

GERMAN STUDIES (GMAN)

* **GMAN 0400a / HUMS 0410a, The Top Ten: Best Books of the 21st Century** Sophie Schweiger

In 2025, *The New York Times* published a list of “The Best 100 Books of the 21st Century.” We will not read all of them. Instead, we will ask what it means to rank literature in the first place, as our class takes a closer look at some of the different measures by which books can be made subject to a ranking—for example: sales numbers, expert opinion, and critical acclaim, or success through translation and adaptation. We study the different ways of awarding book prizes and curating lists of literature. Additionally, we study the circumstances that lead to literary “hypes,” including Netflix adaptations, BookTok, and the author-as-celebrity. We read novels and excerpts of novels by some of the *New York Times*’ top-ranked authors, as well as by Nobel Prize laureates of recent years, and compare the different modes of selection and the benefits as well as biases inherent to the respective lists. We also look at currently circulating lists of “banned books” and the works of literature banned from official reading lists and syllabi to understand another aspect of the politics behind the curation of lists. We close our literary journey with a text by author Toni Morrison who, curiously, made all three lists. Enrollment limited to first-year students. HU

* **GMAN 1000b, German for Reading** Stefan Lessmann

Students learn the skills with which to read German-language texts of any difficulty with some fluency. Study of syntax and grammar; practice in close reading and translation of fiction and expository prose in the humanities and sciences. Conducted in English. Does not satisfy the language distributional requirement.

* **GMAN 1100a or b, Elementary German I** Staff

A beginning content- and task-based course that focuses on the acquisition of spoken and written communication skills, as well as on the development of cultural awareness and of foundations in grammar and vocabulary. Topics such as school, family life, and housing. Course materials include a variety of authentic readings, a feature film, and shorter video clips. Tutors are available for extra help. To be followed by GMAN 120. Enrollment limited to 14 per section. L1 1½ Course cr

GMAN 1200a or b, Elementary German II Staff

Continuation of GMAN 110. A content- and task-based course that focuses on the acquisition of communicative competence in speaking and writing and on the development of strong cultural awareness. Topics such as multiculturalism, food, childhood, and travel; units on Switzerland and Austria. Course materials include a variety of authentic readings, a feature film, and shorter video clips. Tutors are available for extra help. To be followed by GMAN 130. Enrollment limited to 14 per section. L2 1½ Course cr

GMAN 1300a or b, Intermediate German I Staff

Builds on and expands knowledge acquired in GMAN 120. A content- and task-based course that helps students improve their oral and written linguistic skills and their cultural awareness through a variety of materials related to German literature, culture, history, and politics. Course materials include authentic readings, a feature film, and shorter video clips. Tutors are available for extra help. After GMAN 120 or according to

placement examination. Followed by GMAN 140. Enrollment limited to 14 per section.

L3 1½ Course cr

GMAN 1400a or b, Intermediate German II Staff

Builds on and expands knowledge acquired in GMAN 130. A content- and task-based course that helps students improve their oral and written linguistic skills and their cultural awareness through a variety of materials related to German literature, culture, history, and politics. Course materials include authentic readings, a feature film, and shorter video clips. Tutors are available for extra help. After GMAN 130 or according to placement examination. Normally followed by GMAN 150 or, with permission of the director of undergraduate studies, by GMAN 171. Enrollment limited to 14 per section.

L4 1½ Course cr

* **GMAN 1630b, The Afro-German Experience** Theresa Schenker

Investigation of the history and culture of Afro-Germans. Topics include pre-colonial contacts between Africans and Germans, German colonies in Africa, and the Afro-German fate during and after the Nazi regime. Strong focus on the experience of Afro-Germans in contemporary Germany as seen in Afro-German fictional and non-fictional texts and media. Course culminates in an analysis of the image of people of color and questions of racism in Germany today Prerequisites: German 150, another advanced German class, or with permission of instructor. L5, HU

* **GMAN 1650a, The German Fairy Tale and its Legacy** Theresa Schenker

Once upon a time, long before Tolkien, Disney, or Rowling, two brothers named Grimm published a collection of fairy tales that went on to have an immense cultural impact throughout the world. German children grow up with these fairy tales and they play a huge part in German culture even today. The Grimm fairy tales are the textual point of departure for a multi-faceted, integrative exploration of this popular and influential genre through time. Students explore fairy tales by Wilhelm Hauff and Ludwig Bechstein, as well as traditional cultural theories of the German fairy tale, psychoanalytic and pedagogical interpretive approaches, and contextualization of this genre in cultural and social history. The focus is on the role that the literary fairy tale played in German culture throughout history and the impact German fairy tales still have today. Prerequisite: Successful completion of L4 German, or appropriate level on the German placement test. L5, HU

