Germanic Languages and Literatures

Germanic Languages and Literatures offers a diverse and challenging program of study in the language, literature and culture of the German-speaking countries. In this program, students engage in intensive study of the German language and explore German literature and culture, from the Middle Ages to the present. They also have the opportunity to learn business German and to study the politics and culture of contemporary Germany.

Our six-semester language core curriculum aims to provide students with the linguistic and cultural skills needed to communicate effectively in a German language environment. Beginning (100-level) courses combine intensive interactive classroom activities with at-home preparation and reinforcement activities (following a “flipped-classroom” approach) to enable students to rapidly acquire the basics of German vocabulary and grammar. Intermediate (200-level) courses are designed to expand and deepen students’ understanding of German society and culture while furthering the development of speaking, writing, listening, and reading skills. Both 100- and 200-level courses work toward the completion of large chapter projects, which prepare students to communicate in various modalities in real-life scenarios. In advanced (300-level) language courses, students refine their core skills, acquire new knowledge of complex grammatical structures, and improve their ability to express sophisticated ideas orally and in writing.

In Washington University’s German program, students take courses from internationally recognized faculty members who are leaders in their fields and who have been recognized for their expertise in undergraduate teaching. Faculty areas of interest include medieval through 21st-century literature, history, film and media, translation, German-Jewish studies, music and sound studies, narrative theory, second-language acquisition, and gender studies. All German classes are small, thus facilitating lively faculty-student interaction. Our collection of contemporary German literature, housed in Olin Library, is the largest in North America and attracts many visiting scholars to our campus.

Students of German can choose among several study abroad programs, and they can take advantage of an array of cocurricular activities, including film series, the national German honor society Delta Phi Alpha, lectures by guest speakers, and readings by visiting authors. Many German students also elect to share their interest in German with the next generation of students by assisting with our annual German Day, which is hosted for high school students from Missouri and Illinois.

A degree in German prepares students for a wide range of future pursuits, including graduate study in such fields as German studies, language education, comparative literature and art history. Students frequently combine a degree in German with another major in the college and, upon graduation, earn advanced degrees in law, medicine, economics, business, engineering, environmental studies, and international and area studies. Our graduates pursue work in diverse fields, from academia to international banking and from diplomacy to publishing.

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Faculty

Chair

Lynne Tatlock (https://german.wustl.edu/people/lynne-tatlock/)
Hortense and Tobias Lewin Distinguished Professor in the Humanities
Director, Comparative Literature
PhD, Indiana University
17th-, 19th- and 20th-century novel and book history; gender; nationalism; translation

Endowed Professor

Gerhild Williams (https://german.wustl.edu/people/gerhild-williams/)
Barbara Schaps Thomas and David M. Thomas Professor in the Humanities
PhD in Comparative Literature, University of Washington
Early modern German and French literature and culture; demonology; Ottoman Eurasia

Professors

Matt Erlin (https://german.wustl.edu/people/matt-erlin/)
Professor of German
PhD, University of California, Berkeley
18th- and 19th-century German literature; intellectual history; digital humanities; material culture

Erin McGlothlin (https://german.wustl.edu/people/erin-mcglothlin-0/)
Vice Dean of Undergraduate Affairs
PhD, University of Virginia
Contemporary literature; Holocaust studies; Jewish studies; narrative theory

Associate Professor

Caroline Kita (https://german.wustl.edu/people/caroline-kita/)
PhD, Duke University
Austrian literature; Jewish studies; music and sound studies; theater

Assistant Professors

Aylin Bademsoy (https://german.wustl.edu/people/aylin-bademsoy/)
PhD, University of California, Davis
Majors

The Major in Germanic Languages and Literatures

Total units required: 25

Required courses:

• German 340C German Literature and the Modern Era and its 1-unit discussion section German 340D German Literature and the Modern Era
  • Or German 341 German Thought and the Modern Era and its 1-unit discussion section German 341D German Thought and the Modern Era
  • Or German 342 German Literature and the Premodern Era and its 1-unit discussion section German 342D German Literature and the Premodern Era
• The senior assessment (undertaken in conjunction with a 400-level seminar)

