**LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**
UBC's campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Musqueam people. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on in their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.

*Image: Promotional Image showing Lancelot and Ossi in Ernst Lubitsch's Die Puppe/The Doll (1919).*

**GMST 335 102: GERMAN CINEMA**
Sexuality and Weimar Cinema
The University of British Columbia
Dept. Central, Eastern, & Northern European Studies

Winter 2026 T1 | 3 Credits
Meets: Tuesday & Thursday, 3:30-5:00 p.m.
Location: Chemistry Building C126

**CONTACT INFORMATION**
Instructor: Dr. Ervin Malakaj (he/him)
Student Hours: after class & by appointment
Office Location: Buchanan Tower 917
Email: ervin.malakaj@ubc.ca

**COURSE DESCRIPTION & GOALS**
This course explores the political, social, and economic realities that shaped the German "Golden Age" of cinema: the Weimar Era (1918–1933). We will watch some of the most iconic along lesser known, yet impactful films from the period. We will examine the link between post-World War I existential crises and discourses on sexuality, the formation of the German star system with an eye to sexualization, and the mediation of childhood in cinema as related to moral panics about desire and sexuality.

There are no prerequisites for this course. The course does not require you to purchase additional materials (it is devised to be fully open access). Readings and discussion are in English. Films are available with English subtitles.

This course is taught in person with scheduled class meetings. Instruction during any given week will follow a variation of the following structure: 1. Students prepare material (viewing, listening, or reading). 2.

Students engage with class lecture designed to contextualize the material they prepared. 3. Students complete assignments intended to help them assess their understanding of the material. See schedule below for more information.

**COURSE OUTCOMES**

Consult the schedule below for detailed outcomes affiliated with each unit of the course. Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to

- **describe** broad developments in the social, economic, and cultural history informing the cinema cultures of Weimar Germany (1918-1933);
- **discuss**, **analyze**, and **interpret** films from the era with a thematic and analytic focus on gender, sex, and sexuality; and
- **describe**, **discuss**, **analyze**, and **interpret** visual material using standard tools of film style.

**GRADE BREAKDOWN**

| | |
|---|---|
| Classroom Work | 15% |
| Podcast Assignments | 15% |
| Midterm Examination | 35% |
| Final Examination | 35% |

**GRADING SCALE**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| A+ (90-100%) | A (85-89) | A- (80-84) |
| B+ (76-79) | B (72-75) | B- (68-71) |
| C+ (64-67) | C (60-63) | C- (55-59) |
| D (50-54) | F (0-49) | |

**BOOKS AND READING MATERIALS**

*Through the UBC Bookstore, Online Vendors, OR: as eBook through our library and Library Course Reserves (LOCR) in Canvas!*

1. Ed Sikov, *Film Studies: An Introduction*, second edition. New York: Columbia UP, 2020. **REQUIRED**

*Online on our Course Reserves/Canvas Site*

The URL for our course reserves site (LOCR) is: https://courses.library.ubc.ca/c.gM3tQs. You can also reach the course reserves site through our Canvas site. There you will find the following texts:

1. Nora Alter, "The Legs of Marlene Dietrich," *Dietrich Icon*, eds. Gerd Gemünden and Mary R. Desjardins (Duke University Press, 2007), 60–78.
2. Anonymous, "In the Empire of Film," *The Promise of Cinema: German Film Theory, 1907–1933*, eds. Anton Kaes, Nicholas Baer, and Michael Cowan (University of California Press, 2016), 349–50.
3. Bela Balázs, "Only Stars," *The Promise of Cinema: German Film Theory, 1907–1933*, eds. Anton Kaes, Nicholas Baer, and Michael Cowan (University of California Press, 2016), 325–27.
4. Paul Dobryden, "23 May 1920: *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* Brings Aesthetic Modernism to the Fairground," *A New History of Germany Cinema*, eds. Jennifer Kapczynski & Michael David Richardson (Camden House, 2012), 80–85.
5. Lotte Eisner, "The Symphonies of Horror," *The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt* (University of California Press, 1969), 95–113.
6. Sabine Hake, "*The Oyster Princess* and *The Doll*: Wayward Women of the Early Silent Cinema," *Gender and German Cinema: Feminist Interventions*, eds. Sandra Frieden, Richard McCormick, Viebeke Petersen, and Laurie Vogelsang (Berg, 1993), 13–32.
7. Molly Harrabin, "Racially Profiled?: 'Jewish' Vampirism in Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922)," *Studies in European Cinema* 21.3 (2024): 287–98.
8. Jochen Hung, "The Weimar Years, Episode 1," *Radio 3: The Essay* November 11, 2019. https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000b7h8.

