CIEE Berlin, Germany

Course title: Reinventing Berlin's Economy after the Fall of the Wall
Course code: ECON 3001 BRGE / BUSI 3006 BRGE
Programs offering course: Global Architecture and Design, Berlin Open Campus Block
Open Campus Track: Business
Language of instruction: English
U.S. semester credits: 3.00
Contact hours: 45.00
Term: Fall Block II 2020

Course Description

This course introduces students to the highly dynamic economic transformation of the city of Berlin since the fall of the Iron Curtain. As former mayor Klaus Wowereit indicated through his now infamous description of his city as "poor, but sexy," Berlin has tried to turn its weakness (i.e., lack of financial capital) into a strength (i.e., wealth of cultural capital) by focusing heavily on "creative industries," tourism, and its world-famous club and art scenes. This course is designed to understand this transformation in all its economic and cultural ramifications: from the vibrant start-up culture and precarious employment patterns to the city's rapid growth and discontent with gentrification.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- Develop an understanding of the actors, forces, and debates shaping Berlin's economic, social, and cultural transformation since the fall of the Berlin Wall.
- Analyze and integrate critical perspectives to construct persuasive arguments about urban development policies.
- Deconstruct concepts and debates central to urban studies, such as the global city, the creative class, gentrification, marketing of the city, and the concept of the “right to the city.”
- Argue and defend, in speech and writing, viewpoints related to these concepts.

Course Prerequisites

None

Methods of Instruction

This course is taught through lecture, student presentations and in-class discussion, enhanced by site visits. Berlin has re-entered the global stage as the "poor but sexy" capital of Germany. But what exactly makes Berlin distinct? Which are the historic factors and contemporary social forces that lend the city its character? How can we systematically describe and analyze the urban fabric we see around us? More specifically, how does Berlin fare in the global competition for human, cultural and investment capital? And what consequences does participating in this competition have upon Berliners, old and new, the city, its infrastructure and natural environment? In this course, we will develop sustained answers to these questions with a specific focus on Berlin's economic development after the fall of the Wall.

Assessment and Final Grade

1. Response Paper I 15%
2. Response Paper II 15%
3. Mid-Term Exam 25%
4. Final Exam 25%
5. Participation 20%
TOTAL 100%
Course Requirements

Response Paper I
Response Paper II

Twice during the course, you will submit 1,200-word response papers engaging with specific questions detailed below.

Mid-Term Exam
Final Exam

Twice during the course, you will be asked to sit an in-class quiz to test your familiarity with the readings, knowledge of core concepts covered in class, reading comprehension and critical analysis skills.

Participation

Participation is valued as meaningful contribution in the digital and tangible classroom, utilizing the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared in advance of each class session and to have regular attendance. Students must clearly demonstrate they have engaged with the materials as directed, for example, through classroom discussions, online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after presentations), interaction with guest speakers, and attentiveness on co-curricular and outside-of-classroom activities.

Attendance

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and all absences will result in a lower participation grade for any affected CIEE course. Due to the intensive schedules for Open Campus and Short Term programs, absences that constitute more than 10% of the total course will result in a written warning.

Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.

For CIEE classes, excessively tardy (over 15 minutes late) students must be marked absent.

Attendance policies also apply to any required co-curricular class excursion or event, as well as to any required field placement. Students may not miss placement/work hours at an internship or service learning site unless approved in advance by the Academic Director and placement supervisor. All students must complete all of the requisite 100 minimum work hours on site at the internship or service learning placement to be eligible for academic credit.

Students who miss class for personal travel, including unforeseen delays that arise as a result of personal travel, will be marked as absent. No make-up or re-sit opportunity will be provided.

Attendance policies also apply to any required class excursion, with the exception that some class excursions cannot accommodate any tardiness, and students risk being marked as absent if they fail to be present at the appointed time.

Absences for classes will lead to the following penalties:
Weekly Schedule

**Week 1**

**Class: 1.1 Introduction to the Course**

Provides a survey of the course as well as guidelines for effectively reading and working with scholarly resources expected in this seminar.

Reading exercise: How to read for argument

**Section I Reunification and Metropolitan Ambitions in the 90s**

**Week 2**

**Class: 2.1 Reunification**

This session looks at the specifics of German reunification as an inherently uneven process of integration between East and West, and its lasting consequences for the urban economy of Berlin in the early 1990s.

