Humanities Seminars Program
Spring 2015

Germany's Roaring Twenties

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January 26 | February 2 | February 9 | February 16

Scene from Metropolis

Berlin, capital of the Weimar Republic between the two World Wars, was one of the most exciting cities in Europe—the place of the most radical experimentation in the visual and performing arts, in mass entertainment and theater, in literature and architecture. Berlin was a laboratory of modernity. While the cultural stage was vibrant and intoxicating, the celebrated roaring twenties also was haunted by the shell shock of World War I and by economic instability, social upheaval, and political turmoil. This class explores avant-garde movements like Expressionism and Dada, as well as major works like Bertolt Brecht’s innovative play Three Penny Opera and Fritz Lang’s monumental film Metropolis. In this seminar we will consider the period’s challenges to notions of art, vast social changes, and the impact of mass culture and technological developments on twentieth-century sensibilities. And we will come to see why this period still fascinates us today.
**Required Reading:**

The additional readings will be uploaded to HSP password protected website http://course.hsp.arizona.edu closer to the beginning of the course.


- **January 26:** Introduction: From World War I to Modernity
  The German Avant-gardes: Expressionism and DADA
  
  **Readings:**
  *Berlin: A Short History* (The Roaring Twenties)
  Oswald Spengler, “The Decline of the West” (1918)
  Raoul Hausmann, “The German Philistine Gets Upset” (1919)
  “Overwrought Nerves”

- **February 2:** Technology and Modernity: Fritz Lang’s 1927 film
  *Metropolis*
  
  **Readings:**
  Fritz Lang, “The Future of the Feature Film in Germany” (1926)
  Willy Haas, “*Metropolis*” (1927)
  Stefan Zweig, “The Monotonization of the World” (1925)

- **February 9:** A New Theater
  
  **Reading:**
  Bertolt Brecht, *Three Penny Opera* (1929)
  Friedrich Wolf, “Art is a Weapon” (1928)

- **February 16:** Visual Culture and the Modern Woman
  
  **Readings:**
  Siegfried Kracauer, “Working Women” (1932)
  “The Unemployed”
  Vicki Baum, “People of Today”