

## **A Story of a City: Berlin of the Enlightenment**

Summer Semester 2022

Dr. Yael Sela, Moses Mendelssohn Zentrum, Potsdam University

**Credit points:** 6

### **Course Description:**

For over a century, Berlin has been one of Europe's most exciting cities, attracting immigrants and travelers from across the globe for its multiple cultural scenes, pluralistic social fabric, religious tolerance, and intellectual diversity. Yet the story of Berlin as a city on the edge begins already in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, at a time when the capital of the Prussian monarchy had become a center of Enlightenment philosophy, literature, and arts, where tensions between court and civil society, high- and lowbrow, Jews and Christians yielded some of European modernity's most fruitful, constitutive moments and shaped such notions as tolerance, diversity, friendship, and public sphere. In this course, we will learn about some of those key moments, get to know the men and women who shaped the city's rich socio-cultural milieu, the dilemmas they faced, and the spaces they inhabited (including a class tour in Berlin-Mitte), and explore the malleability of religious, social, and gender boundaries that characterized Berlin society around 1800 and continues to do so to this day. Focus will be given to the role of the arts, sociability, and philosophy in Christian-Jewish encounters, drawing on letters, visual images, music, philosophical texts, and poetry next to secondary literature.

The course will be conducted in English.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

Upon successful completion of the course, students will have gained a better understanding of cultural aspects of the German Enlightenment and to the complexity of this concept as it was defined and practices in Christian-Jewish encounters during the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and be able to engage with core notions, values, cultural practices, and social structures of German and Jewish modernity.

**Prior Knowledge:** English proficiency required.

### **Course Requirements:**

- active participation in class discussion, reading assignments, and other activities: 30%
- Four-five assignments per term: 20% (see below)
- final essay (exam): c. 12 pp. a short analysis of one text or topic addressed in the course: 50%

### **Assignments and Exchange:**

- Students will be asked to respond to assignments on Moodle, such as commenting on a short text, visual image, audio-visual media, or the assigned readings. Four responses are mandatory throughout the semester to fulfill course requirements.
- The final exam will consist in an essay on one of the topics of the course (tbc with me).
- In addition to the bibliography and other media used during the course, a chat room on Moodle offers a space for posting your questions and exchanging ideas.

### **Other activities:**

During the semester, we will attend the Moses Mendelssohn Exhibit at the Jewish Museum, Berlin and enjoy a guided tour (in English). **This activity is part of the seminar.**

In addition, we will offer participants a tour of Enlightenment-related venues in Berlin, guided by Prof. Christoph Schulte (tbc).