Carolin Emcke

carolin-emcke.de

Carolin Emcke, born in 1967, is a writer and philosopher. She studied philosophy in London, Frankfurt am Main and at Harvard, and earned a PhD with a dissertation on the concept of "collective identities". For several years, she worked as a foreign affairs editor and reporter, covering human rights violations and war crimes in Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, Gaza, Colombia, Haiti and elsewhere.

Since 2004, she has worked as a freelance writer. In her books, essays and columns, as well as in her artistic interventions, she explores violence and trauma, anti-democratic sentiment and racism, sexuality and desire. Her books have been published in more than ten languages worldwide. Her most recent book, *Respekt ist zumutbar: Texte zur Gegenwart*, was published in 2025.

For more than 20 years, Carolin Emcke has curated and moderated *Streitraum*, a series of public discussions at Berlin's Schaubühne theatre. Her many honours include the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade, the Johann Heinrich Merck Prize for Literary Criticism and Essay, and the Carl von Ossietzky Prize for Contemporary History and Politics. She lives in Berlin.

Books

Respekt ist zumutbar. Texte zur Gegenwart
Frankfurt 2025. Who do we want to be in times when democracy and truth are being destroyed?

Was wahr ist. Über Gewalt und Klima
Göttingen 2024. A plea for an ethics of storytelling and for thinking in utopias.

Für den Zweifel. Gespräche mit Thomas Strässle
Zürich 2022.

Journal. Tagebuch in Zeiten der Pandemie
Frankfurt 2021.

Ja heißt Ja und…
Frankfurt 2019.

Gegen den Hass
Frankfurt 2016.

Weil es sagbar ist. Zeugenschaft und Gerechtigkeit
Frankfurt 2013.

Wie wir begehren
Frankfurt 2012.

Stumme Gewalt. Nachdenken über die RAF
Frankfurt 2008.

Echoes of Violence. Letters from a War Reporter
Princeton University Press 2007.

Von den Kriegen. Briefe an Freunde
Frankfurt 2004.

Kollektive Identitäten. Sozialphilosophische Grundlagen
Frankfurt 2000.

Public Formats & Stage

Streitraum, Schaubühne Berlin
Since the 2004/2005 season. A monthly discussion series, curated and moderated by Carolin Emcke; each season follows an overarching theme (most recently culture, violence, emancipation, among others).

„In aller Ruhe", SZ-Podcast
Curated and moderated since 2023; conversations with guests from academia, politics and culture.

Theater: „Ja heißt Ja und…"
Solo play, premiered December 2018 at the Schaubühne Berlin, with guest performances at numerous theatres. Venues: Bochum (Schauspiel), Frankfurt a. M. (Schauspielhaus), Hamburg (Thalia Theater), Heidelberg, Cologne (Schauspiel), Munich (Kammerspiele), Stuttgart (Schauspiel), Zurich (Schauspiel + Kaufleuten).

Curatorial projects
"Krieg erzählen" (Narrating War). Themed days at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (House of World Cultures), Berlin, 2014 (together with Valentin Groebner). "Archiv der Flucht" (Archive of Refuge). Oral history project at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, 2021 (together with Manuela Bojadžijev).

Journalism & Writing

Der Spiegel, 1998–2006
Staff editor; as a foreign editor, on assignment in numerous crisis regions. Including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kosovo, Iraq, Colombia, Lebanon.

DIE ZEIT, 2007–2014
Author and international reporter. Reporting regions including Israel, the West Bank, Pakistan, Egypt, Iraq, the USA.

Süddeutsche Zeitung, 2014–2024
Columnist.

Freelance writer
Since 2014.

Academia & Teaching

Studies
Studied Philosophy, Politics and History in London, Frankfurt am Main and Harvard; scholarship holder of the German Academic Scholarship Foundation (Studienstiftung des Deutschen Volkes); PhD in Philosophy on the concept of “collective identities”.

Mercator Professorship
University of Duisburg-Essen, 2024.

Yale University
Visiting Lecturer in Political Theory (seminars on “Theories of Violence” and “Witnessing War Crimes”), 2003/2004.

Guest lectureships and talks
Regular guest lectureships and talks on Democracy and Human Rights, Witnessing and Justice

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Boards & Memberships

Member of the Board of Trustees of the Gerda Henkel Foundation

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Member of the Foundation Council of the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin (Institute for Advanced Study)

Member of the Moses Mendelssohn Center association

Awards & Honours

Peace Prize of the German Book Trade (2016)
Selected further awards: Theodor Wolff Prize (2008) · Johann Heinrich Merck Prize (2014) · Lessing Prize of the Free State of Saxony (2015) · Carl von Ossietzky Prize for Contemporary History and Politics (2020).

"Das politische Buch" Award, Friedrich Ebert Foundation (2005)
Ernst Bloch Advancement Award (2006)
Theodor Wolff Prize (2008)
Otto Brenner Prize, 1st Prize (2010)
Reporter Prize – Best Reportage (2010)
Journalist of the Year, medium magazin (2010)
Ulrich Wickert Prize for Children's Rights (2012)
Johann Heinrich Merck Prize, German Academy for Language and Literature (2014)
Lessing Prize of the Free State of Saxony (2015)
Lichtenberg Poetics Lectureship Award (2015)
Peace Prize of the German Book Trade (2016)
Soul of Stonewall Award (2017)
Bridge Prize of the City of Regensburg (2019)
Silvers Grant for Work in Progress (2019)
Carl von Ossietzky Prize for Contemporary History and Politics (2020)
Rosa Courage Prize (2021)
Hermann Sinsheimer Prize (2023)
"Glas der Vernunft" Award (2024)
Kompassnadel Award (2024)
Ari Rath Prize (2025)