

# The Blue Bear

Newsletter #4

October 2021



Dear Duke in Berlin friends near and far,

For this month's newsletter, we'd like to give you an overview of the English-language courses that we are offering this Fall semester at Duke in Berlin. We asked three of our eight students to give you an insight into three distinct courses. Due to the stark differences in semester schedules between Germany and the US, all of our courses are taught by program faculty in the Fall.

In addition to the three courses in English, all students are enrolled in an intensive German language course, taught by Jari Splettstößer (Beginning), Tin Wegel (Intermediate) and Daniela Jonas (Advanced). All three language courses meet Monday through Thursday in our DiB building on the campus of Free University in Dahlem, which is in the western part of Berlin. The language instruction that takes place in the classroom is then extended culturally and intellectually by our numerous excursions within Berlin to different sites of historical significance.

We hope that you will enjoy getting a glimpse of the courses at Duke in Berlin!

Mit herzlichen Grüßen

Tin Wegel (Resident Director)

Lina-Sofie Raith (Program Assistant)



Feel free to email us at [duke@zedat.fu-berlin.de](mailto:duke@zedat.fu-berlin.de) with any questions about the program or to get in contact with one of our current Duke-in-Berliners.

**Berlin: Architecture, Art, and the City, 1871 to the Present**

“Between the in-class lectures and excursions to Berlin’s various locales, I remember that the most awing moment of our art course came fairly early on. We were in Potsdam, visiting the Sanssouci gardens, and on that cool and sunny day I realized “Wow, Berlin really does it all.”

The city has its own particular gritty charm, which very suddenly confronts the new visitor, and which we had all started to assume was ubiquitous in the city. But the Sanssouci, and my classmates seem to agree, is one of the most beautiful locations I have ever visited. Buildings sit nestled like ruins in the forests and between streams. It was a subtle beauty, not ostentatious in the way of a French imperial complex (which I have to assume was Frederick the Great’s goal when he built the place — to show up the French). And all the way through, our teacher, Matthias Pabsch, pointed out the significance of each building, not just talking about them as a whole but also going into the nitty gritty details of each architectural feature. We asked, I remember, ever more obscure questions, but Professor Pabsch never said “I don’t know.” In fact, it seemed like he knew everything, such that we quickly sensed that his ability to comprehensively answer questions far outpaced our ability to ask them.

But I think the most enriching part of the class, for me, has been the lessons on Berlin’s urban design. Why city squares take the shape they do; why the city blocks have such a specific interior plan; etc. Even the sidewalks are built in a certain way — granite slabs in the middle with rough

cobble stones on the side — so as to efficiently direct traffic. That detail in particular impressed the class, because we noticed immediately how effective the trick had worked on us.

Now, when I walk through Berlin, I feel like I have the language to understand and describe what is happening around me architecturally, and what brought the city’s mishmash of styles and techniques into existence. More broadly, though, I think I finally have a solid grasp on what goes into creating the built environment of cities in general.”

Jake Neuffer, Wesleyan, Class of ‘23



*Friedenskirche (Church of Peace) in Park Sanssouci in Potsdam*

## POLSCI 295A / PUBPOL 201A / GERMAN 320A Environmental Policy in Europe

“As the largest member state, Germany is an influential actor in environmental policy of the European Union. This class uses discussions, debates, and role-playing exercises to cover a variety of environmental policy topics in Germany and the EU.

Professor Kraemer began the class by introducing the role of the European Union and outlining the key processes necessary to create and enact policy. After building an understanding of the EU, we covered themes including water policy, renewable energy, climate change, and environmental conflict. The class materials and resources demonstrate how individual countries and the European Union interact to shape the current climate and environmental agenda.

We also learned about Germany’s internal politics and policies. In September, Germany had a landmark federal election which marked the end of the Merkel era. Angela Merkel was Germany’s first female and longest-serving chancellor in history, in charge for the last 16 years. We followed the election and focused on what the new government and parties would mean for environmental policy in Europe.

Environmental Policy in Europe has served as an engaging space to learn about and question the policies which shape Germany and the rest of Europe. We have gained a better understanding of the country we are living in by developing an understanding of its key government institutions and environmental policy.”

Joslin Coggan, Class of ‘22



*Potsdamer Stadtschloss is the seat of the Brandenburg parliament. The construction cranes symbolize quite nicely that Potsdam and Berlin remain a work-in-progress.*

## ECON 260A / GERMAN 321A Economics of a United Europe

“Economics of a United Europe has been one of my favorite classes at Duke so far. Prof. Tolksdorf combines economics, philosophy, and history to deliver an interesting and unique course. We are as likely to discuss the role of languages and Kant’s Categorical Imperatives when forming an economic union as we are to discuss the role of central banks.

Our class combines contemporary issues around the world with EU-specific economic decisions and policies. My favorite topic so far has been our discussion of international trade and globalization with the benefits of the EU operating as a single market. I would highly recommend everyone take Prof. Tolksdorf’s class if they have the chance.”

Aly Manjee, Class of ‘24



*A popular German quote: Is that art, or can I throw it away?*