

Department: Modern and Classical Languages

Course No: 3255 W

Credits: 3

Title: Studies in German Literature of the 20th and 21st Centuries

Contact: Roger Travis

Content Area: CA1-Arts and Humanities

WQ: Writing

Catalog Copy: GERM 3255W. Studies in German Literature of 20th and 21st Centuries. Either semester. Three credits. Conducted in German. Prerequisite or corequisite: GERM 233 or instructor consent. Study of a cohesive group of texts that mark the period. Attention will be given to the relevant socio-historical context and to the visual and performing arts.

Course Information: This course is one of the sequence GERM 252, 253, 254, 255 (only one of which is offered each year, mostly 254 or 255) and introduces students to analyzing and interpreting various topics, genres, and forms in 20th and 21st-century German literature and simultaneously familiarizes them with crucial periods and developments in German history and culture of the 20th and 21st centuries, such as modernity, technological and social changes, capitalism and socialism, WWI and pacifism, the roaring 1920s, fascism and the Holocaust, WWII, Germany's Division during the Cold War, German reunification and European integration, life of minorities in contemporary Germany, changes in gender roles, and more. When appropriate, the course draws comparisons to similar occurrences and phenomena in other historical periods, countries, and/or cultures.

(b) COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Reading, writing, and researching assignments help students prepare for active participation in class discussions which are conducted in German. Students are provided with focus questions that guide their assignments. They are encouraged to form and express their own opinions in speaking and writing and substantiate their arguments on the basis of intellectually processed course readings, lectures, and class discussions.

- Selected literary readings (e.g., novellas, plays, poetry, letters, memoirs), occasionally some non-fictional texts, and information from the internet about historical events/developments, authors, and literary periods provide points of departure for class discussions.

- Students are introduced to the vocabulary and strategies of literary analysis, various literary genres and periods, and a number of theoretical approaches to literary criticism (e.g., New Historicism, Post-Colonialism, Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, Feminism, etc.). Students learn to consider political, social, and economic developments, authors' biographies, aesthetic traditions, readers' perceptions as factors in literary analysis and interpretation. Comparisons to cultural developments and literary production in the students' own time, countries, and national literatures are encouraged.

- Whenever appropriate, multimedia input (slides, film clips, musical pieces) enrich the discussions of the literary readings. Students research additional background information on specific works, authors, historical contexts, and literary scholarship.
- In-depth individual and/or group projects inspire students to research topics of their own interest and introduce them to their peers in class.
- Midterm and final examinations help assess students' performance.

(c) MAJOR THEMES, TOPICS, ISSUES:

- Definitions and functions of literature;
- literary genres;
- literary periods of 20th and 21st-century German literature;
- theoretical approaches to literary criticism;
- tools to analyzing literature;
- literary production and reception as a communicative process;
- relationship between text, author, socio-historical, political, economic context, and reader
- impacts of historical events and developments on German literature;
- diversity in German literature;
- minorities' literature in Germany;
- gender and German literature;
- literary periods of 20th and 21st-century German literature;
- German literary works as a social and political voices;
- and more.

Meets Goals of Gen Ed: This course supports students in developing their ability to critically analyze and evaluate works of literature as cultural productions within a particular historical context, and form and articulate their own opinions and judgement.

- Learning about 20th and 21st-century German history, society, and culture through German literature, students become aware of their own era, society and cultural make-up and conscious of the diversity of human culture and experience which, in this case, also reflect perspectives of another culture. Students thus become familiar with and interested in other cultures inside and outside of the United States of America.

- This course's "foreign" topics expand students' knowledge about the world and, more importantly, inspire them to draw comparisons to developments in their own lives, times, and countries and to reflect on their own religious, gender, cultural, and ethnic affiliations. Course topics that stimulate such comparisons and reflections include, but are not limited to the question to which extent gender, race, and class play a role in literary production and reception and how German literature of the 20th and 21st centuries has been impacted: by political systems ranging from monarchy to fascism, communism, and democracy; by the holocaust; by minorities such as Jews, Afro-Germans, Turks and Turkish-Germans, and other migrants; by WWI and II, the division and reunification of Germany, and European integration.

- Students learn to apply tools of literary analysis and discover how literature interacts with the time of its production, the time of its reception, and with the students themselves as readers.

