

**Department:** German

**Course No:** 1171 [171]

**Credits:** 3

**Title:** German Film-- Multiple Cultural Perspectives (taught in English)

**Content Area :** CA 1 and CA4 International

**CA4 Criteria:** GERM 1171 explores the “diversification” of the German film industry and its products, i.e., it analyzes its material and ideological evolution within the increasingly diverse and multicultural societies of the German-speaking countries (Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Namibia/Africa); it examines the impact of film on the construction of racial, gender, and cultural stereotypes and categories of difference, and it investigates the connection of such constructions to social, political, and economic structures. Focusing on issues of diversity/multiculturalism outside the United States, the course maintains a sensitivity to the diversity of experiences across racial-ethnic groups, genders, cultures, and religions and inevitably encourages comparisons to issues of diversity and multiculturalism in the U.S. The course leads students to an appreciation of the differences and commonalities among people by studying the ideas, history, values, and creative expressions (film) of diverse groups from the perspectives of the groups under study. The films selected for this course provide students with many examples of how modern German-speaking societies have become places of multiple, diverse voices and how power relations shape the communication between minorities and majorities. The early screenings on Nazi-Germany, for example, center on different perceptions that brought Germans to support Fascism and the Holocaust or, conversely, join the Resistance and the Allies. In turn, a selection of post-WWII film focuses on Jews’ autobiographical documentation of racial prejudice and persecution in the Third Reich. A series of films by women film makers concentrates on gender issues in film and film industry as well as sexual orientation. Likewise, Turkish-German/Swiss films and films by and about African immigrants provide case studies of a diversity across racial, ethnic and political barriers.

(1) Central to GERM 171 is an appreciation and understanding of the diversity of human experience: Students learn to recognize different types of cinematic representations as they are based on different perspectives of historical, social, and cultural developments and experiences. The inquiry into the voices of German Jews during and after the Holocaust, dissidents in former East-Germany, Turkish-Germans, Afro-Germans, immigrants, women, and disabled in contemporary German-speaking societies--as they are represented in German film--allows students to familiarize themselves with a variety of under-represented perspectives at different historical junctures.

(2) Students develop an understanding of and sensitivity to issues involving human rights violations and migration. Viewing films by and about Holocaust survivors and immigrants to German-speaking countries, students learn to relate to discrimination from the object’s point of view. They learn to interpret the visual strategies these marginalized and under-represented groups have chosen to make themselves be seen and heard within a dominant culture.

(3) Students acquire interpretive tools to investigate the dynamics of social, political and economic

power, i.e., they learn to identify patterns in the uses and abuses of power among different cultural groups as they are reflected in cinematic representations, and students learn to compare them to patterns in their own society and other parts of the world.

The students come away from GERM 171 with a better understanding of how issues of race, ethnicity, gender, and class play out in film industry (e.g., the limited number of and limited funding for ethnic or women directors), how mainstream cinema has projected racial, ethnic, gender, and class discrimination onto the screen (e.g., by way of the powerful “male gaze” and/or “white gaze” of the camera, protagonist, and audience), and how minority film makers have undermined these filmic and cultural traditions (e.g., by reversing the “gaze” and exposing power relations). Students thus learn both to analyze economic, political, and social structures that allow for Othering and to interpret the creative voices and images of a variety of cultural groups as they use, subvert, and change the conventions of German-language cinema. Acknowledging that every major historical development and cultural product (such as film) needs to be seen from a variety of perspectives, students become ! aware that monologic interpretative systems, even though capable of determining people’s lives, are historical constructs (mostly shaped by the dominant cultures), and therefore subject to our interpretation and redefinition.

**International:** Focusing on issues of diversity/multiculturalism outside the United States, GERM 171 maintains a sensitivity to the diversity of experiences across racial-ethnic groups, genders, cultures, and religions and inevitably encourages comparisons to issues of diversity and multiculturalism in the U.S.