



CIEE Global Institute – Berlin

Course name:	Writing Berlin Stories
Course number:	LITT 3101 BRGE
Programs offering course:	Berlin Open Campus, Berlin Global Architecture and Design
Open Campus Track:	Language, Literature and Culture
Language of instruction:	English
U.S. semester credits:	3
Contact hours:	45
Term	Spring 2020

Course Description

This course is designed to connect students to the city of Berlin through the study and production of non-fiction writing. In order to understand the rich and complicated past and present of this city, students read non-fiction writing about Berlin from the 1920s to the present. Students also experience the city directly through excursions to important city sites, interviewing locals, and conducting their own research. Students turn these moments of engagement into reflective essays about the sites and people they encounter.

Learning Objectives

This course teaches students to:

- analyze and critique the art of creative non-fiction writing
- locate, navigate, and describe specific spaces and places about which they write
- interpret accounts of the city's highly contested landscape and development via original research and interviews
- construct narrative accounts from multi-layered intellectual and experiential explorations modeled on non-fiction writing about urban spaces

Course Prerequisites

None.

Methods of Instruction

The course is taught as a mixture of lectures, student presentations, film screenings, excursions, and class debates. Participation is a key component of the course and includes offering peers careful critiques and thoughtful feedback on their writing assignments. The instructor gives individual attention to each student to guide and improve their writing.



Assessment and Final Grade

The course grade will be made up of the following components:

1.	Reflections on the readings:	15%
2.	Three short essays:	30%
3.	Presentation:	10%
4.	Final writing assignment:	25%
5.	Participation:	20%
	TOTAL:	100%

Course Requirements

Reflections on the readings

The instructor provides students with prompt questions to guide them in writing of three brief reflections on the assigned readings. The reflections are approximately 400 words in length and offer an analysis of the reading, including discussion of the author's chosen subject, voice, and style.

Three short essays

These essays relate to major themes and readings in the course. Students incorporate their own experiences in Berlin or outside the city in their writing. Each student's writings will be workshopped in class with peers and the instructor in a collaborative, supportive and constructive manner. Each essay is a minimum of 750 words.

Presentation

Each student is expected (together with one or two other students) to offer a 10-minute presentation on an assigned text, followed by questions posed to the class, which are meant to spark discussion.

Final writing assignment

The final assignment is a 1,900-word narrative account meant to build on writing techniques and feedback received on the short essays completed throughout the course. The assignment is due on the last class session and portions will be workshopped in class before the final due date.



Participation

Participation is valued as meaningful contribution in the digital and tangible classroom, utilizing the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared in advance of each class session and to have regular attendance. Students must clearly demonstrate they have engaged with the materials as directed, for example, through classroom discussions, online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after presentations), interaction with guest speakers, and attentiveness on co-curricular and outside-of-classroom activities.

Attendance Policy

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and absences will result in a lower participation grade for any affected CIEE course. Due to the intensive schedules for Short Term programs, absences that constitute more than 10% of the total course will result in a written warning.

Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.

For CIEE classes, excessively tardy (over 15 minutes late) students must be marked absent. Attendance policies also apply to any required co-curricular class excursion or event, as well as to Internship, Service Learning, or required field placement. Students who miss class for personal travel, including unforeseen delays that arise as a result of personal travel, will be marked as absent. No make-up or re-sit opportunity will be provided.

Attendance policies also apply to any required class excursion, with the exception that some class excursions cannot accommodate any tardiness, and students risk being marked as absent if they fail to be present at the appointed time.



Weekly Schedule

NOTE: this schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor to take advantage of current experiential learning opportunities.

Week 1 Beginnings

Class 1.1 In our first session, we will go over the course's objectives and assignments and do in-class writing exercises.

In-class reading:

Cole, Teju. *Eight Letters to a Young Writer*. NEXT, 2008-2009,

<https://wordsfollowme.files.wordpress.com/2010/10/teju-cole-eight-letters-to-a-young-writer2.pdf>

Recommended:

Hart, Jack. *Storycraft*, 6-41.

Reflection Assignment 1:

Write a 300-word narrative about arriving to Berlin and the CIEE campus. What do you remember seeing? What did you smell? What did you find when you opened your dorm room? Bring Berlin to life through your routine, your eyes. Prompt questions will be included in the assignment posted on Canvas.

