Dr. Agnes C. Mueller

Syllabus for Spring 2009:

GERM 780 / CPLT 750N:

Anti-Semitism in Contemporary German Literature and Film

This course investigates representations of anti-Semitism in contemporary German literature and film. WWII and the Holocaust essentially rendered any post-1945 anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria taboo. However, sociological studies show that anti-Semitism in Germany has, especially since unification, been on the rise again. If we read film and literature as cultural artifacts that indicate trends and currents in societies, we must carefully investigate why and how such anti-Semitic utterances and trajectories are produced, transmitted, and received. We also need to think about how we might respond, and what kinds of traditions of anti-Semitism (anti-Zionism, Islamic prejudices, German right-wing, or German guilt rejection) are represented. Students will analyze works by German non-Jewish and German Jewish writers and filmmakers, asking whether and how their works might display (involuntary) contemporary German anti-Semitism, and examine how German and German Jewish works address anti-Semitism of the past and present.

Learning Outcomes:
At the end of the course, students will be able to:
- demonstrate critical thinking about current issues in contemporary Germany (as represented in culture, history, literature)
- synthesize content from recent, cutting edge secondary sources dealing with anti-Semitism
- present materials orally and in writing concerning the themes they chose
- closely analyze contemporary texts in a foreign language, as well as current responses to those texts by renowned critics
- demonstrate their oral and writing skills in both German and English languages (depending on which their non-native language is)

Please note: While knowledge of German is not required for the course, some of the secondary materials are only available in German. Students with no reading knowledge in German must contact the professor well in advance to receive information on possible substitutes.

Primary Texts:

Peter Schneider: *Eduards Homecoming* (1999)
Günter Grass: *The Tin Drum.* (1959)
Katharina Hacker: *The Have-Not*s (2006)
Barbara Honigmann: *A Love Made of Nothing and Zohara’s Journey*
Viola Roggenkamp: *The Spectacle Salesman’s Family*.

**Films:**
Jakob the Liar (1975 and 1999)
The Nasty Girl (1988)
Der Untergang (Downfall), 2004
Die Fälscher (The Counterfitters), 2007
Mein Führer (2007)

**Secondary Texts (MANDATORY):**

**Requirements:**
Attendance & active participation  30 %
Oral Presentation  20 %
Response Paper  15 %
Research Paper  30 %
Course Record  5 %

**Oral Presentation:**
You will be asked to give an oral presentation on one of the topics listed below, or on a topic of your choice that you have discussed with me. In any case, please discuss your presentation with me in my office hours. They should be at least 40 minutes, and incorporate current scholarship. Also, you should be prepared to respond to questions for about 15 minutes after your presentation, so please also think of a way to stimulate a discussion after your talk.

**Response Paper:**
You should write a personalized response to one of the mandatory texts. I would like your response paper to be on a different text/theme from your Oral Report or Research Paper, and it should be about 5-8 pages long. You may incorporate current scholarship if you wish, but this is not a requirement here. It is due as soon as you have read the work it concerns, but at the latest on the day we discuss the work in class, i.e. you may not turn in a personal response paper after we already discussed the work in class. **I do not want any plot summaries in response papers, rather you should choose a theme or subject matter pertaining to the work of your choice.**

**Research Paper:**
I would like for you to turn in a fully-fledged research paper, which can be based on your presentation, but may also be on another reading/topic of the course (if you do not find your presentation yielding enough material to write on). Obviously, your research paper should go well beyond your findings in the presentation, and I expect you to use your classmates' ideas in the Q&A to develop your thesis (this of course also means that everyone has a responsibility to come up with helpful remarks/questions after the presentations!). If you are unsure about research methods in general, please ask about them in class, and if you have more specific questions concerning your paper, please talk to me. **Your research paper is due on the last day of classes, and I do not accept late papers**, so please get started early on. Your paper should be around 15-20 pages, double-spaced, with bibliography.

**Course Record:**
Everyone should write a fairly detailed report/overview of one class period. Obviously, this should not be the class period where you are also giving the presentation. The CR is due on the Monday before the next class meeting, and will be photocopied by me for everyone. Please sign up early on for your CR.

**Bibliography:**


Donahue, William Collins, “‘Revising ’68: Bernhard Schlink’s *Der Vorleser*, Peter Schneider’s *Vati*, and the Question of History,” *Seminar* 40.3 (September 2004): 293-311.


Fuchs, Anke, “Towards an Ethics of Remembering: The Walser-Bubis Debate and the Other of Discourse”, *German Quarterly* 75.3 (Summer 2002): 235-46.


Metz, Joseph, “‘Truth is a Woman’: Post-Holocaust Narrative, Postmodernism, and the Gender of Fascism in Der Vorleser,” German Quarterly 77.3 (Summer 2004): 300-323.


