

GM150 – German Conversation

Instructor: T. WEITZ

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Course Times: Wednesday, 9:00 – 10:30

Friday, 9:00 – 10:30

Course Description

This course is designed to help students boost their speaking skills and communicate in German with ease and confidence. Understanding and responding to what people speak on the street and in everyday life situations poses challenges for many language learners; the course will tackle these challenges hands-on and from multiple angles, always with an eye on what is most useful for students stepping beyond the “English language bubble” on campus. Classes will be structured around topics of student interest and combine vocabulary building and pronunciation exercises with the creation of various speaking scenarios where students practice expressing themselves spontaneously and explore dialects, accents, and modes of intonation. The course is open to students who have a basic understanding of the German language; the objective of the course is to create a comfortable speaking environment for learners of all levels.

- **The classroom interaction will be in German**, because input and use are the chief engines of foreign language acquisition.
- **Active and consistent classroom participation** is crucial to your success at acquiring the language. A language cannot be “crammed” in. In order to get the most out of this class, you need to constantly use and practice the language.
- **Outside the classroom**, you are expected – and will need to – spend at least 12 hours a week, which corresponds to two hours each day, doing your homework, and learning and practicing your grammar and vocabulary.
- **To maximize the experience of language immersion**, all students agree to speak German, and only German, from the moment they enter the classroom until the moment they leave the classroom, as well as when working together on projects and homework related to the class, when being on an excursion for the class.

The learning goals for this course are focused on skill-building in spoken German. Upon completion of the course requirements, students will have expanded their vocabulary exponentially. They will find it easier to:

- **Feel more confident to actively use their existing knowledge of the German language in conversations**
- **Communicate (listen, speak, read, and write) accurately and appropriately in German**

- **Conduct conversations in German with relative ease**
- **Continue to build the knowledge of the structure of the German language**
- **Continue to establish familiarity with German culture, history, and society**

Attendance

Because Bard College Berlin has an intensive, student-centered and seminar-based educational model, attendance at all sessions of courses is mandatory.

However, you may encounter circumstances that prevent you from attending classes for which you may be excused, meaning that the absences will not impact your grade. These circumstances include illness, religious observance, military obligation, attendance at a conference, a Bard Network event, a civic engagement initiative, a research trip or another compelling circumstance outside of your control (i.e. court appearance, visa appointment, death of a family member). Optional non-academic travel, hosting visiting family and friends, or work schedules are **not grounds** for excused absences. You will be allowed to **self-report your absences four times**, meaning that a notification informing your instructor about the reason for your absence before or within 24 hours of the class is sufficient. If you miss class more than four times, you will need to provide your instructor with appropriate documentation in order to be excused (i.e. a doctor's note).

All **unexcused absences** will lower your final grade by one step (i.e. if your final grade is a B, you will be downgraded to a B-). **Five unexcused absences and more will result in** automatic failure of the course.

If you are facing the unusual situation of long-term, serious medical or personal emergencies (generally lasting more than two weeks), you can request a Leave of Absence, to be approved by the Deans, the Head of Student Life or the Director of Academic Services.

If you have any general medical issues or other concerns that could impact your compliance with these regulations, you need to inform your instructor during the first week of the semester. For information on disability accommodation, you should consult with the Head of Student Life. The process for applying for disability accommodation is explained in the Student Handbook with links to the forms here: <http://www.berlin.bard.edu/for-students/student-handbook/policies-and-regulations/#c4206>

Please be punctual and considerate. Switch off your mobile phone before each class, and keep bathroom breaks to a minimum. Interruptions are bad for everybody's concentration and impolite. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Pronouns

In German, persons as well as nouns are assigned a gender (often randomly): male, female, neuter. These gender assignments are currently still part of the normative usage and of the authentic language material, cultural sources and literary texts used in our classes. We are asking everyone

to be aware of implications resulting from these rigid grammatical rules and conventions, and to respect the wishes of their fellow students and instructors. Please inform your instructor if you wish to be addressed with a preferred pronoun. Unfortunately, German has presently only limited options for doing so. We will try to find solutions that everyone is comfortable with.

