

**Syllabus**  
**UTK – FYS 129 Sec 13 – Another Brick in the (Berlin) Wall**  
**Spring 2010, Jochen Denzler, Tue 12:40-1:55**

Note: Even though this is a 1 credit hour course, we will usually need the full 75 minutes. Think of this as balanced by the fact that you will have only a light homework load and no preparation labor for a final exam.

**Contents:** We'll get glimpses of theory and practice behind the iron curtain from a blend of movies, documentary, scholarly reading, literature, music and underground jokes. It may transpire that despite the hard division of the cold war, ideas have influenced both sides across what became known as 'Iron Curtain'. We'll come to appreciate the sacrifices made by individuals to gain their freedom and review the disintegration of the GDR and the Soviet bloc that visibly began in 1989. We'll also see how the remnant of the Soviet empire continues to influence present Western society.

**Book:** You don't need to buy a book. Reading material will be provided by xerox or in the library course reserve. Specifically, among others, you'll have an opportunity to read Amalrik's essay from 1969: "Can the Soviet Union survive until 1984?" But you will find it easier to await the first few class meetings before beginning to read Amalrik's essay.

**Office hours:** are posted on my website <http://www.math.utk.edu/~denzler> and may change later in the semester. Feel free to ask for an appointment if you wish so, or to attempt drop-in. My office is **Aconda 410 B, phone 4-5325**. Take the 'tower 2' staircase, b/c other towers may lead to a dead end that doesn't connect to my office. Email is [denzler@math.utk.edu](mailto:denzler@math.utk.edu), but I may read it only after some hours of delay. — In a year or so, when Ayres Hall is renovated, my office will be there, on the Hill.

**'Ready for the World' Initiative:** This freshman seminar is offered in cooperation with UT's 'Ready for the World' initiative. Among the purposes of this initiative are the following (rephrased in my own, abridged, wording; limited to those purposes that are addressed here): to increase your knowledge of other cultures and your own, of world geography and history, literature and arts, and to evaluate the influence of issues of history on the present. While this seminar is not limited to these goals, a significant part of the seminar addresses one or several of these goals.

**Exams and Grade:** Since this course is only eligible for S/NC grading, we can skip the exams. For a successful grade you should attend regularly and participate in class activities and quizzes. If you have to miss a week or two, this will not pose a problem for your S grade, but I appreciate a brief notice of absence by e-mail. There will be quizzes. Their purpose is NOT to give you a better or weaker grade, but to guide your own understanding; they also serve an administrative purpose: namely to document and assess activities of the university within the 'Ready for the World' initiative.

**Disabilities:** Students who may need formal accommodations based on documented disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services 974-6087 in Hoskins Library. Independently any student who feels he/she may need arrangements based on the impact of a disability is welcome to contact me to discuss specific needs privately. Note that my office, like all of Aconda Court other than its first floor, is not handicap-accessible, due to the absence of elevators. The procedure is that faculty will meet students who cannot access the stairs downstairs.

**Office beyond this semester:** For the design of this seminar, it is quite possible that you would have more desire to meet with me in the office a few semesters down the road rather than right now. I encourage you to retain material from this course for later reference. Some of you might consider a study abroad in Germany, Austria, or in Eastern European countries, or choose as their foreign language German or Russian. You may want to visit some sites when an opportunity arises that you would not anticipate now. Some sites are less promoted by tourist boards than they'd deserve. We will start up some material that you could pursue individually for many credit hours worth, if you so wish. So I want to stress that you are welcome to see me also after this class is over, and we may discuss anything you wish as long as it is legal and ethical, and to the best of my competence for the matter and experience with it.

**Topics List:**

1. Overview of German, Central and Eastern European history and geography from World War 1 until now.
2. Watch the movie 'Heart of a Dog' after the novel by Mikhail Bulgakov (mid 1920's). The movie is quite faithful to the novel and will give insight into life in Moscow at that time, shortly after the communist take-over 1917/18
3. Some issues of the interplay between Science, Politics and Religion in that context.
4. History of Resistance movements: East Germany 1953, Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968, Poland in the 80's
5. Amalrik's essay from 1969: Can the Soviet Union Survive until 1984?
6. Anatomy of the Berlin Wall, and attempts and engineering prowess to escape. Based on material from the Museum at Checkpoint Charlie. (Did you ever wonder who was Charlie?)
7. Division of Germany in the mirror of popular music: Udo Lindenberg's version of Chattanooga Choo-choo, Bettina Wegner, Reinhard Mey.
8. Soviet Dissidents: Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Andrei Sakharov, Vladimir Bukovsky, Aleksandr Galich. Misuse of psychiatry.
9. Helsinki conference on security and cooperation in Europe (CSCE); Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia.
10. The demise of the Berlin Wall in 1989; Schabowski's famous press conference on Nov 09, 1989.
11. Children without love: The interesting part of this documentary is that a documentary made under a pro-Soviet regime (and still worth viewing) actually deconstructs the very hypotheses of materialism on which the regime is build.
12. The nature of infiltration and deception; persistence of former communist personnel under change of ideology.
13. Samples from Simon Burnett's book 'Ghost Strasse', illuminating facets of Germany after reunification.
14. Soviet underground jokes taken and translated from the book: "The Soviet Union in the Mirror of Political Jokes" by Shturman and Tiktin, and other sources. This material will be interspersed during the semester.