

GERM 67:
Blackness in the German Imaginary, Germany in the Black Imaginary
Fall 2014

Instructor: Dr. Priscilla Layne

Class Meeting Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00-3:15 pm

Classroom: Dey 404

Office: Dey 424

Office Hours: Mondays 3-4 pm, Thursdays 4:45-5:45 pm and by appointment

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Course Description: This seminar deals with how encounters between Germany and the African Diaspora have changed notions of race, nation, identity and belonging. Despite the heterogeneous cultures existing within its borders, Germany has long thought of itself as a white, Christian nation. However, Germany has also represented at times a necessary and at other times an attractive destination for people of African descent. Furthermore, Germans' tendency to imagine themselves as white did not foreclose their acceptance and even celebration of Black culture. From the age of colonialism to the present, Blackness has posed both an allure as well as a danger for Germans, especially those who view Black culture as challenging "old world" traditions. How does one explain Germans' fear and simultaneous love of Blackness? How have many Black intellectuals and artists responded to this puzzling binary? How has the construction of Blackness in Germany changed as a result of historical shifts e.g. from colonialism to postcolonialism and from the nation-state to the European Union? Today, as minority populations increase and the European Union rethinks its borders considering the acceptance of Turkey into its community, Germans are faced with the task of breaking away from earlier narrow thinking in order to accept its changing demographics. Examining how Blackness has been perceived in Germany since the 19th century is useful for understanding why many Germans still stubbornly cling to the notion that Blackness and German culture are irreconcilable. And what do discourses on and encounters with Blackness mean for Germany's future?

Course Goals: In the course of the semester, students will learn how to do close readings of a variety of media, ranging from autobiography, novels and history to films and a musical. Through examining this specific topic, this course will give students the theoretical tools and historical context to engage with broader issues such as race, gender and class, the influence of popular culture, citizenship and immigration. The goal of this seminar is to introduce students to the study of the humanities by having them engage with theoretical and historical texts, learn literary and cultural analysis and conduct their own research. Exploring the construction of Blackness in various historical contexts will help students think more critically about cultural constructs.

Organization of the Course: All foreign-language materials will be available in English translation. All foreign-language films will have English subtitles. Film screenings will be scheduled and students are required to attend. No previous engagement with German, African American, African or West Indian history or culture is necessary. The instructor

will primarily lead the discussion and encourage students to participate based on their engagement with the texts. Students' performance will be assessed based on both collaborative and individual work. For collaborative work, students will have to write four short essays for each of the four historical periods: Colonialism, Weimar & Nazi Germany, Postwar and Postunification. In order to work collaboratively, you may want to take advantage of online tools like Google Docs. For each essay, you will have a choice of writing about an artwork, a musical piece, a film, a literary text or a historical moment. You should vary your essay topics. For example, you cannot write all of your essays about films; you have to choose a different kind of object for each essay. Bare in mind, whether you write about a 5-minute song, a 90-minute movie or a 20 page short story, each object will have its own unique challenges and require just as much thought and time. The instructor will provide you with a list of suggested topics for each essay. Students will have an introduction to library research, so that they are familiar with using the resources at UNC.

Additional assignments for which students are responsible are posting to the course blog by 9 am each Tuesday and Thursday. Once a week, your blog post must be the response to a homework question which you will be assigned. Answers to homework questions should not exceed 100 words, but you must reference at least one book or article. When you do not have a homework question, you can just write a brief response (ca. 200 words) to the reading consisting of a comment about something you found interesting or a question you have. There will be a take-home midterm and either a final examination or project which will allow you to display your understanding about the texts we've been reading in class.

Attendance

You are only allowed three absences. Each subsequent absence will lower your final grade.

Assignments

Essays 30%
Midterm 15%
Weekly Course Blog Entries 20%
Final 20%
Preparedness and Participation 15%

Important Dates

First Essay September 9th (The sign-up sheet will be passed around Tuesday Sep. 2)
Second Essay October 5th
Third Essay November 4th
Fourth Essay December 2nd
Take-Home Midterm October 15th
Final TBD

Guidelines for Technology

You should bring your text to every class meeting, along with pen and paper to take notes. Unless otherwise stated, you are not allowed to use laptops or tablets in class. Likewise your cellphones should be turned off before you enter class and should remain off for the duration of the class period. If under special circumstances you require the use of technology in class, please see the professor to discuss special arrangements.

