German Language and Literature

Objectives

The German section of the Department of German, Russian, and Asian Languages and Literature offers instruction in the German language and literature aimed at providing access to many aspects of the culture, past and present, of Germany, Austria, and parts of Switzerland. German has always been one of the prime languages of international scholarship, and the reunification of Germany in 1990 has drawn renewed attention to the European and worldwide importance of that country. German majors have gone on to graduate school in German literature to prepare for a career of teaching and research or to professional schools in law, medicine, or business, entered government work, or found employment with publishing companies or business firms with international connections.

How to Become a Major

The department welcomes all students who wish to become majors in German language and literature. Nonmajors and majors are offered computer-aided instruction in German, and work in the classroom is supplemented with regular German-speaking events. Majors in German literature are encouraged to spend their junior year in Germany or any other German-speaking country. Students are especially encouraged to participate in the Brandeis Berlin Summer Program, a six-week intensive program taught in the center of the German capital. See Scott Van Der Meid in the Study Abroad office for more details.

In addition to the major in German literature, the section offers a minor in German literature and participates in the program in European Cultural Studies. (The abbreviation GECS denotes German and European Cultural Studies courses.)

Faculty

See German, Russian, and Asian Languages and Literature.

Requirements for the Minor

GER 103a or GER 104a and GER 105b are required, plus two German literature/culture courses above GER 105b. Successful completion of GER 30a or a departmental language exemption exam is a prerequisite for the minor.

Requirements for the Major

A. ECS 100a (European Cultural Studies: Proseminar/Modernism) to be completed no later than the junior year.

B. Advanced language and literature study: Required are: GER 103a, GER 104a, and GER 105a, plus any five German literature/culture courses above GER 105b, at least two of which must be conducted in German.

C. Majors wishing to graduate with departmental honors must enroll in and complete GER 99d (Senior Thesis), a full-year course. Before enrolling, students should consult with the coordinator. Candidates for departmental honors must have a 3.50 GPA in German courses previous to the senior year. Honors are awarded on the basis of cumulative excellence in all courses taken in the major and the grade on the honors thesis. One semester of the senior thesis may be counted toward the six required upper-level courses.

A major in German may obtain the Massachusetts teaching certificate at the high school level by additionally completing requirements of the Education Program. Interested students should meet with the program director.
Courses of Instruction

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<tr>
<th>1–99</th>
<th>Primarily for Undergraduate Students</th>
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**GER 10a Beginning German**
Intended for students with little or no previous knowledge of German. Emphasis is placed on comprehending, reading, writing, and conversing in German and the presentation of basic grammar. Class work is enhanced by various interactive classroom activities and is supplemented by extensive language lab, video, and computer-aided exercises. Usually offered every year in the fall.
Ms. von Mering

**GER 20b Continuing German**
Prerequisite: GER 10a or the equivalent. Continuation of comprehending, reading, writing, and conversing in German, with an emphasis on basic grammar concepts. Special attention is paid to the development of speaking skills in the context of cultural topics of the German-speaking countries. Extensive language lab, video, and computer-aided exercises supplement this course. Usually offered every year in the spring.
Ms. Geffers Browne

**GER 30a Intermediate German**
Prerequisite: GER 20b or the equivalent. In concluding the development of the four language speaking skills—comprehending, writing, reading, and speaking—this course focuses on finishing up the solid grammar foundation that was laid in GER 10a and GER 20b. It also presents additional audio and video material, films, radio plays, and newspaper and magazine articles, as well as a variety of extensive interactive classroom activities. Usually offered every year in the fall.
Ms. Geffers Browne

**GER 98a Independent Study**
May be taken only with the permission of the chair or the advising head. Readings and reports under faculty supervision. Usually offered every year.
Staff

**GER 98b Independent Study**
May be taken only with the permission of the chair or the advising head. Readings and reports under faculty supervision. Usually offered every year.
Staff

**GER 99d Senior Thesis**
Students should consult advising head. Usually offered every year.
Staff

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<th>100–199</th>
<th>For Both Undergraduate and Graduate Students</th>
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**GER 103a What You Always Wanted to Know**
Prerequisite: GER 30a
Why is 1870 an important date in German history? What/who is Wilhelm Tell of Switzerland? What exactly is the Weimar Republic? Why was it so easy for Hitler to seize power? Was Hitler German or Austrian? What is “Zwolftonmuskul”? What is Dadaism? Is Wagner’s music anti-Semitic? What was the relation between “Bauhaus” and the Nazi regime? What is the “new German film”? The “Ossies” and the “Wessies” and their trouble in getting along—why is that? All that and much more are elaborated in this cultural overview course that aims to cover German, Swiss, and Austrian history and culture, while at the same time strengthening and enhancing German language competency. Usually offered every year.
Ms. Geffers Browne

**GER 104a Let’s Talk! Shall We?**
Prerequisite: GER 30a
Designed to focus on fostering students’ oral skills. Numerous mock situations and roleplaying exercises provide students with the opportunity to develop and polish oral competency in the German language. Various mock social gatherings like student outings and parties, festive family events, romantic dates, academic and professional interview situations offer the know-how for interns to be successful and gain the most out of their experience abroad, travel and restaurant “language,” and also a certain amount of business German. All this and more are practiced in this course. Usually offered every year.
Ms. Geffers Browne

