1. Medieval Literature (Literature A)

This module introduces students to the literature of the medieval period through the works of two classic authors. Iwein, an Arthurian romance by Hartmann von Aue, is a tale of knightly adventure which nonetheless shines a critical light on the chivalric lifestyle and its institutions; the love poetry of Walther von der Vogelweide stages an innovative play with literary conventions and genres in such a way that the poet’s artistry, his reflections, and his sense of humour become important themes in their own right.

Lectures will introduce students to the texts and the latest critical approaches; the aim is to understand the texts both on their own terms, as products of a particular historical culture, and also as classics with enduring appeal – works of literary art which use the same techniques as modern writers, and deal with the same range of ‘mortal questions’ thrown up by the human condition.

Texts

Hartmann von Aue, Iwein. The original text, accompanied by a parallel translation into modern German, is included in the following paperback edition of several works by Hartmann: Gregorius, Der arme Heinrich, Iwein: Text und Kommentar, ed. and trans. Volker Mertens (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag paperback, 2008). There is no need to read more than Iwein.

Walther von der Vogelweide, Gedichte, ed. and trans. Peter Wapnewski (Frankfurt: Fischer-Taschenbuch, 2008), with special reference to poems 5, 10, 12, 15, 19, 21, 23, 24

Introductory reading

Hartmann

Wolf, Jürgen, Einführung in das Werk Hartmanns von Aue (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2007)

Walther

Ehrismann, Otfrid, Einführung in das Werk Walthers von der Vogelweide (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2008)
2. Modern Literature I: the 18th and 19th Centuries  
(Literature B)

These two texts introduce students to two of the best-known German writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. *Urfaust* is the first version of Goethe’s life’s work, the drama *Faust*, and it is the greatest work produced by the literary movement known as *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress). It is a powerful tragedy of overreaching human ambition and desire. A highly effective drama on stage, it also exemplifies a wide range of poetic forms. Kleist’s stories are now recognized as among the finest examples of German narrative, with their suggestive prose, their profound psychology, and their existential themes. *Die Marquise von O...* is an outstanding example of the *Novelle* genre, depicting the enigmatic character of human existence and the fragility of social order. It was also made into a memorable film by Eric Rohmer.

**Texts**

J. W. von Goethe, *Urfaust* (Stuttgart: Reclam UB5273)  
Heinrich von Kleist, *Die Marquise von O...* (Stuttgart: Reclam UB8002) (with *Das Erdbeben in Chili*)

**Introductory Reading**

**Goethe**


**Kleist**


3. Modern Literature II: the 20th and 21st Centuries and Film (Literature C)

This module requires study of two internationally known products of culture in German, providing introductions to key aspects of that culture. Kafka’s most famous story, *Die Verwandlung*, is an iconic work of modernism, at once essentially literary, and of interest from many other points of view, for instance psychoanalysis, ethics, theology and social theory. It continues to be of relevance today for its probing of what it means to be a human subject in modernity and for its resistance to unambiguous interpretation.
Barbara (2012), by leading member of the Berlin School of filmmakers, Christian Petzold, is a prize-winning film drama set in and around a provincial hospital in the German Democratic Republic. The title figure is a dissident, seeking to escape to the West, and the film is concerned with the surveillance to which she is subject and the forms of resistance that she is able to mobilise. A key question is what forms of love, trust, care and communication are possible under the conditions of a coercive regime.

Texts


Introductory Reading

Kafka

Webber, Andrew, ‘Kafka: *Die Verwandlung*, in Landmarks in German Short Prose, ed. P. Hutchinson (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2003), pp. 175-190

Petzold


4. History: Imperial Germany 1871-1918, Authoritarianism and Modernism

Few periods of German history have aroused such intense interest as the decades following the establishment of the first modern German nation state in 1871. Many have seen them as the prelude to the Third Reich 1933-1945. Others have emphasized that they saw the birth of some of the most important modernist movements of the twentieth century and of traditions that still shape German society today. This module will examine the rich and dissonant history of the Kaiserreich. It was an authoritarian state which was confronted by increasingly vociferous popular liberal and democratic movements. The
emergence of extreme forms of nationalism was balanced by radical visions of a return to nature and ‘Lebensreform’ or of women’s emancipation. The growth of militarist attitudes and anti-Semiticism on the one hand was matched by the formulation of radical visions that enthusiastically embraced modernity, technology and the city on the other. The first lecture will focus on Bismarck’s chancellorship; the second will deal with the reign of Wilhelm II. The third and fourth lectures will examine the numerous and often politically ambivalent forms of antimodernism and modernism respectively.

**Introductory reading**


Berger, Stefan, *Inventing the Nation: Germany* (London: Arnold, 2004), ch.3

Jefferies, Matthew, *Contesting the German Empire 1871-1918* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008)

* Recommended as preparatory reading before teaching begins.

### 5. Linguistics: Language and Lexicography

This module will look at the German language through its two greatest dictionaries, the *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (DWB, 1854–1960) started by the Brothers Grimm, and the *Vollständiges Orthographisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* started by Konrad Duden, the modern *Deutsche Rechtschreibung* (DR, 1st ed. 1880, 25th ed. 2010). The Grimms’ work is a deliberately nationalistic project, designed to raise the profile of the German language as the common inheritance of the German people, to place the study of the language on a solid philological foundation, and to be read both by scholars and by family men in the home. It is the largest and most comprehensive German dictionary ever written. The contrast with the single-volume *DR* could hardly be greater. It is a word-list rather than a true dictionary, designed to bring the unity of a single written form to the language whose main glory, for the Grimms, lay in its regional and historical diversity. Duden’s dictionary, now in its 25th edition, is far more likely to be found in a German home than the *DWB*: what it lacks in charm it makes up for in prescriptive power. The module will look at discursive material such as Jacob Grimm’s introduction to the first volume of the *DWB*. It will consider the dictionaries themselves as examples of particular lexicographic techniques and ideologies, and will examine the balance between description and prescription which has shaped the development of the language.
6. Thought: Marx and Nietzsche

Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche were the two great German revolutionaries of the nineteenth century and each proclaimed a breathtaking vision of the emancipation of human society that continues to fascinate and inspire even today. Marx claimed that he had discovered the truth about the world and exposed the social and political structures of his time as nothing more than a system created by the bourgeoisie to protect its own property and power. His discovery, he claimed, enabled him to show how that world was doomed and why it would soon collapse. Mankind would liberate itself, according to Marx, not just because the oppressed yearned for freedom but because capitalism would founder on its own internal contradictions. Nietzsche rejected Marx’s ideas but pursued his own life-long crusade against the bourgeois world and its delusions. His key insight was that society, religion, morality (even scholarship!) were based on bogus assumptions. Selfish and cowardly, human beings had simply deluded themselves that there was a God, that there were such things as good or evil. Nietzsche sought to show how life might be lived in the realisation that all previously accepted truths were false, in a world (beyond mere good and evil) governed by new values. The two texts chosen for this module are among the most concise statements of the thinking of Marx and Nietzsche, two of the most important thinkers not just of modern Germany, but of the modern world.

Texts

Karl Marx, Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei (Stuttgart: Reclam UB8323) Friedrich Nietzsche, Jenseits von Gut und Böse (‘Vorrede’, and Hauptstücke 2, 5 and 9). (Stuttgart: Reclam UB7114)

Introductory Reading


Young, Julian, *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography* (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), chapter 21 (pp. 407-31)