

International Winter University (IWU) Kassel 2010 Reflections on German History: Literature and Art of the 19th and 20th centuries

In this seminar we will take a closer look at the so-called `Goethe-Zeit`. We are going to see what led to Nietzsche's dictum that Goethe himself was culture. In order to do so, we will have a look at his major works and will be introduced to Goethe's concept to bring poetry and science together within the thinking. Thus, we will analyse Goethe as a scientist, i.e. Goethe's theory of colour and the "Goethe-Elephant."

In the second part of the seminar we will focus on the second half of the 19th century during which time Nietzsche proclaimed the superman ("Übermensch") according to his central thesis of the "will to power." This thesis was having a great impact on the following decades as did his diagnoses concerning a fundamental change in the hierarchy of values which describe the Christian morality as overcome. Nietzsche's type of thinking was later called "philosophy of life" and influenced many authors like Thomas Mann.

The seminar closes with a third topic: Revolutionary art movements in Germany. On a excursion to Weimar, a small town in Thuringia which has become a cultural melting pot during Goethe's time, we will see many cultural relicts of the time and we will explore the artefacts of the revolutionary art movements in Germany, like the `Bauhaus`, which was founded in Weimar, and Expressionism.

Assignment:

Students will be asked to prepare a presentation on one of the topics of the seminar. A written report will be due at the end of the course.

Credits: 4 ECTS, 45 contact hours.