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# German Language and Literature

Courses of Study:  
 Minor  
 Major (B.A.)

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## 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.

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## How to Become a Major

The department welcomes all students who wish to become majors in German language and literature. Non-majors and majors are offered computer-aided instruction in German, and work in the classroom and the Language Media Center 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. 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.)

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## Faculty

See German, Russian, and Asian Languages and Literature.

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## Requirements for the Major in German

**A.** ECS 100a (European Cultural Studies: The Proseminar) 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 towards 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.

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## Requirements for the Minor in German Literature

GER 103a or GER 104a and GER 105b is 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.

## Courses of Instruction

### (1-99) Primarily for Undergraduate Students

#### 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 I

[ fl ]

*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 10 and GER 20. 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

### (100-199) For Both Undergraduate and Graduate Students

The abbreviation GECS denotes German and European cultural studies courses.

#### GER 103a What You Always Wanted to Know

[ hum fl ]

*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 "Zwölfertonmusik"? 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? What made Falco an internationally renowned pop singer? All that and much more is 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 proficiency.

Ms. Geffers Browne

#### GER 104a Let's Talk!! Shall We?

[ hum fl ]

*Prerequisite: GER 30a.*

Designed to focus on fostering students' oral skills. Numerous mock situations and role plays provide students with the opportunity to develop and polish oral proficiency in the German language. Social gatherings of various kinds like student outings and parties, festive family events, romantic dates, academic and professional interview situations, 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 is practiced in this course.

Ms. Geffers Browne

#### GER 105a Learning Language through Literature-Learning Literature through Language

[ wi hum fl ]

*Prerequisite: GER 30a or the equivalent.*

*This course may not be repeated for credit by students who have taken GER 50a in previous years.*

Provides broad introduction to contemporary German literature while further enhancing various language skills through reading, writing, student presentations, class discussion, and partner and group activities. "Covers" the entire 20th 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 since the course is designed as an interactive language/literature course. Usually offered every year.

Ms. Geffers Browne

#### GER 110a Goethe

[ hum ]

Intensive study of many of Goethe's dramatic, lyric, and prose works, including *Goetz*, *Werther*, *Faust I*, and a comprehensive selection of poetry. Usually offered every third year.

Ms. von Mering

#### GECS 118a Seduction and Enlightenment

[ hum ]

*Open to all students. Conducted in English with readings in English translation. This course may not be repeated for credit by students who have taken GECS 108a in previous years.*

Explores the dialectic of reason and the irrational from the late 18th 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 119b Nietzsche to Postmodernism

[ hum ]

*Open to all students. Conducted in English with readings in English translation. This course may not be repeated for credit by students who have taken GECS 109b in previous years.*

Explores the dialectic of reason and the irrational from the late 19th century in Germany and Austria to the present. Works by Adorno, Benjamin, Brecht, Celan, Habermas, Heidegger, Junger, Kiefer, Thomas and Heinrich Mann, Nietzsche, Schoenberg, Spengler, and Expressionist painting and film. Usually offered every second year.

Mr. Dowden

**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 Mering

**GER 121a German Lyric Poetry**

[ hum ]

Focuses on poets, poems, and cycles of poems in the German lyric tradition since Goethe, and introduces the various forms of poetry. Acquaints the student with some important critics of German lyric, including Adorno, Benn, Gadamer, Heidegger, Heller, Hofmannsthal, Kommerell, Szondi, and others. Usually offered every third year.

Mr. Dowden

**GER 130b Märchen, Kunstmärchen, and Kalendergeschichten**

[ 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 Kunstmärchen and calendar stories composed by German writers from Romanticism into the 20th century. Usually offered every third year.

Mr. Dowden

**GER 140a Drama und Spektakel**

[ 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 Mering

**GECS 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 18th-century infanticide to 20th-century femme fatale, from beautiful soul to feminist dramatist, from revolutionary to minority writer. Readings include major literary works, feminist criticism, and film. Usually offered every third year.

Ms. von Mering

**GECS 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 18th and early 19th century to the present. Examines the role of German Jews in German politics, economic life, and culture; the rise of anti-Semitism in the 19th century; the Nazi government’s anti-Jewish policies to the postwar period. Usually offered every year.

Mr. Sheppard and Ms. von Mering

**GECS 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 Mering

**GECS 167a German Cinema: Vamps and Angels**

[ hum ]

*Open to all students. Conducted in English with readings in English translation. This course may not be repeated for credit by students who have taken GECS 165a in fall of 2001.*

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, political, cultural, and film-historical contexts with an emphasis on gender issues. Usually offered every second year.

Ms. von Mering

**GECS 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

**GECS 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. This course will explore the culture, concept, and the 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 Erzählungen**

[ hum ]

*Prerequisites:* B- or better in GER 39a, or the equivalent. GER 103b 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

**GECS 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

**GECS 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**

[ hum ]

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

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**Cross-Listed Courses****MUS 65a**

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

**ECS 100a**

European Cultural Studies Proseminar: Modernism

**ECS 100b**

European Cultural Studies Proseminar: Making of European Modernity

**EAS 125b**

Seminar in the Unofficial History of the Cultural Revolution in China

**FA 177b**

Twentieth-Century European Art and Architecture in Berlin

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Department of

## German, Russian, and Asian Languages and Literature

Courses of Study:

See German Language and Literature.

See Russian Language and Literature.

See Chinese.

See East Asian Studies.

See European Cultural Studies.

See Japanese.

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**Faculty****Robin Feuer Miller**

Dostoevsky and Tolstoy. Nineteenth-century Russian literature and comparative literature. The novel. Reader-response criticism.

**Qun Ao**

Chinese.

**Joan Chevalier, Language Coordinator (Russian)**

Foreign language pedagogy. Second language acquisition. Slavic linguistics. Sociolinguistics.

**Stephen Dowden**

German modernism. Romanticism. The Novel: Kafka, Bernhard, Thomas Mann, Broch, Musil, Goethe. Austrian literature.

**Christine Geffers Browne, Language Coordinator (German)**

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

**Yuxiang Liu**

Chinese.

**David Powelstock**

Nineteenth- and 20th-century Russian literature. Romanticism. Modernism. Czech literature. Poetry. Translation. Literary theory.

**Hiroko Sekino**

Japanese.

**Harleen Singh**

South Asian Studies. Postcolonialism. Comparative literature.

**Sabine von Mering, Undergraduate Advising Head (German)**

Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-century German literature. German women writers. Feminist theory. Language pedagogy. Drama.

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**Greek**

See Classical Studies.