

# Princeton University



Josef Ehm, Electronically Powered Mechanical Classifier,  
Head Office Social Insurance, Prague, 1936

## Independent Work in the Department of German

**2023-2024**

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## I. Introduction to the Field of German, the German Major and its Curricular Learning Goals

Since the pre-requisite for entering the major is a certain level of proficiency in the German language, represented by the completion of GER 107 or the equivalent, we begin with a description of what this means:

Students completing GER107 successfully will have gained proficiency at or near B2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (generally corresponding to intermediate/advanced boundary levels on the ACTFL scale). Students at the B2 level demonstrate the ability to interact clearly and without explicit preparation in spontaneous communicative circumstances, speak with native speakers on general topics without straining communication, understand complex, concrete and abstract texts, and write on a wide variety of subjects at an analytical level, such as comparing strengths and weaknesses of arguments.

In the discipline of German, we study the literature, history, philosophy, culture, media, 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 no other tradition offers so rich an array of cultural achievement in so many of these fields—one only has to think of the musical tradition from Johann Sebastian Bach to Karlheinz Stockhausen, or the philosophical tradition from Immanuel Kant to Jürgen Habermas—making the study of German culture an endlessly fascinating quest. It should be equally obvious that the turbulent history of the German-speaking nations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century presents formidable challenges to any easy understanding of that tradition. Although the larger field is defined in terms of the German language, those speaking and writing in that language over the course of centuries did not exist in a vacuum. The study of German is therefore an inherently *interdisciplinary* enterprise that also involves the study of *other* languages and literatures, histories, discourses, and cultural forms. These connections to other fields are reflected not only in the affiliations of department faculty with other departments and interdisciplinary programs (e.g., Architecture, Art and Archaeology, the Center for Culture, Society, and Religion, Comparative Literature, European Cultural Studies, History of Science, Judaic Studies, Media and Modernity, and Medieval Studies), but also in the six “tracks” available to German majors (German Literature, German Philosophy and Intellectual History, Media and Aesthetics, Linguistics, Study of Two Literatures, and the Joint Program in Culture and Politics). Because of this variety of offerings, the exact knowledge acquisition will vary from student to student, but certain common skills will be developed through the combination of coursework and independent work.

The goals of a German major are thus twofold: 1) to advance language proficiency by increasing core vocabulary; understanding of embedded sentence structures; comprehending nuances of style and register; engaging in extended discussion and debate; writing essays and short research papers in German; leading a seminar discussion in German; and 2) not only acquiring a range of knowledge in the chosen area of interest (major track) but also learning *how* to pursue the unknown, and in so doing, to create knowledge. The ultimate goal is to acquire the research,

writing, and rhetorical skills necessary to articulate that knowledge in a carefully presented and coherent argument that solves a problem in the context of a larger conversation or debate. In this way, our majors practice ways of thinking and communicating that will serve them well beyond their collegiate careers in virtually any profession.

The field as delineated by the range of expertise of our faculty represents strength in the full range of German literature from the Middle Ages to the present; intellectual history and the dissemination of knowledge from 1700 to the present day; twentieth century art, including painting and photography; cinema studies; media studies; feminism; 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 within one of these subfields. The list of recent senior thesis topics included later in this booklet gives a sense of the wide range of possibilities.

## II. Overview of Independent Work

Independent work in German lies at the heart of our training of young scholars. All concentrators participate in our Junior Seminar in the Fall of their junior year and write a year-long Junior Independent Paper. The Senior Thesis is then developed and written during their senior year. These papers enable the student not only to integrate but also to develop further the language and research skills (reading, speaking, thinking, learning, writing) they are acquiring in their classes and in their study, research, and work abroad experiences. The Senior Thesis is the culmination of this entire course of study, providing the most compelling way for the student and faculty alike to evaluate his or her ultimate achievement as a scholar of German.

The **Junior Seminar** in the German Department has a dual pedagogical function. On the one hand, it is a semester-long exploration of key methodological approaches, debates and research methods in the field, the mastery of which is assessed both through in-depth seminar discussion and a series of response papers. On the other hand, it is a semester-long workshop in developing a topic, working bibliography and the outline of an argument for the year-long Junior Independent Paper (the JP). This is done by devoting a significant portion of every weekly meeting to individual presentations and group discussions of each student's JP project. Drafts are workshopped, with students proposing edits to the work of their peers, guest faculty presentations are scheduled that speak to the topics being explored, and the project is evaluated by the seminar leader at various points in the semester with detailed feedback. The result is that by the end of the Fall term, each student has developed a clearly defined project with an annotated bibliography and has a firm grasp of the research and writing skills needed to spend the next semester developing this foundation into a well-crafted essay. Equally importantly, the seminar teaches how to go about *structuring* a year-long research project -- a crucial skill for the Senior Thesis embarked upon the following year.

