This class is seven weeks, so I have added 5 minutes to each class. If you have to leave earlier, please do so.

Dancing On The Volcano:
Weimar Berlin’s Avant-Garde Culture in the Golden Twenties

Syllabus

During the Weimar Period (1918-1933) Berlin was the most cosmopolitan city in Europe, the first city in the world to become a modern metropolis. In order to experience the stimulating, experimental and avant-garde cultural mix that defined Weimar Berlin, we will immerse ourselves in its painting, sculpture, architecture, film, photography, music, theater, dance, performances, cabarets, sexology and degenerate nightlife; so we can fully understand this new international modernity in a metropolis that became a “creative cauldron” filled with nationalities from all over Europe.

But at the same time Berlin was a city where decadence, corruption, fear, hyperinflation, and turbulence flourished. In a battlefield between Fascism and Communism its experiment in liberal democracy was doomed, thus leading to the deluge that would engulf Europe and finally the world.

During this class we will meet such brilliant and talented individuals as: George Grosz, Max Beckmann (painting), Wilhelm Lembruck (sculpture), George Gropius, Mies van der Rohe (architecture), Fritz Lang, Marlene Dietrich, Louise Brooks (film), Mary Wigman (dance), Kurt Weill, Alban Berg (music), Max Reinhardt, Bertholt Brecht
(theater), Anita Berber, Claire Waldoff (cabaret).

All of these avant-garde cultural developments will be explored before the city “dancing on the volcano” would descend in 1933 into the horrors of the Nazi years, and a very special moment in twentieth century cultural history would disappear forever.

Finally, we will look at the way in which this world and time have “imprinted” themselves on the American mind by tracing the evolution of Christopher Isherwood’s Berlin Stories and its fascinating heroine, Sally Bowles, as we follow her from the stories, onto the stage, film and then the musical, Cabaret.

At the end of the musical, Cabaret, the hero, Clifford Bradshaw says, “There was a Cabaret and there was a Master-of-Ceremonies and there was a city called Berlin in a country called Germany. It was the end of the world and “I was dancing with Sally Bowles and we were both fast asleep..........”

The course will include handouts, numerous visual images, musical selections, a bibliography, and suggested readings.

ALL OF THE FILMS (SUGGESTED VIEWINGS) CAN BE FOUND ON YouTube. It appears that the world can be found on YouTube!!!!

In the weekly breakdown below, class participants are encouraged to watch the suggested VIEWINGS for each session before or after the class meets.

For example, the film “Die Sinfonie der Grosstadt” (“Berlin, Symphony of a Great City, Ruttman, 1927) should be viewed AFTER the first class meeting

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Week 1- Monday, January 7

Introduction: class information, syllabus, handouts, and comments on film viewings.

Defining the Weimar Period
Although the Weimar Period lasted for only 15 years, there are three major phases of about five years each: they are different, and these differences should be kept in mind.

Turbulent Phase: (1918-1923).
After the end of WW I there was a period of political chaos and extremely high inflation. In 1923 the inflation problem was resolved.

Relative Stabilization Phase of the “Golden Twenties”: (1924-1929).
This brief period is the time that we can refer to as the “Golden Twenties”. The term the “New Objectivity” is also used in regard to the arts.

Crisis and Collapse: (1929-1933). Hitler would take over in January of 1933.
With the world wide financial crisis of the “Great Depression” and resulting high unemployment, the Nazi’s would completely take over and the years of horror would follow.

I would now like to show you a series of visual images that partly capture the Weimar years. You can think of this as a brief overview, an introduction.

Expressionism in the Arts Defined
Artists:
Ludwig Kirchner: Self Portrait and Self Portrait as a Soldier, Friedericichstrasse, Potsdamer Platz, the Brandenburg Gate.
Kathe Kollwitz: Photo and Self Portrait, Karl Liebknecht Memorial, The Survivors, Dead Child, Pieta.
Max Beckmann: Photo and Self Portrait with a Champagne Glass, Descent From the Cross, Dance in Baden-Baden, Night, The Dream, The Lion Tamer, The Departure.

