

# GRMN 016: BABYLON BERLIN

## FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR

Prof. Javier Samper Vendrell [he/him]

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T/TH 1:45–3:15 PM

Office: Williams Hall 753

Office Hours: T 3:30–4:30 PM and TH 10:30–11:30 AM, and by appointment

This course explores Germany's conflicting history from 1918 to 1933. The Weimar Republic, as this period is called, was characterized by economic turmoil, political violence and extremism that resulted in Hitler's rise to power and the Third Reich. At the same time, it also represents one of the most productive periods in artistic and intellectual terms in the twentieth century. Great innovation in science, architecture, literature, art, and cinema occurred in this short period of time. The "golden twenties" are also often portrayed as a time of increasing gender equality and sexual freedom. Throughout the semester we will explore some key issues of this period as we discuss the first two seasons of the TV crime fiction series *Babylon Berlin* (2017–). We will not only rely on history writing or television to paint a coherent picture of the Weimar Republic. Instead, you will create original arguments based on detailed analysis of primary sources. News articles, essays, a novel, a novella, and other primary sources will help develop your own arguments and improve your information literacy skills as you learn about one of German history's most fascinating periods.

### Required Texts

*Babylon Berlin* (Seasons 1 and 2). The series is available on Netflix and on reserve at Van Pelt Library.

Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say / I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*. W. W. Norton & Company, sixth edition. [You may purchase the eBook edition.]

Keun, Irmgard. *The Artificial Silk Girl*. Translated by K. v. Ankum. Other Press, 2011.

All other materials will be available on Canvas.

### Participation, Preparation, and Assessments

**Regular attendance and active participation** will help you do well in this course. Please make sure to be in class on time. Attendance will be recorded. I will give you a warning if you have 2 or more unexcused absences. If your absence is excused for a religious holiday or an official activity, please let me know. If you're sick, we'll work together to find alternatives for completing the required work for this course.

Participation is more than just being there. It requires student engagement and active learning before class. Classroom behavior must reflect a spirit of generosity and respect. Classroom etiquette requires that we pay attention to people speaking and avoid side conversations, for example on cell phones, distracting or disrespectful gestures, and unrelated reading and writing.

Daily **homework** entails reading and taking notes in preparation for class discussion. You should plan to read every day, so that you don't have to binge the night before class. There will be questions to guide your reading every day.

**POSITION PAPERS.** You will write **five essays** ranging from 2–6 double-spaced pages on the TV series and the texts read in this course. You will focus on improving several other crucial academic skills, such as critical reading and analysis of texts, writing, discussion skills, as well as how to thoughtfully respond to your peers' contributions and feedback. In our class discussions, we will collaboratively examine our sources and generate interpretive questions about them. When writing your essays, you will strive first and foremost for clarity (organization and style) and accuracy (well-formed grammatical structures).

**ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY.** The first-year seminar introduces students to the college's libraries as well as to information literacy and research skills. This assignment will ask you evaluate different kinds of sources related to a specific research topic. I will distribute a list of topics in advance.

**ORAL PRESENTATION.** At the end of the semester, you will give a presentation based the research you conducted for the annotated bibliography. The final presentation will be about 10 minutes in length and should reflect on the research process, your findings, and how they relate to the course's main themes.

Oral expression is subject to revision like our written work in this course. You must schedule and practice your presentation with one of your classmates outside of class. You will receive feedback on your presentation from them, take these comments into consideration along with your own reflections, and share your improved oral presentation in class. You will present your information by referencing notes, but not by reading entirely from a prepared text. After the conclusion of the presentation, the course participants and the instructor will complete oral presentation evaluations, which will be included in the presentation grade calculations.

Active Participation	20%	Essay 1	5%
Oral Presentation	10%	Essay 2	10%
Annotated Bibliography	10%	Essay 3	10%
		Essay 4	15%
		Essay 5	20%

## Deadlines

All relevant due dates are listed in the syllabus. I expect that all essays to be turned in when they are due. **Each student is entitled to ONE 72-hour extension** during the semester. You do not need to provide a reason for the requested extension, but you must notify me.

## Communication with the instructor

I will hold office hours twice a week (T 3:30–4:30 PM and TH 10:30-11:30 AM). We can meet in person or on zoom. I'd like to encourage you drop by my office or to make an

appointment during these times, but you can always schedule an appointment at another time convenient for both of us. You should contact me if you have specific questions or if you would like to learn more about the themes covered in this course. You don't need to have a "reason" to come to office hours, though. We can talk about everything. Office hours are a great opportunity for us to get to know each other.

If you can't make it to office hours but need assistance, you may contact me by email. If it is an urgent matter, it is important that you leave a realistic amount of time for me to respond. I may not be able to respond to your e-mail immediately, but I will try. If you send me an email the right before an assignment is due, you may not receive a response in time for it to be helpful for you. Remember to follow the basic rules of [email etiquette](#).

