

Professor Gail Finney

## GER 118B. THE ROARING TWENTIES IN GERMANY

UC Davis Summer Abroad course, Berlin, Germany, August 2010

Knowledge of German not required

“We hope in this show to have captured something of the intimate pulse of our red-hot times”—this statement concerning a Berlin cabaret performance in 1924 reflects the vitality and cultural richness of the period between Germany’s defeat at the end of World War I (1918) and Hitler’s rise to power (1933). Named for the small town of Weimar in which its constitution was drafted, the Weimar Republic experiences a rapid succession of regimes, as well as intense economic turmoil, keen tension between social classes, an unprecedented level of sexual liberation, the birth of the New Woman, the emergence of the mass as a political entity, burgeoning anti-Semitism, and the rise of fascism.

The cultural richness of this turbulent era is reflected in the designation “roaring” or “golden” twenties: cabarets and revues flourish, jazz finds an immensely popular reception, new mass media such as the radio and the phonograph gain prominence, some of the most brilliant films in cinematic history are made, theater and literature thrive, the plastic arts reach a peak of creativity and innovation, and women experience an unprecedented degree of emancipation.

During the 1920s Berlin was at the center of all these developments—political, musical, cinematic, dramatic, literary, artistic, sexual—and innumerable museums, monuments, and other cultural artifacts remain in the city today to bear abundant witness to the Weimar period. Berlin is therefore eminently suited to be the site of a summer course on Weimar culture. The course is devoted to interdisciplinary study of Weimar culture through representative examples from painting, drama, film, architecture, and short fiction, some of which will be illustrated through excursions to cultural sites in Berlin. We will also take field trips to Weimar, Dresden, and Potsdam.

### Texts

**Course Reader** consisting of selections from *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, Edward Dimendberg (1995) (**WRS**) and other readings

Marieluise Fleisser, *Purgatory in Ingolstadt* (1926) (in Course Reader)

Bertolt Brecht, *The Threepenny Opera* (1928), trans. Ralph Manheim and John Willett; Penguin, ISBN 9780143105169

Thomas Mann, “Mario and the Magician” (1929) (in Course Reader)

We will view the following films in class:

Robert Wiene (dir.), *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919)

Josef von Sternberg, *The Blue Angel* (1930)

Fritz Lang, *M* (1931)

G.W. Pabst, *The Threepenny Opera* (1931)

### **Schedule for GER 118B and concomitant GER 198 (Directed Group Study)**

Classes will take place from 10:00 am-12:30 pm, Monday-Thursday. **Readings are to be completed by the class in which they are listed.** Except for the excursions to Dresden and Weimar, all field trip sites are located in or near Berlin (Potsdam is roughly one hour to the southwest of Berlin). Participation in all field trips is required.

- August 2      Introduction; the legacy of World War I: pp. 5-6 and selections 5, 9, and 12 in **WRS**
- Aug 3        Expressionism in painting: chapter 2 of Peter Selz, *Beyond the Mainstream* (in Reader)
- Aug 4        Reactions against Expressionism I: Dada: pp. 474-476 and selections 187-190 in **WRS**
- Aug 5        Reactions against Expressionism II: "New Objectivity": selections 191, 193-198 in **WRS**  
Afternoon: **Field trip** to the Neue Nationalgalerie (Museum of Modern Art)
- Aug 6-8      **Field Trip** to Weimar
- Aug 9        Expressionism in film: Robert Wiene (dir.), *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920): pp. 617-619; selection 260 in **WRS**; Gemünden, "How to View a Film" in Reader
- Aug 10      Fritz Lang's film *M* (1931); Guest lecture by Bastian Heinsohn, Assistant Professor of German, Bucknell University; selection 269 in **WRS**; Tatar on *M* in Reader
- Aug 11      Comparison between *Caligari* and *M* as portrayals of mental pathology: The Bauhaus: the marriage of art and technology: pp. 429-431 and selections 167-169, 172, and 173 in **WRS**  
Afternoon: **Field trip** to the Bauhaus Archive in Berlin

- Aug 12      Women and sexuality: Rogowski, “How to Read a Play” in Reader; Fleisser, *Purgatory in Ingolstadt* (1926), scenes 1-4 (in Reader); **Journals due in class**
- Aug 14      **Bicycle Tour** of Potsdam
- Aug 16      Finish Fleisser; pp. 195-196 and selections 75, 76, 78, 82, 306 in **WRS**
- Aug 17      The cabaret in Weimar culture: Josef von Sternberg’s film *The Blue Angel* (1930); pp. 551-553 and selections 230, 234, 235, 236, 238, 267 in **WRS**
- Aug 18      **Essays due**; peer review of essays in class
- Aug 19      Critique of the capitalist system: Brecht, *The Threepenny Opera* (1928), through Act II, scene 5  
Afternoon: **Field trip** to the Käthe-Kollwitz-Museum
- Aug 21      **Field Trip** to Dresden
- Aug 23      Finish Brecht; selections 228 and 242 in **WRS**
- Aug 24      Film of *The Threepenny Opera* (1931) by G.W. Pabst; comparison of play and film;  
The rise of Nazism: selections 48, 49, and 51 in **WRS**
- Aug 25      Mann, “Mario and the Magician” (1929) (in Reader): **Journals due in class**
- Aug 26      **Final Examination**

Requirements for GER 118B (4 units):

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| 1. Regular attendance and class participation  | 10% |
| 2. Five-minute oral presentation on an aspect of the reading being treated in class that day | 20% |
| 3. Five-page essay, due August 18  | 30% |
| 4. Final Examination, August 26  | 40% |

Requirements for GER 198 (4 units):

Students must keep a journal in which they record their responses to each of the field trips (at least one page per field trip). These responses should be augmented or edited according to further reading and film-viewing as the course progresses. First half of journal due on August 12; final versions due in class on August 25.