

## **Geography of Europe 331**

**Instructor:** Dr. Heike Alberts

**Dates of course:** Mar 20 through Mar 31

**Location:** Berlin, Germany

### **Course Description:**

Contemporary Europe is a diverse region in terms of natural landscapes, political and economic systems, languages and cultures. It is also a region undergoing far-reaching transformations, most prominently the “velvet revolutions” in Eastern Europe since the late 1980s and the increasing integration and cooperation of European countries in the European Union. The diversity and rapid changes make studying Europe both interesting and challenging for geographers.

In this class we will explore five broad topic areas. We will begin by looking at the current social setting, such as demographic characteristics of the population, languages and religions, ethnic conflicts and migration. Next we will study the physiographic regions of Europe, natural resources and environmental challenges, before turning our attention to the basic features of the European economy. We will then explore Europe’s urban history from ancient times to today. Finally, we will focus on the most important political developments after 1945 and examine the challenges and chances of European integration.

We will cover some of these topics in lectures and class discussions, but on most days we will actually look at concrete examples in Berlin. I was born and raised in Berlin, so I very much look forward to showing you my city and teaching you about the geography of Europe!

### **Teaching Philosophy:**

For me learning is an interactive process, with both teachers and students learning from one another. I do not see you as containers in which I pour knowledge. I also do not see you as sponges that readily absorb whatever is presented to you. Rather I see you as individuals with different backgrounds and histories, strengths and weaknesses, and styles of acquiring and processing information. I will give you plenty of opportunity to be active in class, and hope that you will enjoy the on-site exercises that we will do while we explore Berlin. In my opinion, getting to know a place through personal experience is much better than learning about it in lecture. However, to get the most out of this experience, you have to be active in soaking up as much information as you can during our stay in Berlin.

### **Equipment:**

While we will spend some time in a regular classroom, we will often be out exploring the city, no matter whether it is beautiful or pouring rain. Therefore it is essential that you bring comfortable shoes, warm clothes (Berlin can be very pleasant in March, but it can also be cold and wet), and rain protection. Bring a clipboard so that you can take proper notes while we are outside the classroom. You might also want to bring your camera.

### **Required Readings:**

I prepared a few book chapters and articles for you. They will be deposited in a copy shop close to your dorm, so you can photocopy them whenever it is convenient for you. I expect you to do your readings before coming to class. Additional resources for your assignments will also be available in the copy shop.

For one of your assignments, you will review a book about Europe. While Berlin bookstores carry some books in English, I recommend that you buy your book in the US and take it with you. The books I recommend are easily available through Amazon or Barnes and Noble.

**Class Policies:**

- Since we will cover a lot of material in one day and lectures complement, rather than duplicate, reading materials, it is important that you do not miss any class days and participate actively in the activities we will be doing.

- This class is only two weeks long, so it is important that you meet all deadlines and don't fall behind on the class material. I will deduct points if your assignments are late.

- Academic honesty and integrity is expected at all times. Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated and will be handled according to university guidelines.

- Incomplete (I) will only be given in exceptional circumstances.

- Please be respectful at all times towards your fellow students, the instructor, and other people we will encounter during our time in Berlin. Be critical of ideas, not people; listen to and respect everyone's ideas even if you don't agree. Remember that you are a guest in this country and behave accordingly.

**Exams and Grading:**

Your grade will consist of the following components:

Exams: The two exams consist largely of short answer questions, but there may also be a short essay. Each exam is worth 20% of your grade.

Book review: You will be asked to write a critical review of a book about a topic connected to this class. I will give you several possible titles, but I encourage you to find a book on your own that really interests you. Please make sure to check in with me before you buy your book. If you want, you can complete this assignment before going on the European Odyssey. Your book review counts 20% of your grade.

- Opinion/discussion papers: You will be asked to write two papers about controversial topics. For one paper, you will read some extra materials made available in the copy shop. This paper will count 15% of your grade. The other paper will be based on material we covered in class. It is worth 10% of your grade.

- Class Exercises: You will be asked to complete three short assignments while we are out in the field. Each assignment is worth 5% of your grade.

- All assignments can be turned in hand-written, but the hand-writing has to be clearly legible. Chicken-scratch or otherwise sloppy assignments will not be accepted.

Course grades will be based on the following table:

93-100% A

76-81% BC

59-63% D

88-92% AB

70-75% C

58% or less F

82-87% B

64-69% CD

**Students with Special Needs:**

It is university policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students who have documented disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Please contact me as soon as possible to discuss any accommodations you might need and provide appropriate documentation.

Monday, March 20

- Topics: Introduction, The Changing Political Map, Languages in Europe, Education System
- Readings: Murphy, Alexander B. (1998): "European Languages," in: A European Geography, Tim Unwin, ed. Longman, Harlow, 34-50
- Field trip: Walking tour of the campus of the Free University Berlin

Tuesday, March 21

- Topics: Population Issues, Religious Patterns, Ethnic Conflict in Europe
- Readings: Djilas, Aleksa (1995): "Fear Thy Neighbor: The Breakup of Yugoslavia," in: Kupchan, Charles, ed. Nationalism and Nationalities in the New Europe, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 85-106

Wednesday, March 22

- Topic: Migration
- Readings: Leitner, Helga (1995): "International Migration and The Politics of Admission and Exclusion in Postwar Europe," in: Political Geography, 14(3), 259-278
- Field trip and exercise: Kreuzberg (immigrant neighborhood); exercise due on Thursday, March 23

Thursday, March 23

- Topics: Physiographic regions, Climate, Agriculture, Energy, Resources, Environment and Economy
- Readings: Saiko, Tatyana (1998): Environmental Challenges in the New Democracies," in: The New Europe. Economy, Society and Environment, David Pinder, ed., John Wiley and Sons, New York, 381-399

Friday, March 24

- Exam I
- Topic: Urban Geography I
- Readings: Danta, Darrick and William H. Berentsen (1997): "Urban Geography," in: Contemporary Europe. A Geographic Analysis, William H. Berentsen (ed.), John Wiley and Sons, New York, 195-227
- Field trip and exercise: Pergamon Museum, Downtown East Berlin; exercise due Saturday, March 25

Saturday, March 25

- Topic: Urban Geography II
- Field trip: Transect through different neighborhoods in Berlin, Egyptian Museum

Monday, March 27

- Topic: The New Berlin
- Field trip: Government Neighborhood and Potsdamer Platz, Television Tower
- Hand in discussion/opinion paper I

Tuesday, March 28

- Topics: The Cold War and the Revolutions in the 1980s
- Readings: TBA

Wednesday, March 29

- Topics: Transportation Issues
- Readings: Ross, John F. (1995): "When Co-operation Divides: Øresund, the Channel Tunnel and the New Politics of European Transport," in: Journal of European Public Policy 2(1), 115-146
- Field trip and exercise: Lehrter Stadtbahnhof, exercise due Thursday, March 30

Thursday, March 30

- Topics: The European Union
- Readings: European Union (2002): "What is the European Union," "How Is the EU Run?," "Building the New Europe: The EU and Its Neighbors," "The Euro: Completing Economic Unity in: The European Union. A Guide for Americans, <http://www.eurunion.org/infores/euguide>

Friday, March 31

- Exam II
- Hand in opinion/discussion paper II and book review