

GM150 German Conversation
(course qualifies for the Civic Engagement Certificate)

Dr. Ulrike Wagner, Fall 2025 u.wagner@berlin.bard.edu Office: P98A U9 Office hours (online): Tue: 14:00 – 15:00, and by appointment	Mo & Wed: 14:00 – 15:30 Location: P98a SR4
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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.
- **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 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 three 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 three 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-).

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 Maria Anderson Long, Head of Student Life: m.andersonlong@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>

PRONOUNS

In German, persons as well as nouns are assigned a gender (often randomly): male, female, neuter. These gender assignments are 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 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. German has presently only limited options for doing so. We will find solutions that everyone is comfortable with.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Attendance, Participation, Vocabulary Quizzes	40%
Presentation/Moderation	20%
Midterm Project	20%
Final Project	20%

ASSIGNMENTS

- **Vocabulary Diary:** To further develop and refine your language skills at this level, it is very important that you work on constantly building up your vocabulary. You will therefore keep a vocabulary diary. There will be **announced vocabulary quizzes** throughout the semester.

- **Regular “Adoption” of topics** (text, film, artwork etc.) from the syllabus. You are responsible for introducing your topic in class on the day that it is assigned and for animating and moderating our discussion.
- **Mid-term:** You will have to submit a podcast or video on a topic of your choosing (ca. 7 min.). Your project may involve other participants, but your input needs to be at the center.
- **Final:** You will participate in a live speaking event in class during the final week of the semester. We are going to determine what this event will look like during the semester. To pass the course, you will have to pass this final project.

Readings: All Readings are available on **Google Shared Drive** for the course. Student-initiated readings for the group presentations and individual presentations will be uploaded to Google Shared Drive and/or emailed.

Please be punctual and considerate. Switch off your cell phones before each class (including the vibration setting). If you are texting, emailing, surfing the web – you are considered absent! Also please keep bathroom breaks to a minimum. Interruptions are bad for everybody’s concentration and impolite.

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.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Sept. 1/3	Willkommen & Einführung Studium & Universität; Studentische Wohnsituationen
Week 2: Sept. 8/10	Studium & Universität; Studentische Wohnsituationen Zeitungsschau – Vergleich verschiedener Zeitungen in Deutschland, Medienkultur
Week 3: Sept. 15/17	Zeitungsschau – Vergleich verschiedener Zeitungen in Deutschland, Medienkultur
Week 4: Sept. 22/24	Geschichte, Kunst & Film im 20. Jahrhundert (Weimar Berlin, Nazi-Zeit, Ost-West nach 1945)

	Film: <i>Ich bin dein Mensch</i> (2021) Dokumentation Mein Mann lebt als KI weiter (2024)
Week 11: November 17 / 19	Künstliche Intelligenz (KI), Medien & Menschenrechte
Week 12: November 24 / 26	TBD
Week 13: December 1 / 3	Abschlussprojekte
Week 14: December 8 / 10	Abschlussprojekte
Week 15	Completion Week