9. J. Hoberman, “The Twinned Evils of *Nosferatu*,” *Tablet Magazine* May 19, 2020. https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/arts-letters/articles/nosferatu-hoberman-murnau.
10. Laurie Marhoefer, “Did Sex Bring Down the Weimar Republic?” *Bulletin of the GHI* 65 (Fall 2019): 59–71.
11. Mihaela Petrescu, “Brigitte Helm and Germany’s Star System in the 1920s,” *Continuity and Crisis in German Cinema, 1928–1936*, eds. Barbara Hales, Mihaela Petrescu, and Valerie Weinstein (Camden House, 2016), 189–209.
12. Lotte Reiniger, “Living Shadows: The Art and Technology of the Silhouette Film,” *The Promise of Cinema: German Film Theory, 1907–1933*, eds. Anton Kaes, Nicholas Baer, and Michael Cowan (University of California Press, 2016), 470–71.
13. Shoshana Schwebel, “Lulu’s Smile: An Archive of Trauma in *Die Büchse der Pandora* (1929),” *The German Quarterly* vol. 95 no. 2 (2022): 149–66.
14. Camilla Smith, “The Weimar Years, Episode 2,” *Radio 3: The Essay* November 12, 2019. https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000b7r9.
15. Katie Sutton, “The Weimar Years: Episode 3,” *Radio 3: The Essay* November 13, 2019. https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000b5xr.
16. Samper Vendrell, “The Queer Threat to Civilization in Fritz Lang’s *M*,” *The Germanic Review* 92.3 (2017): 264–79.
17. Cynthia Walk, “Filmrettung: Save the Past for the Future!” Film Restoration and Jewishness in German and Austrian Silent Cinema,” *Rethinking Jewishness in Weimar Cinema*, eds. Barbara Hales and Valerie Weinstein (Berghahn, 2021), 327–37.
18. Marina Warner, “The Shadows of Lotter Reiniger,” *Stranger Magic: Charmed States and the Arabian Nights* (Harvard University Press, 2012), 390–402.

*Films Online on our Course Reserves/Canvas Site*
**NOTE**: You will find these films on our course reserve site. They are streaming through Kanopy or through our library’s internal streaming service. Please note that there are a lot of versions of these films circulating online. Many of the films on YouTube are not complete and you will miss key scenes. The library also has access to DVD prints of each.

1. E.A. Dupont, *The Ancient Law* (*Das alte Gesetz*, 1923)
2. Fritz Lang, *M* (1931)
3. Fritz Lang, *Metropolis* (1927)
4. Ernst Lubitsch, *The Doll* (*Die Puppe*, 1919)
5. F. W. Murnau, *Nosferatu* (1922)
6. G.W. Pabst, *Pandora’s Box* (*Die Büchse der Pandora*, 1929)
7. Lotte Reiniger, *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* (*Die Abenteuer des Prinzen Achmed*, 1926)
8. Joseph von Sternberg, *The Blue Angel* (*Der blaue Engel*, 1930)
9. Robert Wiene, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (*Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari*, 1920)

**CLASSROOM WORK & ATTENDANCE**
You will succeed in our class by preparing (i.e., reading or watching) the material for the days on which it is assigned. Reading and watching, for our purposes, are not passive activities: take notes about things you found engaging, confusing, illuminating, frustrating in a given text. Those notes (in the margins, on printouts, in notebooks) will come in handy during class discussions. Being prepared also means that you should have copies of all the material required for class handy as you are completing the assignments and while present in class.

I will ask you to participate actively in daily course assignments through iClicker. These assignments cannot be made up. You are allowed to miss two of these assignments for absences with documented

concessions approved by a UBC advising office. Any assignments you miss thereafter, even for documented concessions, will receive a 0. Please sign up and familiarize yourself with iClicker prior to our course. You can find information about the program along with contact information for tech support here: https://lthub.ubc.ca/guides/iclicker-cloud-student-guide/. Your participation in and my evaluation of your work on these daily course assignments constitute 15% of your final course grade.