**Viewing**

“Die Sinfonie der Grosstadt” “Berlin, symphony of a Great City”), Walter Ruttmann, 1927. If you have not seen this film please do so. It gives you a complete overview of Berlin during this period, and it is a perfect representation of the art of Montage.

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**Week 2- Monday, January 14**

Expressionism (continued), Dada, Sculpture, Architecture (Expressionism and Modernism), Painting (“New Objectivity”---Neue Sachlichkeit), Photography (Abstraction and Formalism), Photomontage.

**Expressionism---Painting**

**Artist:**
Dada in Berlin

Artists:
Otto Dix, Raoul Haussmann, Hannah Hoch, Johannes Baeder, John Heartfield, George Grosz. (I have included them as a group).

Sculpture

Sculptors:
Ludwig Kirchner: Standing Woman, Woman Lying Down.
Wilhelm Lembruck: Fallen Man, Ascending Youth---Standing Youth.
Ernst Barlach: Man In Stocks, Man With Sword.

Sculptural Variations

Sculptors:
Hans Arp: Shirt and Fork, Relief.
Kurt Schwitters: Merz/Kijkduin, Merz Bau (Room Transformations).
Raoul Hausmann: Mechanical Head.
Rudolf Belling: Sculpture 23.
Naum Gabo: Constructed Head, Saule (Column or Pillar).

Expressionism in Architecture

Architects:
Eric Mendelsohn: Einstein Tower.
Walter Gropius: Monument to The March Dead.
Ernst and Gunther Paulus: Kreuzkirche.
Franz Schwechten: Haus Vaterland.

I have included here a set design for the film “Metropolis”, but we will discuss the film in detail later.

Hans Poelzig: Grosses Schauspielhaus.

A design for the film “The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari”. This film will be discussed in detail.

Architectural Modernism

Architects:
George Bauer and Siegfried Friedlander: Soho House.
Peter Behrens: AEG Turbine Factory.
Eric Mendelsohn and Richard Neutra: Mossehaus, Universum Cinema.
Philip Schafer: Department Store (Karstadt).
Bruno Taut and Martin Wagner: Horseshoe Estate.

New Objectivity In Painting

Artists:
Otto Dix: Sylvia von Harden and a photograph by August Sander.
Christian Schad: Count St. Genois d’Anneaucourt, Self Portrait, Sonja, Lotte or The Berliner.
George Grosz: The Art Dealer, “Alfred Flechtheim”.
Otto Dix: Dr. Hans Koch and Dr. Meyer-Hermann.
Rudolf Schlichter: Margot.

Photography, Photo Abstractions and Formalism, Photomontage
Photographers:
**August Sander:** People of the Twentieth Century, Pastry Cook, Coalman, Young Farmers, the Wife of Peter Abeles.
**Karl Blossfeldt and Albert Renger-Patzsch:** Plant and Glasses, Shoe Making Irons, Factory Chimneys.

Artists:
**Raoul Haussman:** Dada Siegt, Tatlin at Home.
**Hannah Hoch:** The Beautiful Girl, Da Dandy.
**John Heartfield:** Dove of Peace, Hurrah, The Butter Is All, German Oak Tree, Hitler Is Sharpening His Knife, Don’t Be Afraid, Hitler Is a Vegetarian, Adolf; The Superman, Kaiser Adolf.

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Week 3- Monday, January 21
There will be no class on this day, because it is Martin Luther King Day, a holiday. We will make up the time on March 4th.

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Week 4- Monday, January 28

Architects/Designers:
**Mies van der Rohe:** Two Skyscraper Models.
**Eric Mendelsohn:** Villa Sternefeld, Barcelona Chair.
**Walter Gropius:** Sommerfeld Villa, Chicago Tribune Tower, Bauhaus Theater Interior.
**George Muche** and others, Adolf Meyer, Walter Gropius
**Henry van de Velde:** Haus Am Horn.
**Bauhaus Designers:**
**Marcel Breuer:** Haus Am Horn (furniture), Tubular Chair, Dressing Table, Wassliy chair.

