

GM150 German Conversation

Instructor: Dr. Andreas Martin Widmann

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Course Times: Wednesday, 15:45-17:30

Friday, 15:45-17:30

Consultation hours: After class and by appointment

Course Description

The 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 situations poses challenges for many language learners; the course will tackle these challenges hands-on and from multiple angles, always with an eye toward 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 completed A1 or have at least a basic understanding of the German language; the objective of the course is to create a comfortable speaking environment for beginners to advanced learners.

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.
- Make sure to always bring a **hardcopy** of your written **homework** to class. Assignments need to be **double-spaced** and have **margins of about 3 cm** on each side for comments and corrections.

- Essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

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

- 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 expand new grammar necessary to communicate effectively
- 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-). Seven 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 Brian Gallagher, Head of Student Life: b.gallagher@berlin.bard.edu

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.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPRING 2021

Some students might need to begin the semester remotely due to travel restrictions caused by the pandemic. In addition, all students and instructors must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill. Instructors will make efforts to offer alternatives to in-person attendance where needed, including remote participation or asynchronous options.

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:

All course material (audio recordings, videos, copies of newspaper clippings etc.) will be made available prior to classes in electronic form via GoogleClassroom. Please check in advance.

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/>

Continuous Assessment

Grading

Your Grade will be based on class attendance, quality of participation, written homework assignments, and tests:

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| • Class Participation & Homework Assignments | 50% |
| • Midterm Project Presentation | 25% |
| • Final Project Presentation | 25% |

Final Exam:

There is no 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 alternative final.

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 by adding or signing a statement such as “Ich habe ehrlich gearbeitet”.

GM150 GERMAN CONVERSATION

SYLLABUS

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

Week 1 (Feb. 1 – Feb. 07)	Einführung: Reden, sprechen, sich unterhalten
Week 2 (Feb. 08 – Feb. 14)	Die Universität
Week 3 (Feb. 15 – Feb. 21)	Medien und Unterhaltung I: Film
Week 4 (Feb. 22 – Feb. 28)	Medien und Unterhaltung II: Fernsehen und Musik
Week 5 (Mar. 1 – Mar. 07)	Liebe, modern
Week 6 (Mar. 08 – Mar. 14)	Eine Runde Berlin (Podcast)
Week 7 (Mar. 15 – Mar. 21)	Worüber wir reden, wenn wir über Tauben reden: Natur in der Stadt
Week 8 (Mar. 22 – Mar. 28)	Mango Body Whip Geschichten Midterm Project Presentation
Spring Break Mon, Mar. 29 - Mon, Apr. 05, 2021	
Week 9 (Apr. 06 – Apr. 11)	Stadt, Land, Fluss: Stadt – Land Gegensätze Dialekte und Soziolekte
Week 10 (Apr. 12 – Apr. 18)	Reklame, Werbung, PR
Week 11 (Apr. 19 – Apr. 25)	Politik und Pathos: Ansprachen, Reden und die Sprache der Politik

Week 12 (Apr. 26 – May 02)	„Am Ende des Tages...“: Bürodeutsch und Sprache am Arbeitsplatz
Week 13 (May 03 – May 09)	Sprache und Gender
Week 14 (May 10 – May 16)	Ein Pferd kommt in eine Bar: Komik und Witze Final Project Presentation
Week 15 (May 17 – May 23)	Completion Week