**PODCAST ASSIGNMENTS**
You will complete three podcast assignments, which are aligned with the three units constituting the course. Two of the assignments will be individual, and one of them will be a group assignment. You will receive more information about these assignments ahead of time. My evaluation of your work on these assignments constitutes 15% of your final course grade. Grades on any late assignments will be reduced by 33% for every day beyond their original due date.

**MIDTERM & FINAL EXAMS**
You will complete an in-class midterm and a final examination. Each exam will cover all the material for the class leading up to it. You will receive more information about the exams ahead of time. My evaluation of your work on these exams constitutes 70% of your final course grade. If you miss six or more course sessions you may be excluded from taking the final examination.

**INCLUSIVE COURSE**
You will effectively learn in an inclusive space that continues to challenge you intellectually. I will strive to foster such a space in the classroom. Most of all, *you* are required to contribute to the shaping of such an inclusive and intellectually stimulating setting by honoring the diverse backgrounds, statuses, and experiences of your fellow students. Please communicate to me any concerns or needs that immediately relate to your learning in this regard.

**COMMUNICATION**
Communication is essential for your success in our course. I will send you regular updates about class via email and will post to our Canvas site. For this reason, you should regularly (i.e., daily) check your official UBC email account and our Canvas site for important announcements about our course.

If you send me an email, please use the standard format for addressing faculty or standards employed in professional communication. Begin an email with a salutation such as “Dear Dr. Malakaj: ....” and you can close with “Best/Yours/Sincerely, ....” I will respond to your email within one or two business days and usually do not respond to email on weekends. During professional travel, I will be unavailable via email but will respond to your inquiries as soon as I return to campus.

**ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION**
All official accommodation requests for the course will be handled through the UBC Centre for Accessibility. The Centre can provide accommodations that enable successful classroom experiences for students with accessibility needs. For more information, visit: https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/centre-for-accessibility. If you require any additional accommodation that can improve your experience in and facilitate success in the classroom, please reach out to me.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY & GENERATIVE AI**
The academic enterprise is founded on honesty, civility, and integrity. As members of this enterprise, all students are expected to know, understand, and follow the codes of conduct regarding academic integrity. At the most basic level, this means submitting only original work done by you and acknowledging all sources of information or ideas and attributing them to others as required. This also

means you should not cheat, copy, or mislead others about what is your work. Violations of academic integrity (i.e., misconduct) lead to the breakdown of the academic enterprise, and therefore serious consequences arise, and harsh sanctions are imposed.

Incidents of plagiarism or cheating may result in a mark of zero on the assignment or exam and more serious consequences may apply if the matter is referred to the President's Advisory Committee on Student Discipline. Careful records are kept in order to monitor and prevent recurrences. You can also find more info about UBC's official academic honesty and standards policy here: https://vancouver.calendar.ubc.ca/campus-wide-policies-and-regulations/academic-integrity-and-standards.

The use of generative AI tools (including ChatGPT, GrammarlyGO, Claude, etc.) is not allowed in this course. These tools can interfere with the goals of this course, which emphasize personal expression and original thought. Use of AI without permission will be considered academic misconduct.

**UNIVERSITY VALUES**

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious and cultural observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support are available here: https://senate.ubc.ca/policies-resources-support-student-success.

**CONTENT WARNING**

Our class will feature written and/or visual materials which depict violence. The inclusion of these written and visual texts in our syllabus is not gratuitous. We will instead approach these texts intellectually and assess in which ways and why violent material is deployed in a given cultural text. I respect your perspective and will be very glad to discuss this with you individually.

**PERSONAL AND INTELLECTUAL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING**

UBC provides a number of services to help students succeed in learning and being in our campus community. This includes services on topics such as academics, money, immigration, health and wellbeing. You can find out more information about various programs following this link: https://students.ubc.ca/support. If you feel comfortable, reach out to me. I can try to provide additional information about available resources.

