
German Language and Literature

Courses of Study:
 Minor
 Major (BA)

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 Major

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 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.

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.

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

[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 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

(100–199) For Both Undergraduate and Graduate Students

The abbreviation GECS denotes German and European cultural studies courses which are taught in English.

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 “Zwölftonmusik”? 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.

Ms. Geffers Browne

GER 104a Let’s Talk! Shall We?

[fl hum]

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, and 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.

Ms. Geffers Browne

GER 105a Learning Language through Literature/Learning Literature through Language

[fl hum wi]

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 and 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 since the course is designed as an interactive language/literature course. Usually offered every year.

Ms. Geffers Browne

GER 109b Meisterwerke Deutscher Kurzprosa

[hum]

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

[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. Explores the dialectic of reason and the irrational from the late eighteenth century in Germany and Austria until its 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. Explores the dialectic of reason and the irrational from the late nineteenth 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 Der Eros und das Wort: Lyrik seit Goethe

[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, Bann, Gadamer, Heidegger, Heller, Hofmannsthal, Kommerell, Szondi, and others. Usually offered every third year.
Mr. Dowden

GER 130b Die Prinzessin und der Golem: Märchen

[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 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 Mering

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

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 eighteenth-century infanticide to twentieth-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 eighteenth and early nineteenth century to the present. Examines the role of German Jews in German politics, economic life, and culture; the rise of antisemitism in the nineteenth century; the Nazi government's anti-Jewish policies to the postwar period. Usually offered every year.
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, antisemitism 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.

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 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. Explores the culture, concept, and development of European modernism in works by Broch, Canetti, Döblin, Junger, Kafka, Mann, Musil, Rilke, and Roth. Usually offered every second year.
Mr. Dowden

GER 181a Franz Kafka's Erzählungen

[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

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

HUM 125a Topics in the Humanities

[hum]

An interdisciplinary seminar on a topic of major significance in the humanities; the course content and instructor vary from year to year; may be repeated for credit with instructor's permission. Usually offered every third year.
Staff

Cross-Listed Courses

ECS 100a

European Cultural Studies Proseminar:
Modernism

ECS 100b

European Cultural Studies Proseminar:
Making of European Modernity

FA 177b

Twentieth-Century European Art and
Architecture in Berlin

MUS 65a

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

Department of
**German, Russian, and
Asian Languages and Literature**

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.

Faculty
Robin Feuer Miller, Chair

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

Stephen Dowden, Chair, European Cultural Studies

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

Irina Dubinina, Language Coordinator (Russian)

Bilingualism. Russian heritage speakers. Teaching language through culture/film/theater. Second-language acquisition in Russian. First-language attrition.

Yu Feng

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 and Undergraduate Advising Head (German)

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

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

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

Hiroko Sekino, Language Coordinator (Japanese) (on leave fall 2007)

Japanese.

Harleen Singh

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

Sabine von Mering

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

Greek

See Classical Studies.