German 250(W): German Cinema
Contact: Prof. Christa Spreizer; christine.spreizer@qc.cuny.edu

Sample Syllabus #1:

German 250: Postwar German Cinema
KG206
Fall

This course offers a chronological view of film art with particular emphasis on divided Germany (1949-1990) and Post-Unification Germany (1990-present). After World War II cinema in Germany became a major medium in the nation’s efforts to redefine itself. Topics will include cinema’s use and challenges to Hollywood filmmaking conventions, the place of cinema in building and questioning national identity, its context within European filmmaking, and the role of German cinema in the emerging field of German Studies. We will look at Heimat films that ignored the political realities of the Cold War, as well as the ambitious, politically and ideologically charged films of the New German Cinema. We will discuss the cultural and historical context in which films were produced and compare how audiences of different times and cultures, including the present, come to certain interpretations about these works. Through viewings and formal and informal classroom discussions, we will engage in an active inquiry interpreting cinema from a variety of perspectives. Students will become acquainted with major stylistic innovations, different genres, actors, and various directing styles that will enable them to think about how German cinema fits into modern day discussions regarding the history of filmmaking and the development of German Studies. This course will satisfy the Appreciating and Participating in the Arts (AP) and European Traditions (ET) requirements of the PLAS.

Students by the end of the course should be able to communicate their thoughts effectively both in class and in their writing assignments and become aware of the need for interpretative tools in our complex, everyday lives. They should be able to identify the major cinematic periods and their representative works and relate this to the development of other European and non-European traditions. They should be able to respond appropriately within the context of an academic discussion and be able to critique their own verbal and written presentation skills. They should be able to incorporate useful feedback into their repertoire of critical and evaluative skills as they view, analyze, synthesize, and write about German cinema. They should be able to relate it to their own lived experience, thereby becoming more aware of the complex nature of cultural texts and the personal, cultural, and historical forces that shape interpretation.

Required Texts:

These are available at the College Bookstore and MUST be purchased for this course:

List of Films to be viewed in class this semester include:


Course Requirements:
A journal of impressions when first viewing each film, to be summarized in class. 10 percent. Active participation and contribution to classroom discussions. 20 percent. The students’ engaged interest in the course will be assessed on a daily basis by general class preparedness and informed participation in classroom discussions. Two (2) writing assignments of 5-7 pages each. 30 percent. Written assignments must be completed as scheduled. The draft copy will need to be a substantial and well-informed effort to meet the assignment criteria. The final version should take into account fellow students’ and/or teacher critiques. Both versions must be submitted on time in order to receive a grade. Midterm Examination. 20 percent. The examination will take place in class and encompass both short answer and essay-length questions. Final Examination. 20 percent. The examination will encompass both short answer and essay length questions.

Policy on Plagiarism:
All work submitted must be your own. Any evidence of plagiarism on the first draft or final version of writing assignments will result in a failing grade for the assignment and a possible failing grade in the course.

Lesson Plan:

**September**

1  Monday    No Class (Labor Day)


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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>The Oberhausen Manifesto and Young German Cinema: Screening: Alexander Kluge, <em>Yesterday Girl</em> (1966)</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>New German Cinema and Postwar Reckoning: Screening: Rainer Werner Fassbinder, <em>The Marriage of Maria Braun</em> (1979)</td>
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**October**

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<td>6</td>
<td>New German Cinema and Postwar Reckoning: Screening: Helma Sanders–Brahms, <em>Germany, Pale Mother</em> (1979)</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Midterm Examination</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>The (Re) politicization of New German Cinema: Screening: Volker Schlöndorff, Margarethe von Trotta, <em>The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum</em> (1975)</td>
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**November**

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**December**

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<td>Summary</td>
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<td>12-23</td>
<td>Final Examinations</td>
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German 250W: Sample Syllabus #2:

German Women Filmmakers:

In this course we will analyze the works of major German-speaking women filmmakers (Austrian and German), focusing on the films of Leni Riefenstahl and Margarete von Trotta. Whereas the films to arise from the Oberhausen Manifesto (1962) and New German Cinema were primarily by men, networks of women filmmakers were also established to improve the working conditions and representation of women in filmmaking. Today there are proportionately more women filmmakers in Germany than in any other country. We will begin with an overview of women filmmakers of the first half of the twentieth century, before concentrating on the films to come out of the German women’s movement and the questions they pose regarding a feminine aesthetic. We will analyze the wide-ranging, heterogeneous character of women in filmmaking, their topics and innovations to filmmaking. The course will conclude with a discussion of recent films by Monika Treut and the experimental filmmaker Vali Export. Students will analyze the construction of forms of difference in the history of German cinema and think about how these changes affect audience perception in the present day.

Background Texts:

List of Films:
Leontine Sagan, Mädchen in Uniform (1931)
Leni Riefenstahl, Triumph of the Will (1935)
Jutta Brückner, Ein ganz und gar verwahrlosten Mädchen (A thoroughly demoralized girl, 1977)
Helma Sanders–Brahms, Deutschland, Bleiche Mutter (Germany, Pale Mother 1979)
Marianne Rosenbaum, Peppermint Frieden (Peppermint Peace, 1983)
Dorris Dörrie, Männer (1985)
Margarethe von Trotta, Die bleierne Zeit (Marianne and Julie, 1981)
Margarethe von Trotta, Rosa Luxemburg (1986)
Monika Treut, My Father is Coming – Ein Bayer in New York (1991)

Course Outline:
Week 1: Gender and Weimar Film: Leontine Sagan, Mädchen in Uniform (1931)
Week 6: Fascism in Cinema --An Inability to Mourn?: Helma Sanders–Brahms, *Deutschland, Bleiche Mutter* (Germany, Pale Mother 1979)
Week 9-10: Memory and Unglamorous Subjectivity: Margarethe von Trotta, *Die bleierne Zeit* (Marianne and Julie, 1981)
Week 15: Final Examination

**Assessment:**
The primary tools for assessment will be a student journal, 2 papers of 5-7 pages, and final examination. The final will assess what the students have learned from the course, while the writing assignments will work toward improved writing skills.

**Administration:**
This course counts towards the German major and minor, and can be listed as a writing-intensive course. Course quality will be supervised by the German Program coordinator and the PLAS/ Curriculum Committee in the Dept. of European Languages & Literatures, which is responsible for review of the course to assure that it meets the goals of the PLAS.