

Washington University
Department of Germanic Languages & Literatures
PhD Program

The Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures offers a full program in the language, literature, and culture – past and present – of Germany and German-speaking countries. In addition, faculty members are involved in university-wide programs, such as Art History, Comparative Literature, European Studies, Film and Media Studies, Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Religious Studies, and the Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies Program. While maintaining a multiplicity of approaches, the thrust of our intellectual endeavors lies in the conviction that literature is a socio-historical phenomenon. The Department is committed to personalized exchange between faculty and graduate students and to student participation in departmental enterprises. The Department also gives close attention to teacher training through internships, workshops, and a classroom visitation program. We maintain an exchange agreement at the graduate and undergraduate levels with the University of Tübingen, in addition to graduate student exchanges with the universities of Berlin, Cologne, and Munich. The arrangements enable us to send American graduate students to Germany annually, while at the same time assuring that native German exchange students are enrolled in our advanced departmental courses. Finally, the library of Washington University maintains an excellent research collection in our field. The German Department's Max Kade Center for Contemporary German Literature has, in cooperation with Olin Library, established the Special Collection of Contemporary German Literature (active since 1985), as well as the Suhrkamp/Insel Collection (1982-2012). Also of special interest are the Gontard Collection (18th to 20th centuries) in the Rare Book Collection of Olin Library, the collections held in the Medical Library, the Reformation Collection at Concordia Seminary, the Vatican Manuscript Collection at St. Louis University, and the extensive collection of nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century German-American materials to be found in the St. Louis Public Library. The St. Louis Art Museum and the Washington University Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum have extensive holdings in German expressionist and contemporary art. Members of the Washington University community may avail themselves of these and many other educational and cultural resources of the greater St. Louis area.

Course Work

The PhD requires 51 hours of course work (including 36 AM credits) home-based in German. Students who complete interdisciplinary graduate certificates will be required to enroll in additional units as specified by the certificate-granting department or program. Students may not exceed 72 hours of coursework.

Each student must take courses in the full range of German literature and culture, to be chosen in consultation with the graduate advisor. The following courses are required (exceptions are only possible upon review by the faculty):

- German 453: *Theories of Literary and Cultural Analysis* (3 units)
- German 456: *Introduction to Middle High German Language and Literature* (3 units)
- German 457: *Introduction to Linguistics and the Structure of German* (3 units)
- German 5051: *Introduction to the Teaching of German* (1 unit – normally to be taken during the second semester of the first year at Washington University)
- German 5052: *Teaching Practicum* (1 unit)
- German 5053: *Seminar in Theories of Foreign Language Pedagogy / Theories of Second Language Acquisition* (2 units)

- German 5061: *Apprenticeship in the Teaching of Literature and Culture I* (1 unit)
- German 5062: *Apprenticeship in the Teaching of Literature and Culture II* (1 unit)

In addition, students are required to take one course in German literature prior to 1700. This requirement must be completed in residency at Washington University.

These rules regarding required courses to be taken at Washington University apply to students joining the Department with a bachelor's degree. Students entering with a master's degree may already have fulfilled some of these requirements. The fulfillment of Washington University requirements with course work completed elsewhere should be discussed with the Director of Graduate Studies who will make a determination.

German Language Competency

Advanced language competency in German is expected upon entering the program. Designated faculty members review the German language skills of incoming graduate students during the orientation week prior to their first semester at Washington University. This assessment consists of a 30 minute written response in German to a question posed by members of a faculty committee. This response is completed without a dictionary. The committee will then meet with each student for a 15-20 minute follow-up conversation in German. In cases where a student's German is determined to be inadequate for professional purposes, faculty will consult with the student to develop a plan of action.

Foreign Language Requirement

Students planning to work primarily on post-1700 materials must display reading proficiency in French. The requirement may be satisfied by examination or by enrolling in and successfully completing French 400-401. Students are strongly encouraged to pursue reading knowledge in languages other than French if necessary to conduct particular research for their dissertation.

