

Bildung

Course Description

ECLA's core course for BA4 and Project Year students is dedicated to an investigation of the ideals that guide our pursuit of knowledge and understanding. In term 1 the focus will be on *Bildung*, a concept that has played a key role in German thought from, at least, the 18th century until today. The word 'Bildung' is commonly considered untranslatable and in class we will discuss advantages and disadvantages of some of the possible translations: 'formation', 'self-cultivation', and 'education', just to mention some of the most obvious candidates. Most of our shared readings will be from the period in which the concept of *Bildung* rose to prominence in German philosophy, literature and educational theory, i.e. the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In this period it became possible to identify "the true end of man" (Humboldt, 1791-2) or "the highest good" (Schlegel, 1799) as *Bildung*, to institute a journal dedicated to its pursuit (*The Athenäum*, 1798-1800) and to write a novel that would later be considered the beginning of a new genre best defined as the *Bildungsroman* (Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* from 1795). The aim of the class is to build up an understanding of the ideal of *Bildung* by studying some of the key texts that helped articulate and establish it. An appreciation of the classical ideal, or ideals, of *Bildung* should help us engage with some of the current discussions about the role that the pursuit of knowledge play in our lives today. Cultural critics have long complained that we live in a period of *Halbbildung* (half-cultivation) or even *Unbildung* (non-cultivation). Is this true? And if true, is it really a problem? Is the ideal of *Bildung* obsolete in our so-called "knowledge society"? Or have we lost something of great value that we should attempt to bring back to life?

Teaching

Tracy Colony, ECLA
Tobias Joho, Chicago University
Jürgen Oelkers, Universität Zurich
Julia Peters, LMU München
Ryan Plumley, ECLA
Thomas Nørgaard, ECLA (Convener)
Catherine Toal, ECLA
Theodore Ziolkowski, Princeton University

Syllabus

Week 1

Monday, Oct 3: Public holiday: no class.

Wednesday, Oct 5: Mendelssohn, On the Question: What is Enlightenment? (TN)

Week 2

Monday, Oct 10 (10:45): Blackbourn, *History of Germany 1780-1918*, Prologue (RP)

Wednesday, Oct 12 (10:45): Humboldt, *The Limits of State Action*, Chs 1-6 (TN)

Week 3

Monday, Oct 17 (10:45): Humboldt, *The Limits of State Action*, Chs 7-11 (TN)

Wednesday, Oct 19 (10:45): Humboldt, *The Limits of State Action*, Chs 12-16 (TN)

Week 4

Monday, Oct 24 (10:45): Fichte, *The Vocation of the Scholar*, Lectures 1-2 (RP)

Wednesday, Oct 26 (10:45): Fichte, *The Vocation of the Scholar*, Lectures 3-5 (RP)

Friday, Oct 28 (17:00): Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, 1 (CT) OPTIONAL

Week 5

Monday, Oct 31 (10:45): Schleiermacher, *Soliloquies*, 1-2 (TN)

Wednesday, Nov 2 (10:45): Schleiermacher, *Soliloquies*, 3-5 (TN)

Friday, Nov 4 (19:30): Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, 2-3 (CT) OPTIONAL

*** Friday venue TBD. Common dinner in town***

Week 6

Monday, Nov 7 (10:45): Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, 4-5 (CT)

Wednesday, Nov 9 (10:45): Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, 6 (CT)

Saturday, Nov 12 (17:00): Essay 1 - Deadline

Week 7

Monday, Nov 14 (10:45): Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, 7 (CT)

Wednesday, Nov 16 (10:45): GUEST SEMINAR: *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, 8 (TZ)

*** Common lunch after the seminar, with Prof. Ziolkowski ***

Week 8

Monday, Nov 21 (10:45): Novalis, *Henry von Ofterdingen* (TN)

Wednesday, Nov 23 (10:45): GUEST SEMINAR: Goethe, Conversations of German Refugees (TJ)

Friday, Nov 25: GUEST LECTURE: Hegel on Bildung (JP)

Week 9

Monday, Nov 28 (9:00): Nietzsche, Schopenhauer as Educator, §§1-4 (TC)

Wednesday, Nov 30 (17:00): Nietzsche, Schopenhauer as Educator, §§5-8 (TC)

Week 10

Monday, Dec 5 (10:45) GUEST LECTURE: The German idea of 'Bildung' today (JO)

Wednesday, Dec 7: Final Discussion: Do we need Bildung today? (TN)

Week 11

Friday, Dec 16 (17:00): Essay 2 - Deadline

Grading

Seminars, Weeks 1-5: 25%

Seminars, Weeks 6-10: 25%

Essay 1: 20%

Essay 2: 30%