GERMAN STUDIES MAJOR

MAJOR DESCRIPTION

The study of language and literature lies at the center of German studies, for in works of literature, language manifests itself in its most complex, aesthetically rewarding, intellectually stimulating, and culturally revealing forms. The concept of literature goes far beyond the recognized genres of fiction, poetry, and drama. Because literary patterns and language can be identified in Hegel’s writings on the philosophy of mind, Nietzsche’s unsystematic but brilliant and provocative philosophical texts, or Freud’s analyses of how the human mind functions, students of sociology, psychology, history, political science, and many other disciplines can benefit from learning to analyze literary structures and styles.

The German intellectual tradition has played a major role in the development of Western thought. The German Studies Department’s offerings in this area constitute key components of the Certificate in Social, Cultural, and Critical Theory and include aesthetics, cultural and literary theory, the history of science, and major figures from the Enlightenment to the Frankfurt School.

Majors can also pursue individual interests in courses on film and visual culture, the performing arts, music, intellectual and political history, or environmental studies that have a substantial German component.

ADMISSION TO THE MAJOR

To become a German studies major, a student should have no grade lower than a B in any course taken in the department. The department recognizes the diversity of student interests and goals by giving its majors great flexibility in designing their programs of study. Students should work closely with their major advisors to put together coherent courses of study and assure that they will make steady progress toward mastery of the German language. The department strongly recommends that majors fulfill Stages I and II of the general education expectations.

MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

The major requires satisfactory completion of nine credits worth of courses. At least five credits must be earned in courses taught in German above the level of GRST211, with at least three of the five being GRST seminars at the 300-level or courses taken in Germany. We encourage students to participate in our approved programs in Berlin or Hamburg. Up to four credits earned there typically count toward the major, provided the subject matter is relevant to German studies, the instruction and assignments are in German, and the major advisor has given prior approval. Students who choose to spend an entire year in Germany should consult with the department in advance to ascertain how many courses will count toward the major.

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

The German studies major is designed to allow students to explore the rich and diverse cultures of the German-speaking countries through a flexible interdisciplinary program that stimulates the students’ creative and critical capacities and can serve as the basis for future academic or professional study or employment.

The specific goals are as follows:

- Knowledge of the German language: Courses are designed to enable students to achieve at least Advanced Mid-Level proficiency in speaking and comprehending spoken German, according to the ACTFL guidelines. They will have ample opportunity to become fluent and accurate writers of German in a variety of genres and contexts.
- Intercultural literacy: Students can expect to gain insight into unfamiliar cultural attitudes and artifacts that enables them to be open-minded and competent participants in their own and foreign environments.
- Historical breadth: Students will be able to acquire insight into the development of the German-language cultures from the Enlightenment to the present and those cultures’ impact on Western civilization and other cultures.
- Knowledge of the field of German studies: Through their courses, majors can become acquainted with techniques of textual interpretation, with the scope of the field, and with prevailing research methods and disciplinary tools.
- Experience in German-speaking countries: Students will receive strong encouragement and support to experience a German-speaking country firsthand through: study abroad during the academic year or the summer, internships, thesis/capstone research, or study or teaching after graduation.

STUDY ABROAD

For information on the programs in Berlin and Hamburg, students should speak with their faculty advisors and the Office of Study Abroad (http://www.wesleyan.edu/cgs/osa), located in Fisk Hall. The application deadline is October 15 for study abroad in the spring and March 1 for study abroad in the fall or for the entire year. Those students for whom study abroad is not possible during the fall or spring semester should consult with the department about the possibility of taking courses during the summer.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT

See Advanced Placement Credit (http://www.wesleyan.edu/registrar/general_information/ap_ib_credit.html) information.

PRIZES

Students who demonstrate excellence in the study of German may be candidates for prizes given from the Scott, Prentice, and Blankenagel funds. Students seeking modest funding for special projects should consult the chair.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

German Haus is a wood-frame house at 65 Lawn Avenue, with six single rooms and one double, provides a vibrant center for German-themed events and activities on campus. Whether discussing current events over coffee and pastries, interpreting poems, watching classic or contemporary films, or hearing about faculty members’ research, the residents and their guests can explore a multitude of interests.
HONORS

• Eligibility. To become a candidate for honors in German studies, a student must have earned a B+ or better in all German studies courses above GRST211 and must have taken at least one course in each of the three curricular areas.

• Candidacy. A prospectus must be handed in and approved by the prospective tutor or the department chair by the end of the Reading Period in the spring of the junior year. Enrollment in senior thesis tutorials (GRST409 and GRST410) is required. Candidates for honors in German studies and another department or program may choose to have two thesis tutors. The two departments or programs must agree in advance about the tutoring arrangement and evaluation of the honors project.

• Honors projects. Honors are given only for two-semester projects. Examples of possible projects are a scholarly investigation of a topic in German studies; a translation of a substantial text from German to English, accompanied by a critical essay or introduction; production of a play from the German repertory, accompanied by a written analysis; a creative project written in German, accompanied by a brief introduction or afterword.

• Deadlines. Deadlines for nomination to candidacy and submission of the honors project are set by the Committee on Honors.

• Evaluation and award of honors. Honors projects will be evaluated by the tutor(s) and at least two other readers. A student receiving high honors may, at the department’s discretion and subject to the guidelines of the Committee on Honors, be nominated to take the oral examination for University Honors.