Students planning to work on pre-1700 materials must pass a reading exam in Latin. Reading knowledge of French is also strongly encouraged.

The Teaching Program

The ability to demonstrate teaching excellence is now a standard requirement for jobs in the field of German language, literature, and culture. Our teacher training and professional development program combines practical teaching experience with coursework and internships.

All graduate students are involved in teaching the core language courses, which have been organized so that we teach in teams. In most cases these teams consist of main section and subsection instructors. This arrangement functions like an apprenticeship system. Beginning teachers start with a light teaching load and they are provided with pre-existing instructional materials and are assisted by a course supervisor in determining how their piece of the course supplements and enhances the material covered in the sections taught by other team members. They assist with test creation and homework correction but are not solely responsible for either of these tasks. As graduate student instructors gain more experience and prove themselves, they are given more responsibility, usually moving on to intermediate and advanced courses.

Over the course of their teaching careers, students have the opportunity to offer instruction at a variety of levels. As they gain experience, they are given increasing responsibility for all aspects of teaching: developing and personalizing materials, lesson plans, corrections and grading, and so on. This approach has many advantages, including extensive

mentoring by a variety of faculty members. It also provides students with many examples of good teaching and many different successful teaching styles and opportunities to develop their own teaching styles over time.

In addition to teaching in the core courses, graduate students must complete three 1- or 2-unit pedagogy seminars as well as two teaching internships, which are designed to enhance their ability to teach language and literature in both German and English.

Outside of these five courses, the German Department teaching program includes on-the-job training. This training consists of an annual orientation workshop that includes a session on evaluating writing in English, the above-mentioned teaching in teams with faculty and experienced TAs, regular observation and evaluation, and workshops and talks by experts in the field from off campus.

Upon completion of the teaching program, students will have acquired the following skills and experiences:

- an overview of theories of Second Language Acquisition;
- practical experience with a variety of teaching assignments ranging from beginning German to teaching in English outside of their discipline;
- one-on-one conversations with faculty in German as well as outside of the department concerning the challenges of and strategies for teaching a variety of courses;
- the ability to think broadly about curriculum and about the position of German departments in colleges and universities, about staffing of courses, and about other pragmatic aspects of undergraduate programs, as well as a broader familiarity with the requirements of the profession as a whole;
- a preliminary teaching portfolio

Study Abroad

Graduate students making satisfactory progress toward their degree will normally study abroad in their fourth year, at which time they will have completed all course work for the PhD. (N.B.: Students who join the program with a master's degree are on a different time schedule.) Exceptions to this rule must be approved by the faculty.

As students consider a year abroad they should, with the help of the faculty, try to determine how it would fit into their particular course of study. Beyond the obvious linguistic and cultural benefits of study at a German university, students should review their progress through the Washington University program, focus on their developing interests that will be areas of specialization, and/or seek out scholars working in Germany who might foster their work.

Students wishing to study abroad will normally be expected to apply for the Fulbright and the DAAD at the beginning of the academic year at Washington University preceding their year abroad. This means that students must have a well-articulated research project by the time of application. Work on the application should begin, at the latest, in the summer before applications are due. Students should consult closely with appropriate faculty members when formulating their application materials. If this application is unsuccessful, the Department will, under normal circumstances, grant the student one of the four exchange fellowships.

Students are expected to work with the German Department to develop a plan for the year abroad. This will include a statement as to what the student needs to accomplish to be considered to be “making good progress toward the degree.” Review and approval of the plan by the faculty is required.

Annual Review

In addition to conducting regularly scheduled exams and reviews for PhD candidates, faculty meet at the end of each spring semester to assess the progress of all graduate students, including their performance in coursework and exams, teaching, as well as any departmental service or activities. Following that meeting, the chair sends each student an annual review letter summarizing the faculty’s discussion. The intention of the review letter is to inform students of areas of particular strength as well as those requiring additional development, in order to help guide their progress toward the PhD.