Week 2 Newcomers

To write well about a city, the writer needn't be a long-time resident. This week, we focus on the experience of writing about compelling, new surroundings.

Class 2.1 We will go over our assignment about moving to Berlin and experiencing the city as a newcomer. We will also learn about Berlin history during the so-called Weimar Republic. In 1920, a 26-year-old correspondent, Joseph Roth, arrived from Austria to Berlin, not long after the end of the First World War. He went to Berlin's heart to write about compelling characters in *What I Saw: Reports from Berlin 1920-33*.

In-class reading:

In groups, students will read one of the following selections from Roth and discuss



it with the rest of the class.

Roth, Joseph. *What I Saw: Reports from Berlin 1920-33*:

- “Going for a Walk” under *What I Saw*, 23-34
- “Refugees from the East” under *The Jewish Quarter*, 35-39
- “With the Homeless” in *Displaced Persons*, 63-68
- “Architecture” in *Berlin Under Construction*, 115-118

Reflection Assignment 2:

Choose a vivid passage from one of the assigned sections and write a 300-word reflection about what makes it come alive to you. What works in terms of the style of writing and the imagery? What did it make you think about?

Reflection assignment 1 due

Class 2.2

We will go on a walk as a class in Kreuzberg and take notes of the architecture, people who live here, character of the stores, and observe how the borough changes when we go from Bergmannkiez to Kottbusser Tor area. Make sure to bring a notebook and pen or pencil and wear comfortable shoes.

Reading:

Roth, Joseph. *What I Saw: Reports from Berlin 1920-33*:

- “The Man in the Barbershop” in *Bourgeoisie and Bohemians*, 131-134
- “The Kurfürstendamm,” 147-152
- “The Tour Around the Victory Column,” 179-182
- “An Apolitical Observer Goes to the Reichstag,” 193-198

Short Essay 1:

Write a 750-word narrative about Kreuzberg. You’re writing as if your piece were included in a book about Berlin, describing this borough to the reader. The class will read each other’s writing in the next session and provide feedback to help improve it.

Reflection assignment 2 due



Week 3

Memories and Memorials

We will read about the Berlin of Nazi Germany through a first-person account of the city by reporter William Shirer, through the portrait of characters in Rory MacLean's book *Berlin: Portrait of a City Through the Centuries* and from William Shirer's *Berlin Diary*.

Class 3.1

We workshop each other's Kreuzberg assignment. We then discuss Berlin during the Third Reich and watch selections from Alexa Karolinski's documentary *Oma & Bella* about two German Jewish women who returned to Germany after the war.

Short Essay 1 due

Class 3.2

The class will be divided into groups that will visit selected memorials to the Holocaust, including Israeli artist Micha Ullman's installation to commemorate the book burning at Bebelplatz, the Gleis 17 memorial at the Grunewald S-Bahn station, and along Pariser Straße in West Berlin.

Short Essay 2:

During your visit to the memorial site, take notes on how passersby pay attention, interact or ignore the memorial, and also take note of your own experience. Write 750 words about the extent to which a place can hold a memory. What does it mean to memorialize an experience? How close can any memorial get to an historical event and do these do the victims justice? How did you feel when you visited these sites and observed other visitors? Students will read each other's work and workshop these essays during the next class session.

Class 3.3

This session is dedicated to discussing class readings and workshopping students' written assignments on the memorials.

Short Essay 2 due

Week 4

Borders

The Berlin Wall divided the city from 1961 to 1989, and during this time West Berlin had a special political status that resulted in an unusual way of life. This lifestyle gained notoriety with the 1978 publication of *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo* (We



Children from Zoo Station), which became the film *Christiane F.* We're going to talk about Berlin stories on both sides — East and West, and – for those who could - what crossing from one side to the other entailed.

Class 4.1 Students learn about writings on life in Berlin during the Cold War and discuss the history of the time period. Students also learn about interviewing people.

Reading:

Maclean, Rory. *Berlin: Portrait of a City Through the Centuries*: “Dieter Werner, Wall Builder”, 275-294

Listening:

“Iron Curtain,” a story about Ulrike Poppe, possibly the most surveilled woman during the Cold War. Reporter Luisa Beck produces her story for Snap Judgment.

