

Course title:	Art in Germany from the Middle Ages to the 20th Century
Instructor:	Dr. Matthias Vollmer
Email address:	mvollmer@t-online.de
Track:	D-Track
Language of instruction:	English
Contact hours:	48 (6 per day)
ECTS credits:	6
Prerequisites:	Students should be able to speak and read English at the upper intermediate level (B2) or higher.

Course description

The course will introduce Berlin's outstanding art collections, with their wide range of masterpieces from late medieval times to the present day. We shall focus throughout on the particular circumstances that shaped the production and reception of German art, especially during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. During this long period, the formation of a German nation state and the problematic notion of a German national identity became intimately connected to the question of a German style and artistic 'expression'. A special focus will be given to the "Art of the two Germanys" between 1945 and 1989. We shall explore Germany's vibrant art history by focusing on works by artists like Martin Schongauer and Albrecht Dürer, Caspar David Friedrich, Karl Friedrich Schinkel and Adolph Menzel, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Otto Dix, Joseph Beuys and Anselm Kiefer.

Field trips include the following museums and galleries in Berlin: Deutsches Historisches Museum, the Gemäldegalerie, the Museum of Photography, the Brücke Museum, the Nationalgalleries, and the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum.

Student profile

In principle, the course is open to all students regardless of their field of study, but primarily it addresses art history students. An elementary knowledge of art and art history is advantageous, but not obligatory.

Course requirements

Regular attendance & active participation, mid-term and final exam.

Required language skills

The language of instruction is English. Language proficiency on an advanced intermediate level (B2) is a prerequisite for participation. For orientation purposes, you can assess your language skills here (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR): <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168045bb52>

Attendance

Each class consists of six teaching modules (45 minutes each). If you miss 6 modules (unexcused), your final course grade will drop by one grade. Coming more than 20 minutes

late counts as one missed module (this also applies to excursion days). If you come late to class six times (up to 20 minutes) your entire course grade will also drop by one grade. If you miss 14 modules or more (unexcused), you will fail the class. Excused absences, such as those with medical documentation, do not count toward these totals.

Grading

Active participation: 50%

Mid-term Exam: 20%

Final Exam: 30%

Readings

A digital reader will be provided.

Course schedule

Date	Program*
Monday, August 3, 2026	Introduction Overview of the content, aims and the logistic parameters of the course: grading, attendance, final exam, visits to museums (excursions) Art and National Identity Field trip: On campus or Deutsches Historisches Museum
Tuesday, August 4, 2026	The Middle Ages and the Renaissance: From Prague to Nuremberg and Wittenberg Field trip: Gemäldegalerie - Altarpieces and panel paintings
Thursday, August 6, 2026	The 19th Century: Romanticism, Historicism and Realism Field trip: Alte Nationalgalerie - Friedrich, Runge, Menzel, Böcklin
Friday, August 7, 2026	Light and the Discovery of Photography Field trip: Museum of Photography or Martin Gropius Bau Mid-term Exam
Monday, August 10, 2026	The 20th Century I - The Avantgardes Field trip: Brücke-Museum or Berlinische Galerie
Tuesday, August 11, 2026	The 20th Century II - From the Avantgardes to "Degenerate Art"

	Field trip: Neue Nationalgalerie
Thursday, August 13, 2026	The 20th Century III - Contemporary Art and the German Past Field trip: Sammlung Scharf-Gerstenberg or Hamburger Bahnhof Gallery
Friday, August 14, 2026	Final Exam in Class

*Field trips are subject to change depending on the availability of appointments and speakers. On field trip days, class hours may be adjusted.