

# GERMAN LITERATURE AND CRITICAL THOUGHT

Degree Types: PhD

The Department of German (<https://www.german.northwestern.edu/>) offers training in German-language literature, culture, and thought from the mid-eighteenth to the early twenty-first century. Our faculty provide teaching and mentorship in a wide range of areas related to modern German-language literature and culture, with a particular focus on interdisciplinary work in the fields of critical theory, philosophy and literature, literary theory, intellectual and cultural history, media theory, and the intersection of literature and religion. Graduate students in the program are encouraged to pursue innovative and original projects according to their individual interests, developing their skills as creative thinkers and researchers while receiving a solid grounding in German literary and cultural history and the practices of textual analysis.

In line with its commitment to interdisciplinary research, the program collaborates closely with other departments and programs at Northwestern, including Comparative Literary Studies, Philosophy, Jewish Studies, Spanish and Portuguese, English, Asian Languages and Cultures, Science and Human Culture, and History, as well as with the various networks of interdisciplinary graduate clusters at Northwestern. (For more information on the graduate clusters and how you can have a second intellectual "home" outside of the department, please visit the [Interdisciplinary Clusters page](#)). The program also maintains strong ties with universities and institutions in Germany and Austria (including Frankfurt, Münster, Vienna, and the ZfL Berlin), where students often choose to spend their second fellowship year, and/or secure additional fellowship funding beyond the five years provided by The Graduate School.

The program is also committed to fostering graduate students' pedagogical training. In addition to its tenure-line faculty, the department includes award-winning professors of instruction and experts in second-language acquisition who work closely with graduate students as supervisors and mentors to develop their professional skills and teaching portfolios.

## Additional resources:

- Department website (<https://www.german.northwestern.edu/>)
- Program handbook(s)

## Degree Offered

- German Literature and Critical Thought PhD (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/tgs/german-literature-critical-thought/german-literature-critical-thought-phd/>)

## German Literature and Critical Thought Courses

### GERMAN 324-0 Modern German Drama (1 Unit)

Plays by authors ranging from Heinrich von Kleist to Peter Weiss, from the perspective of the stage as a "moral institution."

Prerequisite: None.

*Literature Fine Arts Distro Area*

### GERMAN 336-0 German Cultural Criticism (and Beyond) (1 Unit)

This class explores the history of cultural critique through a reading of major texts in German cultural criticism from the late eighteenth century to today (as well as selected texts outside that tradition but indebted to it) that aim at understanding, evaluating, and even revolutionizing their culture and times.

*Literature and Arts Foundational Discipline*

### GERMAN 401-0 German Literature and Critical Thought 1750-1832 (1 Unit)

This course begins with the formative aesthetic discussions undertaken by Lessing and Mendelssohn, turns to Kant's program for critical self-reflection, and considers a wide range of responses, including those of Schiller, the early romantics, Kleist, Hölderlin, and Goethe.

### GERMAN 402-0 History of Literature and Critical Thought 1832-1900 (1 Unit)

Thematic approach to key texts of 19th century German literature between Goethe and Gottfried Keller, tragedy and the Bildungsroman. Literary and philosophical texts are read side by side in order to interrogate traditional concepts of realism, mimesis, and interpretation.

### GERMAN 403-0 German Literature, Critical Thought and New Media 1900-1945 (1 Unit)

Built around selected key texts on the aesthetic theories of modernism (e.g., by Nietzsche, Adorno, Bürger, and Kittler), this course explores the relationship of literature and the visual arts and scrutinizes the status of literature within aesthetic production in modernity. Particular attention to works by Rilke, Kafka, Brecht, Lasker-Schüler, Benn, Musil, and Mann.

### GERMAN 404-0 German Literature, Critical Thought, and New Media since 1945 (1 Unit)

Overview of the most influential texts that reflect the mounting concern with media in German literary and critical theory since the Second World War. Emphasis on the effects of the rise of media studies and theory on the understanding and interpretation of literature.

### GERMAN 405-0 Basic Issues in Foreign Language Teaching (1 Unit)

This course focuses on basic principles of second language acquisition and language teaching methodology. It introduces students to the major trends and theories in language teaching. The critical reflection of pedagogical practices is emphasized.

### GERMAN 407-0 Proseminar (1 Unit)

The proseminar is a spring quarter theory and methodologies course in which students develop a research-level paper in conjunction with previous work in other courses. Students are required to present their work in a proseminar during the course of their coursework.

### GERMAN 408-0 Critical Theory and Religion (1 Unit)

This course explores the central place the concept of "religion" has occupied in the development of critical theory and, in turn, the role critical theory has played in reframing "religion" in modernity and in the contemporary geopolitical moment. We take up the question, "Is critique secular," as we consider the contributions, potential and actual, of "religion" to social transformation.

### GERMAN 431-0 Contemporary German Literature (1 Unit)

Readings from authors representative of literature in the former East and West Germany's. May be repeated for credit with change of topic.

### GERMAN 441-0 Studies in Communication and Culture (1 Unit)

Content varies. Samples; feminist literature, media studies, the history of literary journals, and other specific topics representative of current research interests. May be repeated for credit with change of topic.

### GERMAN 490-0 Independent Reading (1 Unit)

May be repeated for credit. Permission of instructor and department required.

**GERMAN 499-0 Independent Study (1 Unit)**

May be repeated for credit. SEE DEPT FOR SECTION AND PERMISSION NUMBERS.

**GERMAN 590-0 Research (1-3 Units)**

Independent investigation of selected problems pertaining to dissertation. May be repeated for credit. SEE DEPT FOR SECTION AND PERMISSION NUMBERS.