This seminar addresses German-speaking exile literature from 1933 to 1950. On the basis of historical and political contextualization, readings and discussions will focus on literary theoretical and discourse analytical questions. In contrast to Nazi ideology and its totalitarian claim to constitute “Germanness,” numerous émigrés intended to represent the “other” Germany from outside its national borders. This politicization of exile discourse which made “direct” critical involvement with the regime appear imperative had a lasting effect on literature written in exile. The leitmotif of our analysis will be the question to what extent exile literature developed its critical reflection towards a specific aesthetics of exile; an aesthetics that articulates the reference to the historical-political situation, to Nazi Germany, expulsion, loss of language, dislocation and cultural transfer in form of a critique of representation. We will discuss topics such as the conceptualization of (German) tradition/transference, languages of (non-)identity, theories of (anti-)mimesis, discourse politics and aesthetics, or Avant-garde and exile. Authors include, among others, Karl Krauss, Thomas Mann, Irmgard Keun, Else Lasker-Schüler, Hannah Arendt, Adorno, Benjamin, Brecht, Lukács, Anna Seghers, Auerbach, Améry, Blanchot.
The concept of the “people” is so politically charged that for at least a generation, research into premodern European vernacular or unofficial cultures has been paralyzed. This course aims to convert this impasse into an opportunity, reopening the dossiers of folklore, folk literature, folk religion, and folk art. The technologized mass culture enveloping our lives today, as well as the virulent new modes of political populism, are the inevitable frameworks of this investigation. The course will have several objects of study: antiquarian and proto-scholarly study of popular customs and literary forms, for example the collecting of proverbs or fairy tales already in the sixteenth century; the establishment in the nineteenth century of the "wisdom" of the people, or "folklore," as an object of systematic scholarly study as well as the museological enshrinement of material popular culture; and the twentieth-century theoretical discourses on folk or popular cultures, and the entanglement of those discourses with the mass media and with nationalist politics. Among twentieth-century theorists and historians we will read Riegl, van Gennep, Benjamin, Bakhtin, Propp, Auerbach, Löwenthal, Ginzburg, Davis, Blumenberg, Foucault, Certeau, Anderson, Rancière, Didi-Huberman
What it means to be stunned, stumped, subjected to and constituted by the death drive and its aggressive aggregates. We shall take a close look at psychoanalysis, philosophy, literary works, and stories of addiction that depend on traumatic eventfulness for their articulation. Readings involve Kleist, Rilke, Freud, Duras, Lacan, Cixous, Derrida, James Baldwin, Celan, Phillis Wheatley.
GERM GA-2222: TOPICS IN 20TH CENTURY GERMAN CULTURE:

FREUD AND THE CINEMATIC IMAGINATION

Taught by Global Distinguished Professor:

ELISABETH BRONFEN | R 2:00-4:45p | 2 CREDITS | FALL 2021 | IN ENGLISH

From the onset, the dream factory cinema drew into focus the proximity between this new medium and psychoanalysis. The aim of this block seminar is to explore how a set of articulations of the unconscious—be it dreamwork, neurotic and psychotic symptoms or trauma—have not only inspired screenplays but can, in themselves, be reconceived in cinematic terms. To do so we will engage in close readings of Freud's writings, including his Interpretation of Dreams, his Studies in Hysteria, his essays on the work of fiction and the uncanny, as well as his speculation on the death drive. By way of crossmapping, we will bring these texts into conversation with a set of psychoanalytically influenced films, including G.W. Pabst's Secrets of a Soul, Ernst Lubitsch's The Doll and Alfred Hitchcock's Marnie.
THE TIME IT TAKES: FROM NOVEL TO FILM

MIEKE BAL, GLOBAL DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR
TH 2:00-4:45p | FALL 2021, OCT-NOV, 2 CREDITS | IN ENGLISH

In this seminar we will explore temporality as the backbone of history, but not in the traditional, chronological way. Instead, we will examine the possibilities of a temporality that is not linear but moves in different directions, starting from the present. During the four weeks we will closely read selected chapters from three novels, in view of their potential for transmedialization into visual, or audiovisual, texts: Madame Bovary, Don Quijote, and Train to Trieste. Each novel lends itself to reading with a contemporary slant that we will take as primary in view of making a “preposterous” connection between present and past. Each has been or will be audiovisualized: the first one into a feature film, alternatively shown with photographs as installations; the second consists of installations only, and the third will be a feature film only. For the latter we will be able to read the script based on the novel, written by someone else, not connected to my own projects. The question of time will be studied in view of order, sequence, chronology, preposterousness, duration; and rhythm.
Creating Reality From A Writer’s Point of View

In writing, you have to use reality-tricks sometimes to prevent an imaginary world from collapsing. Elsewhere it may be necessary to fiddle with fiction at some point to keep a report trustworthy. Throughout literary history masters of both worlds seem to focus on black holes within narratives rather than clinging to the fiction/non-fiction-dilemma. Fiction and non-fiction might not be separate genres but murky siblings, mimicking each other to great effect. Readings include, among others, Heinrich von Kleist’s »The Earthquake in Chile«, extracts from Stendhal’s autobiography »The Life of Henry Brulard«, as well as stories by Georges Perec, Joan Didion, and Alexander Kluge.

Marcel Beyer,
DAAD Visiting Professor

FALL 2021

- GERM-GA2223
- T 2:00 - 4:45P

- Course Meets Oct - Nov
- ★ 2 credits
- Taught in English