In the very rare case in which a student fails to meet departmental and university guidelines for academic performance, he/she may, in accordance with Graduate School policy, be subject to academic probation or dismissal. Copies of the policy on Probation and Dismissal for Academic Reasons are available from the departmental website and from the Chair’s office.

First Year Review

The First Year Review is intended to provide *all* incoming students (holding either the BA or MA) with an opportunity to discuss their academic progress with a selection of departmental faculty members. Convened by the DGS, the review consists of a one-hour conversation with two faculty members (at least one of whom have led a seminar in which the student was enrolled during his/her first year). Over the course of the conversation, students will be asked to reflect on what they have learned in their courses, to describe their areas of intellectual interests, to indicate how these might evolve into a dissertation topic, and to discuss their plans for future course work, exams, and independent research. The faculty members will provide a frank assessment of strengths and weaknesses of the student based on his or her performance in the seminars and will make suggestions regarding areas and skills on which to focus in the future.

Master’s Degree

1) *Course Work*

At least thirty-six hours of graduate-level work chosen in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). The thirty-six hours normally consist of graduate seminars. Six of these hours may be taken outside the Department in related fields.

2) *Teaching*

Each student is required to teach two semesters of German language or the equivalent at Washington University under the direction of a faculty member.

3) *Master’s Exam*

Students who enter the program with a BA will take their master’s exam by the end of their second year. The exam is coordinated by the DGS, conducted by at least two faculty members, and entails both a written and an oral component. The exam is based on a thematically organized list of 30-40 major works representing German literature, visual culture, and thought from the Middle Ages to the present. This list is developed by the student in consultation with the DGS and relevant faculty members and should reflect the student’s

coursework and primary research interests. This list must be submitted to the DGS by the middle of the fall semester in the year during which the exam will be taken. It may be organized around a single theme, but the works will more likely be grouped into a limited number of thematic clusters. A group of themes might address a number of topics, for example, “intermediality,” “authorship,” and “Enlightenment and Romanticism,” or “the history of the senses,” “gender and performativity,” and “childhood in literature.”

Students are expected to begin thinking about the exam as soon as possible, and to devote a substantial portion of their first summer in the program to reading and preparation. Part of this preparation will entail studying selections from a list of critical reference works made available to all students upon acceptance to the program. This list will be supplemented with theoretical texts that reflect the student’s specific thematic clusters. In addition, students will typically enroll in a one-unit Independent Study course (German 500) in the spring semester of their second year to prepare for the exam.

The written component of the exam consists of four essays chosen from a total of six questions developed by the exam committee, based upon the student’s chosen theme or chosen themes. These questions are intended to encourage the student to synthesize and contextualize and will thus require the student to situate some of the texts from their list within the larger trajectories of German literary, visual, intellectual, and political history. This exam is “open book” and must be handed in within 48 hours.

The oral component consists of a one-hour examination conducted by two examiners. Its purpose is (a) to follow up on issues raised in the written exam, and (b) to explore the theme(s) of the student’s chosen list of 30-40 works in some greater detail. The oral exam should be scheduled no sooner than one week after the submission of the written exam, to allow faculty adequate time for review.

A student’s performance in both the oral and the written MA exam will serve the faculty as one important element in deciding whether the student will receive permission to proceed with his or her graduate studies.

4) *The Master’s Thesis Option (for German exchange students only)*

If substantial research has already been undertaken in previous coursework at the home institution, a German exchange student may elect to write a master’s thesis. **The decision to write a thesis must be made during the initial advising meeting with the DGS at the beginning of the fall semester.** In that advising meeting, the student should discuss with the DGS the proposed topic and the selection of a tenured or tenure-track faculty member as thesis director. The student will then normally enroll for six hours of research credit with the chosen director, three hours in the fall semester and three hours in the spring semester. The results of this work must be a paper of thesis quality that the student defends in an oral examination conducted by the thesis director and two additional faculty members. A full draft of the thesis is generally due to the thesis director immediately following spring break. **The final version of the thesis must be submitted to all three readers by April 15. The oral examination date will be set for late April.**

Permission to Proceed

During the annual review of all students at the end of the spring semester, the graduate faculty will formally review the standing of

- students who have entered the program with a BA and have completed their second year of study, and
- students who have entered the program with an MA and have completed their first year of study

in order to determine whether these students will receive permission to proceed with their pursuit of the PhD degree.

