

Rebels without a Cause: *Adolescence, Love, Death and Rebellion in Literature*

The Sorrows of Young Werther – The New Sorrows of Young W. – The Catcher in the Rye

Course Description:

The Sorrows of Young Werther made the young Goethe a famous author over night. This partly autobiographical epistolary novel about a sensitive young man, who kills himself because the girl he loves is engaged to someone else, was appealing to many young men at the time. A “Werther fever” broke out and supposedly led to a number of copycat suicides. Besides, this “Sturm-und-Drang” (“Storm-and-Stress”) novel influenced the later Romantic Movement.

Almost 200 years later, East German writer Ulrich Plenzdorf explicitly referred to the “Werther:” The protagonist of his *The New Sorrows of Young W.*, Edgar Wibeau, picks up Goethe’s small book and becomes fascinated with what at first strikes him as old-fashioned and odd. But gradually he starts, at first subconsciously, to imitate Werther’s language and behavior, even following in his footsteps by falling in love with an engaged girl, until he finally dies, seemingly by accident. Since East German authorities and critics condemned the text for its ‘negative hero,’ it triggered a literature debate in the GDR – and became an international success.

If there is some sort of external link between the two works, it might be J. D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye* (a highly disputed and successful book as well): Plenzdorf’s anti-hero Edgar starts off as a drop-out resembling Salinger’s protagonist Holden Caulfield (esp. in his use of adolescent teenage slang) and only subsequently turns into a new Werther. All protagonists of the three texts speak in first-person perspective thus defending their radical subjectivity.

The seminar analyzes the topoi of adolescence and rebellion against suppressive rules and morals in three entirely different bourgeois societies: Germany in the late 18th century, the USA in the 1950s, and the GDR in the 1970s. We will explore the topoi of subjectivity, radicalism, and escapism as the driving forces behind this rebellion and the role that authentic (romantic) emotions play as a counterforce to reason, the dominant concept of the Enlightenment.

The seminar will be supplemented by film viewings and theater visits.

Primary texts to be read (in English and partly in German):

- Johann W. Goethe. *The Sorrows of Young Werther / Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1774)
- Ulrich Plenzdorf. *The New Sorrows of Young W. / Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* (1972/1973)
- Jerome D. Salinger. *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951)

Course assessment: One oral presentation and two take-home tests

ECTS-Points: 6

Seminar-Ziele

Am Ende des Seminars

- werden Sie einen der erfolgreichsten und berühmtesten Texte der deutschen Literatur kennen und etwas über den vielleicht wichtigsten deutschen Schriftsteller gelernt haben;
- werden Sie Ihre Kenntnisse über den „Sturm und Drang“ in der deutschen Literatur vertieft haben;
- werden Sie etwas über die Gesellschaft und über Außenseitertum in der DDR gelernt haben;
- werden Sie sich in der deutschen Sprache – mündlich und schriftlich – besser ausdrücken können. Obwohl die Seminarsprache Englisch ist, sollten Sie etwas Deutsch verstehen und bereit sein, diese Kenntnisse auszubauen, d.h. die Texte auf Deutsch zu lesen.

Seminar-Anforderungen

Aktive Teilnahme an den Seminarsitzungen: 30%

Bei diesem Kurs handelt es sich nicht um eine Vorlesung, sondern um ein Seminar. Für Sie bedeutet das: dass Sie sich auf die Seminarsitzungen gründlich vorbereiten, um dann mitdiskutieren zu können. Von Ihnen wird *aktive* Teilnahme erwartet.

Referat: 30%

Von Ihnen wird erwartet, dass Sie einmal im Laufe des Semesters zu einem der vorgeschlagenen Themen ein Referat vortragen. Ihr mündlicher Vortrag sollte 15-20 Minuten lang sein. Darüber hinaus wird von Ihnen erwartet, dass Sie in Ergänzung zu dem Referat ein Handout schreiben. In diesem Handout sollten wesentliche Informationen zum Referat stehen und die Quellen, auf die Bezug genommen wird, angegeben werden.