Reading:


**Class: 2.2 Building the New Capital**

In this session we look more closely at one of the largest redevelopment projects undertaken in reunified Berlin — the reconstruction of Potsdamer Platz. Designed by policy-makers and developers to position Berlin as a business-friendly and capital-worthy service metropolis, the new face of the square has not remained without controversy and contestation.

Reading:


**Class: 2.3 Site Visit to Potsdamer Platz**
We take a walk through Potsdamer Platz recording, visually and in writing, the old and the new, sights of loss (disappearance, displacement, memorialization, nostalgia, etc.) and sights of change (urban renewal, progress, etc.). Is history always written by the winners?

Section II “Poor but Sexy”: Marketing the Creative City

Week 3
Class: 3.1 The Creative Class and The Creative City

We review the changing role of the city from the industrial to the post-industrial economy and focus especially on Richard Florida’s seminar terms — the creative class and the creative city — for shaping the most significant urban planning approaches of the 21st century.

Reading:
Sean Andrew Chen. “Questioning the Cult of the Creative Class.” Next City, 26 June 2012.

Response Paper Due:
In an essay of 1,200 words, describe your experiences and impressions walking in Potsdamer Platz drawing the concepts and approaches we learned during the first two weeks of the course. Merge personal experience with an analysis of the readings! Has Berlin lived up to its metropolitan ambitions from the 90s? At what cost? How do you personally appreciate the development of Potsdamer Platz into its current form?

Class: 3.2 Branding Berlin

This session surveys the various efforts the city of Berlin has made to position itself globally as a creative hub since the year 2000. It also critically examines the socio-political implications of these branding efforts.

Reading:
Claire Colomb. Staging the New Berlin. “Marketing the Creative City. 2001-2011” (222-66)

Mid-Term Exam:
Covering readings and course material up to and including this date

Week 4
Class: 4.1 Berlin Subcultures and the Commodification of Dissent

In this session we explore the meaning of concepts like subculture and counter-culture, position them within the recent history of the city and try to make sense of what happens to these cultural goods when turned into a brand or commodity.

Reading:


Section III Berlin’s Economic Drivers and Their Critics

Class: 4.2 Start-up Prosperity

Takes a look at the booming startup ecosystem in the city and examines critical arguments brought against precarious employment relations in the field and the contentious relation between digital capitalism and gentrification.

Reading:
Week 5

Class: 5.1 Gentrification and Revanchism

Examines the history and economics of gentrification in Berlin along with theoretical approaches that try to demystify the business-as-usual interpretation of the process and position it as a deliberate and calculated urban strategy.

Reading:


Class: 5.2 Tourism and Hospitality

Looks at one of the most significant growth industries in Berlin, its consequences for the housing market, urban infrastructure and local neighborhoods, approaching tourism as a question of policy making rather than individual preferences and consumer trends.

Reading:


Al-Jazeera interview with Ada Colau: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tLopMK1JCbU

Class: 5.3 Site Visit: Kottbusser Tor & Surroundings

We split into groups of 2-4. In the span on three hours, please visit two of the following three locations: Café Kotti, Südblock and betahaus, representing different poles of the Kottbusser Tor area. Ask yourself: Who are the patrons using these spaces? Try to situate them demographically (age, gender, ethnicity, class and cultural capital). How do they use these spaces? What are they consuming and for what prices? Read the flyers and posters hanging around in these spaces and try to form an opinion about the life-worlds that exist around them. Finally, reflect on the relation of these two places to the surrounding neighborhood and to one another.

Second Response Paper Due

Week 6

Class: 6.1 Discussion of Site Visit and Review

Class: 6.2 Conclusions and Final Test

Final Exam

Covering readings and course material since the midterm

Course Materials

Readings

All primary (excerpts and complete book) and secondary texts will be provided by the instructor. Secondary
literature will be provided as handout in class or on Canvas.

Sources for the presentations can be taken from course materials but should mainly be researched and studied independently. Both, the internet and libraries will provide for sufficient materials.


**Online Resources**


http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/berlin-lays-cornerstone-on-controversial-palace-project-a-905366.html

http://www.humanityinaction.org/knowledgebase/31-stop-gentrification-take-your-right-to-the-city

“Why Startups Are Good for the Economy.”