

America in the German Imagination

Course Designation: German/Global Studies/American Studies (300-level; possibility for students enrolled for German credit to complete some readings and assignments in German)

Credit Hours: 3

Semester/Term:

Meeting Days/Time/Location:

Instructor Information

Instructor: Katherine Kerschen

Email:

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Office:

Office Hours:

Course Description

"America" has long held a unique spot in both the collective and individual German imagination. This course explores *Amerikabilder*, or how America has been conceptualized and represented in German literature, philosophical discourse, politics, and the popular media. Beginning with the first major wave of German-speaking immigrants to America in the early 19th century and proceeding roughly chronologically to the present day, various images of America and their role within German history and culture will be considered.

Through this course, students will expand their knowledge of German history, literature and culture; gain a deeper understanding of the cultural and political relationship between Germany and the USA, both historically and in a contemporary context; and develop critical thinking skills that can be applied to a variety of cross-cultural situations. Students will also improve their written and oral communication skills.

Prerequisites: GER 302 (if taking the course for GER 400 credit)

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Identify and describe literary, cultural, and philosophical movements in German-speaking countries from 1800 to the present day.
- Compare and contrast different images of America.
- Analyze how certain images of America are created by the authors of both fictional and nonfiction works.

- Develop logical and compelling arguments about nonfiction, literary, and cinematic texts.
- Clearly and effectively communicate observations, opinions, and analysis about cultural history and literature in discussion and in written assignments.
- **For GER 400:** compose short written texts in German with a high degree of grammatical accuracy, varied vocabulary, and in a formal register.

Required Materials

We will work with many different kinds of texts in this course, from historical documents to scholarly articles to contemporary films and documentaries. Most of the texts will be available on our LMS course page, except for the following primary texts, all of which can be purchased online:

- *The Man Who Disappeared (Amerika, oder Der Verschollene)*. By Franz Kafka. Oxford University Press, 2012. (ISBN: 978-0199601127)
 - German version: *Amerika, oder Der Verschollene*
- *Winnetou (Unabridged translation of Winnetou I)*. By Karl May, translated by George A. Alexander. German original first published 1893. Preposterous Press, 2008. (ISBN: 978-0981650401)
 - German Version: *Winnetou I*. (ISBN: 978-3837027297)

Additionally, you will be required to watch one of the following movies on your own time as part of a group presentation. All can be either watched online or rented from the library.

- *Stroszek*. Directed by Werner Herzog, Werner Herzog Filmproduktion, 1977.
- *Der Schuh des Manitu*. Directed by Michael Herbig, Constantin Film, 2001.
- *Friendship!* Directed by Markus Goller, Sony Pictures, 2010.
- *Schultze gets the blues*. Directed by Michael Schorr, United International Pictures, 2003.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Active Participation – 15%

You are expected to participate actively in this class, which means that you should come to class on time, have completed all assigned readings and assignments, ask questions of the instructor, and participate in group work and class discussions. Simply being present in the course but not engaging with the material and the other students will not be sufficient to succeed in this class. Regular class attendance is also part of your participation grade. You may miss no more than 3 class sessions without prior approval from the instructor or an attested excuse (e.g., medical or family emergency). All additional absences will result in a successive lowering of your participation grade.

Homework – 20%

Throughout the semester you will be responsible for completing short homework assignments in addition to the regularly scheduled reading. The homework will consist mainly of weekly contributions to our class discussion forum on the LMS course page. Each week I will post a prompt or discussion question to the forum (note there will be two forums: one in German for students enrolled in GER 400 and one in English for all other students). You must post a 2-3 sentence response and comment on at least two of your classmates' responses. Any additional homework assignments will be announced in class and on the LMS course page and must be completed by the beginning of class on the day that they are due. **Late homework assignments will not be accepted unless previously discussed with the instructor!**

Short Response Papers – 20%

You are required to turn in 3 short response papers related to specific texts. Each paper should be approximately 300-400 words in length and should aim to summarize the text and draw together in a brief analysis how that text relates to the different images of America discussed so far in the course. In-class peer review workshops will be conducted for these papers. Deadlines and more details instructions for each response paper will be posted on the LMS course page.

Discussion Kick-off – 5%

Once during the semester you will do a mini presentation to “kick off” the class session. You will have 5-10 minutes to provide a summary/analysis of the reading for that day and guide class discussion. You will choose your presentation date during the 2nd week of class. Further details and a grading rubric will be on Canvas.

Group Presentation – 10%

You are required to give one group presentation during the semester. The presentation should be about 20 minutes long, plus 5-10 minutes for questions and discussion afterwards. The presentation will be based on a German-language movie set in the United States (the options for movies are listed in the “Course Materials” section above). In a group of no more than 4 students, you must choose a movie, watch in on your own time, and then present it to the class. Your presentation should include a summary of the film's plot, background information about the context in which it was made, and an analysis of its “Amerikabild.” Each group member must speak for at least 5 minutes. You may also show a few scenes or clips from the movie to illustrate your points or to analyze with the class; these do not count towards the 20-minute time limit.