The 5000-word **Junior Independent Paper** designed during the Junior Seminar is completed in the Spring semester of the Junior Year in close collaboration with a faculty adviser assigned by the Director of Undergraduate Studies. This faculty adviser meets weekly with the student, reads and gives comments on drafts, and then, once it has been submitted, evaluates the essay in the form of

a reader's report that summarizes the work and lays out its achievement as an independent research project (see below for more details on evaluation criteria).

The German Department **Senior Thesis** consists of a research paper, normally 60-80 pages in length, on a topic developed by the student in close collaboration with a faculty adviser assigned by the Director of Undergraduate Studies. Typically, the thesis process begins with questions that emerge from students' experience in a specific class or series of classes with a particular professor or within a chosen area of the field. The resulting project is thus the culmination of the student's work in the department. Skills acquired in the language, literature, and culture through coursework, study abroad, and junior independent work come to full fruition in this year-long undertaking. The combination of independent, self-motivated research, critical thinking, and regular intellectual exchange with the adviser, provides each student with an empowering and integrated educational experience that goes far beyond coursework.

Ultimately, the goal of the senior thesis is not merely to learn, but also to pursue the unknown, to create knowledge, and to articulate that knowledge in an argument that solves a problem in the context of a larger conversation or debate. In this way, seniors practice ways of thinking and communicating that will serve them well beyond their academic careers.

A brief outline of the process: Students are asked to submit a proposal with a sketch of their research question in October of their senior year, a bibliography in November, and drafts of separate chapters in December and February. The completed thesis is due the second or third week of April (see Timeline). During exam period, the students then meet for an hour-long examination with the two readers of their thesis (adviser + 1 other faculty member). During this hour, they give a brief presentation of their thesis and then answer questions from the faculty members about their work.

**III. Timelines for AY 2023-2024****Junior Calendar****FALL SEMESTER**

<i>September 5</i>	<i>Classes begin</i>
<i>October 9-13</i>	<i>Midterm Exams</i>
<i>October 14-22</i>	<i>Fall Recess</i>
<i>November 22-26</i>	<i>Thanksgiving Recess</i>
<i>December 8-15</i>	<i>Reading Period</i>
<i>December 15</i>	<i>Short written statement of Junior paper topic due (one copy each to Director of Undergraduate Studies and adviser)</i>
<i>December 15</i>	<i>Dean's Date deadline for written work</i>
<i>December 16-22</i>	<i>Fall term examinations</i>

**SPRING SEMESTER**

<i>January 29</i>	<i>Spring term classes begin</i>
<i>March 4-8</i>	<i>Midterm Exams</i>
<i>March 9-17</i>	<i>Spring Recess</i>
<i>April 8</i>	<i>Draft of JP due to adviser</i>
<b><i>April 29</i></b>	<b><i>Junior Paper due (5,000 words)</i></b>
<i>April 29 - May 7</i>	<i>Reading Period</i>
<i>May 7</i>	<i>Dean's Date deadline for written work</i>
<i>May 10-16</i>	<i>Spring Term Examinations</i>

## Senior Calendar

### FALL SEMESTER

<i>September 5</i>	<i>Classes begin</i>
<b><i>September 28</i></b>	<b><i>Two-page thesis statement due (one copy each to Director of Undergraduate Studies and adviser)</i></b>
<i>October 9-13</i>	<i>Midterm Exams</i>
<i>October 14-22</i>	<i>Fall Recess</i>
<b><i>October 27</i></b>	<b><i>Preliminary bibliography and outline due to adviser</i></b>
<b><i>November 21</i></b>	<b><i>Twenty pages of first draft of thesis due to adviser</i></b>
<i>November 22-26</i>	<i>Thanksgiving Recess</i>
<i>December 8-15</i>	<i>Reading Period</i>
<i>December 15</i>	<i>Dean's Date deadline for written work</i>
<i>December 16-22</i>	<i>Fall Term Examinations</i>

