

# The Golden Age of German Cinema (1918-1933)

Dr. Emily Allegra Dreyfus

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Time Slot:	Mondays, 4:30 p.m.
Language of Instruction:	English
Contact Hours:	45
ECTS Credits:	6

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## Course Description

Never was German film and cinema culture as vivid and cutting-edge, liberating and socially engaged, experimental, commercially successful and internationally renowned as in the years between 1918 and 1933. The revolution of 1918 and the creation of the first German republic inspired writers and artists, film makers and producers, many of them Jewish, to try something entirely new.

This outburst of creativity came to an abrupt end in 1933 with the seizure of power of the National Socialists and the establishment of a dictatorship leading to World War II. A hundred years on, what do films from the Golden Age of German Cinema tell us? Why is it worth studying these old 'classics'? How can they enrich our view of history, the arts, and political debate? And how do they generate knowledge, controversy, excitement?

This course focuses on close readings of canonical films, including examples of popular, avantgarde and documentary filmmaking. We will consider early monster films, psychological thrillers and political propaganda, the invention of the 'unchained camera' and modern editing techniques, the creative use of sound and music, stardom and the appearance of the New Woman on screen.

The course introduces students to fundamental elements of film and film analysis; it fosters a critical understanding of how film functions both as entertainment and as an art form; it explores the developments within German film in light of specific historical and cultural frameworks. The course assumes no prior knowledge of German, German films, or film theory in general. It is taught in English and all sound-films have English subtitles.

**Please note:** Students will watch each film individually before class, e.g. on the internet, or via specially arranged viewing sessions on campus.

## Learning Objectives

Students will learn about fundamental elements of film and film analysis. They will develop a critical understanding of how film functions both as entertainment and as an art form. They will learn about major developments within German film in light of specific historical and cultural frameworks.

## Student Profile

Should be in their fourth semester of college/university education or beyond.

## Assignments and Grading

Attendance, participation, homework: 200 Points

Weekly writing assignment: 250 Points

Independent Project Report: 100 Points

Midterm Exam: 200 Points

Final Exam: 250 Points

Completion of the Midterm Exam as well as the Final Exam is needed for a grade.

FU Grade	Points of 1,000
1.0	980-1,000
1.3	950-979
1.7	900-949
2.0	850-899
2.3	800-849
2.7	750-799
3.0	700-749
3.3	650-699
3.7	600-649
4.0	500-599
5.0	< 500

## Attendance

Attendance in class is mandatory. You are expected to be punctual out of respect to both your instructor and your fellow students. If you cannot attend class because you are sick, please report to the FU-BEST office (info@fubest.fu-berlin.de) and to your instructor by e-mail before class.

Absences are **excused** in case of **illness**; however, for the fifth sick day and every other sick day after that (consecutive or cumulative, counted not per individual course but for the program overall), you will need to turn in a doctor's notice ("Attest" in German) to the FU-BEST office in order for them to count as excused, too.

If you miss an exam due to an excused absence, your instructor and the FU-BEST team will arrange a make-up exam for you; you may also be entitled to a term paper deadline extension. If you, however, do not fulfill all course requirements needed for a grade by the (later) date determined by the program, it will no longer be possible to pass the course.

Please also note that if you miss more than half of a course's sessions (even if due to excused absence), passing the course is no longer possible.

Personal travel and visits by relatives or friends are **not** accepted as reasons for absence (i.e., absences for these reasons always count as unexcused).

Regarding **unexcused** absences, please note the following:

- Any unexcused absence has consequences for at least the participation portion of the grade.
- Two unexcused absences lead to a formal warning and a lowering of the course grade by a fraction.
- Three unexcused absences will result in an "F" (5.0) on the transcript.

An absence for more than half of a particular day's session will be considered an absence for that day.

## Literature

Digitized readings posted on the online learning platform Blackboard.