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<th>105a</th>
<th>Learning Language through Literature/Learning Literature through Language</th>
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Prerequisite: GER 30a or the equivalent. Provides broad introduction to contemporary German literature while further enhancing various language skills through reading, writing, student presentations, class discussion, and partner group activities. Covers the entire twentieth century, examining ways in which literature reflects culture, history, and politics, and vice versa. Focuses on a significant expansion of vocabulary as well as ironing out some subtle grammar traps. Students’ writing skills improve by means of numerous creative writing assignments. Speaking skills are challenged in every class, as the course is designed as an interactive language/literature course. Usually offered every year.
Ms. Geffers Browne

**GER 109a Meisterwerke Deutscher Kurzprosa**
Conducted in German.
Tailored to suit the needs of advanced intermediate students, this course explores in detail several short prose masterworks by writers including Martin Buber, Franz Kafka, Friedrich Nietzsche, Thomas Mann, Rainer Maria Rilke, and Arthur Schnitzler. Usually offered every third year.
Mr. Dowden

**GER 110a Goethe**
Open to all students. Conducted in English with readings in English translation. Explores the dialectic of reason and the irrational from the late eighteenth century in Germany and Austria until their collapse in World War I. Works by Beethoven, Kant, Mendelssohn, Goethe, Lessing, Mozart, Heine, Novalis, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Thomas Mann, and others. Usually offered every third year.
Ms. von Mering

**GECS 118a Seduction and Enlightenment**
Open to all students. Conducted in English with readings in English translation. Explores the dialectic of reason and the irrational from the late eighteenth century in Germany and Austria until their collapse in World War I. Works by Beethoven, Kant, Mendelssohn, Goethe, Lessing, Mozart, Heine, Novalis, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Thomas Mann, and others. Usually offered every third year.
Ms. von Mering
GER 120a German Enlightenment and
Classicism
[ hum ]
Prerequisites: GER 39a, A— or better in GER
30a, or the equivalent.
Careful reading and discussion (in German)
of some of the most moving dramatic
scenes and lyrical poems written by
Lessing, Klopstock, Lenz, Goethe, Schiller,
Holderlin, and others will provide an
overview of those fertile literary and
intellectual movements—enlightenment,
storm and stress, and idealism—that
eventually culminated in German
classicism. Usually offered every third year.
Ms. von Merging

GER 121a Der Eros und das Wort: Lyrik,
Prosa, Drama
[ hum ]
Focuses on the prose, poetry, and drama of
love in German literature since Goethe.
Workes by Goethe, Kleist, Novalis, Tieck,
Rilke, Hofmannsthal, Schnitzler, Treichel,
and others. Usually offered every third year.
Mr. Dowden

GER 130b Die Prinzessin und der Golem:
Maerchen
[ hum ]
Prerequisite: GER 30a. Conducted in
German.
An introduction to the genre of fairy tale in
German literature, focusing especially on
the narratives collected by Jakob and
Wilhelm Grimm, but also exploring the
Kunstmarchen and calendar stories
composed by German writers from
Romanticism into the twentieth century.
Usually offered every third year.
Mr. Dowden

GER 140a Bertolt Brecht und das Theater
des 20. Jahrhunderts
[ hum ]
Prerequisite: GER 103a or equivalent.
Conducted in German.
Examines the role of theater and drama as
“moral institution” and entertainment.
How does theater hold postwar Germans
accountable for remembering the past and
promoting social justice? Students will also
work collaboratively on a performance
project. Usually offered every second year.
Ms. von Merging

GER 145a Berlin in Literature/Literature in
Berlin
[ hum ]
Prerequisites: GER 103a, 104a, or 105a.
Course to be taught at Brandeis summer
program in Berlin.
Berlin as the covert capital of the twentieth
century and newly revitalized modern
metropolis has served as background to
many literary masterpieces. Follows the life
and work of Berlin authors, both male and
female, including site visits. Usually offered
every summer.
Ms. Opitz-Weimars

GER 150a From Rapunzel to Riefenstahl:
Real and Imaginary Women in German
Culture
[ hum ]
Open to all students. Conducted in English
with readings in English translation.
Exploring German cultural representations
of women and real women’s responses.
From fairy-tale princess to Nazi filmmaker,
from eighteenth-century infanticide to
twentieth-century femme fatale, from
beautiful soul to feminist dramatist, from
revolutionary to minority writer. Works
include major literary works, feminist
criticism, and film. Usually offered every
third year.
Ms. von Merging

GER 155a Modern German Jewish History
[ hum ]
Course to be taught at Brandeis summer
program in Berlin.
Study of Germany and the European Jews
from the period of emancipation in the late
eighteenth and early nineteenth century to
the present. Examines the role of German
Jews in German politics, economic life, and
culture, the rise of anti-Semitism in the
nineteenth century, the Nazi government’s
anti-Jewish policies to the postwar period.
Usually offered every year.
Ms. von Merging