Course Materials:

Course Materials will be discussed in the first week of class following a class conversation about topics of interest.

Hard copies or electronic copies of the relevant material (copies of newspaper clippings etc.) will be made available prior to classes dedicated to special subjects.

I strongly encourage you to make use of the following resources:

- The **Bard Center for Foreign Languages and Culture** provides various language learning materials on the website at <http://flcl.bard.edu/resources/german/>
- Check out the “**Resources**” section at the Bard College Berlin German Studies Program website; it provides an overview of useful links and online resources on German language, literature and media at <https://berlin.bard.edu/academics/german-program/>

Grading

You will be graded based on class attendance, quality of participation, level of improvement of your language skills over the semester, as well as interaction in class and motivation to speak German.

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| • Class participation | 50% |
| • Midterm Project Presentation | 25% |
| • Final Project Presentation | 25% |

Final Exam:

There is not written or oral final exam in the traditional sense. Instead, all students will have to complete a project in recorded form (audio or video) and to participate in a live speaking event in class during the final week of the semester. We are going to determine what this event could look like during the semester, keeping in mind pandemic safety measures. In order to pass the course, you will have to pass this final project.

Academic Integrity

- According to the Student Code of Conduct (located in the Student Handbook), Bard College Berlin adheres to a strict set of guidelines in regards to Academic Integrity.
- If a student is suspected of Plagiarism, Collusion, Resubmission of their own work or Cheating, protocol requires the instructor to inform Kerry Bystrom (Associate Dean) or Catherine Toal (Dean) with the specifics of the situation. They will communicate with the student about the alleged violation and follow up with a disciplinary process, which is run through the Academic Integrity Board.
- Specifics of the policy itself can be found in the student handbook. It is part of your responsibility as a student to familiarize yourself with this aspect of College life and Code of Conduct.
- Please be aware that using tools such as Google Translate may pose a violation of academic integrity even when carried out with the best intention, e.g. when its intended purpose was to correct or improve the linguistic quality of your writing rather than deceive.

COVID-19 Contingency Plan

In the event of a COVID-19 outbreak we may be required to shift to online teaching. Classes will resume live on ZOOM or other video platforms. For continuous assessment and other assignments we will ask you to adhere to a BCB “honor code”: When submitting work you may be asked to confirm that you did not cheat.

GM150 – GERMAN CONVERSATION

SYLLABUS

Please note that this syllabus is subject to change; the selection of additional topics is preliminary. You are responsible throughout the semester for knowing what you have to do for each class.

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| Week 1: Aug 30 – Sept 3 | Welcome & Introduction Small Talk Key Concepts & Practice |
| Week 2: Sept 6 – Sept 10 | Hobbies |
| Week 3: Sept 13 – Sept 17 | Theater Theater Visit Discussion & Planning |
| Week 4: Sept 20 – Sept 24 | Politics |
| Week 5: Sept 27 – Oct 1 | Newspapers Newspaper Publishing House Visit Planning |
| Week 6: Oct 4 – Oct 8 | Cinema |
| Oct. 18 - Oct. 24 | <i>Fall Break</i> |
| Week 7: Oct 25 – Oct 29 | Museums |
| Week 8: Nov 1 – Nov 5 | Animals |
| Week 9: Nov 8 – Nov 12 | Sports |
| Week 10: Nov 15 – Nov 19 | Jobs |
| Week 11: Nov 22 – Nov 26 | The Future |
| Week 12: Nov 29 – Dec 3 | AI |
| Week 13: Dec 6 – Dec 10 | Dreams |
| Week 14: Dec 13 – Dec 17 | <i>Completion Week</i> |
| Tuesday, Dec 14 | German Department Final Exam Day |