

**York University**

**Department of Languages, Literatures and Linguistics**

**GER3640/4640/HUMA3602:  
Women in German Literature and Culture**



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Fall 2016  
W 2:30 – 5:30 pm

Prof. Diana Spokiene  
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**Course description**

This course will explore the rich cultural history of women writers, filmmakers and artists from German-speaking Europe, their roles and identities, and the formation of gender-specific national and intercultural models in literary works and other forms of cultural representation. We will apply various theoretical and critical approaches, ranging from feminist theory, feminist or other literary criticism and social and literary history, in order to establish the historical, sociological and cultural conditions under which these texts were produced and to discuss the particular pressures and concerns to which they represent a response.

**Course Objectives**

- to discuss women's role in German literary and cultural history
- to examine the development of themes and genres in women's works in relation to the literary and cultural discourses at the time of their production
- to explore discursive strategies used by German women in order to define their own identities and lives, both as human beings and as writers and artists, and to investigate if and in what ways their works "deviated" from the (male) traditions

- to question the concept of 'canon' and to analyse both lesser known and marginalized texts
- to investigate German women's contribution to cultural developments and literary and artistic practices in Europe

**Texts** (available from the York University Bookstore)

Elsa Bernstein, *Twilight: A Drama in Five Acts*

Irmgard Keun, *The Artificial Silk Girl*

Yoko Tawada, *Where Europe Begins*

**All other texts** available on the Moodle site.

### **Mark breakdown**

Attendance/ Participation – 10%

Class Presentation and Moderation of Readings – 15%

Response papers (2) – 25%

Essay – 30%

Final Test – 20%

### **Attendance/Participation:**

Regular attendance at all seminars is mandatory. Active class participation includes attendance, preparation of assignments, participation in class discussions. During the class, students are expected to demonstrate that they have read the required texts and are prepared to discuss them in class. Marks will be deducted if students miss more than one class without valid reason.

### **Class presentation:**

There will be one class presentation (approx. 15 minutes long) during the term. As a group project (2 students), you will be asked to open a discussion in class once during the term. You are expected to introduce the text in question, to talk about some issues raised by the text and to prepare a few questions for the discussion. Additional details will be given at the beginning of the term.

### **Response papers:**

During the term, you will be asked to write short response papers to assigned reading questions and to hand in at the end of the meeting in question. These homework assignments are marked on an all-or-nothing basis: i.e. responses of \*reasonable length and quality\* (approximately 2-3 pages) submitted on time receive full points. Students enrolled in German 3640/4640 will be asked to make some German submissions to fulfill their language requirements.

### **Final Test:**

The questions for the final test will be drawn from the readings, lectures, presentations and issues arising during class discussions. In order to do well on the test it is essential to do the readings, to come to each class, to participate in discussions, and to keep up on regular assignments.

**Essay:**

You will be asked to submit one research essay (approximately 8-10 pages, double-spaced) on topics drawn from the course content. More information about possible essay topics will be provided on a separate handout. **Important:** You have to use at least 3 secondary sources, such as book chapters or scholarly journal articles (other than the internet sources), to support your thesis/arguments. Essays are to be written according to standard MLA guidelines (more information is available on the Moodle website). **Please note that all students are responsible for being aware of the definition and consequences of plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty as listed in the York Undergraduate Calendar.**

**Deadlines:**

A deadline is a deadline is a deadline! All assignments are due on the day originally announced.

Make-ups for tests and presentations are permitted only in cases of documented illness (written authorization is required from the doctor). It is the student's responsibility to inform the instructor about the illness and to arrange a make-up. Late work will be penalized: there will be a reduction of 3% per day on essays handed in late without permission.

**Course Materials:**

The texts listed in the weekly schedule are available at the York University Bookstore. Additional texts, such as films, photography and theoretical readings are posted on the Moodle site.

It is highly recommended that students have access to a copy of the *MLA Guide for Writers of Research Papers*. Students enrolled in GER 3640/4640 should also have a good German-English dictionary.

**Grading Scale:** Evaluation will be by letter and numerical grade according to the following scale:

Grade	Per Cent Range	Description
A+	90-100	Exceptional
A	80-89	Excellent
B+	75-79	Very good
B	70-74	Good
C+	65-69	Competent
C	60-64	Fairly Competent
D+	55-59	Passing
D	50-54	Marginally Passing

E	40-49	Marginally Failing
F	0-39	Failing

### **IMPORTANT COURSE INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS**

All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the following information, available on the **Senate Committee on Curriculum & Academic Standards webpage** (See Reports, Initiatives, Documents) –

[http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate\\_cte\\_main\\_pages/ccas.htm](http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate_cte_main_pages/ccas.htm)

- York's Academic Honesty Policy and Procedures/Academic Integrity Webpage
- Ethics Review Process for research involving human participants
- Course requirement accommodation for students with disabilities, incl. physical, medical, systemic, learning and psychiatric disabilities
- Student Conduct Standards
- Religious Observance Accommodation

### Weekly Schedule\*

\*This schedule is tentative. **Students are responsible for informing themselves of any changes.**

Date	Seminar	Deadlines
<b>Sept 14</b>	Introduction: Gender and Cultural Production in German Speaking Europe <u>At Home</u> : Read the article by Barbara Becker-Cantarino “Gender Censorship”	
<b>21</b>	Women Writers and Translators Around 1800 <u>At Home</u> : Read the article by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar “The Madwoman in the Attic”	
<b>28</b>	Elsa Bernstein’s <i>Twilight</i>	Presentation #1
<b>Oct 05</b>	Lou Andreas-Salomé’s <i>Fenitschka</i> <u>At Home</u> : Read the article: “Gendered Urban Spaces: Cultural Mediations on the City”	<b>Response paper #1 due today</b> Presentation #2
<b>12</b>	<i>Irmgard Keun, The Artificial Silk Girl</i>  The Photography of Lotte Jacobi  <u>At Home</u> : Read “Hitler’s Imagined Community” and Susan Sontag’s “Fascinating Fascism”	Presentation #3
<b>19</b>	Leni Riefenstahl’s documentary films; <i>The Wonderful Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl</i>	Presentation #4 <b>Response paper #2 due today</b>
<b>26</b>	<i>Rosenstrasse</i> : Film screening and discussion	Presentation #5
<b>Nov 02</b>	Ingeborg Bachmann’s “Undine Goes” and “The Mysteries of the Princess of Kagran”	Presentations #6
<b>09</b>	Film <i>Barbara</i> (2012) <u>At Home</u> : Read Judith Butler’s “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution”	Presentation #7
<b>16</b>	Yoko Tawada’s <i>Where Europe Begins</i>	Presentation #8
<b>23</b>	Review: Summing Up	<b>Final Essay due today</b>
<b>30</b>	<b>Final Test (2 hours – in class)</b>	