### **Accessibility Statement**

I strive to create a fully inclusive classroom, thus I welcome individual students to approach me about distinctive learning needs. In particular, I encourage students with disabilities to have a conversation with me and disclose how our classroom or course activities could impact the disability and what accommodations would be essential to you. You should register with the Disability Services office.

### **Academic Honesty and Guidelines for Generative AI**

According to the Policies and Procedures Handbook of the University of Pennsylvania, using the ideas, data, or language of another without specific and proper acknowledgement constitutes plagiarism. If you are at all unsure about the appropriate form of acknowledgement in a particular situation, it is your responsibility, as stated in [Penn's Code of Academic Integrity](#), to consult with the instructor to clarify any ambiguities. Plagiarism in any assignment will result in a failing grade for that assignment, and may result in further disciplinary action, which may include receiving a failing grade for the course.

A central goal of this course is to develop critical and analytical thinking. Generative AI cannot replace the development of these skills. Written work created using generative AI tools is not original work. You may not submit written work generated by an AI program as your own work. All assignments should be your own original work created for this course. Keep in mind that the material generated by these programs may be inaccurate, incomplete, or problematic. Nevertheless, you can use generative AI programs for preparation, i.e. to generate topics or brainstorm. Be aware, however, that using these programs may limit your independent thinking and creativity and make it more difficult to engage with the topics developed in class.

If you use generative AI programs in the preparation of an assignment, you must indicate where and how you used these programs in a note before the bibliography of the assignment.

### **Take care of yourself**

Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester. Taking care of yourself will actually help you achieve your academic goals more than spending too much time studying.

All of us experience difficulty for various reasons at some point or another. We all benefit from support and guidance during times of struggle. If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or difficult feelings like anxiety or depression, I strongly encourage you to seek support. An important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. There are [many helpful resources](#) available on and off campus. Take the time to learn about all that's available and take advantage of it. You can also reach out to a friend, faculty member, or family member you trust for assistance connecting to the support that can help.

## COURSE SCHEDULE [READINGS AND DEADLINES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE]

Week 1		Due Dates
Tuesday, August 26	Introduction to the First-Year Seminar; goals and syllabus review; ground rules  <b>Skills:</b> “How to Succeed in a small class.”	
Thursday, August 28	<b>Read:</b> Weitz, <i>Weimar Germany</i> , “Introduction,” 1–5.  <b>Skills:</b> <i>They Say / I Say</i> , Introduction: “Entering the Conversation,” 1–18; Chapter 12: “Entering Class Discussions,” 162–65.	
Week 2		
Tuesday, September 2	<b>Watch:</b> <i>Babylon Berlin</i> , Episode 1  <b>Read:</b> Sutton, “How World War I Changed Sex Research: War Neurotics, Shell Shock, and Sex in an Era of Industrialized Violence,” <i>Sex Between Body and Mind</i> , 91–117.  <b>Primary source (in class):</b> Ernst Simmel, “War Neuroses and ‘Psychic Trauma’” (1918)  <b>Skills:</b> Reading and taking notes.	
Thursday, September 4	<b>Read:</b> Weitz, “Walking the City,” 41–79; Joseph Roth, “Going for a walk” (1921)  <b>Skills:</b> <i>They Say / I Say</i> , Chapter 1: “Starting with What Others Are Saying,” 19–29.	
Week 3		
Tuesday, September 9	<b>Watch:</b> <i>Babylon Berlin</i> , Episode 2	Essay 1

	<b>Read:</b> Weitz, <i>Weimar Germany</i> , “A Troubled Beginning,” 7–39.	
Thursday, September 11	<b>Read:</b> Roth, “The Berlin Pleasure Industry,” (1930) Goll, “The Negroes are conquering Europe” (1926) “Hans Massaquoi is confronted with a ‘people show’” (1929) Robert S. Abbot, “My Trip Abroad” (1929)  <b>Skills:</b> <i>They Say / I Say</i> , Chapter 2: “The Art of Summarizing,” 30–42; “The Art of Quoting,” 43–52.	
<b>Week 4</b>		
Tuesday, September 16	<b>Watch:</b> <i>Babylon Berlin</i> , Episode 3  <b>Skills:</b> Analyzing a Film Sequence; Basic Film Glossary  <b>Penn Career Services Meeting</b>	
Thursday, September 18	<b>Read:</b> Weitz, <i>Weimar Germany</i> , “Sound and Image,” 207–50.  <b>Skills:</b> <i>They Say / I Say</i> , Chapter 3: “The Art of Quoting,” 43–52.	
<b>Week 5</b>		
Tuesday, September 23	<b>Watch:</b> <i>Babylon Berlin</i> , Episode 4 <b>Read:</b> Weitz, <i>Weimar Germany</i> , “Political Worlds,” 81–128. <b>Skills:</b> Academic Honesty (read the booklet in advance)	Essay 2
Thursday, September 25	No class.	
<b>Week 6</b>		
Tuesday, September 30	<b>Read:</b> Loren Balhorn, “May Day, Bloody May Day,” <i>Jacobin</i> (May 1, 2019).  <b>Primary sources (in class):</b> Spartacus Manifesto (1918) German Center Party Program (1922) Social Democratic Party Program (1925) German People’s Party Program (1931) German Worker’s Party, Twenty-Five Points (1920) <b>Skills:</b> <i>They Say / I Say</i> : Chapter 13: “Entering Online Conversations,” 166–175.	