### SPRING SEMESTER

<i>January 29</i>	<i>Spring Term classes begin</i>
<b><i>February 9</i></b>	<b><i>Thirty+ pages of 2nd draft of thesis due to adviser</i></b>
<i>March 6-10</i>	<i>Midterm Examinations</i>
<i>March 9-17</i>	<i>Spring Recess</i>
<b><i>April 15</i></b>	<b><i>Senior Thesis due: PDF copy must be submitted to <a href="mailto:iratsep@princeton.edu">iratsep@princeton.edu</a> by 4:00 pm.</i></b>
<i>April 29 - May 7</i>	<i>Reading Period</i>
<b><i>May 7</i></b>	<b><i>Certificate Papers due</i></b>
<i>May 7</i>	<i>Dean's Date deadline for written work</i>

<i>May 8-9</i>	<i>Senior Departmental Comprehensive Exams</i>
<i>May 10-16</i>	<i>Spring Term Examinations</i>
<i>May 27</i>	<i>Class Day</i>
<i>May 28</i>	<i>Commencement</i>

#### **IV. Guide to the Writing Process**

##### **A. Finding a Topic / Choosing an Adviser**

**Finding a Topic:** This task may be, for some, one of the hardest parts of the process. The first step is to think about what has piqued your curiosity the most during your coursework, that is, what have you read, seen, or heard that you found particularly compelling or puzzling, or thought about for a significant amount of time after class or even after the semester ended. If doing this does not yield results, you can try different approaches. For the JP, a productive way to start is to examine a piece of literature or work of art or theoretical text (depending on your interests) that you have NOT yet read or encountered. Particularly for those doing one of the literature tracks, a useful way to begin is to pick something from the literary tradition with which you are UNfamiliar. Useful at this stage as well will be conversations with faculty members to whom these works ARE familiar. You might also want to try the approach of choosing a time period your courses have not yet covered (for example, medieval? early modern? around 1800?), and start there. Ask a faculty member for recommendations of works, or of general reference works that give an overview of the field and then focus on something that interests you or grabs you while reading that overview. Since the abstracts for the JP and for the senior thesis are usually due during the Fall semester, it is useful to start this thinking process over the summer before, but certainly, steps should be taken in this direction during the first week of the semester at the latest. One thing to remember: it is **often** the case that what you end up actually writing is only loosely related to the topic as you sketched it out initially. What is important is that you have defined a somewhat limited area of inquiry (the history of the novel, for example, is much too big, even for a senior thesis) and a question or questions that will get you started.

**Choosing an Adviser:** Students often choose an adviser based on a positive experience with a professor in a particular course. The student enjoyed the topic, the way the professor approached and taught the topic, and the rapport with the professor that the student developed during the course. Perhaps the student wishes to pursue that topic further, or a topic related to that course, making the choice of that professor as adviser a simple matter.

Whether you have an idea for your adviser or not, make an appointment with the Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) in September. Discuss potential topics and ask the DUS who might be an appropriate adviser. Final assignments will be made and confirmed by the DUS. Based on this discussion, go to the office hours of the professor or professors that are suggested and discuss your current thinking about your topic. See below for more advice on working with your adviser.



## B. The Abstract / Proposal

The abstract for the JPs should be at least a paragraph and can be up to a page in length (double-spaced). The proposal for the senior thesis should be two pages (double-spaced). A typical format for an 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 proposal by describing a paradox you have encountered and then describe how you propose to figure out this paradox, how it came to be, what it means about the context in which it came to be, and how it is resolved or not in a particular work or set of works that you will read and analyze. It will be useful at this stage also to think about why it might matter to work out this paradox or answer this question. What contribution will you be making? What problem of historical understanding or of interpretation will you be correcting or helping to correct? What oversight in the scholarship will you be fixing? Talk to your adviser about your proposal, and see if he or she will read a draft. Show it to your fellow students, too. It is good to get in the habit of showing your work to others and having to answer questions about it. This will help you to get better at both understanding and articulating precisely what your interests are and why.

## C. Breaking it Down / Making a Plan (The Outline)

This stage goes hand in hand with D. below and might also be described as the Outline Stage. You will already have done some reading to get your abstract done. Now that you have a topic and a question or two, you have to think about how best to go about answering the question. You might already have an idea how to do this and that will most likely already be suggested in the abstract. Make a tentative outline based on the abstract. If you have two questions, each one can be a section. Then start reading and looking at whatever you might think of that relates 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 beginning breakdown might be to consider 1) the author's biography; 2) the relationship of this work to the author's other work; 3) the time period in which the work was written/produced; 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 be different and more or fewer depending on whether this is a JP or a senior thesis, and on what the research question/s is/are. Whatever the case, once you have a basic breakdown of your topic, you have a tentative plan of what you need to research before you begin writing.

## D. Research and the Library

Research is a combination of searching for things to read, reading them, and taking notes on your reading. A tried and true method for note-taking is to write down interesting quotations and comment on them. An analog way to do this is with index cards that can then be shuffled around and put into a particular order that matches your outline. This method makes writing a relatively straightforward process of turning the notes on the cards into a prose narrative and argument.

There are also note-taking programs for your computer. 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 can be very time-consuming and should not be left to the last minute. There are many databases now that can be searched on-line. If you are a junior, the DUS will arrange a meeting for all of you (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 also bring you up to date on the databases that you may wish to use for your research. Individual appointments can also be made with Rex to help you find the research tools you need to address your specific questions.

Research can be both exciting and frustrating. It may take a while to find the right keywords to search. Once you find a piece of scholarship that is helpful, look at the keywords listed in the catalogue, and look at the footnotes to see what that person cites and follow the thread from there. Check all the relevant databases (also in German) to make sure you find the most recent scholarship on the topic. Students should remember that a significant number of sources cited in their independent work should be in German. (The determination of the appropriate percentage for your project and situation is made in consultation with your adviser).

Archival research: this type of research is necessary when your topic demands that you to look at primary sources that are unpublished or not otherwise available. This may become apparent during your initial reading. One of your secondary sources mentions a letter in an author's private collection, for example, or old pamphlets or journals from the nineteenth or twentieth century, an artist's drawings, manuscripts. Even though many archives are now digitizing their holdings and making them available on-line, it is often crucial nevertheless to view the originals. 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 figure out 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 below for further details.

As you become immersed in your research, new sources will often lead to changes in your project—you may find yourself pursuing a different path than initially anticipated, or indeed you may find that you need to change course entirely. This is very common and is often the indication that you are in the process of refining the focus of your topic. This means that your outline and plan and ultimate thesis for your project will change during the course of research. Walter Benjamin once spoke of detour as method: when people say that doing research is a dynamic process, this is what they are referring to. Sometimes this change might make you anxious, especially if you end up in a place that you did not write about in your abstract. But there is no reason to be concerned about this. On the contrary: it is a good sign that your thinking is evolving. Indeed, the surprises resulting from research not only often lead to truly original work, but also are what is most fun and rewarding about this process.

*Keep track of everything you read in one file (bibliography) and format the entries consistently from the start. It is tiresome to do the bibliography at the end of the process and under deadline pressure. You will save yourself some anguish if you keep your bibliography up to date as you are*

*researching, note-taking, and writing.* If you do not have one, you might want to invest in a bibliography program like Endnote or Zotero.

### E. Writing and Thinking

A mistake that many students make, 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 in October, but don't wait until two days before a draft is due to start writing. A good practice to develop is to write a little bit every day while you are doing research. After you have finished reading something and taking notes from it, spend 15 minutes or so writing a brief summary and distill what you find useful about the source (or why it's not useful). Even better, put that piece of writing somewhere in your outline. If reading the piece means you are now able to make another distinction among your points, then add a new topic or sub-topic to your outline. If you follow this practice, you will have your argument almost fully fleshed out in outline form and writing your first draft will come much more easily.

As soon as you feel that a section of your outline is about 50-70% researched (or filled in), you can begin writing a draft of that section. Keep your deadlines in mind and use those to help you determine when to start writing. Remember that your first draft does not have to be completely polished, and that everything will be further developed when you revise. You might even think of the first draft as a much more detailed outline in narrative form. The most important thing is to get a draft down on paper. If you are in a writing group, 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 them as well. Don't be afraid to ask questions or just to talk about difficulties with your adviser and your peers. 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 ideas will change as you do research, they also evolve as you write. It is in trying to articulate your points that such points really take shape. Most of your best ideas will come to you *in the course of* writing. This is why it is crucial to have a regular practice of writing, whether it is every day, a few days a week, or whatever works best with your schedule. But producing a small amount of prose on an almost daily basis is the best strategy for advancing such a project.