To be admitted to any 400-level courses except German 402 Advanced Grammar and Style Lab, German 403D Advanced Vocabulary and Usage, German 404 Germany Today, and German 408D German as a Language of Business, students must take German 340C/German 340D
  • Or German 341/German 341D
  • Or German 342/German 342D

Admission to 400-level courses (except German 402, German 403D, German 404 and German 408D) without the completion of German 340C/German 340D, German 341/German 341D, or German 342/German 342D is by departmental permission only.

Elective courses:

Students interested in studying German may declare German as their major or second major. Majors and second majors are required to complete 25 credit units of upper-level courses (202D and higher), at least 12 of which are at the 400 level. If students begin German at Washington University and follow the regular sequence of courses (German 101D Basic German: Core Course I–German 102D Basic German: Core Course II–German 201D Intermediate German: Core Course III), they will be ready to begin the German major after three semesters. With the exception of German 340C or German 341 or German 342, only courses taught in German will count toward the major. All majors and second majors are required to participate in the senior assessment interview in the final semester of their senior year.

Applications for admission to the honors program must be submitted by the first week of classes in the student’s final year of study.

Note: For both majors and minors, at least half of the courses at the 300 level and above must have been acquired either in residence at Washington University or in overseas programs affiliated with Washington University.

Additional Information

Study abroad: German majors or minors are encouraged to participate in one of our overseas study programs. The German department sponsors a semester and a year abroad at the University of Tübingen, Germany. To participate in the Tübingen program, students must complete German 202D (for the semester program), German 301D (for the year program), or their equivalent by the time the program begins. Upon returning to campus, German majors are required to take at least one 400-level course (other than German 497–German 498) during their senior year.

Washington University sponsors a summer program in Berlin, Germany. Students who have taken at least one semester of German may be eligible for this intensive language program. Students studying business or engineering/computer science are also encouraged to consider the study abroad programs in Germany offered by Olin Business School and the McKelvey School of Engineering.

Departmental Distinction in German and Latin Honors in German:

Students who wish to be eligible for distinction in German must undertake a project in German during their final year at Washington University. There are three ways to achieve honors in German: (1) honors by course work and portfolio; (2) honors by creative project; or (3) honors by thesis. Students receiving distinction in German may
additionally qualify for Latin honors in German. By May 15 of the junior year, these students choose a project or portfolio with the help of a faculty advisor from the department, enroll in the appropriate course work during the senior year, and submit completed projects immediately following spring break of the senior year.

Minors

The Minor in Germanic Languages and Literatures

Total units required: 16

Required courses: Students who intend to minor in German must complete 16 upper-level (202D and higher) credit courses taught in German. With the exception of German 340C, German 341, and German 342, only courses taught in German will count toward the minor. At least 3 of the 16 required units must be at the 400 level.

Note: For both majors and minors, at least half of the courses at the 300 level and above must have been acquired either in residence at Washington University or in overseas programs affiliated with Washington University.

We strongly recommend that minors take German 340C German Literature and the Modern Era with discussion section or German 341 German Thought and the Modern Era with discussion section or German 342 German Literature and the Premodern Era with discussion section because these courses serve as prerequisites for all 400-level courses except German 402, German 403D, German 404 and German 408D. Any credits obtained at the 300 or 400 level during the summer institute program in Göttingen may count toward the minor.