Final Paper – 30%

At the end of the semester you will complete a final paper in lieu of a written exam. You do not need to turn in a paper copy, only upload an electronic copy to our LMS course page. The formal requirements of the paper are:

- 2000-3000 words in length
- MLA formatting
- Works Cited page containing at least 2 outside scholarly sources

The final paper may cover any topic discussed in this course. Beyond this restriction, you may choose to approach the final paper in a variety of ways. For example, you could dig deeper into the literature and secondary sources about a text discussed in class, you could search for a new, thematically-related primary text, or you could do a comparison of two texts. One-on-one meetings with the instructor will be scheduled in the week before Thanksgiving break to discuss final paper topics.

Course Schedule

Dates and assignments are subject to change. Check the LMS course page for updates.

Week	Topic	Due
1	Introduction	
	German Emigrants in the 19th Century	<i>Anton in America. A Novel from German-American Life</i> (Reinhold Solger) - excerpts
2	German Emigrants in the 19th Century – Nationalism and Revolution	<i>Anton in America</i> ; excerpts from <i>A Concise History of Germany</i> (Fulbrook)
	German Settlements in the USA	“Phantom Landscapes of Colonization” (Conzen); <i>Anton in America</i>

3	American Nature and German Romanticism	"How We Appeared to a German Poet in 1832" (Schaffer); "Niagara" (Lenau)
	Romanticism vs. Classicism	"To the United States" (Goethe)
4	America's Place in History	<i>Lectures on the Philosophy of History</i> (Hegel) – excerpts
	The "Wild West" from the perspective of a German (who was never there)	"Germany's Wild West Author: A Researcher's Guide to Karl May" (Cook); <i>Winnetou</i>
5	The Wild West	<i>Winnetou</i> Response 1 due
	The Wilde West on Film – <i>Winnetou & Old Shatterhand</i>	<i>Winnetou</i>
6	The lasting influence of Karl May Group Presentation 1 (Der Schuh des Manitu)	"In Germany, Wild for Winnetou" (<i>New York Times</i>); <i>Winnetou</i>
	The Turn of the Century and WWI	<i>The Man Who Disappeared</i> (Kafka)
7	Europe in Upheaval: The Aftermath of War, Alienation, Changing Society	<i>The Man Who Disappeared</i>
	Arts and Music in the Weimar Republic	<i>The Man Who Disappeared</i> ; "The Jazz Republic: Music, Race, and American Culture in Weimar Germany" (Wipplinger)
8	Americanism and Antiamericanism after WWI	"Americanism" (Rudolf Kayser); excerpts from <i>American and Americanism</i> (Adolf Halfeld)
	National Socialist Propaganda and WWII	Excerpts from the <i>German Propaganda Archive</i> (Calvin College); "Das Land ohne Herz': Das Amerika der Nationalsozialisten" (Popp) Response 2 due
9	The Postwar Period: American Politics in Germany	"America in Germany: Power and the Pursuit of Americanization" (Geyer)
	The Postwar Period: American Influence on German Youth Culture	"A special German case of cultural Americanization" – part 1 (from <i>The Americanization of Europe</i> (Stephan))

– *Die Halbstarken* (Film 1956)

10	Postwar German Literature	<i>Journey Through America</i> (Wolfgang Koeppen)
	Germany Rediscovered America Group Presentation 2 (Stroszek)	excerpts from <i>Germany Rediscovered America</i> (Beck)
11	Divided Germany: Perspectives from the German Democratic Republic	"Jazz, rock, and rebels: cold war politics and American culture in a divided Germany" (Poiger); for GER 400: Excerpts from <i>Am kürzeren Ende der Sonnenallee</i> (Thomas Brussig)
	After Reunification Group Presentation 3 (Friendship!)	"A special German case of cultural Americanization" – part 2 (Stephan)
12	The Americanization of German (pop) culture – focus on film	"American pop culture invades Germany: Some love it—some don't" (Schuetz)
	The Americanization of German (pop) culture – focus on music	"German pop culture: how 'American' is it?" (Mueller); "A glimpse back at hip-hop's roots in Germany" (dw.com)
13	Immigration/Emigration in the 21st Century	TV Series <i>Goodbye Deutschland! Die Auswanderer (The Emigrants)</i>
	Immigration/Emigration in the 21st Century	TBD: Germany's "refugee crisis" Response 3 due
14	<i>No class- Thanksgiving Break</i>	
15	The American Dream – <i>Auf der Suche nach dem amerikanischen Traum</i> (ZDF Doku 2011) Group Presentation 4 (Schultze gets the blues)	<i>The European Dream: How Europe's vision of the future is quietly eclipsing the American Dream</i> – excerpts (Rifkin); for GER 400: "Träum weiter, Amerika" (ZEIT)
	Cultural Differences and Stereotypes	for GER 400: "Kulturschock USA: Was Amerika von uns unterscheidet" (<i>focus.de</i>); <i>Allein unter Doppel-Whoppern</i> – Auszüge
16	Teaching America in Germany	Excerpts from German school textbooks
	Wrap-up	
	<i>Finals Week</i>	Final Paper