German Literature in Translation (GELT)

GELT228 Going Green, German-Style: The Relationship to Nature, 1800–Today
Few countries display as active a commitment to protect natural resources and the environment as Germany. Its focus on renewable energies, recycling, and conservation in general is unique even by European standards, and in the U.S., Germany’s policies on sustainability and environmental preservation are often held up as models. It is important to recognize, however, that Germans did not achieve this degree of environmental awareness overnight. Rather, it represents the result of centuries of contemplating, controlling, and conserving nature and cannot simply be transferred to other cultures. In this course, we will examine the German (and European) cultural tradition by analyzing artworks and texts from the past two centuries that have both expressed and shaped salient attitudes and emotional responses. The goals of the course are to provide insight into Germany’s long and complicated history of defining and relating to nature and to allow you to reflect critically on your own attitudes toward nature and the environment.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-GRST
Identical With: GRST228, ENVS228
Prereq: None

GELT230 The Simple Life
As the human population grows toward nine billion and our planet’s carrying capacity comes under increasing pressure, many observers believe the human project itself is at risk. What human beings have accomplished is probably unique in the history of the universe; once lost to war, famine, and ecological collapse, the understandings and physical creations of our cultures would be irrecoverable. We must ask ourselves, with considerable urgency, the following questions: How do we value our economic systems, and our behaviors—individuals, groups, societies, and cultures—affect the conditions under which we, our descendants, and the plants and animals with which we share the earth might live in the future? To what extent and at what cost can technology enable us to adapt to changes already under way? Should we take an “après moi, le déluge” attitude or try to prolong the life of our species, and if so, in what form? Does so-called simple life, as conceptualized in different times and places, offer any useful models? Does living “green” make sense? What about environmental (in)justice?
This course will draw on texts from a variety of periods and disciplines, written in a range of styles and from many perspectives, to examine how these questions and others can be approached. Creative thinking will be strongly encouraged. We will pay particular attention to contemporary sustainability initiatives and threats to the environment in the present moment.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-GRST
Identical With: GRST230, ENV228
Prereq: None

GELT234 Multikulti Germany?: Expressions of Germany’s Cultural Diversity
That Germany is an ethnically and culturally homogenous country is a myth cultivated by the Nazis. Germany’s position in the center of Europe has made its geographical and cultural identity fluid and the make-up of its population diverse at least since the Migration of Peoples (ca. 200-800 CE). Adding to the ethnic and cultural mix were influxes of Jews during the Middle Ages and later; the incursions of armies from all over Europe during the Thirty Years’ War; the 17th-century immigration of French Hugenots to Prussia; the redrawing of borders after both world wars; marriages between black GIs and German women after World War II; and, during the labor shortage that followed World War II, the arrival of guest workers from southern and eastern Europe and Turkey, many of whom ended up staying. Refugees also came from Eastern Europe during the Soviet era and during the Bosnian War, and for some people not motivated by political or economic oppression, Germany has proved an attractive destination.
In this course we will focus primarily on fiction and nonfiction works by recent immigrants or descendants of immigrants, all of whom write in German and have been translated into English. Among the topics we explore will be homesickness; interactions with the bureaucracy; use of and perspectives on language; questions of citizenship, assimilation, and integration; clashes of cultures; and encounters with xenophobia. We will also look at the particular experience of Afro-Germans.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-GRST
Identical With: GRST234, COL216
Prereq: None

GELT239 Modernism and the Total Work of Art
The term “total work of art” refers to the German Gesamtkunstwerk that took on new urgency in the 19th century amid social upheaval and revolution. Understood as the intention to reunite the arts into one integrated work, the total work of art was tied from the beginning to the desire to recover and renew the public function of art. While there exist many approaches to totality in the modern era, this course focuses on modernist theories and practices that simultaneously critiqued existing society and posited a utopian alternative. We will begin by studying formulations of totality in response to a cultural crisis initiated by the 1789 French Revolution. From there, we turn to German idealism and to an analysis of composer Richard Wagner’s ideas and compositions that made the idea of the synthesis of the arts a central focus for European modernism. Yet if Wagner’s works and writings provided the dominant reference for subsequent developments from the 1880s onward, these most often consisted of a search for alternatives to his own theory and practice, particularly in the visual arts. We will examine attempts to envision totality after Wagner in impressionist painting and German expressionism. Ideas of totality and utopia continued to carry positive associations for modern artists until the 1930s, when they became co-opted by totalitarian governments. The course concludes by examining the perversion of modernist dreams in Nazi festivals and art exhibitions.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-ART
Identical With: ARHA339, GRST239, FIST339, COL340, MUSC285
Prereq: None

GELT253 The New German Cinema
This course will investigate the aesthetics, politics, and cultural context of the new German cinema. Having established a critical vocabulary, we will study the influence of Bertolt Brecht’s theoretical writings on theater and film, ambivalent positions vis-à-vis the classic Hollywood cinema, issues of feminist filmmaking, and the thematic preoccupations peculiar to Germany, for example, left-wing terrorism and the Nazi past. Attendant materials will include literary sources, screenplays, and interviews.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-FILM
Identical With: FILM320, GRST253
Prereq: None
GELT260 The Agony and the Ecstasy: The German Novel and Novella
Starting with Goethe in the 18th century, German, Austrian, and Swiss authors have made major contributions to the literary genre of the novel and the sub-genre of the novella, typically shorter than a novel and restricted to one plot line. German prose works often grapple with profound philosophical questions, particularly those that bear on the meaning of life, the relation of the individual to society and to other individuals, the character of justice, definitions of ethics and morality, the nature and calling of the artist, and the tension between thought and emotion. In this course we will read, in English translation, longer or shorter works by some of the most significant and enduring authors writing in German between the 18th and 21st centuries. Particular attention will be paid to the portrayal of social and political issues, to narrative strategies and style, and to thematic continuities in the cultures of the German-speaking regions. We will also consider the challenges of translating fiction from one language and culture to another. Several films based on works read in the course will be viewed and analyzed. Ample opportunities will be provided for writing, in both expository and creative veins, and receiving detailed feedback.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-GRST
Identical With: GRST260, COL273
Prereq: None