## Course Schedule

Calendar	Topics, Readings, etc.
<b>Session 1</b> <b>1 September</b>	<p><b>Topic: Introduction to Weimar Cinema and its theories</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Siegfried Kracauer, 'Introduction to From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film (1947),' in Richard W. McCormack and Alison Guenther-Pal (eds.), <i>German Essays on Film</i> (New York and London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 180-188</li> <li>Lotte H. Eisner, 'Introduction to The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt (1952),' in Richard W. McCormack and Alison Guenther-Pal (eds.), <i>German Essays on Film</i> (New York and London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 189-194.</li> <li>Bobby E. Lüthge, 'The Oyster Princess' [1919], in Laurence Kardish (ed.): <i>Weimar Cinema 1919-1933: Daydreams and Nightmares</i> (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2010), p. 73.</li> <li>Thomas Elsaesser, 'Germany: The Weimar Years,' in Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (ed.), <i>The Oxford History of World Cinema</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 136-151.</li> </ul> <p><b>Viewing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>THE OYSTER PRINCESS (1919, dir. Ernst Lubitsch, 60 Min.), <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rH-lqSrcFNo">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rH-lqSrcFNo</a></li> </ul>
<b>Session 2</b>	<p><b>Topic: Paul Wegener and the Early Fantasy Film</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lotte H. Eisner, 'The Spell of Light: The Influence of Max Reinhardt', from <i>The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt</i> (London: Secker &amp; Warburg, 1973), pp. 39-74.</li> <li>Eugen Tannenbaum, 'The Golem, How He Came into the World' [1920], in Laurence Kardish (ed.), <i>Weimar Cinema 1919-1933: Daydreams and Nightmares</i> (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2010), p. 80.</li> </ul> <p><b>Viewing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>THE GOLEM (1920, dir. Paul Wegener / Carl Boese, 84 Min.) <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6dvWPN8OMA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6dvWPN8OMA</a></li> <li>CINEMA EUROPE: GERMANY (1995, dir. Kevin Brownlow / David Gill, 60 Min.) <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7aVHA40T-jo">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7aVHA40T-jo</a></li> </ul>
<b>Session 3</b>	<p><b>Topic: Expressionism in the Cinema</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gertrud David, 'The Expressionist Film' [1919], in Anton Kaes, Nicholas Baer, Michael Cowan (eds.), <i>The Promise of Cinema. German Film Theory 1907-1933</i> (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016), pp. 420-421.</li> <li>J.B., 'Expressionism in Film: The New Art in Film' [1920], in <i>ibid.</i>, pp. 422-424.</li> <li>Ernst Angel, 'An "Expressionist" Film' [1920], in <i>ibid.</i>, pp. 424-426.</li> <li>Robert Wiene, 'Expressionism in Film' [1922], in <i>ibid.</i>, pp. 436-438.</li> <li>Walter Reimann, 'An Afterword to Caligari' [1925], in <i>ibid.</i>, pp. 438-440.</li> <li>Rudolf Kurtz, 'Limits of Expressionist Film' [1926], in <i>ibid.</i>, pp. 440-442.</li> <li>David Robinson, <i>Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari</i> [1997] (London et al: Bloomsbury, 2019).</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Viewing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI (1919/20, dir. Robert Wiene, 71 Min.) <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-lfEp5t2FIE">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-lfEp5t2FIE</a></li> </ul>
<b>Session 4</b>	<p><b>Topic: The Invention of the ‘Unchained Camera’ and Subjective Realism</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marc Silberman, ‘The Modernist Camera and Cinema Illusion: Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau’s The Last Laugh’, from <i>German Cinema: Texts in Context</i> (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), pp. 19-33.</li> <li>• Siegfried Kracauer, ‘Mute Chaos’, from <i>From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film</i> (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1947), pp. 96-106.</li> <li>• F.W. Murnau, ‘The Ideal Picture Needs No Titles: By Its Very Nature the Art of the Screen Should tell a Complete Story Pictorially’ [1928], in Richard W. McCormack, Alison Guenther-Pal (eds.), <i>German Essays on Film</i> (New York and London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 66-68.</li> <li>• Robert Herlth, ‘With Murnau on the Set’ [1973], in Laurence Kardish (ed.), <i>Weimar Cinema 1919-1933: Daydreams and Nightmares</i> (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2010).</li> </ul> <p><b>Viewing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• THE LAST LAUGH (1924, dir. Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, 90 Min.) <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cC6Tfwfr67g">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cC6Tfwfr67g</a></li> </ul>
<b>Session 5</b>	<p><b>Topic: New Objectivity and Montage Cinema</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Siegfried Kracauer, ‘Montage’, from <i>From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film</i> (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1947), pp. 181-189</li> <li>• Walter Ruttmann, ‘How I made my Berlin Film’ [1927], in Anton Kaes, Nicholas Baer, Michael Cowan (eds.), <i>The Promise of Cinema. German Film Theory 1907-1933</i> (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016), pp. 463-4.</li> </ul> <p><b>Deadline: Independent Project Report</b></p> <p><b>Viewing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PEOPLE ON SUNDAY (1930, dir. Robert Siodmak, Edgar G. Ulmer, 74 Min.)</li> <li>• Excerpts from: BERLIN – SYMPHONY OF A BIG CITY (1927, dir. Walter Ruttmann, 65 Min.) <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MBCGTP3egbc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MBCGTP3egbc</a> (historical score by Edmund Meisel)</li> </ul>
<b>Session 6</b> <b>13 October</b>	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>
<b>Session 7</b>	<p><b>Topic: Ufa, The Coming of Sound and the Star System</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S.S. Praver, <i>The Blue Angel (Der blaue Engel)</i> (London: BFI Publishing, 2002), pp. 10-76.</li> <li>• Elsa Herrmann, ‘This is the New Woman’ [1929], in Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, Edward Dimdenberg (eds.), <i>The Weimar Republic Source Book</i> (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 206-208.</li> </ul> <p><b>Viewing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• THE BLUE ANGEL (1930, dir. Josef von Sternberg, 106 Min.) <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sdww58D6rhc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sdww58D6rhc</a></li> </ul>

