Study Abroad: Berlin
A Case Study for Artistic Transformation and Discovery

Background
By 1929 Berlin was a teeming, cosmopolitan city, teetering on the edge of an abyss. The tolerant Weimar Republic would soon be replaced by an intolerant, Nazi regime, whose hubris would lead to Berlin’s brain drain and fall. Home to some of the greatest intellectuals in history, the city that had come to define Modernism itself, was on the verge of economic and political collapse, played out in the streets, cafes, cabarets, theaters, art works, films and novels. The candle was burning furiously on both ends; and rarely in history had it been so bright.

SPECIFICS
Students from all disciplines are welcome as we sleuth our way through a once divided city to uncover what it means to be alive in a particular time and place. Using the city of Berlin as a living museum, students will examine the German Avant-Garde’s participation in the social, technological, political and cultural transformation of Berlin, from the years directly preceding World War I up through the Nazi Campaign against ‘Degenerate Art.’ Alongside using Berlin’s museums, art works, architectural haunts, literary cafés and historical monuments as a case study for understanding an era in the context of its time, the students will work on various in-class exercises that are designed to provoke them into considering what makes what they do a unique expression of their own age, beliefs and histories. To dare to dig beneath the city’s scars, unearth its past and embrace its re-unification will help shed new light on what role we chose to adopt for ourselves, in our fast-paced, frequently nostalgia ridden and volatile world today. As our own President Barak Obama said, “People of Berlin- people of the world – this is our moment. This is our time.”

June 4-July 2; 3 Credits (Elective); Professor: Mary Sherman, Fine Arts Department