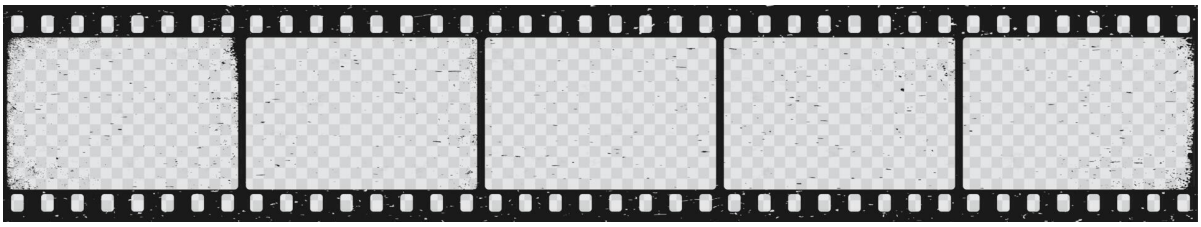
**COPYRIGHT**

All materials of this course (course handouts, lecture slides, assessments, course readings, etc.) are the intellectual property of the course Instructor or licensed to be used in this course by the copyright owner. Redistribution of these materials by any means without permission of the copyright holder(s) constitutes a breach of copyright and may lead to academic discipline. I do not permit students to record and make publicly available any component of the course.

**GERMAN STUDIES AND MODERN EUROPEAN STUDIES @ UBC**

You can complement the work you do in our course by enrolling in other courses offered in the German Program, the Modern European Studies Program, or other coursework in the Department of Central,

Eastern, and Northern European Studies. We offer exciting minors and majors in language and culture studies, as well as interdisciplinary studies. For more information about these programs, check out the department website (cenes.ubc.ca) or reach out to me! I'd be glad to put you in touch with the advisors for these programs.



## COURSE SCHEDULE

The semester schedule is not absolute. I may adjust it as needed to suit the needs of the class.

**UNIT 1: Post-WWI Existential Crises, Modernity's Discontents, & the Trouble with Desire**

Upon successful completion of this unit, students will be able to

- recall key cultural, historic, and economic information regarding the formation of the Weimar Republic as it relates to Weimar cinema culture
- analyze visual texts with an eye to shot composition

| Week 1 | Tue, Sept 8 | Thu, Sept 10 |
|---|---|---|
| | **No class! Campus Expo Day!** | **Prepare for Class**<br>Read Syllabus<br>Listen to Hung, "The Weimar Years 1"<br>Listen to Smith, "The Weimar Years 2"<br><br>**Work in Class**<br>Introduction to the course |
| **Week 2** | **Tue, Sept 15** | **Thu, Sept 17** |
| | **Prepare for Class**<br>Listen to Sutton, "The Weimar Years 3"<br>Read Marhoefer, "Did Sex Bring Down the Weimar Republic?"<br><br>**Work in Class**<br>Weimar art, cinema, and sexuality<br>Podcast assignments | **Work in Class**<br>In-class screening of Oswald's *Different from the Others* |
| **Week 3** | **Tue, Sept 22** | **Thu, Sept 24** |
| | **Prepare for Class**<br>Watch Wiene, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*<br>Read Dobryden, "23 May 1920"<br><br>**Work in Class**<br>Cinema, film form, existential crises | **Prepare for Class**<br>Read Sikov, mise-en-scene, the shot, subject-camera distance 5–12<br><br>**Work in Class**<br>Weimar film canon formation |
| **Week 4** | **Tue, Sept 29** | **Thu, Oct 1** |
| | **Prepare for Class**<br>Watch Murnau, *Nosferatu*<br>Read Harrabin, "Racially Profiled?"<br>Optional: Read Hoberman, "The Twinned Evils"<br><br>**Work in Class** | **Prepare for Class**<br>Read Eisner, "Symphonies of Horror"<br>Read Sikov, camera angle, space and time on film 12–18<br><br>**Work in Class**<br>Cinematic desire and film form |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | The East, contagion, & cinema of dread<br>Virtual visit: Dr. Harrabin | |
| **Week 5** | **Tue, Oct 6** | **Thu, Oct 8** |
| | **Prepare for Class**<br>Watch Dupont, *The Ancient Law*<br>Read Walk, "Film Restoration and Jewishness"<br><br>**Work in Class**<br>Cinema of modernity/tradition | **Prepare for Class**<br>Read Sikov, editing, 55–69<br><br>**Work in Class**<br>Politics of passing and desire<br><br>**Podcast assignment #1 due.** |