Courses


L21 German 101D Basic German: Core Course I

Introductory program; no previous German required. Students will develop their competence in listening, speaking, reading, and writing German by means of interpersonal, interpretive and presentational communicative practice. This first course serves as an introduction to German grammar and culture; goals range from developing the communicative skills necessary to find an apartment to being able to read modern German poetry. Students will learn how to apply their knowledge of basic cases and tenses in order to hold a conversation or write a letter describing their interests, family, goals, routines, etc., and to discover personal information about others. Students who complete this course successfully should enter German 102D.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: LCD, LS BU: HUM EN: H

L21 German 102D Basic German: Core Course II

Continuation of German 100D or 101D. In preparation for more advanced academic study in German, this second course will further introduce students to fundamental German grammar, culture and history. It is comprised of a combination of situational lessons and tasks which will challenge their critical thinking abilities. Students in 102D will familiarize themselves with the language necessary to understand and give directions, apply for a job, and speak with a doctor; students will also read more advanced content such as Grimm’s fairy tales and a text from Franz Kafka. Prerequisite: German 100D, 101D, the equivalent, or placement by examination. Students who complete this course successfully should enter German 201D.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: LCD, LS BU: HUM EN: H

L21 German 201D Intermediate German: Core Course III

Continuation of German 102D. This course is designed to expand and deepen students’ understanding of modern German society and culture and to help them improve their skills in all four key areas of foreign-language learning: reading, speaking, listening and writing. All class discussions and assignments will be in German in order to provide students with an opportunity to expand their active and passive vocabulary and gain confidence in their ability to communicate in the language. Prerequisite: German 102D, the equivalent, or placement by examination. Students who complete this course successfully should enroll in German 202D.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD, LS BU: HUM EN: H

L21 German 202D Intermediate German: Core Course IV

Continuation of German 201D. In preparation for study at the advanced level, this fourth-semester course will continue the four-skills based approach of 201D, focusing on a range of cultural topics relevant to the German-speaking lands, including diversity in modern German society, the media, local and national politics, and transatlantic relations. The course also includes additional review of grammatical structures that will enable you to express yourself more fluently and idiomatically in German. All class discussion and assignments will be in German, in order to provide you with an opportunity to expand your active and passive vocabulary and gain confidence in your ability to communicate in the language. Prerequisite: German 201D, the equivalent, or placement by examination. Students who complete this course successfully should enroll in German 301D.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: LCD, LS BU: HUM EN: H

L21 German 301D Advanced German: Core Course V

This course involves the discussion of literary and non-literary texts in combination with an intensive grammar review. It also presents a systematic introduction to the expressive functions of German, with an emphasis on spoken and written communication. In addition to the regular class meetings, students should sign up for a twice-weekly subsection. Prerequisite: German 202D and German 210D or equivalents, or placement by examination. Students who complete this course successfully should enter German 302D.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: LCD, LS BU: HUM EN: H

L21 German 302D Advanced German: Core Course VI

Continuation of Ger 301D. Refinement and expansion of German communication skills (speaking, listening, writing, reading), deepening understanding of German grammatical structures, acquisition of more sophisticated and varied vocabulary, introduction to stylistics through discussion, and analysis of literary and nonliterary texts. In addition to the regular class meetings, students should sign up for a twice-weekly subsection. Prerequisite: Ger 301D or equivalent, or placement by examination. Students completing this course successfully may enter 400-level courses. Note that German 340C/340D, German 341/341D, and German 342/342D are prerequisites for most 400-level courses.

Credit 4 units. A&S IQ: LCD, LS BU: HUM EN: H

L21 German 313 Conversational German

Practice in speaking and vocabulary development in cultural contexts. Prerequisite: German 210D, equivalent, or placement by examination. May be repeated for credit.

