



## 7,662: Cities and Creativity: And then the wall fell - Berlin 1989/2009

### Subject information

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ECTS-Credits: 3

### Attached courses

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Timetable	Language	Lecturer
<a href="#">7,660,1.00 Cities and Creativity: And then the wall fell - Berlin 1989/2009</a>	English	<a href="#">Beyes Timon</a> , <a href="#">Steyaert Chris</a>

### Course information

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#### Course prerequisites

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#### Course content

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"Strewn with wild signatures that are painted over each day, and that return, renewed, each day, Berlin is still City of Writing of these times. A book that one does not leaf through, but rather a book that one walks through." Markus Mai & Thomas Wiczak, Writing the Memory of the City

"Spaces cling to their pasts, he said, and sometimes the present finds a way of accommodating this past and sometimes it doesn't. At best, a peaceful coexistence is struck up between temporal planes but most of the time it is a constant struggle for dominion." Chloe Aridjis, Book of Clouds

"Instead, an incessant flow of possibilities and near-intangible meanings appears. This flow casts its spell over the flâneur or even creates him. The flâneur is intoxicated with life in the street - life eternally dissolving the patterns which it is about to form." Siegfried Kracauer, Once Again the Street

At the beginning of the 21st century, cities are, once again, at the center of intellectual and political attention and debate. Cities are laboratories for the configurations and significations of (post-)modernity, brimming with creativity. Nowhere are there so many potential fields of interaction as in the urban habitus: potential specialist or different vocations, dispositions or lifestyles will find its articulations somewhere within urban spaces - in an ongoing process of social formation and deformation, participants of urban life invent ways of making their voices heard. Urban spaces are contested arenas where a multiplicity of interests, perspectives and discourses make their claims.

When urban spaces become the focus of inquiry, they tend to be perceived as architecturally built environments, physical containers for human conduct, put into place and remodelled by city planners and builders. By focussing on the distilled material forms, however, the dynamic production and reproduction of city space is too often left aside.

Departing from simple but detailed and personal yet reflected experiences of urbanity, we will focus on theories and observations which allow to understand the city as a geographic, discursive, cultural and social space. We will inquire how the ordering and organization of urban life is continuously forged and challenged and where new possibilities for work, citizenship and lifestyle emerge. There is movement and change, desires and passions, tensions and conflicts, politics and ideology that shape and reshape a city (and are shaped and reshaped by it in return). Studying urban spaces thus presents a potentially endless variety of observations, exemplifications and interpretations as well as potentially-to-be-written stories that re-vision and change the images and representations of public life in our cities.

In this seminar, the city will be looked at as a "potential space" with surprising possibilities and perpetual uncertainties where creativity, change and innovation become realized. Often, this entails the contestation of established urban realities and (re)constructions of urban publics. This year's course will focus on the possibilities, surprises and disillusionments the city of Berlin was confronted with since the wall fell. How has city life been (differently) organized and disorganized, reproduced and altered in the aftermath of the historical event on November 9th, 1989?

With the city of Berlin as empirical base, teams of students are expected to conduct small ethnographic field studies by looking for and identifying themes in connection with the urban transformation since the wall came down. Studying these themes through, for example, interviews, observations, pictures, sound recordings and video-takes, drawings and maps, reports and articles, the teams will then transform their empirical work into stories of Berlin as a potential city: stories of actual events and emerging projects as much of invisible walls

and hijacked spaces.

### Course structure

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In order to detect, observe and describe urban traces of newness, creativity and transformation with regard to Berlin's unfolding since the wall came down, students are expected to participate fully and actively in all parts of the seminar

**Starting-Off: Experiences of urban space** - 24th September, 14-16\* We explain course concept as vivid and detailed as possible and we get to know the participants and their readiness/questions to become city adventurers, urban ethnographers, creative dwellers and dedicated flâneurs. We distribute literature and project expectations and match groups with suggested projects.

Conceptual groundings - 08th October, 14-17\* In a literature workshop, we discuss selected conceptual approaches for studying urban spaces based on the group literature preparations

**Methodological preparations** - 22nd October, 14-18\* We learn about ethnographic practices by having a go at them. Based on students readings, we go into the city of St Gallen, and "try out" ethnography through semi-structured exercises with regard to observing, taking notes and "constructing" data.

**Fieldwork Berlin (guest: Kathrin Wildner, Urban Ethnographer)** - 6/7/8th November (14-18, 10-17, 11-13)  
The groups embark on their field trips, gathering impressions and observations at respective urban sites, and make fieldnotes.. In-between, time-outs are organized where groups can report experiences, discuss questions and store "data-vignettes" Students can also (facultative) participate in the festivities which will take place on Sunday the 8th and Monday the 9th.

**Follow up** - 19th November, 14-17\* The groups present their interpretations of their ethnographic field studies and preliminary papers (not longer than 15 pages) for discussion of questions and for receiving feedback from staff and other groups.

Contextual Studies are considered part of **Contact Learning**; thus, taking part properly implies **regular attendance**. It is the students' own responsibility to ensure that there is **no timetable clash** between the courses they have chosen.

\*See for the latest announcements concerning time and class on **Stundenplan Online**.

### Course literature

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Selected articles will be handed out in the first session.

### Course additional information

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Please note that getting to Berlin and back as well as accommodation for the field trip (Nov. 6th-8th) will have to be organized and funded by the course participants themselves.

If you book early, both Air Berlin and Swiss offer comparably cheap fares from Zurich to Berlin and back.

Also, Berlin is not an expensive city. As to nice and reasonably priced hostels in central locations, we recommend the Circus Hostel (<http://www.circus-berlin.de/>), Citystay Hostel (<http://www.citystay.de/>), Wombat Hostel (<http://www.wombats-hostels.com/berlin/>).

Due to the festivities around the 20th anniversary of the fall of the wall, beds can be expected to be in great demand. So please book as early as possible.

### Information about the Examination

#### Examination type

**decentral - Active participation (20%)**

Comment: active participation

#### Examination aids

**no regulation necessary**

No rules for examination aids are required for this examination.

- For written examinations at home (term paper), courses without credits, etc., no specific rules for examination aids are required.
- The regulations of the University of St. Gallen and the rules of academic work (sources and aids must always be identified) are applicable in a subsidiary fashion.
- All written work must be accompanied by a declaration of authorship.

Question language: **English**

Answer language: **English**

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## decentral - Group examination paper (80%)

Comment: written group work

### Examination aids

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- All written work must be accompanied by a declaration of authorship.

Question language: **English**

Answer language: **German, English**

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### Examination content

Empirical investigation

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### Exam-relevant literature

see course literature

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### Attention please:

***Wir machen Sie darauf aufmerksam, dass dieses Merkblatt verbindlich ist und vor anderen Informationen wie Studynet, persönlichen Datenbanken der Dozenten/-innen, Angaben in den Vorlesungen etc. den absoluten Vorrang hat.***

***Die Angaben im Merkblatt bleiben bis zum Biddingstart (11.08.09) unverbindlich. Die Prüfungsinformationen für dezentrale Prüfungen sind ab der 4. Semesterwoche (12.10.09) verbindlich. Die Angaben zu zentralen Prüfungen bleiben bis zum Start der Prüfungsanmeldung am 02.11.09 unverbindlich. Bitte schauen Sie sich das Merkblatt nach Biddingstart bzw. nach dem 12.10.09 (dezentrale Merkblätter) und nach dem 02.11.09 (zentrale Merkblätter) nochmals an.***