### F. Revising and Editing

Revising is also integral to the writing/thinking process being described here. Be aware of your deadlines and try to plan so that you can hand in drafts in a timely manner. Once you get feedback, go back to the draft and revise. Give yourself a few days off from working on this version of the paper; when you return to it with fresh eyes you will suddenly notice things that you can revise and refine.

Writing a long research paper is a process of discovery. A lot of discovery will happen during the research phase, but the most original insights you will have often occur when you are revising. For this reason, you may need to revise a previous chapter after you have written a later one. And this is also one of the reasons it is best to revise your introduction only after you have drafted and revised the entire thesis at least once. At this point you can go back to the beginning and work through your introduction. A good intro is extremely important, as it sets the terms of your discussion as well as expectations for your argument. The chapters that follow will be that much more illuminating and satisfying to the reader if you signal in the introduction what you are going to do and how you plan to do it.

Editing is one of the things you do as you revise and it can be thought of as a more mechanical process. That is, when you are editing, you are correcting grammatical and spelling mistakes (proofreading) as well as looking at things like sentence structure, style, and transitions. When you edit, you should be thinking about whether what you have written “reads well,” is easy to follow. Fluency is another key issue in this context – does your prose flow? Or is it choppy? Being easy to follow does not mean only formulating simple sentences. Nor do sentences that are overly complex or laden down with clauses necessarily make an argument complex. In the end, good writing involves striking a balance between simplicity (clarity) and complexity (sophistication of ideas).

## V. How to get the most out of your Adviser

### A. Establishing ground rules

A general principle to remember with regard to advising – it is your responsibility as the student to make contact with the adviser and to set up a relationship that works best for you. This is **independent** work, which means that you, the student, must take the initiative to make your thesis happen. The department sets basic deadlines, but do not expect the adviser to write to you and ask you to come see them to talk about your proposal. This is your job.

Ideally, you will already have a relationship with the professor who will advise your JP or thesis because you have taken one or two classes from them. Sometimes, however, the Director of Undergraduate Studies will assign an advisor based on your topic with whom you have not worked before. Even if you do not know your adviser well, contact them *at the beginning of the semester* and set up a meeting to discuss the thesis or JP process. Before you meet, think about your own writing process 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 ground-rules for independent work (like meeting regularly – weekly or every two weeks is best). If the professor asks you for what you need, tell him/her what you think you might need (regular meetings, additional deadlines, written feedback over oral feedback or vice versa). If the professor does not ask you, ask the professor if they would be willing to provide whatever it is. Again, it is your responsibility to figure out what you need and find ways to get it. Some advisers, because of their experience, will anticipate your needs, but don't *expect* this to happen. And don't wait for an email from your adviser before you start thinking about what you're going to do. Be active and pro-active.

## B. Making/Keeping Deadlines

As indicated in other sections, deadlines are crucial for helping the process along. The department has several firm deadlines, but you should work out additional due dates for certain deliverables with your adviser as necessary. For example, if you are to hand in an outline in November, discuss with your adviser when you might be able to expect feedback (at the next meeting? In a couple days? Weeks?) In other words, you can give your adviser a deadline, too (something else to discuss in the first meeting when setting up ground-rules).

Keep to your schedule and deadlines. Your JP will help you figure out to what extent you are able to do this and what you might need to improve if you have trouble making your deadlines. Writing is hard, not only intellectually, but emotionally. Procrastination is a perennial problem. Sometimes a looming deadline is the only thing that can motivate a person to sit down and work. Find out what sort of person you are and figure out if there is anything you can do to help overcome blocks to meeting deadlines. If you have trouble with things like planning, time organization, work habits, ask your adviser for advice and/or discuss it in your writing group if you have one. Or just with friends who are also juniors or seniors. Chances are, someone among your peer group has had the same problem and just talking about it with someone who is sympathetic can help overcome the problem. Your adviser has probably also had his or her fair share of writing blocks, and will certainly have suggestions about how to organize yourself to get your writing done. Ask them!

## C. Keeping in Touch

Although the work you are doing is independent, it is of paramount importance to stay in touch with your adviser. Sometimes, especially if a student is falling behind, there is a tendency to cancel appointments (“I don’t have anything to show you!”) or not to make them *until* one has something to show. This is *not* the best way to proceed. We strongly recommend that students set up regular (e.g., every two weeks) meetings with the adviser, even if only to check in for 15 minutes and report on progress, even if only to report on the lack of progress. Depending on your adviser, your check-in might just be an email. The contact can take many forms (another ground-rule you can set up at the beginning of the semester), what is important is that it take place regularly. Staying in touch with your adviser is a way of staying in touch with your project, even if your two midterms and three papers due in one week get in the way of working on the independent project for a week or two, the meeting/contact will keep you in it.

Bottom line: the most successful writing projects are usually associated with regular contact with the adviser.

## D. Asking Questions

This might seem obvious, but students often worry about asking their advisers questions, not wanting to “bother” them with something that might seem insignificant. However, the adviser is there basically for this reason, to advise you. Especially during the JP, when you are taking your first stab at writing a long research paper, ask questions when you have them. If your adviser is someone whose ground rules state for whatever reason that the professor only wants to give written feedback on drafts, then ask the adviser to whom you might direct specific questions that might come up about researching or the mechanics of putting the paper together or whatever. In other words, if your adviser can’t answer the question, ask someone else. There is help available in the library, the department managers know an awful lot about a lot of these things, and graduate students in the department might also be helpful. Or ask your peers.

Bottom line: The writing process is, in the end, all about asking questions and determining where to look to find the answers or work them out. Don’t be afraid to ask questions if you have them.

## VI. Help with Writing

### A. The Writing Center: <https://writing.princeton.edu/writing-center>

Princeton offers a wonderful resource on campus to help 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.

The Writing Center welcomes all Princeton students, including:

- undergraduates working on essays for courses,
- juniors and seniors working on independent research projects,
- international students not used to the conventions of American academic writing,
- graduate students working on seminar papers or dissertations,
- students writing essays for fellowships or for graduate school or job applications,
- students crafting oral presentations.

Writing Fellows can help with any part of the writing process: brainstorming ideas, developing a thesis, structuring an argument, or 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.”

Links for scheduling conferences are on the web-page listed above and take place in New South.

## B. Program Colloquia

In addition to the junior seminar described above, students may be able to find other groups in which to share their work. Students in interdisciplinary certificate programs often 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 have thesis colloquia. Students should check with the Director or Program Manager of the certificate program they are in to see if there is a colloquium in which to participate. All of these opportunities should underscore both the usefulness and importance of getting feedback on written work from a variety of sources.

## VII. Formatting and Citation

**Senior Thesis:** Documentation should follow the most recent guidelines of the **Modern Language Association**; footnotes and parenthetical styles are both acceptable. In either case, the thesis should include a bibliography of Works Cited. Try to consolidate footnotes and parentheses for ease of reading (the MLA Handbook has advice on this issue). For more information, consult the MLA Handbook or the organization's website at [www.mla.org](http://www.mla.org).

Below are the regulations for the formatting and submission of the thesis:

**Fonts:** Senior theses must be single-sided and double-spaced, printed in a 10- or 12-point font. The font should be a legible serif font (Times New Roman, Garamond, or similar), and the document should use only one style of font.

**Margins:** The margins should be 1 ½" on the left-hand side and 1" on the other three sides.

**Order of parts:** The thesis should start with the title page. Other front matter (all of which is optional, though tables of contents are generally quite helpful for the readers) should appear in the following order: abstract, dedication, epigraph, table of contents, list of illustrations, preface, and acknowledgements. After that comes the introduction and then the chapters. The order of elements at the end of the thesis is as follows (other than the bibliography, all such elements are optional): appendices, endnotes, glossary, bibliography.

**Title page:** The title-page must include the title of the thesis, the author's name and class, the date on which the thesis is due, the name of the primary adviser, and the following inscription: "A Senior Thesis submitted to the Department of German in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts at Princeton University." The order should be as above but the layout of the page is optional (centered or not, caps or not), so long as it is clear.

**Final page:** The final page of the thesis must include the following text—“This paper represents my own work in accordance with University regulations.”—followed by the author’s signature.

**Submission:** Students must submit, on or before the deadline date, a pdf file of their thesis to their adviser, and to the Director of Undergraduate Studies, and Lynn Ratsep.

## VIII EVALUATION / ASSESSMENT

### A. Expectations

Because of the diversity of approaches available in this department (as outlined above in section I), excellent independent work in this field is defined primarily in terms of the goals mentioned above. That is: learning *how* to pursue the unknown, and in so doing, to create knowledge. The ultimate goal is to acquire the research, writing, and rhetorical skills necessary to articulate that knowledge in a carefully presented and coherent argument that solves a problem in the context of a larger conversation or debate. In this way, the independent work trains our majors in ways of thinking and communicating that will serve them well beyond their collegiate careers in virtually any profession.

The assessment of the work therefore focuses on three distinguishing qualities that demonstrate the achievement of this ultimate goal:

- 1) Originality and Imagination – Anyone who thinks long and deeply about a topic will come to see it in a unique way. Many elements of an original argument may have been noticed before, but it is unlikely that anyone will have noticed them in the precise way of a particular student, nor does this make the argument less original. What counts is not only seeing something in a new way, but also being able to recognize and make clear what is distinctive about the student’s perspective, i.e. having a firm grasp of the state of the literature on any given topic so one can know what has and has not been already explored.
- 2) Breadth of Knowledge – Because by its very nature, the thesis allows a student to research in depth about a topic, it is important that the student make use of as much material as is feasible. This will automatically add complexity and originality to the discussion. Also important is taking account of material that contradicts, or supports, the position of the paper.
- 3) Clarity and Persuasiveness of the Argument – Following the first two principles will go a long way to making an argument persuasive, but persuasiveness will also be dependent on how clear the distinctive perspective is. The best theses balance clarity with complexity. It is no small achievement to make accessible a complex and nuanced work, theory, or idea through a coherent, sophisticated, and articulate argument.

Attending to these three aspects of writing and presenting one’s research will result in both the acquisition of multiple skills and production of new knowledge that are the goals of this work.



## **B. Assessment**

Grades of A, B and C represent different levels of engagement with each of the three expectations articulated above.

- A thesis that is evaluated in the A range typically displays excellent mastery of all three dimensions: it is original and imaginative; gives clear evidence of having digested a wide range of relevant material, and has organized and synthesized this material and its particular reading of it into a clearly structured and well-argued set of chapters.
- A thesis that receives a grade in the B range will have demonstrated mastery of a sizable amount of material but will not have engaged some important works, may be less original and creative in its conceptualization of the subject being explored and may be lacking in theoretical sophistication and/or a compellingly structured argument.
- A thesis that is given a grade in the C range usually reflects only a superficial grasp of the relevant literature, is much less ambitious in its scope, less theoretically informed, and will be comparatively lacking not only in originality but also in the clarity and complexity of its argument.

## **C. Reader's Reports**

Following the above criteria, the adviser and one additional reader (a faculty member from the German department or from an associated department), will evaluate the thesis and will each write a detailed reader's report. These critical assessments lay out in detail the thesis's achievements and make suggestions for improvement. 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, a third reader is brought in to ensure the thesis is being evaluated fairly. For specifics on grade values, see the standards for "Written Work" on the department website: <https://german.princeton.edu/grading-standards>.

## **D, Thesis Defense**

Shortly after Dean's Date, each senior is examined on the thesis by the adviser and the second reader. The one-hour oral exam begins with a short presentation (approx. 10 minutes) in which the student reviews the goals of their thesis and whether they were achieved. Students are also encouraged to take this opportunity to respond to comments made in the readers' reports. The faculty then ask questions (in English) about some of the larger ramifications of the thesis including how the thesis relates to the coursework the student did in the department and to the larger context of their undergraduate education. A short final portion (15-20 minutes) of the exam is conducted in German.

The student is evaluated as to whether he or she was able to defend the positions in the thesis that are 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? 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 oral exam.

### **E. Penalties for Late Work**

Junior papers will be docked 1/3 of a grade for every two unexcused days beyond the departmental deadline. Late submission of the senior thesis will result in a penalty of 1/3 of a grade for every three unexcused days beyond the departmental deadline. All extensions (excused late days) must be approved by the dean of the student's residential college.

## **IX Appendices**

### 1. List of Thesis Titles 2017-2023

#### **2023**

Reimagining the Revival: The Case for a Contemporary Staging of Haydn's Opera *Der Apotheker*

Soccer in Germany: On the Power of a National Sport

The Shmatte Siddur: Tattered Order, Ordered Tatters, and Queering *Yiddishkeit*

“*Dies Buch ist ausschließlich für die Frau geschrieben*”: Unmasking Gender Ideology in the Health Rhetoric of Bess Mensendieck's *Körperkultur der Frau*

#### **2022**

Ideology and Anxiety, Familiarity in Capitalism and the Strangeness Thereof

Surrealist Woman, Dismembered Doll, Horror Victim: Hans Bellmer's *Puppe* Photographs

