

GERM 498: Topics in German – Swiss Literature

T 4-6:45 in SPA-029C

Instructor: Dr. Walo Deuber (MHB 808 / later MHB 611)
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Office Hours: T 2:30-3.30 & R 2:30-4:30 and by appointment

The Course will present three contemporary Swiss fiction authors of distinction and their writings dealing with traditional and current Swiss cultural and political issues. We take a special approach to the oeuvre of the writers with three films showing them at work in their respective home-towns in Switzerland: Zurich, Basle and Solothurn. I made these films especially for GERM 498 at CSULB.

The Course focuses on definitions of HEIMAT and FREMDE, two key-issues in the contemporary European debate on 'European identity'. The three authors HUGO LOETSCHER, JÜRIG FEDERSPIEL and PETER BICHSEL together with the acclaimed MAX FRISCH show close ties to the USA in their work. At the same time they express concern with Switzerland as a stronghold for world-finance and isolationist attitudes toward the ongoing forming of an European Nation led by neighboring Germany, France and Italy.

Based on selected short stories and novels by the three authors and Max Frisch we will raise questions about the 'use value' of literature and language in mutual global understanding.

It is recommended to attend GERM 480: German Cinema (R 5-8:45). There I will introduce Swiss films, some of them transpositions of literature into film as Max Frisch's HOMO FABER into THE VOYAGER, starring SAM SHEPARD and FRIEDRICH DÜRRENMATTS acclaimed DER BESUCH DER ALTEN DAME into THE VISIT, starring INGRID BERGMAN and ANTHONY QUINN.

At the end of the semester students will have deepened their knowledge of contemporary German literature of which so called 'Swiss' literature is a distinct part. The students will also have gained an insight into contemporary Swiss and European social and cultural issues.

There are no required textbooks. Books of the mentioned authors, offered by the Swiss Arts Foundation PRO HELVETIA, will be distributed in week 2.

Requirements:

- Regular attendance and participation (30%)
- Knowledge of selected works by the authors shown in 3-4 page essays (2 before and 2 after Midterm – protocol of the session may count as 'essay') (30%)
- Midterm (20%)
- Final (20%)

Final: Tue, May 22nd at 5-7pm