

GMST 440A-201 –2024, Winter Term 2

Shaky Grounds: Earthquakes in German Literature from the 18th to the 20th Centuries

Instructor: Dr. Gaby Pailer, Professor of German Literature / European Transcultural Studies

Time: Monday + Wednesday, 9:30-11:00 am.



Course Description

Welcome to GMST 440A 2024!

This course is dedicated to historical seismic catastrophies and their rendering in German and other literatures of the 18th and 19th centuries. The four course modules will relate to the famous Lisbon tsunami disaster of November 1, 1755, the earthquake of Calabria and Sicily of 1783, and the earthquake of San Francisco of 1906. In all three modules we'll read renderings in dramatic or narrative form as well as eye witness accounts and other source materials, mostly in German, some of it in English, or French. All course materials are provided on Canvas.

This course is offered in hybrid mode offering in-class as well as online participation.

Some classes and final oral presentations will be on Zoom.

The main language of instruction of this course is English with the option for students to study the German versions as well. If you are taking this class for a German degree program, please contact the instructor / **No prerequisites.**

Syllabus and Course Readings

Weeks 1-2 – Introduction and Theoretical Relections

Welcome – Land Acknowledgement - Introduction to the course concept.
Nature, Culture, and the Anthropocene.

Weeks 3-5 – Module 1: Lisbon, Portugal 1755

Voltaire, *Candide, or Optimism (Candide ou l'optimisme)* (excerpts);
Johann Jakob Moritz Moritz, „An unknown German Eyewitness Report“.
Heinrich von Kleist, *The Chilean Earthquake (Das Erdbeben in Chili)*;

Weeks 6-9 – Module 2: Messina, Sicily 1783

Charlotte von Stein, *The Two Emilys (Die zwey Emilien)* (tragi-comedy, 1803).
Eyewitness reports of the Messina earthquake.
Comparison with: Sophia Lee, *The Two Emilys* (1798) (novel, excerpts).

Weeks 10-13 – Module 4: San Francisco 1906

Jack London, „The Story of an Eyewitness“ (1906);
W.S. Van Dyke (dir.) *San Francisco*, with Clark Gable, Jeanette MacDonald, USA 1936 (film).
Hermann Hesse, *The City (Die Stadt)* (narrative, 1910)

Assignments and Grading Scheme

- Participation, Preparation, Online Assignments and In-Class Group Work: 20%
- Midterm Exam (on Canvas, 75 minutes, Quiz and Essay questions): 30%
- Slide Presentation of intended final essay (on Zoom): 20%
- Final Essay: 30%

All exams and essays will include a declaration by students that this is their original work and wording, and all sources used have been indicated and referenced.

Contact

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