

**Department:** German

**Course No:** 1169 [169]

**Credits:** 3

**Title:** Contemporary Germany in Europe

**Content Area:** CA1-Arts and Humanities

**Diversity:** CA4 International

**Course Information:** a. This course familiarizes students with contemporary German society as a part of the European Community and presents the cultural and historical elements that shape the diversity of everyday life in Germany in the 21st century. Students will explore a range of topics, including reunification, minorities, education and youth, the arts, gender, and politics and place these topics within the context of the European Community. The goal of the course is for students to gain insight into the diversity of the European Union and its cultural and political issues (including immigration, East and West, nationalism, religion) by taking united Germany as an example. b. Requirements for this course include critical reading of fiction and non-fiction and newspaper and magazine articles. Students have to hand in 1-2 page response papers for larger texts, and they send questions via e-mail prior to each class. In addition to taking a mid-term and a final exam, they are required to conduct one informant interview (interviewee has to have lived in Europe for a period of at least 1 year) and one native informant interview (interviewee has to have European citizenship), class size permitting. c. Major themes and topics of the course are: a) analyzing cultural differences with regard to topics familiar to American university students such as race, class, gender, national identity, religion, minorities, immigration, leisure time and work; b) familiarize students with the political and social structures of Germany and with the cultural complexities of the European Union.

**Meets Goals of Gen Ed:** This course will help students become articulate (1) as it will expand their knowledge and vocabulary to include terms and information about another culture, in fact, about many cultures and countries that are part of the European Union. They will acquire intellectual breadth and versatility (2) as well as acquire critical judgment (3) as they will be exposed to the inner workings of German and European everyday life, by contemplating and analyzing comparative questions such as:

a. If you were a young man/woman in Germany today, what hopes and fears would you probably have, and how would you approach your education, job prospects, parent generation and peers? What meaning do these elements have in your life and how important may they be to your German peers?

b. How have German identities changed after reunification, in a multicultural society, and within the growing European Union? Is there a basis for comparison with the US, or do we have to engage with these senses of self as vastly different from the US?

c. Of what importance is religion (or family or national identity or gender identity etc.) in Germany, based on [specific text]? Given that Muslims are the fastest growing religious community in Europe, what effect does this growth have on cultural debates on race and immigration? Are you familiar with similar debates in the US or do Germans and Europeans approach questions of race and immigration

from a different perspective? What, based on your reading, can you gauge from this perspective? Students will have to base their debates and evaluations on the information from within those cultures, making possible stereotypes or individual and anecdotal experiences subject to reconsideration or revision. They will also acquire consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience (6) because this course focuses on international cultures, specifically Germany and the European Union, and on value systems with students are not necessarily familiar. Not only are students going to read and discuss texts from within these international cultures, but they are also going to be able to compare conversations with those who have grown up in Europe or Germany and those who have been able to experience Europe or Germany during an extended stay. This comparison, on the background of course lectures and discussions, will hopefully compel them to weigh the personal story with the historical and cultural context and result in a more critical understanding of a multicultural world.

**CA 1 Criteria:** GERM 169 relies heavily on the human experiences communicated through literary and essayistic texts, and it includes historical research. Investigating the historical/critical analyses of the human experience (1) as it is lived in contemporary Germany within Europe is central to this course. Germans are experiencing a great change in their social and cultural make up, a change that is occurring in many other European countries as well. How are they coping with the dilemma of a dwindling population and a heated debate about how many immigrants are enough? How are Turkish-Germans, Afro-Germans and a growing German-Jewish population approaching a multicultural Germany that has heralded Human Rights issues and tolerance, but that continues to be marked by the Nazi past? Students will be challenged by the "otherness" of human experiences in Germany and in Europe, but they will also learn to read and reread texts composed by Germans and Europeans as something that is "other" in very specific ways and develop thinking processes and the ability for abstraction that enables them to engage with these human experiences. They will recognize these experiences as something that is simultaneously familiar and new (as in universally human) and as something that cannot necessarily be understood simply by drawing from their own culture (as in specific to socialization, historical tradition, political and cultural context). In addition, a cultural studies approach (crossing the disciplinary border of literature to include film and media studies) guarantees the discussion and appreciation of written and graphic art forms (4) as well as inquiries into political thought and praxis that inform the always present link between art and politics in Germany and beyond. This aspect is apparent in advertising, for example, where the cultural context for referential play with images and words is pivotal. It is apparent, too, in ongoing public debates about places of memory (monuments) and about exhibitions that contribute to the cultures of identity in Germany and Europe.

**CA 4 Criteria:** GERM 169, as a course about Germany, is international and multicultural by definition since it focuses on a culture different from that familiar to the students in the course. GERM 169, as a course about Germany in Europe, draws on a multitude of cultures and experiences, as Europe, within and without the European Union, is a patchwork of cultures with differing languages, customs, and local and national histories. In addition, and since the common notion of multicultural (as in race, nation, and religion) plays a pivotal role in today's Germany and Europe, the course will challenge students to work with expressions of diversity and multiculturalism that differ from those in the United States, emphasizing varieties of human experiences, perceptions, thoughts, values and modes of creativity (1):

Germany's culture is marked as one of the historically most racist and as one of today's most tolerant societies in the world, inviting inquiries into how current interpretive systems and/or social structures and value systems evolved. That applies to issues of human rights as well as migration (4), the latter a pivotal element that effect almost all aspects of everyday life in Germany today, making Germany a particularly intriguing and instructive example to study the cultural struggles of migration and integration within Europe and the discussion of religious diversity. That applies, too, to German perceptions of the body and the self, for example, perceptions that are based on ideas and practices emerging from social movements at the beginning of the 20th century. Students will learn to approach these and other perspectives as cultural creations (2) and learn to dissect them as such. The texts we read and the images and films we consult all contain these themes within, interweaving the multicultural with the international. The discussion of these themes helps students to arrive at an idea of identity as it is perceived by an increasing number of hybrid or "hyphen" Germans, Turkish- Germans, Afro-Germans, Asian-Germans, etc. and the questions and challenges they pose to the value systems of "native" Germans.

**International:** GERM 169 focuses on issues of diversity/multiculturalism outside the United States as it encourages students to develop a critical understanding of different readings of culture and cultural history in Europe and, therefore, different everyday practices. Afro-Germans and Turkish-Germans have histories that are closely connected to the European past, and public debates and artistic expression on diversity, multiculturalism, and integration display the particular German and/or European approach to creating a shared and productive future.