Session 8 & 9	<p><b>Double Session: Guided Excursion in Berlin Mitte</b></p> <p><b>Meeting Point:</b> tba <b>Time:</b> tba</p>
Session 10	<p><b>Topic: The Urban Thriller</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anton Kaes, M [2001] (London et al: Bloomsbury, 2021).</li> <li>• Interview with Fritz Lang about M [1963], in Laurence Kardish (ed.): <i>Weimar Cinema 1919-1933: Daydreams and Nightmares</i> (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2010), p. 188.</li> <li>• Gabriele Tergit: 'Fritz Lang's M. Filmed Sadism' [1931], in Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, Edward Dimdenberg (eds.), <i>The Weimar Republic Source Book</i> (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 632-633.</li> </ul> <p><b>Viewing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M (1931, dir. Fritz Lang, 105 Min.) <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q_JU10cYLVQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q_JU10cYLVQ</a></li> </ul>
Session 11	<p><b>Topic: The Youth Film from Communism to Nazism</b></p> <p><b>Reading:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marc Silberman, 'Whose Revolution? The Subject of Kuhle Wampe (1932)', in Noah Isenberg (ed.), <i>Weimar Cinema. An Essential Guide to the Classic Films of the Era</i> (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), pp. 311-330.</li> <li>• Eric Rentschler, 'Emotional Engineering: Hitler Youth Quex (1933)', in <i>The Ministry of Illusion: Nazi Cinema and its Afterlife</i> ((Cambridge, Mass., London: Harvard UP 1996), pp. 53-69.</li> </ul> <p><b>Viewing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excerpts from: Kuhle Wampe, or: Who Owns the World? (1932, dir. Slatan Dudow, 71 Min.)</li> <li>• Hitler Youth Quex (1933, d. Hans Steinhoff, 95 Min.) <a href="https://archive.org/details/hitlerjunge-quex">https://archive.org/details/hitlerjunge-quex</a></li> </ul>
Session 12	<p><b>Topic: Propaganda and the Avant-garde</b></p> <p><b>Reading:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julian Petley, 'Film Policy in the Third Reich', in Tim Bergfelder, Erica Carter and Deniz Göktürk (eds.), <i>The German Cinema Book</i> (London: British Film Institute, 2002), pp. 173-181.</li> <li>• Eric Rentschler, 'Germany: Nazism and After', in Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (ed), <i>The Oxford History of World Cinema</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 374</li> </ul> <p><b>Viewing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• THE TRIUMPH OF THE WILL (1935, dir. Leni Riefenstahl, 105 Min.). <a href="https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6uajey">https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6uajey</a></li> </ul>
Session 13	<p><b>FINAL EXAM</b></p>