



Syllabus

Image(s) of the East - A Visual History of the GDR - 54613

Last update 19-02-2021

HU Credits: 2

Responsible Department: Cont. German Studies:politics, Soc.&Cult

Academic year: 0

Semester: 2nd Semester

Teaching Languages: English

Campus: Mt. Scopus

Course/Module Coordinator: Dr. Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann

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Coordinator Office Hours: Monday, 10:00-11:00

Teaching Staff:

Dr. Tobias Ebbrecht Hartmann

Course/Module description:

In recent years visual history became a new and vivid discipline within the field of contemporary history. As a result of the increasing importance of visual and audiovisual media during the 20th century and after decades of debates if and how visual sources might be used for and included into historical research contemporary history is today, according to historian Gerhard Paul, "in essence historiography of media society". Evidently also the history of the GDR is to a large extent a visual history. The ideological contest between the two Germanys was notably also fought within the sphere of visual media. GDR officials had been aware of the power of images in making and shaping the perception of the socialist state and society. Film and television as well as news photography were highly contested and controlled sectors. This led to a dense interplay of the use of visual technologies and their control, even within the semi-official public sphere. The course Image(s) of the East – A Visual History of the GDR explores the history of the East German state through its visual heritage.

Course/Module aims:

- 1.Exploring the history of the GDR through its visual heritage*
- 2.Analyzing political and social life through visual sources*
- 3.Introducing theoretical and methodological implications of visual history*
- 4.Researching a broad variety of visual documents*
- 5.Using online databases and archives for research*

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

- 1.Understanding the complexity of East German history and society*
- 2.Analytical skills to work with visual sources for research purposes*
- 3.Applying methods of visual historiography*
- 4.Using visual sources as research material*
- 5.Managing online resources*

Attendance requirements(%):

80%

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: Based on photographs, films and paintings significant aspects of East German social, political and cultural life will be analyzed. The course introduces the theoretical and methodological implications of visual history as well as visual historiography as interdisciplinary approaches. We utilize collaborative learning tools as well as group work and breakout sessions. Films made in and about the GDR serve as audiovisual sources for practicing visual historiography. Researching a broad variety of visual documents students conduct

group research on specific focus topics (Housing, Stasi, Youth, The Wall) that offer insight into the complex history of the East German state. The research will result in class presentations and blog posts as well as in a research essay on a specific visual source.

Course/Module Content:

PRELIMINARY PROGRAM:

- 1) Introduction: Images of the GDR □ 17 March 2021
- 2) Video Lectures: Visual History and Visual Archeology & The Impact of East German Documentary Films on writing GDR history □ 7 April 2021
- 3) Guest Lecture: Open Memory Box □ 21 April 2021
- 4) Film: Das Haus □ 28 April 2021
- 5) Focus: Housing (Group presentation) □ 5 May 2021
- 6) Film: Radfahrer □ 12 May 2021
- 7) Focus: Stasi (Group presentation) □ 19 May 2021
- 8) Guest Lecture: Photography □ 26 May 2021
- 9) Film: Wozu denn ¼ber diese Leute einen Film □ 2 June 2021
- 10) Focus: Youth (Group presentation) □ 9 June 2021
- 11) Film: Die Mauer □ 16 June 2021
- 12) Focus: The Wall (Group present □ 23 June 2021

Required Reading:

- Crew, D. F. (2009). *Visual Power? The Politics of Images in the Twentieth-Century in Germany and Austria-Hungary*. *German History* 27:2, 271-285.
- Drechsel, B. (2010). *The Berlin wall from a visual perspective: Comments on the construction of a political media icon*. *Visual Communication*, 9:1, 3-24.
- Ebbrecht-Hartmann, T. (2017) □Archives for the Future: Thomas Heise's Visual Archeology□, *Imaginations □ Journal of Cross-Cultural Image Studies* 8:1 (2017) □ Special Issue □New Research on East Germany□ ed. By Marc Silberman (Online: <http://imaginations.csj.ualberta.ca/?p9485>).
- Gaskell, I. (2001). *Visual History*. In: *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*. Ed. by P. Burke. Pennsylvania State Univ. Pr., 187-217.
- Huyssen, A. (2009). □German Painting in the Cold War□, *New German Critique* 37:2, 209-227.
- Paul, G. (2011). *Visual History (english version): Version: 1.0*, Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte, 7.11.2011, Online: http://docupedia.de/zg/Visual_History_.28english_version.29?oldid106489
- Pfautsch, A. (2018). "Documentary Photography from the German Democratic Republic as a Substitute Public." *Humanities* 7, 88. doi:10.3390/h7030088.
- Port, A. (2015). □History from Below, the History of Everyday Life, and Microhistory.□ In: *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* 11, 108-113. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.62156-6>.

Vowinckel, A. (2018). *Photographic Nuisance: Stern Photographers Thomas Höpker and Harald Schmitt in the GDR*. *Journal of Modern European History* 16:1, 126-145.

Additional Reading Material:

A full reading list will be send out at the beginning of the course.

Course/Module evaluation:

End of year written/oral examination 0 %

Presentation 0 %

Participation in Tutorials 0 %

Project work 40 %

Assignments 0 %

Reports 30 %

Research project 30 %

Quizzes 0 %

Other 0 %

Additional information: