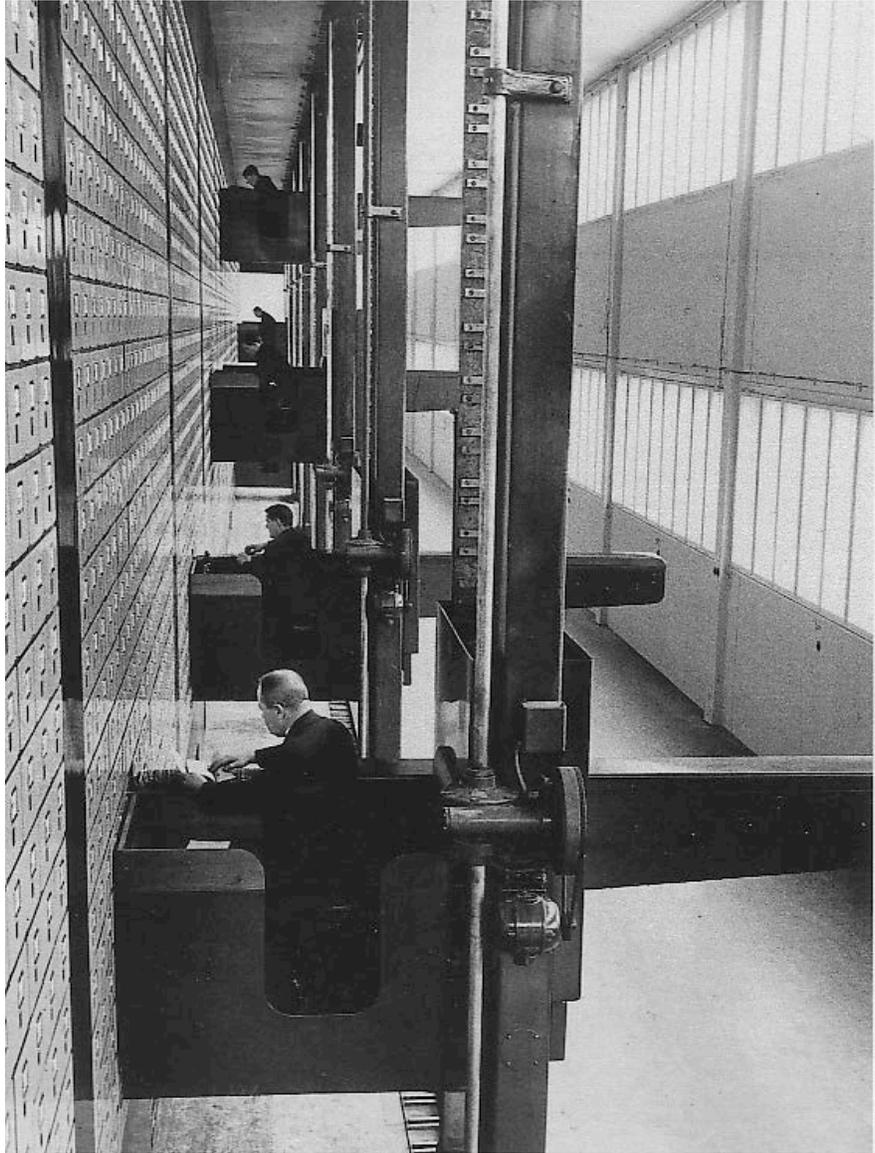


# Princeton University



## Independent Work in the Department of German

2013-2014

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## I. Introduction to the Field of German

The faculty in the Department of German study the literature, history, philosophy, culture, and art of the groups, confederations, and nations who have spoken German from the Middle Ages to the present. It is safe to say that few other traditions offer so rich an array of cultural achievement in so many of these fields, making the study of German culture an endlessly fascinating and rewarding venture. Given Germany's central role in the most turbulent and troubling events of the twentieth century, it is not surprising, too, that the field of German studies has, since the Second World War, developed into a vanguard for critical approaches to the analysis of cultural tradition and to questions of canonicity: like Germany itself, German Studies has had to undergo a process of thorough reflection, reinvention and reconstruction, making it today one of the methodologically most innovative and forward-looking disciplines in the humanities.

Although our field is defined by the geopolitical boundaries of German-speaking Central Europe, the people speaking and writing in the German language over the course of centuries were not cut off from the rest of the world. The study of German is an inherently interdisciplinary enterprise that necessitates branching out into other languages and their literary traditions, national histories, and cultural discourses. These connections to other fields are reflected in our faculty's close affiliations with other departments and interdisciplinary programs such as Architecture, Art and Archaeology, the Center for the Study of Religion, Comparative Literature, European Cultural Studies, History of Science, Judaic Studies, Media and Modernity, and Medieval Studies. A field of study defined in this way is obviously vast. Despite the small size of our department, however, we have been able to embrace and promote this interdisciplinarity while rigorously maintaining the study of German culture and literature as our central object of study. We believe that the study of German is enhanced and fortified, not diluted, by incorporating knowledge from other disciplines.

As reflected in the broad range of expertise of our faculty, the field encompasses above all the full span of German literature from the Middle Ages to the present, but also research in intellectual history and knowledge-structures from 1700 to the present day, aesthetic philosophy, twentieth-century art (including painting and photography), cinema studies, media studies, feminism and gender studies, psychoanalysis, critical theory, systems theory, and theories of second language acquisition. Concentrators in German normally choose the topics for their independent work from one of these subfields. The list of titles of recent senior theses included below under IX. Appendices will give you the best sense of the range of possibilities.

## II. Overview of Independent Work

Independent work in German is the keystone in the department's training of young scholars. As a German concentrator, you will write two junior papers (JPs), a shorter one in the Fall and a longer one in the Spring, and a senior thesis over your senior year. These projects will encourage you to integrate the language and intellectual skills (reading, speaking, thinking, learning, writing) you are acquiring in your classes and in your study, research, and work experiences abroad. As the culmination of this course of study, the senior thesis provides the most compelling way for you and your faculty adviser to summarize and evaluate your achievements as a scholar of German.

### A: Junior Paper

During the first term of the junior year, students are required to write an original and carefully constructed research essay of approximately 4,000 words on a subject of their choosing relating to some aspect of German culture, history, or politics broadly conceived. One of the principle goals of this paper is to introduce you to the challenges of articulating and pursuing an intellectual question of your own in greater depth. Up to this point, you have likely engaged only with the primary cultural texts of our discipline, and for the first time you will now encounter the range of secondary scholarship and criticism. As a result, you must begin to identify your own interests, to understand how these interests interface with existing research in the field, and to develop a writerly voice in which to articulate yourself as a scholar. Consonant with this goal is learning how to do research on a particular question. This means, *inter alia*, working with research databases in the library; assembling a bibliography on the topic that includes not only primary sources, but also secondary scholarship on the topic in the original language (German and, for those studying earlier fields, medieval German and Latin); and producing, in close collaboration with your JP adviser, an extended, coherent, and developed argument in writing.

During the second term of the junior year, students will present a longer essay (approximately 8,000 words). For your second essay, you are expected to choose a different adviser and are encouraged to explore a different avenue of research as well. Nonetheless, this essay is meant to hone research and writing skills acquired during the Fall semester with the first JP. The increased length gives you the opportunity to go into even greater depth with your research and helps you to develop the skill of conceptual organization: it teaches you how to break down a larger research question into a series of moving parts, encouraging you to incorporate a variety of approaches, and address different aspects of your topic in an organized and coherent way. The length also cultivates your rhetorical resources, since you must now develop and motivate a persuasive scholarly argument over the course of a written text that is twice as long as the first JP. This paper, in turn, helps you develop the organizational and conceptual skills necessary to tackle the year-long research project that comes next.

### B: Senior Thesis

Building on the research skills and foundations established by the two junior papers, the senior thesis is an opportunity for concentrators to push their knowledge even further. The senior thesis consists of a research paper, normally 60-80 pages in length, on a topic of interest to the student. In some cases the topic of the thesis grows out of one of your junior papers; in others, the thesis

process begins with questions that emerge from your experience in a particular class; no less often it proceeds from ongoing dialogue with a particular faculty member on a subject of interest to you. Whatever its origin, the resulting project is the culmination of your work in the department: skills acquired in the language as well as knowledge of literature and culture acquired through coursework, study abroad, and junior independent work all come to full fruition in this year-long effort. The combination of self-motivated research and regular intellectual discussions with an adviser gives you an integrated educational experience that goes far beyond the parameters of coursework. The goal of the senior thesis is not merely to master a particular field of knowledge, then, but to pursue the unknown, to create knowledge where it is missing, and to articulate the findings in the context of a larger conversation or debate. In this way, seniors practice forms of critical thinking and communication that will continue to serve them long after their time at Princeton.

*A brief outline of the process:*

Students in their senior year submit a two-page abstract (a sketch of their research question) in October, a bibliography in November, and drafts of separate chapters in December and February. At each of these benchmarks you can expect to receive feedback from your advisor either in the form of written comments or verbal feedback, offered during office hours. The completed thesis is then due the first or second week of April. During exam period, the students will then participate in an hour-long exam with the two readers of their thesis (the adviser and one other faculty member, chosen by the Departmental Representative in consultation with the student and the adviser). During this time, they will first offer a short presentation about their thesis and answer questions from the faculty members about this work; a small portion of the exam, typically around 15 minutes, is conducted in German.

### III. 2013-2014 Timeline

#### JUNIOR YEAR

##### **FALL SEMESTER**

October 9	Abstract due, one copy each to the Departmental Representative and to the adviser, who will be assigned in consultation with the student during the first week of classes
November 25	Draft of junior paper due to adviser
January 7	First junior paper due (4,000 words)
January 17	Adviser's report on first junior paper due
January 21	Return of junior paper report to student

##### **SPRING SEMESTER**

February 24	Abstract due, one copy each to the Departmental Representative and to the adviser, who will be assigned in consultation with the student during the first week of classes
April 12	Draft of junior paper due to adviser
May 6	Second junior paper due (8,000 words)
May 16	Adviser's report on second junior paper due

May 21 Return of junior paper report to student

Juniors interested in receiving funding for senior thesis research should submit an application letter and a proposed budget to the Chair in May.

## SENIOR YEAR

### FALL SEMESTER

October 11 Two-page abstract due, one copy each to the Departmental Representative and to the adviser, who will be assigned in consultation with the student during the first week of classes

November 11 Preliminary bibliography and outline due to adviser

December 9 Twenty pages of first draft of thesis due to adviser

### SPRING SEMESTER

February 10 A second draft of thesis, thirty pages or more, due to adviser

April 11 Senior thesis due.  
A PDF copy must be submitted to senior thesis adviser and to [lratsep@princeton.edu](mailto:lratsep@princeton.edu) by 4:00pm. Additionally, two spiral bound readers copies and one bound copy must be submitted to the German Department Office by 4:00pm.

May 2 Faculty readers' reports due to Departmental Representative

May 7 Return of one copy of thesis plus readers' reports to student

May 14-15 Senior departmental comprehensive exams

## IV. Guide to the Writing Process

### A. Choosing a Topic and an Adviser

For many, choosing a topic is in fact one of the hardest parts of the process. Having been exposed to a number of exciting and new ideas during their time at Princeton, some students are frustrated by the demand to limit their inquiry to a particular subject. For those who find themselves in this situation: keep in mind that your thesis is not the end of your work as a scholar and that you can continue your inquiry into fields of knowledge after Princeton, whether in graduate school or in non-academic contexts. Others are unsure about the kind of scholarly topic that could sustain their interest for an entire semester or year. For those in the latter situation: the first thing to do is to think about what most stimulated your curiosity and interest during your coursework; the things you have read, seen, or heard that you found particularly compelling or puzzling; and the topics that continued to linger in your thoughts after classtime or even after the semester ended. If this does not yield results, there are other approaches to try. For the first JP especially, one productive place to start is to engage with a piece of literature, a work of art, or a theoretical text that you have not yet read or encountered before, even something from a tradition of thought or body of literature with which you are unfamiliar. For junior independent work, we recommended exploring something out of your field of expertise because often the thesis will take you back onto more familiar territory.

Similarly, you might want to consider research in a time period your courses have not yet covered and start there: if you have researched modernism, consider something in the Middle Ages; if you have taken a course on Romanticism try a subject from the postwar period. Visit a faculty member during office hours, ask her or him to recommend specific works or general reference guides that give an overview of the field, and then focus on something that grabs your attention. Since the abstracts for the first JP and for the senior thesis are usually due in October, it is useful to begin these preliminary reflections already during the summer before; at the very latest, though, steps should be made in this direction during the first week of the semester. Keep in mind that what students actually end up submitting in January is often only very loosely related to the project that they sketched out in October. Far more important at this point is that you can define a field of inquiry and articulate a question that will get your research started.

Many students choose an adviser based on a positive experience with a professor in a particular course. Perhaps you enjoyed the course's subject matter, the way the professor approached and taught the topic, and the intellectual dialogue that you developed with the professor during the course. You may want to pursue this topic further, or a topic related to that course, making the choice of that professor as adviser a simple matter. Keep in mind, though, that while the same professor can advise one of your JPs and your senior thesis, you cannot write both of your JPs with the same professor, so you will necessarily have to explore the scholarly specializations of other faculty as well. If you need advice, we encourage you to visit the Departmental Representative in September as you begin to think about a project. Discuss potential topics with her or him and ask who might be an appropriate adviser. Students who want to conduct thesis research during the summer between their junior and senior years are encouraged to meet with the departmental representative already in April or May of their junior year in order to identify a possible adviser for the project. Based on this discussion, go to the office hours of the recommended professor or professors to discuss your thoughts about this topic. You should then be able to reach a decision based on the experience of these conversations.

## B. The Abstract

The abstract for the junior paper should be at least a paragraph and can be up to one double-spaced page in length. The abstract for the senior thesis should be two double-spaced pages. In both cases, a typical format for the abstract is a description of the field of inquiry or a context followed by a delineation of a question or set of questions related to that field or context. You may want to start the abstract by introducing a paradox you have encountered; then you can describe how you propose to investigate this paradox, how it came to be, what it reveals about its historical context, and how it is elaborated in the particular work(s) that you will be analyzing.

For juniors: if you get started early enough, you can talk to your adviser about your abstract, and ask her or him to read a draft. Show your work to your fellow students as well. It is good to get in the habit of sharing your work to others and fielding questions about it: this will help you to improve at understanding and articulating precisely what your interests are and why.

For seniors: in addition to following the preceding advice for juniors, it might also be useful to consider why it is important for scholarship to address this paradox or answer this question. In

other words: What contribution will you be making? What lacuna of historical understanding or of interpretation will you be helping to correct? What oversight in the scholarship will you be fixing? And how can you explain it in a way that makes the problem interesting to others?

### C. Breaking it Down/Making a Plan

The process of outlining your project goes hand-in-hand with item D below, “Research and the Library.” Once you have done sufficient reading to produce an abstract, have decided on a topic and have a question or two you want to investigate, you will need to make a tentative outline on how to go about your research. If you have multiple questions, each one can be a section. Then begin researching and considering various sources that might relate to this question. As you read, you will become aware of further distinctions that might need to be made. For example, if you are looking at a literary work, a very traditional way to break down your project might be to consider 1) the author and his/her life; 2) the relationship of this work to his/her other work; 3) the time period in which s/he is writing; 4) the genre of the work; 5) its relationship to other works of the same genre; 6) its relationship to the other works on a similar topic; etc. These categories will of course vary in number and extent depending on whether this is a JP or a senior thesis and on the topic that you are researching. Whatever the case, once you have a basic outline of your topic, you have a tentative plan of what you need to research before you start writing.

### D. Research and the Library

Research is a combination of locating sources, reading them, taking notes, and adapting your project based on your findings. A classic method for note-taking is to write down relevant quotations or arguments on index cards, which you can then shuffle around in a sequence that matches your outline (there are also computer programs such as DEVONThink for the same purpose). If you use this method, writing effectively becomes a process of translating the notes on the cards into a prose narrative and argument. The important point is to write down what interests you and what is relevant to your topic so that this information or quotation is easily accessible when you want to use it in your paper.

The research stage is very time-consuming and should not be left to the last minute. Fortunately, there are many databases now that can be searched online. If you are a junior, the Departmental Representative will arrange for you and your cohort to meet early in the Fall with the German Studies research librarian Rex Hatfield ([rexh@exchange.Princeton.EDU](mailto:rexh@exchange.Princeton.EDU)), who will give you a tour of the resources available in Firestone library and, based on your personal interests, will also introduce you to the databases that will be of most use for your research. Depending on the direction your ongoing research takes, you can later make individual appointments with Mr. Hatfield to help you find the research tools you need to answer the new questions that arise.

Research can be both exciting and frustrating. It may take a while to find the right keywords to search. Once you find a book or article on your subject that is helpful, look at the accompanying keywords listed in the catalogue; even more importantly, look at the footnotes in this piece of scholarship itself to see the sources cited by the author and follow the thread from there. Check all the relevant databases (also in German) to make sure you have found the most recent work on the topic. Students should remember that a significant number of sources cited in their

independent work should be in German. (Consult with your adviser to determine the appropriate percentage for your project). Keep in mind as well that the vast majority of sources still exist only in print form, so do not become too dependent on the convenience of online databases or the magic of Google.

It is possible that you will want to conduct archival research for the longer JP or senior thesis. This type of research is necessary especially when your question requires you to look at a collection of unpublished primary sources. This may become apparent during your initial tranche of research. One of your secondary sources mentions a letter in an author's private collection, for example, or old pamphlets from the nineteenth century, an artist's preliminary drawings, or manuscripts that contain the initial sketches for a project. Even though many archives are now digitizing their holdings and making them available online, it may become necessary to view the originals all the same. This type of research requires planning and funding. If you are doing study or work abroad, you may be able to tack on a trip to the archives while overseas. Or you may decide that you need to go visit an archive in Berlin over Thanksgiving or Winter Break. There are resources on campus to support this type of research trip. See Section 2 of IX. Appendix for a list.

The inductive process of researching is going to bring changes to your project. As your topic comes into greater focus, you may be led down a different path than the one you originally anticipated, and you may even change the direction of your research entirely. Your outline and final thesis will evolve over the months of research. You should not feel anxious if your research develops in directions that were not anticipated in your outline. This is natural, even inevitable. When scholars say that conducting research is a dynamic process, this is what they are referring to. Indeed, the surprises resulting from research are not only what leads to truly original work, but also what is most fun and rewarding about this process.

It is a good idea to keep track of everything you read in one electronic file or notebook. You will save yourself some anguish if you update your bibliography continuously as you are researching, taking notes, and writing. Some find bibliography programs like Endnote helpful.

#### E. Writing and Thinking

A common mistake made by many students, especially with the thesis because it extends over such a long period of time, is to wait too long to start writing. You will have to submit your abstract already in October, but don't wait until two days before a draft is due to begin writing. A good practice to develop is to write a little bit every day while you are doing research. After you have finished reading a text and taking notes from it, spend around 15 minutes writing a brief summary and noting what you find useful about the source (or why it's not useful). If possible, situate that piece of writing somewhere in your outline. If incorporating the piece enables you to further refine and distinguish among your existing points, then add a new topic or sub-topic to your outline. If you follow this practice, your argument will almost be fully fleshed out in outline form when it comes time to write, and producing your first draft will come much more easily.

As soon as you feel that you have completed most (50-70%) of the research for a given section of your outline, you can begin writing a draft of that section. Keep your deadlines in mind and

use them to help you determine when to start writing. Remember that your first draft does not have to be completely polished, and that everything will have to be revised based on your adviser's feedback anyway. You might even want to think of the first draft as just a more detailed outline in narrative form. The most important thing is to get a draft down on paper. If you are in a senior thesis writing group (see Section VI), show the draft to the group and get feedback. This will accelerate your process, especially if you have hit any blocks or dilemmas. You should also be meeting regularly with your adviser. Depending on the ground-rules you set up with your adviser (see section V. below), you should be getting feedback from him or her as well. Don't be afraid to ask questions or talk with your adviser and your peers about difficulties. Sometimes solutions will occur to you as you are articulating the problem and you will find that your fellow scholars have plenty of helpful ideas as well.

Finally, keep in mind that writing and thinking go hand in hand. Just as your outline and your thesis idea will change as you do research, so, too, will they change as you write. In the very process of articulating your points, you will develop them. Indeed, most of your best ideas will come to you while you are writing. This is why it is crucial to have a regular practice of writing, whether it is everyday, a couple days a week, whatever ends up working with your schedule.

#### F. Revising and Editing

Revising is also integral to the process of writing and thinking being described here. Remember when your deadlines are, and try to plan so that you hand in drafts in a timely manner. Once you get feedback, go back to the draft and revise. Especially if you give yourself a few days off from looking at this section of the paper, you will notice things immediately that you can revise and refine.

Writing a long research paper is a process of discovery. Much of this discovery will happen during the research phase, of course, but the refined and probably most original discoveries you will make will in fact happen when you are revising. For this reason, you may need to revise a previous chapter after you've written a later one. And this is also one of the reasons that you will probably have to revise, if not completely rewrite, your introduction once the whole thesis has been drafted. For many scholars the introduction is in fact the last piece of a given text that they write. A good introduction is extremely important, as it sets the terms of your discussion as well as expectations for your argument. The chapters that follow will be much more illuminating and satisfying for the reader if you signal in the introduction what you are going to do and how you will do it.

Editing is one of the things you do as you revise and can be thought of as a primarily mechanical process. That is, when you are editing, you are correcting grammatical and spelling mistakes (proofreading) as well as considering aspects of your writing like sentence structure, style, and transitions. When you edit, you should be thinking about whether what you have written "reads well" and is easy to follow. Does your prose flow? Or is it choppy? Don't hesitate to read a sentence aloud to test how it sounds to the ear. Of course, being easy to follow conceptually does not necessarily mean that the grammatical structure of a sentence is simple. Conversely, using overly complex grammatical constructions does not make the argument itself more complex. In the end, good writers are the ones who can achieve a balance between simplicity and complexity,

between clarity and sophistication of ideas.

In partial fulfillment of your senior thesis, you will be required to submit a PDF of your complete thesis to the Department of German for inclusion in the Princeton Digital Senior Thesis Archive, which is housed in DataSpace (<http://dataspace.princeton.edu/jspui/>). While this PDF will be downloadable to anyone with a Princeton login, non-Princeton users must request and pay for thesis PDFs. The metadata that are publicly available and visible to online search engines include your name, thesis title and abstract, class year, and thesis adviser.

The purpose of publishing your thesis digitally is to provide the Princeton University community with access to all independent work. This increased accessibility will allow your work to have a much greater impact on your field than printed copies of your thesis, which enjoy only a very limited circulation. In the past, printed theses typically had an audience of only by two people (your readers), in addition to the small number of people who would take the initiative to order it from the library. But now, given the virtually limitless circulation of a digital PDF, you can be gratified that your thesis will find a much wider readership. And while the benefits of assisting and inspiring the scholars that come after you are immense, you should be aware that this exposure also entails possible negative aspects. The potential audience for your thesis expands dramatically: in addition to those seeking your expert knowledge on the subject, admissions officers from graduate school, future employers, and the CIA all will have access to your thesis as well. This is not to alarm you, but merely to remind you to write your thesis with integrity and with an eye for quality. As always, you should give careful thought to any information that you make available online.

## V. How to Get the most out of Your Adviser

### A. Establishing Guidelines

A general principle to remember with regard to advising is that it is the student's responsibility to make contact with the adviser and to set up the best parameters for the working relationship. With good reason, the thesis is designated "independent work": the thesis can only happen through your motivation, enthusiasm, and commitment. The department sets basic deadlines and provides you with all of the intellectual resources to conduct your work, from tours of the library to writing groups, but it is ultimately your responsibility to make steady progress with the thesis. Do not expect, for example, that your adviser will initiate contact and ask you to come see him/her to talk about your abstract. It is your job to reach out to your adviser to discuss your independent work.

Ideally, you will already have a relationship with the professor who will be advising your JP or thesis based on a class (or two) that you have taken with him or her. However, even if you do not know your adviser well, contact him or her at the beginning of the semester and set up a meeting to discuss the thesis or JP process. Before you meet, reflect upon your personal experiences writing in the past and your strengths and weaknesses in this area. Think about how an adviser can help you overcome your weaknesses and enhance your strengths. Ask the professor if he/she has any particular guidelines for independent work. Most importantly, establish how often you

will meet (meeting regularly every week or two is optimal). Tell your adviser what sort of guidance you anticipate needing and don't be afraid to customize the process: based on past experience, you may need additional deadlines or you may prefer written responses over oral feedback. Again, it is your responsibility to identify what you need and to establish strategies to get it. Our professors have years of experience advising independent work, but you can't expect them to anticipate your particular needs.

### B. Making and Keeping Deadlines

As indicated in other sections, deadlines are crucial for helping the process along. The department has several firm deadlines, but you can work out additional ones with your adviser as necessary. For example, if you are expected to hand in an outline in November, discuss with your adviser when you might be able to expect feedback. In other words, give your adviser a deadline, too. Keep in mind, though, that you cannot realistically expect your adviser to comment upon work you have submitted in just a couple of days, since, in addition to advising your work, professors are busy teaching, writing, administrating, lecturing and, of course, advising your peers. As always, if you want thoughtful feedback, you need to give your reader ample time to work through your writing.

Keep to your schedule and deadlines. Your experience with the JPs will help you determine how you can best do this and what might help you improve if you typically have trouble observing deadlines. Writing is hard, not only intellectually, but emotionally. So procrastination is a perennial problem. Sometimes an urgent deadline is the only thing that can motivate a person to sit down and work. Be honest with yourself about what sort of writer you are and how you can overcome your difficulty meeting deadlines. If you have trouble with things like planning, time organization, or work habits, discuss it in your writing group or look into taking one of McGraw's workshops. You can also discuss it with friends who are also juniors or seniors, since chances are high that someone among your peer group has encountered the same problem and may have good advice. Finally, your adviser will have numerous suggestions about how to organize yourself to get your writing done. Ask him or her!

### C. Keeping in Touch

Although the work you are doing is independent, it is of paramount importance to stay in touch with your adviser. It may be tempting to cancel or postpone a meeting with your adviser if you fall behind your writing and want to wait until you have concrete work to show. But this is not the best way to proceed. We strongly recommend that you set up and keep to regularly scheduled meetings with your adviser, even if only to check in for 15 minutes and report on progress, or, conversely, to report on the lack of progress. Depending on your adviser, your check-in might just be an email. The interactions can take many forms (another guideline you can set up at the beginning of the semester), but what is important is that contact occur regularly. Staying in touch with your adviser is a way of staying in touch with your project. Even if the two midterms and three papers that are due in a single week prevent you from working on your independent project for that week, the regular contact with your adviser will keep the process moving forward.

### D. Ask Questions

Students often worry about asking their advisers questions, wanting not to bother them with something that might seem insignificant. However, all advisers know that this is part of the process as well. If the question is really so insignificant or its answer so obvious, then the adviser should be able to direct you towards general scholarship on the matter. Especially during the JPs, when you are taking your first stab at writing research papers, ask questions when you have them. And if for some reason your adviser can't answer the question, other resources are available. Just because you are working with one professor doesn't preclude the possibility of asking other faculty research questions related to their respective field of specialization. There is also help available in the library and graduate students in the department might also be helpful. Or ask your peers. Finally, don't forget that the department administrators have accompanied many a major through the shoals of writing the thesis and may have practical advice. The bottom line is that the writing process entails asking questions and knowing where to look to find the answers.

## VI. Getting Help and Feedback on Your Writing

There are a number of useful opportunities to get feedback on written work from a variety of sources.

### A. The Writing Center

Princeton students are fortunate to have a wonderful resource on campus that assists with all types of academic writing. The Writing Center offers student writers free, one-on-one conferences with experienced fellow writers trained to consult on assignments in any discipline.

Located in Lauritzen Hall, the Writing Center welcomes all Princeton students, including:

- undergraduates working on essays for courses,
- juniors and seniors working on independent research projects,
- international students unaccustomed to the conventions or idioms of American academic writing,
- graduate students working on seminar papers or dissertations,
- students writing essays for fellowships or for graduate school or job applications, and
- students crafting oral presentations.

Writing Fellows can help students at any phase of the writing process, from brainstorming ideas and developing a thesis to structuring an argument and revising a draft. The goal of each conference is to teach strategies that will encourage students to become astute readers and critics of their own work. Although the Writing Center is not an editing or proofreading service, Fellows can help students learn techniques for improving sentences and checking mechanics.

Writing Center conferences complement, but do not replace, the relationships students have with their teachers and advisers.

#### B. Senior Thesis Writing Group

In addition to the writing center, German concentrators writing theses have the opportunity to participate in a Senior Thesis Writing Group within the department. In this colloquium, students present drafts of work at each stage to their peers and to the group leader, an advanced graduate student in the German department. In response they receive comments and feedback. This group becomes a venue where students can discuss methodology, research tips, and the various mechanical questions related to researching and writing a large project.

#### C. Program Colloquia

Students in interdisciplinary certificate programs might also have the opportunity to share their work and get peer feedback from other students working on topics within those programs. Students in Medieval Studies and European Cultural Studies, for example, have thesis colloquia. Students should check with the Director or Program Manager of the certificate program they are pursuing to see if there is a colloquium in which to participate.

### VII. Formatting and Citation

#### A. Sample Title Page

# Thesis Title

by

Annette-von Droste-Hülshoff

A senior thesis submitted to  
The Department of German in partial  
Fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Degree of Bachelor of Arts

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY  
Princeton, New Jersey

April 11, 2013

## B. Page Layout and Page Limit

Formatting for the thesis is as follows: the *title* should conform to the university regulations (see sample in VII.A); the *margins* should be one inch on all sides; the *font* should be a legible serif font (e.g. Times New Roman, Garamond, etc.) at 12 point; indented block-quotations and footnotes may be smaller, but no smaller than 10 points (even 10-point type is small considering that the thesis will be stored on microfiche once accepted). The thesis should not exceed 80 pages, and you must get permission from the Departmental Representative and your adviser if you exceed this limit.

## C. Footnotes and Bibliography

Documentation should follow the most recent guidelines of the Modern Language Association; footnotes and parenthetical styles are both acceptable, but consult your adviser on this question, because he or she might have a preference. In either case, every thesis should include at the end a bibliography of works cited. Try to consolidate footnotes and parentheses for ease of reading (the MLA manual has advice on this problem). For more information, consult the MLA Handbook or the organization's web site at [www.mla.org](http://www.mla.org).

# VIII. Evaluation

## A. Expectations

Despite the diversity of approaches and disciplines represented in this department (literary studies, art history, aesthetic philosophy and media theory, intellectual history, politics, applied linguistics), there is a common standard for excellent work in all of these fields. Such work possesses three distinguishing qualities:

- 1) Originality and Imagination. Most scholars who think deeply and at length about a given topic will come to see it in a unique way. Many of the elements of an original argument may have been noticed individually before, but it is unlikely that anyone will have considered and organized these observations in the precise way that you have. Building upon the discoveries of previous scholars does not make your argument less original. What counts is that you have seen something in a new way and that you are able to recognize and elucidate what is distinctive about your perspective.
- 2) Breadth of Knowledge. Because a thesis by its nature allows you to research one specific topic in depth, it is important that you make use of as much material you can. Doing so will add complexity and originality to your discussion (cf. above, Part IV. C. and D.) We do not expect you to know everything, but the more relevant material you can incorporate into your project, the more convincing it will be. Failure to take account of existing material relevant to your research—whether it contradicts or supports your claims—will make the project as a whole less successful.

- 3) Clarity and Persuasiveness of the Argument. Following the first two principles will go a long way to making your argument persuasive, but your persuasiveness will also depend on how clear you can make your distinctive perspective. Many a brilliant argument is marred by an inability to communicate the theses in a clear fashion. Here is where revising, editing, and getting feedback—from adviser and peers alike—are indispensable. They can help you determine early on where your thinking or idiom of expression might be muddled. As noted before, the best theses balance clarity with complexity. It is no small achievement to make a complex and nuanced story, theory, or idea elegantly clear.

#### B. What the Grades Mean

An **A** thesis is elegantly written, based on highly original thinking, states and clarifies a compelling thesis, and defends that thesis with persuasive argumentation and convincing evidence. An **A** paper is analytical—as opposed to merely descriptive—and demonstrates that the student has conducted a close and critical reading of the material. An **A** thesis also not only takes into account the relevant scholarship on the topic, but also makes an original contribution to that topic. An **A+** thesis would meet all these criteria but would additionally show a degree of sophistication and complexity on a par with graduate student work in the **A** range. Such a paper would be very close to publishable in an academic journal. An **A-** thesis would be truly excellent in most regards, but slightly flawed in one or more respect; it would fail to meet fully one of the three principles listed above.

A **B** thesis entails writing that is careful, but not necessarily elegant. It is based in thinking that shows some degree of originality. It states and clarifies a reasonably interesting thesis. And it engages seriously with existing scholarship. A thesis that has most of these traits but also exhibits an occasional flash of insight would qualify for a **B+**. A thesis that has most of these traits but also possesses some more serious flaws would merit a **B-**.

A **C** thesis lacks a cogent argument and offers little more than a summary of ideas and information. It presents a satisfactory level of research but suffers from factual errors, unclear writing, poor organization, or some combination of these problems. The primary claim of a **C** thesis is likely flawed in that it is either uninteresting or too ambitious to defend adequately and, consequently, cannot withstand close scrutiny. A **C+** thesis will have some or all of these problems but will also have an original insight or two, and may demonstrate evidence of greater depth of knowledge. A **C-** will demonstrate that, despite its many flaws, at least some effort was made.

A **D** thesis is minimally acceptable and barely counts as a completion of the requirement. For example, the student may have studied the topic with some understanding, but most **D** theses display serious deficiencies in all of the areas explicated above.

An **F** paper indicates a student's failure to demonstrate any competence in the research materials or in the construction of an argument. It reads as unfinished. Above all, an **F** thesis indicates an utter lack of effort.

### C. Readers' Reports

Once the thesis is completed and turned in, it will be evaluated by the adviser and one additional reader (a faculty member from the German department or a faculty member from an associated department, chosen by the Departmental Representative in consultation with the student and the adviser). Each reader will write a detailed reader's report that will lay out in detail the thesis's achievements and flaws. The final grade for the thesis is the average of the two grades given by the readers. If there is a great discrepancy between the two grades given, the Departmental Representative may appoint a third reader to ensure that the thesis is being evaluated fairly.

Students receive copies of the readers' reports by a date specified by the Departmental Representative and in advance of the Thesis Defense.

### D. Thesis Defense

Usually on the Wednesday or Thursday after Dean's Date, each senior will be examined on the thesis by the adviser and the second reader. This exam lasts one hour. The students will begin the exam by making a short presentation (10 minutes or fewer) in which they review the goals of their thesis, reflect on how they went about achieving them, and offer their own evaluation of whether they met these goals. Often students use the presentation as an opportunity to respond to comments made in the readers' reports. After the student presentation, the faculty proceed to ask questions about the thesis which the student must adequately answer. A portion (15-20 minutes) of the conversation will be conducted in German. At this point students are often asked to explain how the thesis relates to previous coursework taken in the department and to reflect more generally about their education in the field of German.

Evaluation of the student is based on whether he or she was able to defend the positions of the thesis when questioned by the readers. The criteria for the evaluation are similar to the principles for the written work: How clearly and cogently can the student speak about the argument and about the research? How much knowledge does the student convey in his or her answers? And how convincing and persuasive is he or she in defending the positions? It is often the case that some of the flaws of the written work can be overcome in a good defense.

When calculating departmental honors, the defense grade is considered separately from the thesis and given less weight than the written work.

## IX. Appendices:

### 1. List of Thesis Titles 2006-2013\*

#### CLASS OF 2013 SENIOR THESES AND ADVISERS

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\* For access to archived senior theses, please consult DataSpace, the University's digital repository: <http://dataspace.princeton.edu/jspui/>.

Kerck, Antoine (2013): Germany's Protestant Ethics and the Greek Sovereign Debt Crisis: A Weberian Perspective, Michael Jennings, 72 pages

Lebsack, Victoria (2013): The 'vremde' and the Fantastic in "Wolfdietrich", Sara S. Poor, 125 pages

Stolzenberg, Stephen (2013): Killer Communications: The Terror Attack as Medium and its Representations through Film, Michael Jennings, 91 pages

#### CLASS OF 2012 SENIOR THESES AND ADVISERS

Hendren, Lieve (2012): Life as Art: Radical Social Change in Nietzsche. Christiane Frey, 93 pages

Kurwa, Shelina (2012): Illusions of India: The Distant Shore of the German Imagination, Michael Jennings, 82 pages

Reilly, Kelly (2012): Objective Gaze in Nature and the Nature of Objective Gaze: Rilke's Aesthetics in the Context of Cézanne, Devin Fore, 88 pages

Walsh, Matthew (2012): Society Finds Closeness: Increasing the cultural relevance of opera for mass audiences through the Metropolitan Opera's 'Live in HD' broadcasts, Christiane Frey, 59 pages

#### CLASS OF 2011 SENIOR THESES AND ADVISERS

Benitez, Robert Loen (2011): The Construction of a Life Worth Living in German Queer Literature 1919-1933. Michael W. Jennings, 92 pages

Hopkins, Nicole Lynn (2011): Father/Mother/Secret Lover: A Jungian Analysis of Daniel Paul Schreber's Denkwürdigkeiten eines Nervenkranken. Sara S. Poor, 91 pages

Loewenstein, Jacob (2011): Integrist State Support of the Culture Industry from UFA to Media: Televisual Policy to Resist Americanization. Thomas Y. Levin, 114 pages

Muenzel, Johannes (2011): The "Private" Detective, Public and Domestic Masculinities in the West German Crime Film of the 1950's. Brian Hanrahan, 62 pages

Parks, Rebecca K. (2011): Painting Politics: George Grosz, Max Beckmann, and Otto Dix and the Experience of Germany's Interwar Art and Politics. Nikolaus Wegmann, 68 pages

Ziegler, Jayden (2011): Generalization and Productivity in Morphological Paradigm Gaps: Varying Type Frequency and Competition. Adele Goldberg, 65 pages

CLASS OF 2010 SENIOR THESES AND ADVISERS

Chaney, Justine Mary (2010): Contorting the Invisible: The Emergence of Corporal Punishment in German Narrative at the Turn of the Twentieth Century. Christiane Frey, 78 pages

Chereches, Anca (2010): Combinatory Categorical Grammar and German Local Scrambling. James Rankin, 83 pages

Denz, Jacob (2010): "Wichtig zu Lernen": Einverständnis and Body Politics in Brecht's Lehrstücke. Devin Fore, 101 pages

Madole, Robert (2010): The Specter of Automation: The Organic and Its Limits in Robert Musil's "Man Without Qualities". Michael W. Jennings, 74 pages

Porter, Allen (2010): Immanence and Transcendence. Thomas Y. Levin, 74 pages

CLASS OF 2009 SENIOR THESES AND ADVISERS

Colgan, Brendan (2009): Nation Branding & National Identity: Making Euros and Sense of German Identity. Sara S. Poor, 98 pages

Harper, Jason (2009): Datamoshing: Aesthetics of the Glitch. Thomas Y. Levin, 94 pages

Kim, Christine (2009): More than Meets the Eye: Connections between Phenomenology and Art. Arnd Wedemeyer, 53 pages

Kowen, Michael (2009): Speculations about Speculation (about Speculation): Text as Text, Text as Theory. Nikolaus Wegmann, 88 pages

May-Gamboa, Julio (2009): Navigating the Metropolis: Advertising, the Bauhaus, and Objectification in Weimar Germany. Brigid Doherty, 69 pages

Plaku, Bora (2009): Faust as a Political Tool in National Socialism; Faust as a Political Tool in Resistance With an Example by Klaus Mann. Sara S. Poor, 55 pages

Schlegel, Christian (2009): Musil, Criticism, Musil-Criticism. Michael W. Jennings, 83 pages

CLASS OF 2008 SENIOR THESES AND ADVISERS

Frankle, Elissa P. (2008): Ihre Wege als Deutsche und Juden: Constructions of Identity in Jewish Museums in Bavaria. Michael W. Jennings, 132 pages

Nunan, Timothy (2008): Leopold Schwarzschild, Das Neue Tagebuch, and Anti-Totalitarianism in Interwar Europe, 1933-1941. Anson Rabinbach, 177 pages

CLASS OF 2007 SENIOR THESES AND ADVISERS

Burkle, Arthur (2007): Love and Terrorism in Heiner Muller's QUARTET. Nikolaus Wegmann, 50 pages

Lampert, Marcus (2007): Walter Benjamin's Fractured Cosmos: A Reading of "Einbahnstrasse". Michael W. Jennings, 69 pages

Langer, Abigail E. (2007): Verschiedene Gehirne: Medical Observation and Social Self-Destruction in the Poetry and Pose of Gottfried Benn. Devin Fore, 92 pages

Stolzenberg, Emily (2007): "Der Sinn von Politik ist Freiheit": Conceptions of Politics and Freedom in Max Weber, Carl Schmitt, and Hannah Arendt. Arnd Wedemeyer, 74 pages

CLASS OF 2006 SENIOR THESES AND ADVISERS

Dillon, Maggie Blair (2006): The Threat of the Blur; Stress and Rupture in Gerhard Richter's October 18, 1977. Brigid Doherty, 55 pages

Fockele, Kenneth E. (2006): The poetics of physical love in Heinrich von Morungen and Walther von der Vogelweide. Sara S. Poor, 106 pages

Purdie, Denise Rita (2006): Technische Nothilfe: The Evolution of Perception in the Works of Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Walter Benjamin and Robert Musil. Michael W. Jennings, 90 pages

Shimp, Scott (2006): Online Offentlichkeit: A Habermasian Analysis of the Blogosphere. Thomas Y. Levin, 147 pages

Voute, Thomas M. (2006): Shields and Swords: Stasi Surveillance Through the Use of Informants. Walter Hinderer, 71 pages

## 2. Funding Sources

Funding is available from the Department of German for research related to independent work. A letter requesting funding should be sent to the department chair in May. Students are encouraged to explore other possible sources of funding, including:

- Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies (<http://www.princeton.edu/piirs/>)
- Study Abroad Program (<http://www.princeton.edu/oip/sap/>)

- Senior Thesis Research Funding from the Office of the Dean of the College (<http://odoc.princeton.edu/support/senior-thesis-funding>). Students can apply for thesis funding from ODOC in the spring of junior year to support senior thesis research to be conducted during the summer. They can also apply in early fall of senior year for funding for research to be conducted over fall semester, winter break or intercession.