Credit 1 unit. A&S IQ: LCD EN: H
L21 German 331 Topics in Holocaust Studies: Children in the Shadow of the Swastika
This course will approach the history, culture and literature of Nazism, World War II and the Holocaust by focusing on one particular aspect of the period — the experience of children. Children as a whole were drastically affected by the policies of the Nazi regime and the war it conducted in Europe, yet different groups of children experienced the period in radically different ways, depending on who they were and where they lived. By reading key texts written for and about children, we will first take a look at how the Nazis made children — both those they considered “Aryan” and those they designated “enemies” of the German people, such as Jewish children — an important focus of their politics. We will then examine literary texts and films that depict different aspects of the experience of European children during this period: daily life in the Nazi state, the trials of war and bombardment in Germany and the experience of expulsion from the East and defeat, the increasingly restrictive sphere in which Jewish children were allowed to live, the particular difficulties children faced in the Holocaust, and the experience of children in the immediate postwar period. Readings include texts by Ruth Klüger, Harry Mulisch, Imre Kertész, Miriam Katin, David Grossman and others. Course conducted entirely in English. Open to freshmen. Students must enroll in both main section and a discussion section.
Credit 1 unit.
Prerequisite: German 302 or the equivalent.

L21 German 402 Advanced Grammar and Style Lab
Take your German skills to the next level! This 1-unit lab is designed for advanced students seeking to master the finer points of German grammar and style through targeted exercises and discussion. Students will learn to construct sophisticated, elegant, and accurate sentences, with the goal of improving their effectiveness as writers and speakers of German. A rotating weekly focus will cover such topics as: complex sentence structures; advanced passive and subjunctive forms; idiomatic prepositional and verb phrases; and infinitive constructions. Prerequisite: German 302 or the equivalent.
Credit 1 unit.

L21 German 341 German Thought and the Modern Era
In this introductory to the intellectual history of the German-speaking world from roughly 1750 to the present, we will read English translations of works by some of the most influential figures in the German tradition, including Kant, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Adorno, Heidegger, Arendt, Habermas, and others. Our discussions will focus on topics such as secularization, what it means to be modern, the possibility of progress, the role of art and culture in social life, the critique of mass society, and the interpretation of the Nazi past. We will consider the arguments of these thinkers both on their own terms and against the backdrop of the historical contexts in which they were written. Open to first-year students, non-majors and majors. Admission to 400-level courses (except 402, 403D, 404, and 408D) is contingent on completion of this course or 340C/340D. The main course is conducted in English, so this will only qualify for major or minor credit when taken in conjunction with one-hour discussion section in German (L21 341D).
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM; ETH: IS; EN: H
L21 German 404 Germany Today
This course is an introduction to the history, politics, and culture of contemporary Germany from 1945 to the present. Topics include the cultural construction of identity in post-unified Germany; European integration and the post-wall economy; the German constitution, electoral system, and current elections; current debates and controversies; political parties and leading political figures; the role of literature, film, music, the visual arts, media, and popular culture; and the role of universities. Discussions, readings, and papers in German. Prerequisites: German 302D and German 340C/340D or German 341/341D or German 342/342D. Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD, LS; Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: IS EN: H

L21 German 408D German as a Language of Business
This course introduces students to concepts and issues relevant to German business and economics and helps them to develop the language skills necessary to succeed in the German business world. We concentrate on the basic elements of the German economic system, looking at Germany as a site of production and exchange, the legal structure of German firms, the relations between labor and management, and strategies for product development and marketing in national and international contexts. Students also are introduced to specific German business practices, including forms of communication, management styles and general corporate culture. Students learn business vocabulary, writing skills for business correspondence, oral presentation techniques, and reading and comprehension strategies for German newspapers and news reports. All discussions, readings and assignments are in German. Prerequisite: German 302D. Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: LCD, LS BU: IS EN: H

L21 German 4100 German Literature and Culture, 1150-1750
This course involves the exploration of medieval and early modern literature and culture within sociohistorical contexts. Genres and themes vary and may include visual culture; representation; the development of fictionality and historical writing; questions of race, gender, and class; courtly culture; law; magic and marvels; and medical and scientific epistemologies. Readings may include such genres as the heroic epic, drama, "Mínnesang," the courtly novel, the Arthurian epic, fables, the novella, religious or devotional literature, witch tracts, pamphlets, political writings, the "Volksbuch," the picaresque novel, and the essay. Discussion, readings, and papers are in German. Prerequisites: German 302D and German 340C/340D or German 341/341D or German 342/342D. Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD, LS, WI BU: HUM IS: EN H