Books

The following books can be purchased at the UNC Student Bookstore:

Paul Beatty, *Slumberland*

Jackie Sibblies Drury, *We Are Proud To Present a Presentation About the Herero of Namibia, Formerly Known as Southwest Africa, From the German Sudwestafrika, Between the Years 1884 - 1915*

All other texts will be available on Sakai in PDF form.

TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE

Colonialism

Tuesday August 19: Introductions

Thursday August 21st: W.E.B. Du Bois' Autobiography pp. 97 – 114 and Andrew Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa*, pp. 100- 111

Week 2

Tuesday August 26th: Woodruff Smith, *The German Colonial Empire* pp. 66-73 and Andrew Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa*, Chapter 3

Thursday August 28th: Smith, *The German Colonial Empire* pp. 51-65 and Gustav Frenssen's *Peter Moor's Journey to Southwest Africa* pp. 1-12; 38-81. You can find Frenssen's text online at:
archive.org/stream/petermoorsjourn00frenngoog#page/n6/mode2up

Week 3

Tuesday September 2nd: *Morenga* pp 1-55

Thursday September 4th: Jackie Sibblies' *We Are Proud To Present a Presentation About the Herero of Namibia, Formerly Known as Southwest Africa, From the German Sudwestafrika, Between the Years 1884 - 1915*

Weimar and Nazi Germany

Week 4

Tuesday September 9th: *Hell on Earth* (1931) dir. Victor Trivas
Watch at home before class at the following link: archive.org/details/HellOnEarth
First paper due

Thursday September 11th: Excerpt from Tina Campt's *Other Germans* (pp. 31-63) and Alaine Locke's "Black Watch on the Rhine"

Week 5

Tuesday September 16th: Excerpt from *Jazz and the Germans* (pp 1-18) and *Jonny strikes up the band*

Thursday September 18th: Tour of Davis Library

Week 6

Tuesday September 23rd: Tina Campt, *Other Germans*, Ch. 3

Wednesday evening, September 24th: Screening of *Quax in Afrika*

Thursday September 25th: *Quax in Afrika* (1947) dir. Helmut Weiss

Week 7

Tuesday September 30th: Excerpts from Hans J. Massaquoi's *Destined to Witness*

Postwar

Thursday October 2nd: Martin Klimke and Maria Höhn, *A Breath of Freedom*, Ch. 3

Week 8

Tuesday October 7^h: Excerpt from William Gardner Smith's *Last of the Conquerors*
Second paper due

Thursday October 9th: Excerpt from Willi Heinrich's *The Lonely Conqueror*

Week 9

Tuesday October 14th: Heide Fehrenbach's *Race After Hitler*, Ch. 3

Thursday October 16th : Excerpts from Michael Ende's *Jim Knopf and Lukas the Engine Driver* and Ayim et. al. *Showing Our Colors*

Midterm Take-home exam due Wednesday October 15th at noon.

Week 10

Tuesday October 21st: Excerpt from Ika Hügel-Marshall's *Invisible Woman* pp. 13-59

Thursday October 23rd: *Toxi* (1952) dir. R.A. Stemmler

Week 11

Tuesday October 28th: Excerpt from *Showing Our Colors*

Thursday October 30th: Selected poems from May Ayim's *Blues in Black and White*

Postunification

Week 12

Tuesday November 4th: Paul Beatty's *Slumberland*, pp. 1-61
Third Paper Due

Thursday November 6th: *Slumberland*, pp. 62-123

Week 13

Tuesday November 11th: *Slumberland*, pp. 124-185

Thursday November 13th: *Slumberland*, pp.186-243

Week 14

Tuesday November 18th : Afro-German Poetry and Spoken Word

Thursday November 20th : Excerpt from Auma Obama's *And Then Life Happens*

Week 15

Monday Evening November 24th: Screening of *Passing Strange*

Tuesday November 25th: *Passing Strange*

Week 16

Tuesday December 2nd: Conclusions and **Fourth Paper Due...Final TBD**