**Bauhaus Photo:** Among the group are: Anni and Joseph Albers, Breuer, Gabo, Feininger, Itten, Kandinsky, Moholy-Nagy, Mondrian, and Schlemmer.

**Wilhelm Wagenfield:** Table Lamp.
**Marianne Brandt:** Tea or Coffee Service, Silver Tea Infuser.
**Christian Dell:** Wine Jug.
**Laslo Moholy-Nagy:** Light Prop for an Electric Stage, Typography and Graphics.
**Anni albers:** Weavings, Textiles, Wall Hangings.
**Gunta Stozl:** Weavings.
**Herbert Bayer:** Typography.
**Joost Schmidt:** Typography.

**Bauhaus Stage Workshop**

**Designer/Director:**
**Oscar Schlemmer:** Sculptor, Theatrical Concepts, “The Triadic Ballet” (1922) and “Dance of Sticks” (1928).

**The Beginnings of Film in Berlin**
Preceded by an “archaic period” (1895-1918), the period of Expressionist films extends from 1919-1925; followed by New Objectivity in Mid-Twenties films.

**Expressionism and Other Developments in Weimar Films**

**Babelsberg and Neu-Babelsberg:** The Glass House, UFA Studios Complex.

**Movie Theaters:** UFA Theaters, Gloria-Filmpalast.

New Objectivity in Mid-Twenties Films


VIEWINGS:


“Metropolis” (“Metropolis Restored”), Fritz Lang, 1926.


Week 5- Monday, February 4


Actresses:
Marlene Dietrich: “The Blue Angel” (1930).

Actor:
“Lustmord” and the film “M”.

**Peter Kurten:** Serial Killer.
**Otto Dix:** Sex Murderer: Self-Portrait, Sexual Murder, Dream of the Female Sadist II, Lustmord, Scene II.
**George Grosz:** John, the Lady-Killer.
**Rudolf Schlechter:** Lustmord.

**Actor:**
**Peter Lorre:** “M” (1931).

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**Classical and Expressionistic Theater**

**Directors:**
**Leopold Jessner:** “Othello” (1921).

**VIEWINGS:**

“Die Buchse der Pandora” (“Pandora’s Box”), G. W. Pabst, 1929.


“M”, Fritz Lang, 1931.

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**Week 6- Monday, February 11**

Theater (Continued), Dance And Music: Opera, Popular,
Jazz

Theater

**Directors:**
**Leopold Jessner:** “Richard III” (1920).

**Designer:**
**Traugott Muller:** “Hurrah We Live” (1927).

**Architect:**
**Walter Gropius:** Total Theater.

Topical Theater

**Plays:**
“Cyankali” (“Cyanide”, 1929).

Music and Dance: Opera, Popular, Jazz

**Musical Libretto:**
**Bertolt Brecht:** “The Three Penny Opera” (1928).

**Music:**
**Kurt Weill:** “The Three Penny Opera” (1928).

Dance

**Choreographer:**
Rudolf von Laban: Laban Notation

Choreographer/Dancer:
Mary Wigman: “Witches Dance” (1926).
Kurt Jooss: “The Green Table” (1932).

Music: Opera, Popular, Jazz

Opera House:
The Kroll Opera house. It went through many transformations over the years and was destroyed in WW II.

Productions In Berlin: Included are productions at other locations.
Bertolt Brecht: “The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny” (1930).

Jazz opera


Black Performers and Productions

Weintraub’s Syncopators:
Sam Wooding and His Orchestra:
Chocolate Kiddies:
VIEWINGS:

“Die Dreigroschenopera” (“The Three-Penny Opera”), G. W. Pabst, 1931.

“Hexentanz” (“Witch Dance”), Mary Wigman, 1926.

“The Green Table”, Kurt Jooss, 1932.


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Week 7 - Monday, February 18

There will be no class this day, because it is President’s Day, a holiday. We will make up the time on March 4th.