L21 German 4101 German Literature and Culture, 1750-1830
This course explores the literature and culture of the Enlightenment, Storm and Stress, Weimar Classicism, and Romanticism within sociohistorical contexts. Genres and themes vary and may include the representation of history, absolutism and rebellion, the formation of bourgeois society, questions of national identity, aesthetics, gender, romantic love, and the fantastic. Readings and discussions include texts by authors such as Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, Kant, Novalis, Günderode, the Brothers Grimm, Kleist, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Eichendorff, and Bettina von Arnim. Discussion, readings, and papers are in German. Prerequisites: German 302D and German 340C/340D or German 341/341D or German 342/342D. Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD, LS, WI Art: HUM

L21 German 4102 German Literature and Culture, 1830-1914
This course explores an introduction of 19th-century literature and culture within sociohistorical contexts. Genres and themes vary and may include the representation of history, liberalism and restoration, nationalism, industrialization, colonialism, class, race and gender conflicts, materialism, secularization, and fin-de-siècle. Readings and discussions include texts by authors such as Buchner, Heine, Marx, Storm, Keller, Meyer, Fontane, Droste-Hülshoff, Nietzsche, Eibner-Eschenbach, Schnitzler, and Rilke. Discussions, readings, and papers are in German. Prerequisites: German 302D and German 340C/340D or German 341/341D or German 342/342D. Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD, LS, WI Arch: HUM Art: HUM EN: H

L21 German 4103 German Literature and Culture, 1914 to the Present
This course is an exploration of modern and contemporary literature within sociohistorical contexts. Genres and themes vary and may include the representation of history, the crisis of modernity, the two World Wars, the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich, gender relations, the women’s movement, and postmodern society. Readings and discussions of texts include authors such as Wedekind, Freud, Mann, Kafka, Brecht, Seghers, Boell, Bachmann, Grass, and Wolf. Discussions, readings, and papers are in German. Prerequisites: German 302D and German 340C/340D or German 341/341D or German 342/342D. Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD, LS, WI Art: HUM BU: HUM EN: H

L21 German 4104 Studies in Genre
This course explores the definition, style, form, and content that characterize a specific genre. It will investigate the social, cultural, political, and economic forces that lead to the formation and transformation of a particular genre. Students will examine generic differences and the effectiveness of a given genre in articulating the concerns of a writer or period. Topics and periods vary from semester to semester. Discussions, readings, and papers are in German; some theoretical readings are in English. Prerequisites: German 302D and German 340C/340D or German 341/341D or German 342/342D. Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD, LS, WI Arch: HUM Art: HUM EN: H

L21 German 4105 Topics in German Studies
This course focuses on particular cultural forms such as literature, film, historiography, social institutions, philosophy, and the arts or on relationships between them. The course examines how cultural meanings are produced, interpreted, and employed. Topics vary and may include national identity, anti-semitism, cultural diversity, the construction of values, questions of tradition, the magical, the erotic, symbolic narrative, and the city. The course may address issues across a narrow or broad time frame. Discussions, readings, and papers are in German. Prerequisites: German 302D and German 340C/340D or German 341/341D or German 342/342D. Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD, LS, WI Arch: HUM Art: HUM EN: H