**UNIT 2: STAR SYSTEMS AND WOMEN ON SCREEN**

Upon successful completion of this unit, students will be able to

- identify key terms in film studies, particularly those relating to the formation of the German star system
- recall key cultural, historic, and economic information regarding the middle period of the Weimar Era as it relates to film culture
- analyze cinematic texts with an eye to camera movement, cinematography, and film editing

| **Week 6** | **Tue, Oct 13** | **Thu, Oct 15** |
|---|---|---|
| | **Prepare for Class**<br>Watch Lang, *Metropolis*<br>Read Petrescu, "Brigitte Helm and Germany's Star System"<br><br>**Work in Class**<br>Femme fatale aesthetics | **Prepare for Class**<br>Read Sikov, Performance 129–37<br><br>**Work in Class**<br>Weimar star system |
| **Week 7** | **Tue, Oct 20** | **Thu, Oct 22** |
| | **Prepare for Class**<br>Review your class notes<br><br>**Work in Class**<br>Midterm review | **Midterm Exam (in class)** |
| **Week 8** | **Tue, Oct 27** | **Thu, Oct 29** |
| | **Prepare for Class**<br>Watch Pabst, *Pandora's Box*<br>Read Schwebel, "Lulu's Smile"<br><br>**Work in Class**<br>Cinema and sexual violence | **Prepare for Class**<br>Read Sikov, motion picture photography, aspect ratio, and lightning, 38–47<br>Read Balázs, "Only Stars"<br>Read Anon, "In the Empire of Film"<br><br>**Work in Class**<br>The miracle of Brooks |
| **Week 9** | **Tue, Nov 3** | **Thu, Nov 5** |
| | **Prepare for Class**<br>Watch Sternberg, *The Blue Angel*<br>Read Alter, "The Legs of Dietrich"<br><br>**Work in Class** | **Prepare for Class**<br>Read Sikov, camera movement, 24–33<br><br>**Work in Class**<br>Sexual allure and performance style |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Dietrich the star | **Podcast assignment #2 due!** |

**UNIT 3: CHILDHOOD AND SEXUALITY**

Upon successful completion of this unit, students will be able to

- recall key cultural, historic, and economic information regarding the later years of the Weimar Era as it relates to film history
- analyze cinematic texts with an eye to sound, narrative, and performance

| **Week 10** | **Tue, Nov 10** | **Thu, Nov 12** |
|---|---|---|
| | **No class! Midterm Break!** | **Prepare for Class**<br>Watch a Weimar film not on this syllabus<br><br>**Work in Class**<br>Group Podcast Assignment Planning |
| **Week 11** | **Tue, Nov 17** | **Thu, Nov 19** |
| | **Prepare for Class**<br>Watch Reiniger, *The Adventures of Prince Achmed*<br>Read Reiniger, "Living Shadows"<br><br>**Work in Class**<br>Orientalist imagery and romance | **Prepare for Class**<br>Read Sikov, narrative, 89–100<br>Read Warner, "The Shadows of Reiniger"<br><br>**Work in Class**<br>Silhouetting and children's entertainment |
| **Week 12** | **Tue, Nov 24** | **Thu, Nov 26** |
| | **Prepare for Class**<br>Watch Lubitsch, *The Doll*<br>Read Hake, "Wayward Women"<br><br>**Work in Class**<br>Weimar slapstick | **Prepare for Class**<br>Read Sikov, filmmakers, 116–24<br><br>**Work in Class**<br>Hesitant heterosexuality |
| **Week 13** | **Tue, Dec 1** | **Thu, Dec 3** |
| | **Prepare for Class**<br>Watch Lang, *M*<br>Vendrell, "The Queer Threat to Civilization"<br><br>**Work in Class**<br>Crime and cinema | **Prepare for Class**<br>Read Sikov, sound, 74–83<br><br>**Work in Class**<br>Cinema and pathologized sexuality<br>Concluding remarks about the course<br><br>**Podcast assignment #3 due!** |

**The final exam date for the course is TBD until the official schedule for the exam period is announced.**