

Border Roles: Cinemas of East and West Germany
Peter Schweppe
Upper Level Film Course

This course will study the narrative roles of borders in East and West German cinema. For both nations, the portrayal of the German-German border conveyed pressing ideas about nation, ideology but also film history. By focusing on the relationship between film narratology and the roles that borders play in narratives, this course scrutinizes visual techniques that helped construct or deconstruct borders in central films from the GDR and FRG. To assess the representation of borders from a variety of angles, we will analyze cinematic techniques, effects, and overlapping discourses that surrounded the East-West German border. In particular, we will look at the role the Wall played in East and West German cinematic production. Through an exploration of borders, we assess the dichotomy of East and West German cinema by looking at films from both sides. On another level, we will unpack theories of film narratology that stretch beyond the ideological or cinematic context of East and West Germany and build knowledge of key theoretical debates.

This research course is designed for a graduate level course in German Studies or an upper level Film Studies course in English. Each week will be structured around one film. The purpose of the course is to engage students with German cinema(s), film theory, and viewing strategies. To interconnect these areas, students will practice their interpretation of techniques, still shots, scenes, and films. In addition, we will read theoretical essays as well as one short story that will guide classroom conversation. Students will thus hone their ability to think about film theory as well as interpret film. Throughout the semester, students will hand in one sequence analysis that exhibits their viewing interpretation as well as one paper (5-6 pages) that elucidates an aspect of film narratology discussed in class. The final term paper (18 pages) will combine these skills and situate an overarching argument into a narrative framework based on one film.

Readings:

Bal, Mieke. *Narratology* (2009 edition)
Feinstein, Joshua. *The Triumph of the Ordinary* (2002)
Heiduschke, Sebastien. *East German Cinema: DEFA and Film History* (2013)
Schneider, Peter. *Der Mauerspringer* (1982)
Verstraten, Peter. *Film Narratology* (2009)

All other texts will be assembled in a coursepack.

Assessment:

Student participation	15%
Sequence analysis	15%
Theory write-up	20%
Conference presentation	20%
Term paper	30%

Post-War Rubble

Week 1 Film: *Irgendwo in Berlin* (1946), Dir. Gerhard Lamprecht

Readings:

Verstraten, Segments from *Film Narratology* (2009)

Bal, Segments from *Narratology* (2009)

Shandley, "The Trouble with Rubble" (2001)

East

Week 2 Film: *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* (1957), Dir. Gerhard Klein

Readings:

Sebastien Heiduschke, readings from *East German Cinema*

Peter Verstraten, readings from *Film Narratology*

Week 3: Film: *Heißer Sommer* (1968), Dir. Joachim Hasler

Readings:

Andrea Rinke, "Eastside Stories"

Joshua Feinstein, readings from *The Triumph of the Ordinary*

Sebastien Heiduschke, readings from *East German Cinema*

Week 4 Film: *Die Legende von Paul und Paula* (1973), Dir. Heiner Carow

Readings:

Joshua Feinstein, readings from *The Triumph of the Ordinary*

Sebastien Heiduschke, readings from *East German Cinema*

West

Week 5: *Der Mann auf der Mauer* (1982), Dir. Reinhard Hauff

Readings:

Peter Schneider, *Der Mauerspringer*

Knut Hickethier, "The Restructuring of the West German Film Industry in the 1950s"

Week 6: *Der Himmel über Berlin* (1987), Dir. Wim Wenders

Readings:

Alexander Graf, readings from *The Cinema of Wim Wenders*

Jennifer Kapczynski and Michael Richardson, readings *A New History of German Cinema*

Remembering the Wall

Week 7: *Verriegelte Zeit* (1990), Dir. Sibylle Schönemann

Readings:

Marc Silbermann, "Post-Wall Documentaries"

Week 8 Film: *Die Mauer* (1991), Dir. Jürgen Böttcher

Readings:

Brian Ladd, "Berlin Walls"

Richard Kilborn, "The Documentary Work of Jürgen Böttcher"

Week 9 Film: *Sonnenallee* (1999), Dir. Leander Haußmann

Readings:

Paul Cooke, "Performing 'Ostalgie'"

Week 10 Film: *Der Tunnel* (2001), Dir. Roland Suso Richter

Readings:

David Pike, "Wall and Tunnel"

Week 11 Film: *Good bye, Lenin!* (2002), Dir. Wolfgang Becker

Readings:

Jonathan Bach, "The Taste Remains"

Week 12: *Boxhagener Platz* (2010), Dir. Matti Geschonneck

Readings:

Sabine Hake, Segments from *German National Cinema*

Eric Rentschler, "Post-Wall Cinema of Consensus"