Thursday, October 1	<p><b>Read:</b> Weitz, <i>Weimar Germany</i>, “A Turbulent Economy and an Anxious Society,” 129–168.</p> <p><b>Primary sources (in class):</b> Kroner, “Overwrought Nerves” (1923) The Dawes Committee Report (1924) Ostwald, “A Moral History of the Inflation” (1931)</p> <p><b>Skills:</b> <i>They Say / I Say</i>: Chapter 14: Reading for the Conversation,” 176–86.</p>	
<b>Week 7</b>		
Tuesday, October 7	<p><b>Watch:</b> <i>Babylon Berlin</i>, Episode 5</p> <p><b>Skills:</b> Peer Review, Citation Styles</p>	
Thursday, October 9	Fall Break	
<b>Week 8</b>		
Tuesday, October 14	<b>Watch:</b> <i>Babylon Berlin</i> , Episodes 6 and 7	Essay 3
Thursday, October 16	<p><b>Primary sources (in class):</b> Moeller van den Bruck, “The Third Empire” (1923) Freyer, “Revolution from the Right” (1931) Berlin Stahlhelm Manifesto (1927) Jung, “Germany and the Conservative Revolution” (1932)</p> <p><b>Skills:</b> <i>They Say / I Say</i>: Chapter 4 “Three Ways to Respond,” 53–66.</p>	
<b>Week 9</b>		
Tuesday, October 21	<b>Read:</b> Weitz, <i>Weimar Germany</i> , “Revolution and Counterrevolution from the Right,” 331–60.	
Thursday, October 23	<b>Discussion:</b> “Is this the West’s Weimar Moment?”	
<b>Week 10</b>		
Tuesday, October 28	<p><b>Watch:</b> <i>Babylon Berlin</i>, Episode 8</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Weitz, <i>Weimar Berlin</i>, “Culture and Mass Society,” 251–96.</p> <p><b>Skills:</b> <i>They Say / I Say</i>: Chapter 5, “Distinguishing What You Say from What They Say,” 67–77.</p>	
Tuesday, October 30	<b>Watch:</b> <i>Babylon Berlin</i> , Episodes 9 and 10	Essay 4

	<b>Skills:</b> <i>They Say / I Say</i> : Chapter 6: “Planting a Naysayer in Your Text,” 77–90.	
<b>Week 11</b>		
Tuesday, November 4	<b>Read:</b> Weitz, <i>Weimar Germany</i> , “Bodies and Sex,” 297–330.  <b>Primary sources (in class):</b> Bettauer, “The Erotic Revolution” (1924) Landau, “The Companionate Marriage” (1929) The Lavender Song (1920)	
Thursday, November 6	<b>Watch:</b> <i>Babylon Berlin</i> , Episode 11  <b>Read:</b> Keun, <i>The Artificial Silk Girl</i> , 1–37.  <b>Skills:</b> <i>They Say / I Say</i> : Chapter 7: “Saying Why It Matters,” 91–100.	
<b>Week 12</b>		
Tuesday, November 11	<b>Skills:</b> Information Literacy Session	
Thursday, November 13	<b>Watch:</b> <i>Babylon Berlin</i> , Episodes 12 and 13  <b>Read:</b> Keun, <i>The Artificial Silk Girl</i> , 37–70.	Annotated Bibliographies
<b>Week 13</b>		
Tuesday, November 18	<b>Read:</b> Keun, <i>The Artificial Silk Girl</i> , 70–122.  <b>Skills:</b> <i>They Say / I Say</i> , Chapter 9: “Academic Writing Doesn’t Mean Setting Aside Your Own Voice,” 117–30.	
Thursday, November 20	<b>Read:</b> Keun, <i>The Artificial Silk Girl</i> , 123–155  <b>Skills:</b> Oral Presentations	
<b>Week 14</b>		
Tuesday, November 25	No Class	
Thursday, November 27	Thanksgiving break	
<b>Week 15</b>		
Tuesday, December 2	<b>Watch:</b> <i>Babylon Berlin</i> , Episode 14  <b>Read:</b> Keun, <i>The Artificial Silk Girl</i> , 155–192.	Presentations

Thursday, December 4	<b>Watch:</b> <i>Babylon Berlin</i> , Episode 15 and 16	Presentations
<b>December 17</b>	Essay 5	