

# German Conversation

Fall Term 2020

Instructor: Narges Roshan  
Course Number: GM 150  
Times: Wednesday, 14:00-15:30  
Friday, 14:00-15:30  
Location: K24 Seminar Room 11  
Email: n.roshan@berlin.bard.edu

## COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

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 B1; the objective of the course is to create a comfortable speaking environment for intermedium to advanced learners.

- **The classroom interaction will be in German.**
- **Active and consistent classroom participation is crucial**

## 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](mailto: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 FALL 2020**

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.

## LEARNING

**Confidence** – Getting to know your own language skills by using German actively.

Telling stories in German will motivate you to use everything you know in German.

**Competence** – Exploring and learning strategies to understand and use narratives will help you to develop narrative competence in German.

**Performance** – Combining confidence and competence will enable you to speak spontaneously, freely in class and in public.

## GRADING

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

<b>Class Participation</b>	50%
<b>Midterm</b> (Presenting a Podcast)	25%
<b>Final Exam</b> (Presenting a Ted Talk)	25%

## *Conversation through Narration*

### **Narrative competence**

Narrative competence is a „interdisciplinary key competence“<sup>1</sup> (Nünning 2012) and therefore crucial for language acquisition. This course is designed to make use of narration (storytelling) in order to improve speaking skills. The concept is based on the idea that students are able to express themselves freely and informally through homileic discourse (Ehlich, Rehbein 1979). Homileic discourse refers to forms of discourse such as small talk; telling stories, experiences, jokes, anecdotes etc. as part of daily life.

Homileic discourse serves the purpose of creating mutual trust and a community among equal conversational partners, but can also be used for institutional discourse. During the semester we will work out strategies to get from homileic discourse to institutional discourse by making use of oral and written skills. This approach is based on Konrad Ehlich's text concept (1984): "Text is not limited to writing, but text is also oral."<sup>2</sup> (Ehlich 1984:16).

### **Exploring narrative competence**

The course will encourage students not only to analyze but also to produce narratives by promoting a performative learning environment.

#### **I. Some main questions that will be discussed in class**

- What is discourse? (interdisciplinary term)
- What is narration?
- What are narratives? What are metanarratives?
- What is narrative competence?
- How to develop narrative skills?
- What are differences and similarities between oral and written storytelling?

#### **II. Performative Learning**

In order to use oral storytelling skills students are required to present two main projects:

- 1. Midterm: Podcast (10 min.)**
- 2. Final: TED Talk on stage (10 min.)**

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1 Im Original: „interdisziplinäre Schlüsselkompetenz“ (Nünning 2012).

2 Im Original: „Text ist nicht auf Schriftlichkeit einzuschränken, sondern Text ist auch mündlich.“ (Ehlich 1984:16).

## SYLLABUS

This syllabus is subject to change. You are responsible throughout the semester for knowing what you have to do for each class.

Week 1 (Aug. 31 – Sep. 06)		
Week 2 (Sep. 07 – Sep. 13)		
Week 3 (Sep. 14 – Sep. 20)		
Week 4 (Sep. 21 – Sep. 27)		
Week 5 (Sep. 28 – Oct. 04)		
Week 6 (Oct. 05 – Oct. 11)		
Week 7 (Oct. 12 – Oct. 18)		
<b>Fall Break</b> (Oct. 19 – Oct. 25)		
Week 8 (Oct. 26 – Nov. 1)		
Week 9 (Nov. 02 – Nov. 8)		
Week 10 (Nov. 9 – Nov. 15)		
<b>Wednesday November 11, 2020</b>		<b>Midterm</b>
Week 11 (Nov. 16 – Nov. 22)		
Week 12 (Nov. 23 – Nov. 29)		
Week 13 (Nov. 30 – Dec. 06)		
Week 14 (Dec. 07 – Dec 13)		
Week 15 (Dec 14 – Dec. 18)	Completion Week	
<b>Wednesday December 02, 2020</b>	<b>Final</b>	