

## **German Major**

### **Outcomes and Assessment 2009**

Students in the German department study the language and culture of Germany.

#### ***I. Objectives***

The German Department expects its majors to acquire and demonstrate the four basic linguistic skills in German at the intermediate high or advanced level (based on the ACTFL proficiency guidelines below), which include

- the comprehension of written German in literary and non-literary texts,
- the comprehension of spoken German in a conversation setting and in lectures, movies or theater,
- the active participation in conversations and the ability to give presentations in German,
- and the ability to write intermediate or advanced-level German.

In addition German Department graduates are expected to acquire cognitive skills in two cultural areas, which include

- the cultural traditions of German-speaking countries, and
- the ability to analyze and discuss literary works in German literature.

#### ***II. Achievement of the objectives***

- In fulfilling course requirements, students practice the four skills of understanding, reading, speaking and writing German
- In studying or working in Germany, required for the major, students gain significant additional familiarity with the language and culture.
- By participating in departmental activities, such as the weekly departmental luncheon, Mittagstisch, residing in the German House, and attending our cultural functions in the German House, students practice language skills and deepen cultural understanding.
- In studying for the comprehensive examination, students will learn to comprehend German better and acquire knowledge of major texts and German culture

Below is an explanation of how our majors' course of study and our comprehensive exams lead to the desired objectives/outcomes.

### ***III. Courses***

- The department has a broad array of offerings on the intermediate level to help students gain increased fluency in the language. To give majors access to outstanding works of German literature with its inherent cultural values, Sewanee's German Department offers extensive literature courses. By reading and discussing these works in their original language and by writing analytical essays, students will grow in incisive thinking and also deal with ideas which undergird German civilization. These courses also facilitate further development of skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening comprehension.

- Cultural proficiency is one of the fundamental goals of language learning. By studying the German language and its culture students familiarize themselves with a civilization other than their own, examine its historical and political background and acquire the basic skills necessary to survive abroad. The department, therefore, offers German culture courses at the 300-level. 311. German Culture and Composition I emphasizes conversational exercises in colloquial German and contemporary cultural issues, 312. German Culture and Composition II deals with social and political issues (311 or 312 is required of all majors), 313. Contemporary Language and Usage is a one-semester advanced language and culture course designed to increase oral and written language skills and to help students deal with contemporary societies, 314. Advanced Conversation and Problem Solving examines current topics, such as unemployment, immigration, "skinheads" and European, integration using the Internet and printed materials.

- The department's advanced literature offerings begin with 300, Survey of German Literature from the Beginning to the Present which serves as an entrance to the department's highest-level offerings, mainly for majors/minors.

- In the 400-level literature courses students examine more intensively than at the 300-level major periods and authors in German literature and culture, starting with the Enlightenment through the 20th century, and write essays analyzing the works:

403. German Literature from the Age of Enlightenment through the Storm and Stress

405. German Romanticism

407. Nineteenth-Century German Literature

408, 409. Twentieth-Century German Literature I, II

410. Goethe Seminar

411. Schiller, Hölderlin, Kleist

413. Kafka and His Times

421. Lyric Poetry

422. German Drama

427. East German Literature

444. Special Topics (independent study)

### ***IV. German Department Requirements***

- *Major in German:* The requirement for majors in German is eight full courses at the 300-level and above. At least three of these courses must be at the 400-level. Also required is a period of study or interning in Germany, Austria or Switzerland. Those planning to continue the German

major in graduate school may wish to take more credit hours in the department. Majors must take the comprehensive exam in German, which consists of a seven-hour written test followed by an oral exam.

• *Department Honors*: Students who have performed with distinction may apply in their penultimate semester for departmental honors. If approved, they are requested to write a research paper in connection with a German 444 course (two or four credits). Students demonstrating excellence in both this paper and their written comprehensives are awarded departmental honors.

## ***V. Assessment Testing***

Assessment strategies include exams and other graded work in courses, a requirement to give an oral presentation on the experiences of study abroad, and a comprehensive examination.

