This seminar proposes a decolonizing perspective to the traditional view of German literary history from the late 12th to the mid-20th century, putting emphasis on women and other (racialized) “others”. Students will explore examples of poetical writing in German (Medieval “Minnesong” to Bertolt Brecht), compare three samples of literary histories in German and English (ed. by Beutin, Wellbery, Brinker-Gabler), and along with this, study critical literature on German literary history (Fohrmann), aesthetic judgement (Heydebrand/Winko), canon-building and decanonisation (A. Assmann); feminist and queer studies approaches (Miller; Butler).

Content Warning: We will read material in this course that contains descriptions of violence, including sexual violence. Please reach out to the course instructor if you feel that you cannot read this material due to its depictions of violence, or if you wish to discuss it privately.

Primary Course Readings

Medieval / Early Modern

- Medieval Poetry (e.g. Hartmann von Aue, Walther von der Vogelweide).

Baroque / Early Enlightenment

- Baroque Poetry (Gryphius, Hofmannswaldau, Kuntsch).
- Baroque Drama: Sibilla Schwarz, Trawler=Spiel wegen Einäscherung ihres Freudenortes Fretow (1650)
- Enlightenment Drama: Johann Elias Schlegel, Hecuba (1736/47).

Classicism / Romanticism

- Poetry: Louise Brachmann, „Antigone”; Friedrich Schiller, „Das verschleierte Bild zu Sais”.
- Prose Work: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten.

„Vormärz“/ Realism

- Poetry: Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, „Der Geier” (Ballad)

Naturalism/Avantgarde

- Poetry: Naturalism, Expressionism (Arno Holz, Margarethe Beutler, Else Lasker-Schüler, Gottfried Benn et al.)
- Short Stories: Anna Croissant-Rust, „Hochzeitsfeier”; „Aus der Kaserne”.
- Drama: Bertolt Brecht, Coriolan.

Concepts of Literary History