GELT268 Understanding Modernity: Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud
The names of the writers and thinkers Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud signal a revolution of thought in the 19th and early 20th centuries. This course is designed to make critical theory and contemporary discourses in the humanities and social sciences more accessible by providing the modern historical and philosophical foundations for key concepts such as interpretation, subject, history, politics/society, and religion/morality. We will explore some of the most influential writings of the respective authors in a comparative manner and, thus, come to a better understanding of the genesis of much modern thinking.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-GRST
Identical With: GRST268, COL268
Prereq: None

GELT275 Creativity and Crisis: Germany 1918-1933
This course investigates the fascinating culture of the Weimar Republic, Germany’s first, heady, and ultimately unsuccessful experience with democracy between the end of the First World War and the Nazis’ rise to power. We will focus particularly on Berlin, coming into its own as Germany’s first true metropolis, but will also look at Munich, another hub of cultural activity and the site of Hitler’s early organizing activities. Among the topics to be studied may be the increasing influence of film, radio, and the press; modernism in literature; new impulses in art; the economic and social impact of hyperinflation and the Great Depression; changes in the roles of women; assertion of previously taboo gender identities; competing political ideologies; reactions to the immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe; the emergence of proletarian mass culture; and the observations of cultural critics such as Walter Benjamin and Siegfried Kracauer on the world taking shape before their eyes. We will also read works set in Berlin but written by outsiders (Isherwood and Porter).
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-GRST
Identical With: GRST275, COL276
Prereq: None

GELT279 Good, Evil, Human: German Fairy Tales and Their Cultural Impact
The collected folk tales of Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm have had a substantial impact on the cultural history of Germany and beyond. Deceptively simple, these little texts communicate and negotiate extraordinarily important and complicated messages about what it means to be human, to behave in acceptable ways, to have and control unwelcome desires, and to (be able to) imagine a better world. We will read selected fairy tales from the Grimm collection and other texts, investigate the historical context in which the Grimms undertook their ambitious project, learn about ways in which scholarship has framed fairy tales, and discuss adaptations of the fairy-tale tradition in films and texts of the 20th century.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-GRST
Identical With: GRST279, COL279
Prereq: None

GELT286 Goethe, Schiller, and German Romanticism
This course covers a period of roughly 60 years that defined the shape of German literature and culture for good. In 1774, Goethe entered the literary scene with his epistolary novel THE SORROWS OF YOUNG WERTHER. In 1832, he published his final work, the second part of FAUST, and became immortal. With his earthly death, a period now known simply as the “Age of Goethe” [Goethezeit] came to an end. The tasks of this course will be twofold. We will first examine the aesthetics and core ideas of Goethe and his friend and occasional collaborator, Friedrich Schiller, the second major representative of Weimar classicism. We will then contrast the ideals and works of Weimar classicism with the much more freewheeling and often deeply ironic intellectual and artistic production of German Romanticism as embodied in members of the Romantic circle around Dorothea von Schlegel and her lover and later husband, Friedrich, and Caroline Schlegel and her husband, August Wilhelm Schlegel (Friedrich’s brother). The young and hip members of the Schlegel circle acted both as profound admirers of Goethe’s achievement and as acerbic critics of what they perceived to be the stilted style of Weimar classicism. While Romanticism is often misunderstood as a cult of irrationalism, the German Romantics were closely allied to the transcendental idealism of Fichte and Schelling and advocated their own brand of a communal thinking or “sympolohy.” The course will probe both the continuities and the antagonisms that characterize German literary culture in the Age of Goethe.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-GRST
Identical With: COL293, GRST286
Prereq: None

GELT302 Forward, Without Forgetting: The GDR in Literature and Film
In 1949, postwar Germany officially split into two separate countries with the formation of the German Democratic Republic. Also known as East Germany, the GDR was isolated from the Western world for four decades, but it developed its own, equally rich literary and cinematic cultures. By looking at a range of textual and visual sources, students will engage critically with ways of understanding this “other” Germany and its distinctive cultural expressions, ideology, and history, including the role of the government and the Stasi. We will also explore phenomena such as the “Ostalgie” and retro-chic that manifested themselves after the Fall of the Wall in 1989. We will read works by Christa Wolf, Wolf Biermann, and Monika Maron, among others, and watch films and TV-series produced before and after unification.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-GRST
Identical With: GRST302, COL291
Prereq: GRST213

GELT401 Individual Tutorial, Undergraduate
Topic to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.
Offering: Host
Grading: OPT

GELT402 Individual Tutorial, Undergraduate
Topic to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F

GELT411 Group Tutorial, Undergraduate
Topic to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.
Offering: Host
Grading: OPT

GELT412 Group Tutorial, Undergraduate
Topic to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.
Offering: Host
Grading: OPT