* **GMAN 1690a, Architecture, Art and Social Justice** Marion Gehlker

This class introduces students to aspects of architecture as art and building design, within the context of social and environmental justice issues in the 20th and 21st centuries. Students explore the “New Settlements of Berlin Modernism,” the Bauhaus School, subsidized public housing, industrial and solar architecture in Germany, as well as examples at Yale and in New Haven. Prerequisite: GMAN 140 or equivalent, any L5 class, permission of the instructor. L5, HU

* **GMAN 1701a / FILM 2897a / WGSS 1701a, Gender and Sexuality in German Literature and Film** Lea Jouannais

In this course, we will explore the 20th-century German artistic, literary, and cinematic canon through the lens of gender and sexuality. Queer and feminist perspectives will play a central role in our discussions, while also providing students with a broader understanding of artistic movements in the German-speaking world. A chronological approach, spanning from the interwar period to the present day, will serve as a guide

through key moments in German history. Our readings and analyses will include works by Irmgard Keun and Mela Hartwig in the interwar period, August Sander's photographs, excerpts of Klaus Mann and Annemarie Schwarzenbach's texts, postwar literature with Ingeborg Bachmann, New German Cinema through the films of RW Fassbinder and Ulrike Ottinger; a novel by Elfriede Jelinek, the poetry of May Ayim, and contributions from contemporary German voices. This course is conducted entirely in German. It is recommended that students have completed one other L5 class, though exceptions are possible on a case-by-case basis. Please contact Language Program Director Theresa Schenker with questions: theresa.schenker@yale.edu L5, HU

GMAN 2080a / HIST 1254a, Germany from Unification to Refugee Crisis Staff

The history of Germany from its unification in 1871 through the present. Topics include German nationalism and national unification; the culture and politics of the Weimar Republic; National Socialism and the Holocaust; the division of Germany and the Cold War; the Student Movement and New Social Movements; reunification; and Germany's place in contemporary Europe. HU o Course cr

*** GMAN 3030a / PHIL 3323a, The Frankfurt School** Jacob McNulty

The Frankfurt School of Critical Theory was (is) a group of eclectic interdisciplinary Marxist philosophers and social scientists, active from the 1920s to the present. Most were German Jews born around the turn of the 20th century. The Frankfurt school were a group of thinkers in almost perpetual exile. Simultaneously critical of American capitalism and of Soviet Communism, they were expelled from their native Germany in the wake of Hitler's rise to power. They also often lacked any intellectual safe haven, finding themselves at odds much philosophical and social-scientific orthodoxy (positivism, neo-Kantianism, "value-free" social science etc.). The critical theorists of the Frankfurt School sought to re-actualize ideas from the philosophical tradition, especially from Kant and Hegel, in order to address the complex realities of modern society: mass culture; fascism, totalitarianism and authoritarianism; world war; imperialism; secularization; irrationality, sexuality and aggression; and so on. This class looks at critical theory from a philosophical perspective, focusing on its claim to fuse traditional philosophy and radical social science. At least one prior course in philosophy, preferably in Kant or political philosophy. HU

*** GMAN 3060a / CPLT 3065a / HUMS 3061a, Bad Books** Kirk Wetters

Traditional humanities education always focused on "greatness"—but there is no denying the critical value and sometimes even the enjoyment of poor performances. In a world governed by norms and standards (against the appearance of laxness and relativism), "badness" and amateurism are inevitable. "Bad" works can be extremely popular and influential (e.g., in the cases of pseudoscience, misinformation, racism, antisemitism). The "bad" archive contributes to a reevaluation of critical standards, forms of official and unofficial censorship, freedom of speech and the function of taboos. The course explores famous works that have been considered aesthetically, morally, ideologically and politically pernicious (stopping short, however, of screeds and manifestos like Hitler's *Mein Kampf*). Nevertheless, this course warrants a strong content warning. The range of our considerations will be partly based on the students' wishes and judgments. HU

* **GMAN 3100a / LING 1910a, “Sprachkrise” – Philosophies & Language Crises**

Sophie Schweiger

The crisis of language predates the invention of ChatGPT (who may or may not have helped write this syllabus). This course delves into the concept of language crises and its long history from a philosophical and literary perspective, examining how crises of language are represented in literature and how they reflect broader philosophical questions about language, identity, and power. We explore different philosophical approaches to language, such as the history of language and philology (Herder, Humboldt, Nietzsche), structuralism and post-structuralism (Saussure), analytical and pragmatic philosophies (Wittgenstein), phenomenology and deconstruction (Heidegger), and analyze how these theories shape our understanding of language while simultaneously evoking its crisis. The course also examines how such language crises are represented and produced in literature and the arts; how authors and artists approach the complexities of language loss, and how crises help birth alternative systems of signification. Through close readings of literary texts by Hofmannsthal, Musil, Bachmann, et. al., we analyze the symbolic and metaphorical significance of language crises, as well as the ethical and political implications of language loss for (cultural) identity. Experimental use of language such as DaDa artwork, performance cultures, and “Sprachspiel” poetry by the “Wiener Gruppe,” as well as contemporary KI/AI literature, further complement the theoretical readings. By exploring language crises through the lens of philosophy and literature, we gain a deeper understanding of the role of language – and its many crises – in shaping our understanding of ourselves and our communities. HU

