This course will survey the history and development of German cinema. Starting with canonical works by Murnau, Lang, Riefenstahl, and Fassbinder and ending with contemporary films, we will examine major trends of German cinematography during five major periods, covering diverse cinematic genres such as silent film, documentary, propaganda, avant-garde and experimental. In order to come to a better understanding of how one can define “German” cinema, our focus will be on thematic and formal aspects. This focus leads to two groups of questions: 1) What is the relationship between a specific film and its historical-cultural context? Is this relationship overt or hidden? What does (or did) a German audience see in the film? How can we in this course analyze and interpret these films from today’s standpoint? 2) German films might reflect on German issues, but is there a “German” filmic language/style and what position do these films occupy within world cinema? What are the theoretical and formal concerns of German filmmakers? Throughout the course we will also question and challenge the notion that something like a “German” national cinema exists at all. The goal of this course is to make students familiar with the German film canon, to enable them to use a variety of theoretical and technical terms for film interpretation, and to make them aware of central issues in German history and culture.