

German 890S: Kleist and His Interlocutors



Mondays, 4:40-7:10
Old Chem 119

In constant conversation with the fluidly defined movements of Romanticism, Classicism, Idealism, and Naturphilosophie, Heinrich von Kleist remained adamantly nonconformist and unclassifiable. Acerbic and incisive, tantalizing and enigmatic, violent and kaleidoscopic, Kleist's oeuvre invites, rewards, and frustrates interpretation. In this seminar, we will read dramas, stories, novellas, and occasional essays by Kleist in pairings with works of some of his chief interlocutors, primarily literary and philosophical. Authors will include contemporaries such as Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, Kant, Fichte, and Hegel, as well as Kleist's afterlives in writers such as Kafka and Christa Wolf. We will ask questions about signification, literary form, ideology, ethics, politics, subjectivity, bodies and life processes, and nationalism, among other topics. Suggestions for additional interlocutors will be taken into consideration.

Discussions in English; texts in German, with English translation option for non-CDG students.