# University of North Texas

**Department of World Languages, Literatures, and cultures**

**WLLC 3410.001**

**German Popular Culture**

**Spring 2025**

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| Instructor: Dr. Cindy Renker  Email: cindy.renker@unt.edu  Office: LANG 401-D  Office Hours: MWF 2 pm and  T by appointment |  |

**CLASS requirement for Communication and Digital Skills:**

This course fulfills the CLASS requirement for Communication and Digital Skills. At the end of this course, students should be able to demonstrate effective communication using a digital technological platform and do at least two of the following: 1. Demonstrate the ability to communicate a central idea effectively using appropriate organization/structure. 2. Demonstrate the ability to develop content at an advanced level using a combination of effective supporting materials. 3. Demonstrate the ability to engage in verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors that are appropriate for the audience and adhere to the conventions of the medium selected (written, oral, or visual).

**Required Texts:**

Peter Wohlleben: *The Hidden Life of Trees.* ISB: 978-0-00-821843-0.

Jenny Erpenbeck: *Go*, *Went*, *Gone*. ISBN: 978-0-81-122594-6.

All other require course materials will be posted on Canvas.

**Course description:**

This course explores socio-cultural trends and movements in German society from the 1960s to the present through the lens of popular culture. Our discussions will center on topics related to colonialism, youth rebellion, Cold War, environmentalism, the refuge crisis, and confronting the legacy of National Socialism. The selected course materials range from popular music, movies, TV-series, to popular fiction and non-fiction books that grapple with these topics. This course is taught in English.

**Course Objectives:**

* Analyze the form and content of German popular culture from the post-World War II period to the present.
* Respond critically to the socio-political context in which the expressions/artifacts of German popular culture were created. This will be achieved through homework assignments and research paper.
* Identify the theoretical discourse that orientates the processes by which the expressions/artifacts of German popular culture are created and received.
* Develop digital skills by responding critically to expressions of German popular culture and its impact on coming to terms with challenging issues such as National Socialism, German popular music, colonialism, the refuge crisis, and environmentalism. This will be demonstrated through an oral presentation, in which a central idea is verbally/non-verbally communicated and its content is developed at an advanced level through a PowerPoint, Keynote, Prezi, or YouTube application.

**Assignments/Course Requirements:**

**1. Attendance and class participation:** Regular attendance is required. Repeated unexcused absences and tardiness will affect your grade significantly. Three tardies is the equivalent of one absence. Leaving class before the end of the period will be considered an absence. You are allowed a maximum of three (3) absences, whether excused or unexcused, without penalty. **After the eighth absence, you will receive a failing grade for the entire class.** Excused absences are only: A.) illness with doctor's documentation, B.) official university sponsored activities, and C.) the observance of certain religious holidays (see University Class Attendance Regulations in the UNT Policy Manual http://policy.unt.edu/policy/15-2-5 for details).

**Class participation**: In addition to being physically present, you are also expected to be intellectually present in class and to remain engaged with the discussion topic at hand. Participation also includes the focused reading or watching of the materials under discussion, taking notes, and generally contribute towards a conducive learning environment for yourself and your classmates.

**2. Homework**: You are obligated to complete all assigned readings and submit all homework assignments on time. Homework assignments will be posted to Canvas.

**3. Presentation:** In an assigned group, you will create a presentation (either with PowerPoint, Keynote, Prezi, or YouTube) on a topic related to German popular culture. You will be able to select a topic from a prepared list. For the in-class presentation, you will discuss the socio-historical context of the selected topic and its impact on contemporary German society. The finished presentation will be submitted as well. The application of digitals skills (the inclusion of relevant audiovisuals, recordings, and images in the presentation will be part of the assigned grade.

**4. Final Paper**: You will write a 10–12 page research paper for your final exam. Instructions, topic suggestions, and guidelines will be posted to Canvas.

**5. Evaluation:**

Class participation (including in-class activities and attendance) 20%

Homework assignments 30%

Group Presentation 20%

Research paper 30%

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| 90 – 100% = A | 80 – 89% = B | 70 – 79% = C | 60 – 69% = D | 59% or below = F |

**General Course and University Guidelines:**

**1. Canvas:** All course assignments and any additional materials will be posted on the course Canvas site.

**2. Course communication:** The instructor will communicate with students through Canvas Announcements and through UNT e-mail. All e-mail will be sent to students’ UNT e-mail accounts. It is the students’ responsibility to check UNT e-mail regularly or have UNT e-mail forwarded to another account. In addition, the instructor will only respond to student e-mail if it is sent from the official UNT account.

**3. Cell phones and laptops:** The instructor utilizes technology and other media in the learning process. Cell phones, iPads, tablets, and laptops may be used to access online resources during instruction. Texting, game playing, Facebook are not permitted. If it is determined that cell phones, etc. are being used for anything other than educational purposes, the student will receive a grade of 0 for that day’s class participation grade.

