

**Department of German  
Northwestern University  
2007/2008**

**COURSE: German 402  
TITLE: German Literature and Critical Thought, 1832-1900  
Instructor: Jörg Kreienbrock**

**Description:**

**Economy of/as Literature. Representations of Money and Value in German Literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.**

In his monumental study on the philosophy of money, Georg Simmel claims that it is modern man's characteristic to create values that are not based in any objective essence or physical property, but rest upon an economy of relations. This class traces Simmel's theory of money as a pure form of exchangeability throughout several literary and theoretical writings of the 19th century. These texts simultaneously respond to the rapid acceleration of the industrial revolution in Germany, record its effects on the socio-economic make-up of society, and reinterpret the long-established analogy of money and language, coin and word. Determining value requires a medium, fictional or real, in which the transient processes of exchange can be represented. 19th century German literature, between Goethe and Gottfried Keller, tragedy and the *Bildungsroman*, continually probes the condition of the (im)possibility of equating proposition and thing, representation and represented object. By reading literary, philosophical and economic texts side by side, the contents and discontents of these differing fictions come into focus, interrogating traditional concepts of realism, mimesis and interpretation.

**Syllabus**

Week 1:

J.W. von Goethe – Money as Medium.

Texts: Faust I, II (selections)

Week 2:

Wilhelm Hauff – Currencies of the Heart.

Text: Das Wirtshaus im Spessart

Week 3:

Ludwig Tieck – A Theory of Poverty and Abundance.

Text: Des Lebens Überfluß

Week 4:

Karl Marx – Commodity as Fetish.

Text: Das Kapital (selections)

Week 5:

Georg Weerth – Insights of a Petty Bourgeois.

Text: Humoristische Szenen aus dem Deutschen Handelsleben

Week 6:

Gottfried Keller – Writing on Credit.

Text: Die Leute von Seldwyla (selections)

Week 7:

Jeremias Gotthelf – The Spirit of Money.

Text: Geist und Geld oder die Versöhnung

Week 8:

Gustav Freytag – Realist Merchants.

Text: Soll und Haben

Week 9:

Georg Simmel – A Phenomenology of Money.

Text: Die Philosophie des Geldes (selections)

### **Further Readings**

Luc Boltanski & Eve Chiapello – Der neue Geist des Kapitalismus

Jacques Derrida – Donner le temps – I: La fausse monnaie

Jean-Joseph Goux – Les monnayeurs du langage

Werner Hamacher – Faust, Geld

Jochen Hörisch – Kopf oder Zahl. Die Poesie des Geldes

Niklas Luhmann – Die Wirtschaft der Gesellschaft

Marc Shell – The Economy of Literature

Joseph Vogl – Kalkül und Leidenschaft. Poetik des ökonomischen Menschen

### **Assessment**

One Class Presentation (30%)

Final Paper (70%)