* **GMAN 3180a / CPLT 3180a / FILM 2827a / HUMS 3188a, Artificial Life:**

(Re)Production and the Limits of Humanity Austen Hinkley

A mad scientist creates a living being in a laboratory; automata band together to overthrow their creators; a moving statue appears more lifelike than a human being. Such fantastical images and stories of artificial humanity haunt human culture, from ancient myths to contemporary media. This seminar explores such imaginations of the artificially human, with an emphasis on their role within German culture, in order to examine the often-hazy boundary between artificial production and organic reproduction. We will discuss the significance of this boundary for our understanding of topics such as literature, art, labor, gender, and psychology. Readings are drawn from sources both ancient and modern, from discourses including religion, philosophy, alchemy, literature, and psychoanalysis. In addition to readings, film and other visual materials will be incorporated as primary texts. HU

* **GMAN 3333a / HUMS 4333a, Kafka** Paul North

A name, a puzzle to be solved, a mirage-like figure provoking writers like Jorge Luis Borges to step beyond staid literary models, Jew, German, subject of the Kingdom of Bohemia, accident insurance lawyer, inventor of a device to make table saws safe, abject sufferer of tuberculosis, critic of philosophy and European culture, misogynist, queer, dreamer and recorder of dreams, jokester, refuter of Kierkegaard, challenger to Nietzsche, fabulist, reader of Freud, reader of Flaubert, reader of..., writer of short prose pieces "in a single breath," diarist, novelist. Kafka. HU

- * **GMAN 3460a / AMST 3334a / CPLT 3500a / FILM 3540a / HUMS 3466a, Uwe Johnson's Anniversaries: From A Year in the Life of Gesine Cresspahl** Austen Hinkley

Uwe Johnson's *Anniversaries: From A Year in the Life of Gesine Cresspahl* remains a monument of postwar German literature – and it was written in and about New York City. Across its 367 short chapters (each corresponding to a day of the year), the novel unfolds on three levels: the historical present in New York, memories and family history from Germany, and reporting from the New York Times on current events. The result is a view of life, politics, and history in the middle of the 20th century that is as rich and expansive as it is fragmented. The social and political climate of New York in the late '60s is put into contact with memories of the rise of Nazism in Germany; reporting on the Vietnam war, the civil rights movement and the Prague Spring is refracted through the lenses of the protagonist's past life in East Germany and her new life raising her daughter alone in New York. This course undertakes a close reading of Johnson's sprawling novel with attention to its many historical, political, and literary contexts. Readings from the novel are complemented by relevant short readings on theories of media, politics, literature, and history. No prior knowledge of German language and literature is required.

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- * **GMAN 3620b / CPLT 4890b / HUMS 3720b, Critique and Crisis** Kirk Wetters
In our time, when everyone is suspected of being hyper-critical, it is not surprising that the limits of critique, its function and institutional location are called to question. The idea of "post-critique" has been much discussed in recent years. In order to gain orientation with respect to such concerns, this course develops critical models, primarily from the German tradition, in order to show the great variety of options available beyond the "hermeneutics of suspicion." Topics include: post-critique, the history of critique/criticism, the Romantic concept of critique, traditional vs. critical theory, historicism, philology vs. hermeneutics, science (Wissenschaft) vs. the critique of positivism. Main protagonists include Kant, Schiller, Schlegel, Nietzsche, Dilthey, Max Weber, Lukács, Husserl, Benjamin, Adorno, Koselleck, Szondi, Gadamer, Gumbrecht, Latour, Felski. HU

- * **GMAN 4050a / CPLT 3940a / FILM 4680a, Weimar Cinema** Fatima Naqvi and Claire Demoulin

The German cinema, 1919–1930. Expressionist films and films of the New Objectivity. The pressures of technology and the other arts on cinema; issues of spectatorship, visual pleasure, and distraction. Readings by Simmel, Kracauer, Benjamin, and others. Films by Murnau, Lang, Lubitsch, Pabst, Brecht, von Sternberg, and others. Unless otherwise indicated, courses in this group are conducted in English with both readings and discussion in English. The courses are open to all students in Yale College. Conducted in English, with readings in English. HU

- * **GMAN 4920a and GMAN 4930b, The Senior Essay Tutorial** Theresa Schenker
Preparation of an original essay under the direction of a faculty adviser.