### **• The 300-400-level courses**

Junior and senior level course described above are taught in German; students read and write and discuss in German. Exams given in each of the courses listed above assess the degree to which students have acquired the knowledge and skills required of German majors.

### **• Study/Work Abroad**

The oral proficiency and cultural skills are assessed in an informal presentation by students who have studied or worked abroad, where they

- illustrate what they learned,
- compare what was different in Germany from home and
- explain how they adjusted.

In their responses to the questions of the audience the students' listening skills are assessed.

### **• Comprehensive Exams**

Normally in the last full week of classes, majors take two days of intensive written exams based on the departmental reading list. These tests last for a total of seven hours (3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> each day). In the exam, student must:

- a) Write essays in which they define literary movements and discuss significant works and writers,
- b) Identify major periods, figures and literary works from a series of short text excerpts from the reading list.

Both faculty members grade the exams individually and discuss their results before arriving at an overall grade. Students are expected to achieve at least a B-. An oral exam seeks further

information or clarification of items on the written exams which helps support the assessment of the previous presentation on their cultural experiences in Germany.

The test addresses the German majors' writing skills along with their knowledge of German literature from its beginnings to modern times. The comprehensive exam is based on an extensive reading list that covers German literature from the middle ages to the modern times and assumes an high intermediate to advanced reading knowledge, based on the ACTFL proficiency guidelines.

***VI. ACTFL proficiency guidelines:*** ACTFL has established Intermediate Low, Mid and High Levels of Proficiency. Below are those classified as Intermediate High. We aim to have majors reach this level by graduation, but will consider Intermediate Mid if all other departmental requirements have been fulfilled.

**•ACTFL Writing Guidelines Intermediate High**

Learners are able to meet most practical writing needs and limited social demands. Can take notes in some detail on familiar topics and respond in writing to personal questions. Can write simple letters, brief synopses and paraphrases, summaries of biographical data, work and school experience. In those languages relying primarily on content words and time expressions to express time, tense, or aspect, some precision is displayed; where tense and/or aspect is expressed through verbal inflection, forms are produced rather consistently, but not always accurately. An ability to describe and narrate in paragraphs is emerging. Rarely uses basic cohesive elements such as pronominal substitutions or synonyms in written discourse. Writing, though faulty, is generally comprehensible to natives used to the writing of non-natives.

**•ACTFL Speaking Guidelines Intermediate High**

Learners are able to handle successfully most uncomplicated communicative tasks and social situations. Can initiate, sustain, and close a general conversation with a number of strategies appropriate to a range of circumstances and topics, but errors are evident. Limited vocabulary still necessitates hesitation and may bring about slightly unexpected circumlocution. There is emerging evidence of connected discourse, particularly for simple narration and/or description. The Intermediate-High speaker can generally be understood even by interlocutors not accustomed to dealing with speakers at this level, but repetition may still be required.

**•ACTFL Reading Guidelines Intermediate High**

Learners are able to read consistently with full understanding simple connected texts dealing with basic personal and social needs about which the reader has personal interest and/or knowledge. Can get some main ideas and information from texts at the next higher level featuring description and narration. Structural complexity may interfere with comprehension; for example, basic grammatical relations may be misinterpreted and temporal references may rely primarily on lexical items. Has some difficulty with the cohesive factors in discourse, such as

matching pronouns with referents. While texts do not differ significantly from those at the Advanced level, comprehension is less consistent. May have to read material several times for understanding.

### ***VII. Recent Assessment Results***

In 2009 two students completed all the requirements for graduation with a German major (eight or more courses, studying or working abroad, participating in departmental activities). Both students met the language goals of Intermediate High in writing, speaking and reading in the following manner:

Writing	B (2 students)	
Speaking	B+ (2 students)	
Reading	A (1 student)	B (1 student)
Listening	(not tested)	
Cultural proficiency	A (2 students)	
Reading proficiency	A (2 students)	