Figures of Duplicity

In this course, we will look at the various figures of double identity and duplicity in order to learn about the history of Germany and the history of German film. The topic of double identities and deception runs like a red thread through German film history. Tricksters, con artists, double agents and eloquent liars always make entertaining heroes in movies. Watching how someone creates an elaborate web of lies and deceptions to bring to life a double identity is popular material for films, not at least because films are themselves often seen as elaborate deceptions from the “dream factory” and a story about deception is always also a story about film itself.

Double identities are often also a reaction to an atmosphere of duplicity, a culture that makes people pretend one thing, while really being another. Germany has seen two dictatorships in the twentieth century, and both during and after the reign of these authoritarian regimes, duplicity was widely common, often offering the only possible way to survive. The rigorous culture politics and persecution by the Nazi regime forced many opponents or victims to seek cover identities. Similarly, the Socialist regime of East Germany and their secret service, the Stasi, forced many people to take on double lives, either to hide their opposition and pretend cooperation, or to feign opposition in order to spy on critics.

After the collapse of either system, its supporters were, of course, eager to hide their participation and looked for ways to reinvent themselves in the new ideological systems. Con men (or women) and tricksters are popular figures during those times. After the Wende, the peaceful revolution that led to the fall of the Berlin Wall, the name “Wendehälse“ (neck craners) was the metaphor of the times.

After 2000, many of these ideological battles are over and we see new adaptations of the double identity. In an effort to come to terms with Europe's increasingly multicultural make-up, many contemporary film makers employ double or split identities to portray points of contact and conflict between different life styles, belief systems, or values.

No previous experience in the analysis of films is required for this course. In order to acquire basic skills in film analysis, we use Ed Sikov's introduction to film studies. Sikov offers an easy-to-read, hands-on guide to understanding cinematography. He clearly explains frequently used terminology and provides useful examples from widely known, popular films to illustrate his explanations. His guidelines will help you in analyzing film scenes and developing your own interpretations.

No knowledge of German is required for this course. All discussions will be in English, all films will be shown either in translation or in the German original with English subtitles. Students of German will nevertheless find it useful for improving their German language skills.
The following films are **POSSIBLE OPTIONS**. All registered students will participate in selecting films for the course from this list:

1. **Double Play and Manipulations:**
   - *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* (dir. Fritz Lang, 1930)
   - *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (dir. Robert Wiener, 1920)
   - *The Blue Angel* (dir. Josef von Sternberg, 1930)

2. **Living in a Dictatorship I:**
   - *Aimee & Jaguar* (dir. Max Farberboeck, 1999)

3. **Living under Persecution:**
   - *Jakob, the Liar* (dir. Frank Beyer, 1974)
   - *The Counterfeiters* (dir. Stefan Ruzowitzky, 2007)

4. **Hiding the Past I:**
   - *Murderes Among Us* (dir. Wolfgang Staudte, 1946)

5. **The Trickster:**
   - *Feuerzangenbowle* (dir. Helmut Weiss, 1944)
   - *The Marriage of Maria Braun* (dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1979)

6. **Living in A Dictatorship II:**
   - *Barbara* (dir. Chrisitan Petzold, 2012)

7. **Hiding the Past II:**
   - *The Legend of Rita* (Volker Schloendorff, 2000)

8. **Maintaining Opposing Believe Systems:**
   - *Men...* (dir. Doris Doerrie, 1985)

9. **Continuing Someone Else's Legacy:**
   - *Cherry Blossoms* (dir. Doris Doerrie, 2008)
   - *The Edge of Heaven* (dir. Fatih Akin, 2007)

10. **Resisting Family Expectations:**
    - *Beyond Silence* (dir. Caroline Link, 1986)