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Week 8 - Monday, February 25

Cabarets, Revues, and Performers
Nightlife and Sexuality

Performers:
Grit and Ina van Elben: “Tingel-Tangel Girls”.
Trude Hesterberg: The Wild Stage.
Claire Waldoff: The Wild Stage.
Margo Lion: The Wild Stage.
Bertold Brecht: The Wild Stage.
Valeska Gert: “Grotesque Dance”, “Japanese Dance”. She also appeared with Greta Garbo in “The Joyless Street”.
Karl Valentin: “Now the World Laughs”.
Kurt Tucholsky (pseudonym, Theobold Tiger).
Margo Lion: “The Three Penny Opera”.
Marlene Dietrich: “The Best Girl Friends” sung with Margo Lion.
Celly de Rheidt: Nude Dancing.

Cabarets

Cabarets:
Max Reinhardt’s Schall und Rauch (Sound and Smoke Cabaret (1919).
The Wild Stage.

Nightlife and Sexuality

Sexual Research/Guides:
Magnus Hirshfeld: The Institute of Sex Research Villa, “The Lesbians of Berlin” (1928).

Paintings

Artists:
Alexander Szekely: Scene from a German Brothel in Ghent.
Lutz Ehrenberger: At the Nightclub Heaven and Hell.
Fritz Burger: Off the Track.

Gay and Lesbian Bars:
Café Domino
The Eldorado
The Silhouette Bar

Film

Poster: “Laster” (“Vice”): Kokain, Opium Morphium.

Handout: Types of Cabarets

VIEWING:

“Berlin; Metropolis of Vice” (Episode 2, 2005).

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Week 9- Monday, March 4 (Make-up date)

“Cabaret” And Weimar In Perspective

The Rebirth of “Cabaret” and the Sally Bowles Figure and Legend.

Writers/Poets:
Christopher Isherwood: “The Berlin Stories” (“Mr. Norris Changes Trains” and “Goodbye To Berlin”). The second part is the main focus for the story, “Christopher and His Kind”.
Stephen Spender: Christopher’s Berlin friend.
W. H. Auden: Christopher’s Berlin friend.

Original Sally Bowles: Jean Ross.

Performers:
Sally Bowles: Julie Harris, “I Am A Camera” (1952).
   The cast also included: Lawrence Harvey, and Shelley Winters.
Sally Bowles: Jill Haworth in the original film musical “Cabaret” (1966).
Sally Bowles: Liza Minnelli, film musical of “Cabaret” (1972).
   The film also included Michael York, Helmut Griem, Marisa Berenson and Joel Grey.
Joel Grey: Musical “Cabaret”: Stage and Film.


Director/Choreographer:
There have been many revivals of the musical. Among these was the 2014 production with Alan Cummings and Emma Stone.

Stage Designer: Boris Aronson

Weimar in Perspective
Defining Weimar:
Modernism, Cosmopolitism, Internationalism, Experimentation, Americanization.

Weimar topics:
Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Photomontage, New Photography, Typography, Film, Theater, Dance, Music (Opera, Popular, Jazz, Experimental), Cabarets, Nightlife, Sexuality, “New Woman”, Berlin “Myths”.
Exiles:
This is just a partial list of those who were connected to the Weimar Period and who fled the Nazis.

VIEWINGS:

“I am a Camera”, 1952 (Julie Harris):

“Cabaret”, 1972 (Liza Minnelli):

“Cabaret”, 2014 on Broadway (Alan Cummings):

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Bibliography

The bibliography for Berlin is very extensive, so I have given you a short list of some main books that could be of interest. If you have other particular interests, please contact me.

The section is divided into two parts: Fiction and Non-fiction.

Fiction

Garebian, Kieth, *The Making of Cabaret* (2nd edition), 2011. Although this deals with the production, the material is fictional.


Isherwood, Christopher, *Christopher and His Kind* (1996).


**Non-fiction**

This part contains both general and some very specific works. If you want more book titles on other specific topics, please let me know.


Bayer, Herbert (ed.), *Bauhaus: 1919-1928* (1990)


If you would like to read a book on the period I might suggest the following:

Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider As Insider*.

John Willett, *Art and Politics In the Weimar Period: The New Sobriety*.

Eric Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy*. 