

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

**Course: German 403  
Title: German Literature, Critical Thought, and New Media 1900-45  
Instructor: Prof. Rainer Rumold**

**Course Description:** Built around selected key texts on aesthetic theories of Modernism (Nietzsche, Adorno, Bürger, and Kittler), this course will 1) reflect on the premises of a modernist “visual turn” via, e.g., Rainer Maria Rilke’s Malte Laurids Brigge and pertinent essays by Walter Benjamin, 2) analyze the relation of writing and the *imagination* in the medium of literature (e.g. Franz Kafka), 3) explore the significance of the visual arts ( e.g. Die Bruecke, Der Blaue Reiter) in German Expressionism, e.g. for Else Lasker-Schueler, Gottfried Benn, or Carl Einstein, in relation to the institution of literature and the role of art exhibits and museums in the public sphere, 4) discuss the theory of 20<sup>th</sup> century German drama (from Expressionism to the epic theatre of Bertolt Brecht) in conjunction with the newer media of film and radio, 5) focus on literary documents which are self-reflectively critical of the status of literature and aesthetic production in modernity, such as Robert Musil’s Man without Qualities and Thomas Mann’s Doktor Faustus.

**Readings:**

Friedrich Nietzsche, “Über Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinn,” and selected essays from Unzeitgemaesse Betrachtungen  
Theodor Adorno, from Aesthetische Theorie  
Friedrich Kittler, from Aufschreibsysteme and selected essays on media theory.  
Rainer Maria Rilke, Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge  
Franz Kafka, Selected Short Stories and selections from his Tagebücher  
Gottfried Benn, “Gehirne”  
Else Lasker-Schüler, Selected Poems  
Carl Einstein, Negerplastik  
Bertolt Brecht, Baal, Mann ist Mann, and selected Schriften zum Theater  
Robert Musil, Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften  
Thomas Mann, Doktor Faustus

Methods: Lectures and Discussion in German

Requirements: One in-class presentation and seminar paper (circa 20 to 30 pp)

**Syllabus**

Week I – III: The epistemological premises

Week I : Friedrich Nietzsche and his concept of “Physiology of Aesthetics”--  
Gottfried Benn, “Gehirne”

Week II: Theodor Adorno: The Modernist Work of Art as Technique;  
Franz Kafka, Short Stories

Week III: From Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological  
Reproduction" to Friedrich Kittler's Media Theory  
Selected scenes from Expressionist films (R. Wiene, "Dr. Caligari," etc) to  
Bertolt Brecht, Kuhle Wampe ( film)

Week IV: Rainer Maria Rilke, Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge

Week V: Else Lasker-Schüler, Selected Poems -- Carl Einstein, Negerplastik  
Die Bruecke, Der Blaue Reiter

Week VI: Bertolt Brecht, Baal, Mann ist Mann, and selected Schriften zum Theater

Week VII: Robert Musil, Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften

Week VIII: Robert Musil, Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften

Week IX: Thomas Mann, Doktor Faustus

Week X: Course Summary