*Wissenschaftlichkeit* in Freud: Scientific Reduction and the Ghost of the *Entwurf*

#### **2021**

A Taxonomy of Trumpism: On the Contemporary Application of 'Fascism'

Out of the Trenches and into the Factories: *Der Arbeiter* and Ernst Jünger's Martial Modernity

The *Κᾶτέχων* in Carl Schmitt's Philosophy of World History: *Nonconceptuality, Weaponisation, and Politics of a Metaphorical Constellation*

“Human as Woman”: by Lou Andreas-Salomé: A Translation

Painting the New Woman: On the Late Weimar Paintings of Lotte Laserstein

*Staatsferne, Nichtkommerzialisierung, and Aufklärung*: A Media-Political Case Study of the West German Broadcasting System

## 2020

*Zwischen Chilenidad und Ostalgie – Hybridität, Solidarität, und das Fremde*: Chile-DEFA Films as Transnational Sites of Medialized Remembrance

“What Unites and Divides Humankind?” by Magnus Hirschfeld: A Critical Translation

Method in Madness: A Close Reading of Beethoven’s Late String Quartets from a Performer’s Perspective

Pre-figurative Political Strategies for Change in the West German Green Movement 1968-1985

Making the Future Tense: An Exploration of Sexual Violence and Temporality in Christa Wolf’s *Kassandra*

Alexander Kluge, Registrations of Capitalist Conditions, and Constructions of History

“Against the Malaise of Time”: Embodied Fragmentation and the Temporalities of the Dada Creaturely, 1919-1937

## 2019

Störtebeker Through the Ages: The Political Afterlife of a Folk Hero

Trance Dance, Berlin to Tel Aviv: The Roots of Modern Israeli Dance Aesthetics in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century German Dance

The Historical Multi-Image of Rainer Werner Fassbinder’s *BRD- Trilogie*

## 2018

The Ecological Paradox: A Critique of Recent Environmental Discourse

Mediated Bodies: Technologies of Communication and Human form Around 1900

*Am Rande des Sagbaren*: Rainer Maria Rilke’s *Sonette an Orpheus*, Hugo von Hofmannsthal und der deutsche Stimmungsbegriff

“At the Gate(s) of Mercy”: Reading Celan’s *Jerusalem-Gedichte*

An Ambivalence of Signs: The Symbolic, Literary, and Psychoanalytic in Paul Klee’s 1920 Pandora Constellation

## 2017

War is Not an Earthquake: Capitalism, Virtue, and Resistance in *Mother Courage and her Children*

Lifting the Veil of Phantasmagoria: *Berliner Kindheit um Neunzehnhundert* as a Guide for the Critical Reader

Criminal Chronotopes: The Effect of Crime on Narrative Structure

A European Crusade: An Analysis of the Saxon Wars and Charlemagne’s Efforts to Christianize the Pagan Tribes of Medieval Germany

## 2. Departmental Funding Sources

Funding is available to students from the Department of German to conduct research related to their independent work, as well as for other approved projects. Students should apply to take advantage of all funding opportunities through the [SAFE](#) website. Early consultation with the Director of Undergraduate Studies for further information and advice about application procedures is strongly recommended.

- Declared departmental majors are eligible to apply for funding from the Department. Funding is for research purposes and, in general, not available to support language learning. Students who wish to travel to Europe to improve their knowledge of the German language are strongly encouraged to participate in the Princeton in Vienna program and/or the Summer Work Program, both of which provide financial support.
- Funding will be granted through SAFE only after consultation with the Director of Undergraduate Studies. Students must articulate a bona fide research need to the Director of Undergraduate Studies and then present the case, along with a clearly delineated budget, in the SAFE application. Requests made without consultation will not be considered.
- Students are eligible to apply for up to \$1,500 for Junior Paper research. Because students will enroll in the Junior Seminar during the fall semester, students will typically only be allowed to apply for research funding support one time during their junior year.
- Students are eligible to apply for up to \$2,500 for Senior Thesis research. Should this involve travel, such research trips may be taken during the summer before senior year or in the course of the Fall semester.
- Students are strongly encouraged also to explore other funding resources across the University.

- The above-mentioned amounts represent the total maximum that will be granted, not a guaranteed amount. The Director of Undergraduate Studies will approve applications for undergraduate research funds in consultation with the Departmental Chair and Manager.