

Intermediate German II: German in the World

Spring 2021

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MWF 10:25-11:15

German 20202
Via Zoom

Brief Course Description

Germany is a fascinating country, as are other German-speaking countries, such as Austria and Switzerland. This course will help students explore distinctive aspects of Germany and the German-speaking world, specifically in their difference from the United States. Along with this thematic focus, students will work to expand their vocabulary and strengthen and refine their skills in speaking, writing, reading, and listening. Students will work toward greater fluency, accuracy, and complexity of expression.

Under the rubric “German in the World,” the course will introduce diverse units on Germany, including history; the political system, including the constitution and political parties; society, including multicultural aspects; culture; the economy; and the educational system, including the German university. We will also discuss distinctive traditions and everyday life. We will consider unusual and fascinating dimensions of the language, including proverbs and beautiful or fascinating words as well as cognates and comparisons with another Germanic language, English. In addition, we will explore quality of life indices (an area where German-speaking cities score remarkably well); selected cities and university towns, including Berlin and Heidelberg; regional differences and the various German-speaking countries, especially Austria and Switzerland; religion in the German-speaking world; and stereotypes of the Germans and of the various German-speaking areas. We will also consider a variety of German jokes.

Students will have flexibility in determining further topics, some of which can be explored collectively, others in groups or individually. Other possible topics include, for example, the position of Germany as part of Europe, including questions about the European Union and the Euro; German architecture, art, and music; the nearly unrivaled German philosophical tradition; religious diversity and the prominent German theological tradition; German views of the United States; the German sports culture; German dialects; recreational trends and tourism; cuisine, beer, and wine; and German media.

In addition, we will also include a selection of short and accessible readings so that students have modest exposure to a few of the many great German writers and thinkers. Previous authors have included Kant, Goethe, Schiller, Hegel, Hölderlin, Heine, Mörike, Rilke, Kafka, Tucholsky, Brecht, Tawada, and Benedikt. We will also include recent political addresses and current events. In addition, we will include some films from various periods in German history.

In short, you will find that this course reinforces and deepens your interest in, and knowledge of, Germany and the German-speaking world, and so connects very well to your own existential interests. Because the goal of the course is to help you advance with the language by connecting

your learning of German with your interests, including your curiosity about Germany and other German-speaking countries, suggestions of topics and statements of preferences are welcome at any time.

Students' advancement in the German language will emerge from their content-based work. On a few occasions we will, as needed, step back and look at selected issues of grammar and pronunciation to help ensure students' advancement in the language.

By connecting their language learning with their interests in the German world, students will become more knowledgeable and better conversationalists in German. Students will move further toward the goal of being able to function meaningfully in a German context, eventually at a professional level. They will also prepare themselves for a life-long engagement with German language, culture, and society.