GER 160a In the Shadow of the Holocaust:
Global Encounters
[ hum ]
Traces the experience of German exiles in
different parts of the world. Addresses
issues of identity, linguistic displacement,
problems of integration, (post) colonial
encounters, anti-Semitism and xenophobia,
nostalgia, and the experience of those who
eventually returned to Germany. Usually
offered every third year.
Ms. von Merging

GER 167a German Cinema: Vamps and
Angels
[ hum ]
Open to all students. Conducted in English
with readings in English translation.
From silent film to Leni Riefenstahl and
Nazi cinema, from postwar cinema in the
East and West to new German film after
unification, this course traces aesthetic
strategies, reflections on history, memory,
subjectivity, and political, cultural, and
film-historical contexts with an emphasis
on gender issues. Usually offered every
second year.
Ms. von Merging

GER 170a Viennese Modernism, 1890–
1938
[ hum ]
Open to all students. Conducted in English
with readings in English translation.
An interdisciplinary exploration of cultural
and intellectual life in Vienna from the end
of the Habsburg era to the rise of Nazism:
film, music, painting, theater, fiction,
philosophy, psychology, and physics. Works
by Berg, Broch, Canetti, Freud,
Hofmannsthal, Klimt, Kraus, Mach, Mahler,
Musil, Schoenberg, Webern, Wittgenstein,
and others. Usually offered every fourth
year.
Mr. Dowden

GER 180b European Modernism and the
German Novel
[ hum ]
Open to all students. Conducted in English
with readings in English translation.
A study of selected novelists writing after
Nietzsche and before the end of World War
II. Explores the culture, concept, and
development of European modernism in
works by Broch, Canetti, Doblin, Junger,
Kafka, Mann, Musil, Rilke, and Roth.
Usually offered every second year.
Mr. Dowden

GER 181a Franz Kafka’s Erzahlungen
[ hum ]
Prerequisites: GER 105a is recommended.
A detailed exploration of Kafka’s works,
life, and thought. Emphasis will be given to
his place in the larger scheme of literary
modernism. Usually offered every third
year.
Mr. Dowden

GER 182a Franz Kafka
[ hum ]
Open to all students. Conducted in English.
A detailed exploration of Kafka’s works,
life, and thought. Emphasis is given to his
place in the larger scheme of literary
modernism. Usually offered every third
year.
Mr. Dowden

GER 185b Contemporary German Fiction
[ hum ]
Open to all students. Conducted in English
with readings in English translation.
Explores the postmodernist rejection of the
German tradition in fiction after World War
II, a multifaceted confrontation with
German history and organized amnesia that
has continued into the present. Works by
Koeppen, Grass, Johnson, Bernhard,
Handke, Bachmann, Seghers, Treichel,
Sebald, and others. Usually offered
every year.
Mr. Dowden
GECS 190b German Masterworks

Offers students the opportunity to immerse themselves in the intensely detailed study of a single masterpiece of pivotal importance. Any one of the following works, but only one, is selected for study in a given semester: Goethe’s Faust (parts I and II), Nietzsche’s Thus Spake Zarathustra, Kafka’s Castle, Musil’s Man Without Qualities, Thomas Mann’s Doctor Faustus, Walter Benjamin’s Origin of German Tragic Drama, Celan’s Sprachgitter. Usually offered every year.

Mr. Dowden

Cross-Listed Courses

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ECS 100a</td>
<td>European Cultural Studies Proseminar: Modernism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECS 100b</td>
<td>European Cultural Studies Proseminar: Making of European Modernity</td>
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<tr>
<td>FA 177b</td>
<td>Twentieth-Century European Art and Architecture in Berlin</td>
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</tbody>
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HUM 125a

Topics in Humanities

MUS 65a

Music, the Arts, and Ideas in Fin-de-Siecle Vienna

Department of

German, Russian, and Asian Languages and Literature

Faculty

Stephen Dowden, Chair; Chair, European Cultural Studies; Undergraduate Advising Head (German)


Irina Dubinina, Language Coordinator (Russian)


Yu Feng, Language Coordinator (Chinese)

Chinese language.

Matthew Fraleigh

Classical and modern Japanese literature and language. Cultural and literary exchange between China and Japan. Literature and travel.

Christine Geffers Browne, Language Coordinator (German)

Foreign language acquisition. German realism. Christianity and literature. German-Jewish identity.

Robin Feuer Miller (on leave 2008–2009)


Yukimi Nakano

Japanese.

David Powelstock, Undergraduate Advising Head (Russian); Chair, Russian and East European Studies


Hiroko Sekino, Language Coordinator (Japanese)

Japanese.

Harleen Singh (on leave spring 2009)

South Asian studies. Comparative literature. Postcolonial theory and studies.

Sabine von Mering


Courses of Study:

- See Chinese.
- See East Asian Studies.
- See European Cultural Studies
- See German Language and Literature.
- See Japanese.
- See Russian Language and Literature.
- See South Asian Studies.

Greek

See Classical Studies.