

## **GERMANICS GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS—WINTER 2006**

### **GERMAN 511: Survey of German Renaissance and Baroque**

Jane Brown

TTh 3:30-5:20, DEN 313

5 credits, sln: 4650

This course will develop an overview of sixteenth and seventeenth-century humanism, the Reformation, literature of the Baroque with emphasis on drama. We will consider social and religious context, developments in the other arts and the interaction with imported literary traditions. Reading will include works by Plato, Plautus, Seneca, Bidermann, Erasmus, Gryphius, Grimmelshausen, Luther, Opitz, Burckhardt, Benjamin and others. Two 3p. poetry analyses, two take-home exams.

### **GERMAN 556: Middle High German**

Charles Barrack

TTh 1:30-3:20, DEN 312

5 credits, sln: 4651

An introduction to the Middle High German language stressing reading and a command of vocabulary and concepts as an approach to the courtly and heroic literature of the Middle Ages. The course begins with a survey of the grammar and structure of the languages. Assignments will include readings in lyric and narrative poetry, ending with Hartmann von Aue's legend, *Der Arme Heinrich*. Undergraduates with some facility in reading of German texts are welcome.

### **GERMAN 580: Seminar in German Lit**

Brigitte Prutti

W 1:30-4:20, DEN 310

5 credits, sln: 4653

### ***Refractions of the Enlightenment – The Viennese Theater of Attractions***

The effacement of the high/low divide in postmodern aesthetics and the cultural studies paradigm in the humanities has strengthened critical interest in German pop and media

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culture. Austrian theater is usually not discussed in this context, although popular entertainment has been central to Viennese urban culture ever since the early eighteenth century. German and Austrian Enlightenment critics promoting the new kind of *Bildungstheater* regularly bemoaned the Viennese craving for spectacles and a badly trained audience that felt provoked to laughter even by bourgeois tragedies.

This course focuses on various forms of Viennese popular theater between the late eighteenth (Mozart/Schikaneder) and the twentieth century (Bernhard) with special emphasis on plays and playwrights from the Metternich era until 1848 (Raimund, Nestroy, Grillparzer). Traditionally, Austrian comic theater has been conceived in terms of literary sociology and a distinct local tradition (“Altwiener Volkskomödie”) or according to the literary-historical paradigm of an overarching “Baroque” tradition with a particular set of formal and thematic features. My course title alludes to a well-known concept from film studies instead. Tom Gunning has coined the term “cinema of attractions” for the non-narrative cinema before 1906 in order to call attention to its profound difference from a later cinema of storytelling without automatically privileging the latter and subscribing to a simple progress narrative. Characteristic of this early film is its exhibitionist stance, i.e. the willingness and skill with which it displays its own visibility and with which it undermines any mimetic illusion. Characteristic of Viennese popular drama is its situational poetics, a propensity for spectacle along with a highly self-conscious theatricality and several other “post-dramatic” features in the sense of Hans-Thies Lehmann’s account of contemporary theatrical practice. Hence it seems appropriate to speak of a “theater of attractions” – a term that is to underscore the heterogeneity of Viennese theater as well as its close ties to other forms of modern entertainment culture beyond the claim of its own attractiveness. Even the refined misanthrope in Hofmannsthal’s postwar comedy “Der Schwierige” wistfully evokes the popular spectacle of the fairground. At times, this Viennese *Unterhaltungstheater* seems eerily suspended between pre- and postmodernism; it is strongly allegorical as well as parodistic, heavily didactic and utterly playful (if not outright silly), witty and farcical, given to the use of special effects as well as musical interludes etc.

We will examine a generically diverse range of plays and draw on pertinent theoretical and historical materials. Requirements include regular class participation, brief reading reports, and a seminar paper in conference format to be presented at a meeting of all participants during finals week.