GERM 4900
FROM LENIN TO LOLA: CONTEMPORARY GERMAN FILM

SPRING 2015

Instructor: Dr. Claudia Schwabe
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Class hours: TR 3:00-4:15 p.m.
Class room: Old Main 326
Office hours: TR 4:15-5:15 p.m.
(and by appointment)

Course Description:
The dismantling of the Berlin Wall, the expansion of the European Union, the end of the Cold War, and globalization processes have transformed contemporary Germany. German cinema, too, has undergone significant shifts since the rebellious films of the New German Cinema of the 1970s and 1980s. This course will examine an intertwined set of topics as a way of assessing post-wall cinema in Germany: 1) transnational cinema on the example of Turkish-German filmmaking, 2) World War films returning to the troubled German past, 3) films dealing with immigrant Gastarbeiter families in Germany, 4) unification films portraying East-West sensibilities, and 5) comedic films relating to migration, multiculturalism, and contemporary German identity. The diverse topics covered in the films, which were all released since 2000, range from battles on the front lines during World War I to present-day rebels. Some of the questions that we will grapple with in this course are: Is cinema a form of art or mere entertainment for the masses? And what does it mean to be a work of art? What is its significance as a popular medium? What makes a film worth watching? What distinguishes a good film from a bad one? Is it possible to appreciate a film that you do not especially like? How do filmmakers express themselves through film? Besides the focus on contemporary German films, students will also gain an overview of important movements, directors, and genres in the history of German film and will be introduced to techniques that filmmakers use to express themselves. Students will learn about socio-political developments in twentieth-century Germany and the effect of these events on filmmakers. Students will write and speak in German about their responses to film; develop a working vocabulary of major film terms; be able to trace major trends, influences and figures of German cinema; use analytical techniques that we practice in class to consider other films; and learn to view films more critically.

Objectives:
This course has four major objectives: 1) to introduce students to German film, its cultural context as well as aesthetics; 2) to familiarize students with movements, directors, and genres in the history of German film; 3) to enable students to critically engage with film, learning more not only about film language and filmmakers’ techniques but also about the heated debates which accompanied films throughout the history of the medium in Germany; 4) to provide opportunities for students to improve their German listening, speaking, and writing skills.
Language of instruction
  o German

Required Text

Course Requirements
  o Regular attendance, participation, homework, and other in-class assignments
  o One 10-minute presentation on a German film *not* studied in class
  o 4 short film analyses (1 page for each analysis)
  o 2 critical essays written in German comparing films (3-4 pages, Times New Roman, size 12, double spaced)
  o 9 to 10-page research paper (written in German or in English, extra credit for German) contrasting different films, a book and a film, or a creative project. If you choose to write an essay, I strongly encourage you to present your paper at the Undergraduate Research Symposium hosted by the Department of Languages, Philosophy, and Communication Studies and to visit with me to discuss your project.

Grading
  o Class attendance, participation, homework: 20%
  o 4 film analyses 20%
  o Presentation: 10%
  o Two 3 to 4-page essays: 20%
  o 9 to 10-page final research paper or project: 30%

Grading Scale
  A  (100-93)  A- (92-90)  B+ (88-89)  B  (87-83)
  B- (82-80)  C+ (79-78)  C  (77-73)  C- (72-70)
  D+ (69-68)  D  (67-60)  F  represents a grade below 60

Learning Objectives:
Based on the IDEA evaluation system, the following objectives apply most closely to this course:

- Developing skills in expressing oneself orally or in writing
- Gaining factual knowledge (terminology, classifications, methods, trends)
- Developing specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field most closely related to this course
- Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view
- Gaining a broader understanding and appreciation of intellectual-cultural activity (music, science, literature, etc.)

Semester Outline (Subject to Change):
Week 1: Course Introduction
January 8: Early German Film History 1895-1918 & Weimar Cinema 1919-1933
Week 2: Introduction to German Film
January 13: Nazi Cinema 1933-1945
January 15: German Cinema at the Zero Hour 1945-1949

Week 3: Introduction to German Film
January 20: Postwar East and West German Cinema 1949-1989
January 22: German Film after Reunification 1990-2010

Week 4: Germany and the World Wars
January 27: Merry Christmas
January 29: Der Untergang

Week 5: Coming to Terms with Germany’s Past
February 3: Der Untergang
February 5: Alles auf Zucker

Week 6: Jewish Life in Modern Germany & Neo-Nazism
February 10: Alles auf Zucker
February 12: Die Welle (Essay 1 due)

Week 7: Postwar Germany & National Identity
February 17: NO CLASS (Monday Class Schedule)
February 19: Das Wunder von Bern

Week 8: Transnational Cinema & German Immigrants
February 24: Das Wunder von Bern
February 26: Solino

Week 9: East Germany & DEFA Films
March 3: Solino
March 5: DEFA Märchenfilm

Week 10: Spring Break
March 10: NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)
March 12: NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)

Week 11: Berlin & Butterfly Effect
March 17: DEFA Märchenfilm
March 19: Run Lola Run