2 Klausuren: je 20%

Dieses Seminar beinhaltet zwei Heimklausuren auf Deutsch. Darin werden Sie anhand von klaren Fragen aufgefordert, die bisherigen Seminarergebnisse zusammenzufassen und zu den Themen selbst Stellung zu nehmen. Das heißt, es wird Fragen zur Darstellung von Fakten, also Wiedergabe von Wissen, aber auch wertende Fragen, zur Formulierung eines Argumentes, geben. Für beide Klausuren werden Sie zwei Wochen Zeit haben.

Syllabus Rebels without a Cause: Adolescence, Love, Death and Rebellion in Literature	
Lecturer: Dr. Janine Ludwig Wednesdays, 8:00-10:00 at SFG 2020 VAK-Nr.: 08-26-GE-2 Dozentin: Dr. Janine Ludwig	
April 7, 2010, 8:00	Introduction and organizational issues
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - explanation of syllabus - distribution of oral presentations - course structure and requirements
April 14, 2010, 8:00	Werther 1 – Author and background, protagonist
	Topic: Werther's character and situation Text: Werther, introduction and letters from May 4, May 10, May 12, May 15, May 22, 1771
	Oral presentation: Goethe's biography, autobiographic background and genesis of the novel, reception
April 21, 2010, 8:00	Werther 2 – Love, Feelings, Sturm und Drang
	Topics: Sturm und Drang, Werther and Lotte, egocentricity Text: letters from June 16, June 19, June 21, July 8, July 10, July 13, July 24, 1771
	Oral presentation: Sturm und Drang (incl. Goethe's speech: <i>Zum Schakespears Tag</i>)
April 21, 2010, 18:00	<i>Film: Werther, D 2008, R.: Uwe Janson, Dickinson Room</i>
April 28, 2010, 8:00	Werther 3 – Structure and content
	Text: letters from July 30, August 12 – September 10, 1771
	Structure of the epistolary novel (narratology), constellation of figures (triangle Albert-Lotte-Werther), different versions (changes

	and modifications)
May 5, 2010, 8:00	Werther 4 – Passion vs. Reason, Nature, escapism, wanderer
	Text: letters from December 24th, 1771, May 9, 1772, June 16 – September 4, 1772, September 15, 1772
	Oral presentation: Jean-Jaques Rousseau's <i>Emile</i> and <i>Contrat social</i> , innocence of the child, "back to nature", flight motif
May 5, 2010, 19:30	<i>Theater play: Die Leiden des jungen Werther, Bremer Shakespeare Company</i>
May 17, 2010, 10:00	1st take-home test about the sessions from April 7 – May 26 sent out
May 19, 2010, 8:00	Werther 5 – Suicide motif
	Text: letters from October 27 – November 22, December 4 – end (December 23, 1771) Oral presentation: Suicide
May 26, 2010, 8:00	Young W. 1 – Edgar vs. Werther
	Topic: Relationship between Edgar and Werther/Goethe, Edgar the artist/dilletante
May 26, 2010, 18:00	<i>Film: Die Leiden des jungen Werthers, DEFA 1976, R.: Egon Günther, Dickinson Room</i>
May 30, 2010	1st take-home test to be submitted
June 9, 2010, 8:00	Young W. 2 – The protagonist Edgar
	Oral presentation: Edgar as a rebel in the GDR society, reasons why the subject was partly forbidden (e.g. negative hero, individualist)
June 16, 2010, 8:00	Young W. 3 – Structure and content, author and background
	Topic: Constellation of figures (triangle Edgar-Charlie-Dieter, but also Addi, Zarembo, and Edgar's father)