L21 German 4106 Studies in Gender
This course investigates the construction of gender in literary and other texts as well as their sociohistorical contexts. Particular attention will be paid to the gendered conditions of writing and reading, engendering of the subject, and indicators of gender. Topics and periods vary from semester to semester and include gender and genre, education, religion, politics, cultural and social institutions, science, sexuality, and human reproduction. Discussions, readings, and papers are in German; some theoretical readings are in English. This course may be repeated with different content. Prerequisites: German 302D and German 340C/340D or German 341/341D or Ger 342/342D. Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD, LS, SD, WI EN: H
L21 German 432 Undergrad Seminar: What Dreams May Come: Explorations of the Psyche in Viennese Modernism
This course investigates the relationship of the burgeoning field of psychoanalysis to modernist art and literature in Vienna at the beginning of the 20th century. Examining literary texts and artworks alongside theories of dreams and the unconscious by thinkers such as Ernst Mach and Sigmund Freud, we will analyze the ways that visual artists, composers, and poets sought to divulse the inner workings of the psyche. Our discussion will focus on key questions: What forms and what visual, aural, and verbal languages were developed to represent subjective experience? How did theories of memory and trauma and ideas about gendered psyches shape the depiction of individual agency in these works? What can these works tell us about the larger societal forces at play in this cultural moment? Readings will include the drama, poetry, and novels of Arthur Schnitzler and Hugo von Hofmannsthal; musical works by Mahler and Schoenberg; and the visual art of Gustav Klimt, Helene Funke, and Oskar Kokoschka. Readings and discussion in German. Prerequisites: German 302D; German 340C/340D, German 341/341D, or German 342/342D.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM EN: H

L21 German 4381 Contemporary German Literature
Taught by the Max Kade writer and critic in residence, the course deals with the most recent trends and developments in contemporary German literature, including its multicultural, feminist, and postcolonial aspects. In all, the writer and critic will deal with approximately eight literary texts during the semester. The writers generally include a work of their own and give an idea of their personal poetic. Admission for undergraduate senior German majors is allowed only with permission of the Director of Graduate Studies.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM; LCD Arch: HUM Art: HUM EN: H

L21 German 457 Introduction to Linguistics and the Structure of German
This course is an introduction to the structure of the German language and to linguistic theory: phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics, as well as semiotic, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic theories. Prerequisite: Undergraduates may only take this course with permission of the director of graduate studies.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: LCD EN: H

L21 German 490 Undergraduate Topics in German Film: Introduction to German Cinema
In this undergraduate course, we will watch and discuss some of the great highlights of German film history. The course will provide students with a visual and linguistic foundation for discussing German film from the early days of cinema to the present. To cover such an extensive time span and range of cinematographic output, we will view representative works from various periods, genres, and authors that deal with a wide variety of themes. Class discussions will address the social and cultural significances of cinematic production in 20th- and 21st-century German culture. Readings and discussion in German. Prerequisites: German 302D AND German 340C/340D OR German 341/341D OR German 342/342D or permission of the Director of Undergraduate Studies.
Credit 3 units. Art: AH BU: HUM

L21 German 493 The Task of the Translator
This course offers an introduction to the theory and practice of translation, and it consists of three main components. First, students will have the opportunity to translate a wide range of fictional and nonfictional texts from a variety of genres (short stories, philosophy, journalism, academic prose). The focus will be on translation from German to English, but we will also translate from English to German. Next, we will read selections from key works on the theory of translation, from Martin Luther's 16th-century treatise on his Bible translation to 20th-century essays by philosophers like Walter Benjamin. Finally, we will read and discuss excerpts from some of the most celebrated literary and philosophical translations of the past 200 years, including German translations of authors ranging from Shakespeare to J.K. Rowling as well as English translations of authors such as Goethe and Kafka. This course aims to give students a sense of the challenges and rewards of translation as well as a deeper understanding of the relationship between language, thought, and culture. Prerequisites: German 302D and German 340C/340D or German 341/341D or German 342/342D.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM; LCD Arch: HUM Art: HUM EN: H

L21 German 497 Independent Work for Senior Honors
Research for an Honors thesis, on a topic chosen in conjunction with the advisor. Emphasis on independent study and writing. Open to students with previous course work in German at the 400 level, an overall 3.0 grade point average, and at least a B+ average in advanced work in German. Prerequisites: senior standing and permission of the undergraduate advisor.
Credit 3 units.

L21 German 498 Independent Work for Senior Honors
Continuation of German 497. Completion of thesis. Quality of the thesis determines whether the student receives credit only or Honors in German. Prerequisite: German 497.
Credit 3 units.