- This course encourages students to remain lifelong learners in the sense that they continue to critically read literature against the backdrop of a given historical context on one hand and as thought provoking stimulation in their own lives on the other. Being confronted with the literature of another country and culture, they become aware of their own culturally shaped perspectives. They learn to be open-minded toward people, values, literary and cultural products of other cultures.

CA1 Criteria: This course about 20th and 21st-century German literature introduces students to a broad vision of humanist, historical, cultural, and literary themes. It fulfills the following criteria for Group I courses:

"1) Investigations and historical/critical analyses of human experience:" The literary readings of this course reflect on crucial periods and developments in German history and culture of the 20th and 21st centuries, such as modernity, technological and social changes, capitalism and socialism, WWI, the roaring 1920s, WWII, fascism and the Holocaust, Germany's Division during the Cold War, European integration, life of minorities in contemporary Germany, changes in gender roles, and more. Students learn to critically investigate and analyze human experience as it has been transformed into literary expression. The themes of this course include but are not limited to:

- the alienation of modern man in selected writings by Franz Kafka;
- surviving Auschwitz (Ruth Klueger's autobiography);
- perspectives from the margin: minority literature, e.g., by Afro-German lesbian poet May Ayim and Turkish-German writer Emine Oezdamar;
- representative human experience (e.g.; love, death, growing up as topics in lyrics by the Comedian Harmonists and in Schlink's novel *The Reader*; the experience of war, violence, and hunger in Kaethe Kollwitz's diaries; living in a socialist society as described by East-German writers; belonging to a minority culture [see above]),
- literary periods such as German Expressionism, New Sobriety, exile literature, Nazi literature, POW literature, Post-WWII rubble literature, GDR literature, New Subjectivity, etc.;
- genres in German literature ranging from song lyrics and poetry to dramatic scenes and prose works such as novellas, novels, and short stories;
- and more.

"3) Investigations into the modes of symbolic representation:" The course introduces students to the notion that literary language is another mode of symbolic representation and that this language is culturally specific and can be decoded and interpreted against a particular cultural and historical background. They learn to analyze, interpret, and evaluate literary works as carriers of meaning that can be relevant to readers of another time and another place.

"4) Comprehension and appreciation of written, graphic and/or performance art forms:" Students acquire the linguistic (in the German language) and intellectual tools necessary to comprehend, analyze, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate literary works. By practicing guided but increasingly more independent literary analysis (including investigating questions of content, form, and cultural-historical

context), students develop the ability to understand the interrelations of literary production and historical (social, political, economic), cultural and psychological developments.

W Criteria: The writing component in this course has traditionally been very high although it was not a W-course. This course is part of the series GERM 252, 253, 254, 255 (all of which are proposed to add a W skill code). In these 200-level courses, German majors learn to analyze literary texts and practice to write several papers of varying length (amounting to a total of 15 pages) and of varying degrees of difficulty pertinent to the field of reading, analyzing, and interpreting German literature: content summaries, biographical pieces about specific authors, pieces of creative writing, literary analyses, book reviews, and advertisements for books. Depending on the purpose of the assignment, most papers will have to be written in German. The writing assignments further student's writing abilities in the area of literary investigations and scholarship and simultaneously help them improve their writing in German and deepen their knowledge about a particular author, literary text, or topic. The assignments are practical writing exercises appropriate for German majors and their need to prepare for writing within professional frameworks. Papers are returned to students with comments on content, organization, and style. Students are asked to revise their papers on the basis of these comments. For each paper, the first version accounts for 40% of the grade and the revised version for 60% of the grade. The grades for all papers amount to 50% of the total course grade. Students cannot pass this course without passing grades on all papers. The course's enrollment never exceeds 19 students.

Role of Grad Students: N/A under normal circumstances. If TAs were ever to teach this course, e.g. in a particular staffing crunch, they would be selected on grounds of extra-ordinary knowledge of German literature (e.g., advanced Ph.D. students), extensive teaching experience and pedagogical skills, and native or near-native fluency in German. They would be provided with a syllabus and substantial course material prepared by faculty. They would also take a "W" workshop and would be advised and supervised all through the semester by faculty.