	Structure of the epistolary novel (narratology), different versions (changes and modifications) Oral presentation: Plenzdorf's biography and works, genesis of the novel, reception
June 16, 2010, 17:00 Dickinson Room	<i>Film: Die neuen Leiden des jungen W., BRD 1976, R.: Eberhard Itzenplitz</i>
June 23, 2010, 8:00	Young W. 4 – Summary
June 23, 2010, 10:00	2nd take-home test about the sessions from May 26 – June 23 given out
June 30, 2010, 8:00	The Catcher in the Rye 1 – A modern outcast?
	Oral presentation: Summary and analysis of the novel and societal background
July 2, 2010	2nd take-home test to be submitted
July 7, 2010, 8:00	The Catcher in the Rye 2 – A role model for Edgar?
	Similarities and influences of Holden Caulfield on Edgar Wibeau
	2nd take-home test given back and grades given

Primary Literature:

Johann W. von Goethe. *The Sorrows of Young Werther / Die Leiden des jungen Werther*. A Dual Language Book. Ed. and translated by Stanley Appelbaum. Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 2004 [1787].

→ As Mp3 edition by Reclam Klassiker on StudIP.

Ulrich Plenzdorf. *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* (*The New Sorrows of Young W.*) Ed. with introduction and notes by J.H. Reid. Modern World Literature Series. Edinburgh: Nelson, 1979 [1972/1973].

→ English translation in: Ulrich Plenzdorf, Günter Kunert, Anna Seghers, and Others. *The New Sufferings of Young W. and Other Stories from the German Democratic Republic*. Ed. By Therese Hörnigk and Alexander Stephan. The German Library: Vol 87. New York: Continuum, 2003 [1997].

Jerome D. Salinger. *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951). New York, Boston: Little Brown and Company Edition, 1991 [1951].

Mandatory Secondary Literature:

Werther:

Diekhans, Johannes. *EinFach Deutsch. Johann Wolfgang Goethe. Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*. Paderborn: Schöningh, 2001.

Leis, Mario. *Johann Wolfgang Goethe. Die Leiden des jungen Werther. Lektüreschlüssel für Schülerinnen und Schüler*. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2002.

Rothmann, Kurt. *Johann Wolfgang Goethe. Die Leiden des jungen Werther. Erläuterungen und Dokumente*. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2005.

Schede, Hans-Georg. *Johann Wolfgang Goethe. Die Leiden des jungen Werther. Interpretationshilfe Deutsch*. Stark-Verlag, 2005.

Siepmann, Thomas. *Johann Wolfgang Goethe. Die Leiden des jungen Werther. Lektürehilfen. Ausführliche Inhaltsangabe mit Interpretation*. Stuttgart: Klett Lerntraining, 2009.

Young W.:

Introduction to: Ulrich Plenzdorf. *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* (*The New Sorrows of Young W.*) Ed. with introduction and notes by J.H. Reid. Modern World Literature Series. Edinburgh: Nelson, 1979, pp. v-xxxiii [1972/1973].

Bernhardt, Rüdiger. *Erläuterungen zu Ulrich Plenzdorf. Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* Königs Erläuterungen, Hollfeld: Bange Verlag, 2004.

Brandes, Ute and Fehn, Ann Clark. "Werther's Children: The Experience of the Second Generation in Ulrich Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* and Volker Braun's 'Unvollendete Geschichte'". *The German Quarterly*, Vol. 56, No. 4 (Nov. 1983), pp. 608-623.

Brown, Russell E. "Who Wrote Werther? Ulrich Plenzdorf's 'Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.'". *Neophilologus* No. 73 (1989), pp. 637-639.

Gast, Jonathan. *The Function of „The Sorrows of Young Werther“ in Plenzdorf's „The New Sufferings of Young W.“* Online student document.

Poppe, Reiner. *Ulrich Plenzdorf. Die neuen Leiden des jungen W. Ansichten – Wertungen – Kommentare – Anregungen für den Deutschunterricht*. Hollfeld: Beyer Verlag, 2009.

Please find more literature in the special shelf for this course ("Seminarapparat") "P03 Ludwig" in the library!