- Beck, Luisa, producer. “Iron Curtain – Snap #915.” *Snap Judgement*, Snap Judgement Studios, 27, April, 2018. <https://snapjudgment.org/the-iron-curtain>

Reflection Assignment 3:

Write a 300-word reflection on the assigned reading and listening. Reflect on how individuals experienced the Berlin Wall and the East German regime. How would the wall have affected your life? How would you have reacted to the changes in your environment? What emotions did you feel while reading and listening? What similarities do you see between you and the people living then?

Class 4.2 Outing related to meeting someone who lived during the Cold War and hearing his or her story.

Reading:

Maclean, Rory. *Berlin: Portrait of a City Through the Centuries*: “David Bowie, and ‘Heroes’”, 329-348

Short Essay 3:

Write a 750-word narrative about crossing a border. Where did you go? How did you feel? How did the scene change as you went from one country to the next?



You should write evocatively, using vivid detail. Alternatively, students can write about leaving a place and no longer feeling welcome. Where did you go? Write about feeling unwelcome.

Reflection Assignment 3 due

Week 5 Contemporary Berlin

Class 5.1 In-class writing exercises, discussing writing techniques and contemporary Berlin.

Reading:

Schneider, Peter. *Berlin Now: The City After the Wall*:

- "Berlin: Emergence of a New Metropolis", 89-98
- "Love After the Fall of the Berlin Wall", 122-129

Class 5.2 Class outing in which students listen to the "Green Line" episode of *Berlinology* as we take the U1 subway line from Warschauer Straße to Uhlandstraße to observe how Berlin changes going from East to West. The class will meet in West Berlin with a contemporary author who writes about Berlin.

Reading:

Schneider, Peter. *Berlin Now: The City After the Wall*:

- "Clash of the Architects", 18-21
- "A Wessi Attempts to Find Berlin's Soul", 83-88

Class 5.3 Students spend class workshopping the final assignment.

Reading:

Schneider, Peter. *Berlin Now: The City After the Wall*:

- "Vietnamese in Berlin", 212-214
- "Turks in Berlin", 234-246
- "Jewish Life in Berlin", 293-308

Week 6 Workshop and Conclusion

Class 6.1 Students workshop their final writing assignment



Reading:

Selections from Constantine, *Berlin Tales*

Class 6.2

Site Visit: Aufbau Publishers

Aufbau was founded in 1945 and became the biggest publisher in East Germany, specializing in socialist and Russian literature. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the publishing house has occupied a unique intersection point, uniting two German literary cultures.

Reading:

Selections from Kaminer, *Russian Disco*.

Final writing assignment due

Course Materials

Reading

Constantine, Helen. *Berlin Tales*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. Hart, Jack. *Storycraft: The Complete Guide to Writing Narrative Nonfiction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012.

Hessel, Franz. *Walking in Berlin: A Flaneur in the Capital*. Victoria: Scribe Publications, 2016.

Isherwood, Christopher. *Berlin Stories*. New York: New Directions Books, 2008.

Kaminer, Wladimir. *Russian Disco*. London: Ebury, 2002.

Macleane, Rory. *Berlin: Portrait of a City Through the Centuries*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2014.

Roth, Joseph. *What I Saw: Reports from Berlin 1920-33*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2003.

Schneider, Peter. *Berlin Now: The City After the Wall*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014.

Shirer, William. *Berlin Diary*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1941.

Online Resources

Beck, Luisa, producer. "Iron Curtain – Snap #915." *Snap Judgement*, Snap Judgement Studios, 27, April, 2018. <https://snapjudgment.org/the-iron-curtain>



- Cole, Teju. *Eight Letters to a Young Write*. NEXT, 2008-2009, <https://wordsfollowme.files.wordpress.com/2010/10/teju-cole-eight-letters-to-a-young-writer2.pdf>
- Degregory, Lane. "Local Characters: How to Tell the Stories You Have to Tell." *Nieman Reports*, 15 Dec. 2007, <https://niemanreports.org/articles/local-characters-how-to-tell-the-stories-you-have-to-tell/>
- MacLean, Rory. "My Time On the Set With Marlene Dietrich." *The History Reader*, 12 Feb. 2015, www.thehistoryreader.com/contemporary-history/my-time-on-the-set-with-marlene-dietrich/