Week 12: German (Re)Unification
March 24: Run Lola Run
March 26: Goodbye Lenin (Essay 2 due)

Week 13: Surveillance in East Germany
March 31: Goodbye Lenin
April 2: Das Leben der Anderen
Week 14: Multicultural Comedy I
April 7: Das Leben der Anderen
April 9: Fack ju Göthe

Week 15: Multicultural Comedy II
April 14: Fack ju Göthe
April 16: Türkisch für Anfänger

Week 16: Student Presentations
April 21: Presentations
April 23: Presentations

Week 17: Final Exam Week
April 28: Final Paper/Project due at 1:30 pm

Attendance
In accordance with USU policies, regular attendance is expected of all students. Attendance means physical as well as mental attendance. Planned absences should be discussed with the instructor beforehand. If you need to be absent due to an emergency, please notify me at your earliest convenience. Examples of planned absences that are excused are: university duties or trips and required court attendance. Examples of emergency absences that are excused are: serious illness or injury of the student or a close member of the student’s family. Medical excuses have to be signed by a physician. Written documentation for excused absences must be provided at your next attendance. All missed work must be completed and handed into to me within one week from the day you return. It is the responsibility of each student to make up missed material. Please get notes from someone else in the class or talk to me during my office hours. Students should plan to arrive on time and stay for the duration of the class. I reserve the right to regard constant tardiness (more than twice) as an unexcused absence. **Excessive unexcused absences (more than three) will result in a lower grade (each unexcused absence will lower the final grade by 2%).** Classroom etiquette will be expected (e.g. students will refrain from reading material not related to class and packing up possessions prior to the end of the lecture). Cell phones are to be turned off before class begins (silent not vibrate). If you feel like an exception is necessary, please see me. There will be no laptop computers allowed in class. Students are encouraged to take thorough notes, participate in class discussion, and ask clarifying questions.

Class Participation & Homework
Active participation of the student in class is required. Oral practice of the German language is essential to become comfortable with it and the culture. Homework assignments are part of your final grade. All homework assigned may be collected at any time. If you do not hand in your work on the day it is due or asked for it counts as a 0. The **Discussion Board** (see the link on the Canvas site) may be used for discussions outside class. Frequent contributions to the Discussion board will have a positive impact on the overall participation grade. From time to time, students will also be
asked to respond to specific questions, using the Discussion Board for their answers.

**Presentation**
Each student will give one oral presentation of 10 minutes, and provide a one-page handout for the other classmates. I have to approve the presentation topic, which has to be about a film not covered in class. Presentations should prove that the student has engaged with and understood the film topic, and provide thought-provoking questions for class discussions.

**Film analyses**
You will write detailed film analyses of four of the films that we watch, using the form that I hand out during class. Film analyses are typically due on Thursdays. I will grade analyses based on completeness, evidence of thought, and attention paid to writing style. Please type these critiques, which should be a full page or more.

**Essays**
Students will be expected to write two critical essays (3-4 pages, Times New Roman, size 12, double space, in German) to the topics discussed in class. Your interpretations will argue a thesis about a film and will examine at least two areas of film analysis (narration, cinematography, mise-en-scène, sound, or editing), and you will use at least one scholarly source to support your arguments. Criteria for the evaluation of these essays are linguistic proficiency, style, and content. Essays will be submitted in hard copy form.

**Final project**
9 to 10-page research paper (written in German or in English, extra credit for German) contrasting different films or aspects of films, analyzing a film not covered in class, discussing a certain film period, filmmaker, book and film, etc. Your final project could also be a creative project such as an artistic short film, an educational video, a podcast, visual/plastic arts, an interactive multimedia project, etc. **due by April 28th, 1:30pm.** Group projects are possible. Proposals for projects must be approved by no later than April 1st.

**Canvas**
In addition to the Supplementary Readings, the Canvas website will host links to online resources relevant to the course. There is a wealth of German film sites of various sorts (and the list is constantly expanding), so please feel free to suggest any sites for inclusion on the Canvas site.

**Physical Impairments**
Students with ADA- documented physical, sensory, emotional or medical impairments may be eligible for reasonable accommodations. Veterans may also be eligible for services. All accommodations are coordinated through the Disability Resource Center as early in the semester as possible. In class alternate format materials (braille, large print, digital or audio) are available with advance notice.

**Plagiarism**
Plagiarism includes knowingly “representing, by paraphrase or direct quotation, the published or unpublished work of another person as one’s own in any academic
exercise or activity without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.” The penalties for plagiarism are severe. They include warning or reprimand, grade adjustment, probation, suspension, expulsion, withholding of transcripts, denial or revocation of degrees, and referral to psychological counseling.

Honor Code Policy

As stated in The Student Code, “Each student has the right and duty to pursue his or her academic experience free of dishonesty. The Honor System is designed to re-enforce the higher level of conduct expected and required of all Utah State University students.” Complete academic honesty is expected in this course. Cheating on exams or plagiarism on written assignments will result in a failing grade and may result in further action according to university policy.