**4. Academic integrity:** All work submitted in your name must be your own work. Submitting someone else’s work is plagiarism. Cheating and plagiarism are serious matters. The usual penalties for these offenses include failure for the assignment, failure in the course, and a written report to the Dean of Students.

The "unauthorized" use of any person or technology that assists in a student's assignment, project, or paper is considered cheating under the UNT Student Academic Integrity Policy (UNT Policy 6.003). Unless a professor or instructor gives explicit "authorization," AI cannot be used to complete assignments, projects, or papers. Doing so will result in a "cheating" violation.

**5. Religious holidays**: In accordance with Section 51.911 of the Texas Education Code, UNT will allow a student who is absent from class for observance of a religious holy day to take an examination or complete an assignment scheduled for that day within a reasonable time. Students are required to file a written request with each professor within the first 15 days of the semester to qualify for an excused absence. A copy of the state rules and procedures regarding holy days and the form for notification of absence from each class under this provision are available from the Registrar’s Office.

**6. Disability accommodation:** *The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the Office of Disability Access website at*[*https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access*](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access)*. You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.*

**7. Acceptable student behavior in the classroom:** Student behavior that interferes with an instructor’s ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-012>

**8. Emergency Notification & Procedures:** UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify you with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). The system sends voice messages (and text messages upon permission) to the phones of all active faculty, staff, and students. Please make certain to update your phone numbers at **www.my.unt.edu**. Some helpful emergency preparedness actions include: 1) ensuring you know the evacuation routes and severe weather shelter areas, determining how you will contact family and friends if phones are temporarily unavailable, and identifying where you will go if you need to evacuate the Denton area suddenly. In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

**9. Student Perceptions of Teaching:** The Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT) is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. This short survey will be made available to you towards the end of the semester, providing you a chance to comment on how this class is taught. I am very interested in the feedback I get from students, as I work to continually improve my teaching. I consider the SPOT to be an important part of your participation in this class.

**10. Sexual Discrimination, Harassment, & Assault:**UNT is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any of these acts of aggression, please know that you are not alone. The federal Title IX law makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses. UNT has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

UNT’s Dean of Students’ website offers a range of on-campus and off-campus resources to help support survivors, depending on their unique needs: <http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources>.

The UNT Survivor Advocates can be reached by emailing [SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu](mailto:SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu) or calling 940-565-2648. The UNT Survivor Advocates connect students who have been impacted by violence to resources (counseling, health, safety, academics, legal, etc.), and act as their advocate. They can assist a student by filing protective orders, completing crime victim’s compensation applications, contacting professors for absences related to an assault, working with housing to facilitate a room change (if needed), and connecting students to the many other resources that are available, both on and off campus. They are here to help! For more information see <https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/sexual-misconduct/reporting-sexual-misconduct>

**11. Important Dates and Deadlines**: Students should familiarize themselves with the Registrar’s office dates and deadlines by visiting this website: <https://registrar.unt.edu/academic-calendar-by-semester.html>

**Tentative Weekly Schedule**

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| **Weeks** | **Modules** | **Assignments** |
| Week 1 | Introduction  The German’s Ambivalent Attitude toward their Nation and their Past | See Canvas |
| Week 2  No class Monday!  (MLK DAY) | Popular Media in Post-War Germany  Germany’s Imagination of the American Wild West: Winnetou and Old Shatterhand | See Canvas |
| Week 3 | Germany’s Imagination of the  American Wild West:  DEFA-Indianerfilme/  Westerns and their role in  East and West German societies | See Canvas |
| Week 4 | German Music after WWII | See Canvas |
| Week 5 | Music: (Kraut-)Rock (The German Music Scene in the 1970s and 1980s) | See Canvas |
| Week 6 | Electronic Music, The German  Wave, Rammstein | See Canvas |
| Week 7 | Coming to Terms with  Germany’s Difficult Past:  The Third Reich in Popular  Culture | See Canvas |
| Week 8 | Coming to Terms with Germany’s Difficult Past: The Third Reich in Popular Culture | See Canvas |
| Week 9  Spring Break |  |  |
| Week 10 | Germany and Hollywood | See Canvas |
| Week 11 | Germany and Hollywood | See Canvas |
| Week 12 | Germans and their Forests:  Mythological Identification, the Hidden life of Trees, and the evironment | See Canvas |
| Week 13 | Germans and their Forests:  Mythological Identification, the Hidden life of Trees, and the evironment | See Canvas |
| Week 14 | Contemporary German Society  and the Refuge Crisis | See Canvas |
| Week 15 | Contemporary German Society  and the Refuge Crisis | See Canvas |
| Week 16  No class on Friday!  (Reading Day) | Group Presentations | Presentations |
| Finals Week | Final Paper | See Canvas |