When Ferdinand Freiligrath offered the equation "Deutschland ist Hamlet" in an 1844 poem, he was not intent on paying compliments to his native country and its political situation. He also was neither the first nor the last author to identify Shakespeare's melancholy, tarrying Danish prince as a key point of reference in German literary and intellectual history. In this course we will examine a cross-section of that history of Hamlet reception, from August Wilhelm Schlegel's influential translation of Shakespeare's text and Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* to the transformation of the signifier 'Hamlet' in critical and philosophical assessments from Hegel and Schopenhauer to Nietzsche and Deleuze, and on to 20th-century literary texts by Alfred Döblin and Heiner Müller.

All readings and class discussion will be in German.