The review of students who have entered with a BA is based on their course work over their first two years as well as their performance on the master's exam. The review of students who have entered with an MA is based on their coursework during their first year and their First Year Review.

Qualifying Exams

In order to be admitted to the qualifying examinations students must have completed all required course work, their extra-departmental certificate work (if pursued), as well as the language requirement.

Students taking the qualifying exams should display general knowledge and understanding of the primary materials, historical contexts, scholarly questions, and theoretical frameworks that are likely to drive their future dissertations. The qualifying exam process consists of three parts: two written qualifying papers and the dissertation prospectus. Students typically choose a team of three faculty members at the beginning of this process who will guide them through the exam process and serve as their readers. One of these three will chair the exam committee and may – but doesn't have to – later as the student's dissertation adviser. Untenured faculty members may not serve as exam committee chairs. The normative time frame for completing the qualifying exams is approximately 8-9 months, from the beginning of the bibliographic process to the submission of the prospectus.

In preparation for the exams, the student should – in consultation with the chair of the exam committee – begin to focus on a viable dissertation topic. Consulting with all three members of the exam committee, he or she will then begin to develop an initial bibliography of 12-15 pages (double-spaced) that will serve as the basis for the qualifying exams. This bibliography – to be compiled over the course of approximately 2-3 months – should include primary materials, historical and/or analytical work, and theoretical/methodological texts essential for approaching the primary materials and structuring the dissertation's principal questions. During this 2-3 month compilation period, students should be reading actively from the bibliography in progress, as a means to shape the bibliography and gain clarity regarding the form of the eventual written exams and prospectus. This list is not meant to be a comprehensive bibliography for the future dissertation; it is, however, expected to gain greater specificity and depth over the course of the qualifying work, as the student refines his or her areas of inquiry. To that end, students may continue to revise their bibliographies in consultation with their director during the actual writing phase of the exams. The preparatory phase of the qualifying exam process will be concluded with a one-hour meeting of the student with his/her advising team that will address the scope of the reading list, any problems that have arisen in assembling the list, and the course of the upcoming two written exams and dissertation proposal. Either a one-page abstract that specifies the proposed content of the exams or a one-page list of research questions that will guide the exams should be circulated to the team prior to this meeting.

In the **first exam**, the student is required to situate his/her primary materials and their author(s) in their respective historical contexts and periods, with specific points of emphasis to be determined together with his/her advising team. The **second exam** serves to frame the student's primary materials in theoretical terms; it is meant to discuss in general terms the methodological approach for the planned dissertation. The advising team will, once again, help the student develop the dimensions of this exam before s/he begins the process of writing. Each of these two exams requires a written paper of about 25 pages. These first two exams may be completed in any order, depending on the dictates of the project and wishes of the individual student.

Both exams must be completed within a consecutive four-month period. They will be graded pass/fail and the readers will provide detailed comments on the student's performance.

Dissertation Proposal

Within two months after passing the second qualifying exam, the student is required to write a 10-15 page dissertation proposal and then to present it orally to his or her advising team. The student should first obtain his/her director's approval for the prospectus, make necessary revisions, and then submit a final copy to all three members of the advising team. The oral part of this exam (one hour in length) should be scheduled within two weeks of the circulation of the proposal. If, however, a student completes the proposal during the summer months and the exam committee members are out of town, the oral examination may, at the Chair's discretion, be delayed. The first week of the fall semester would be the very latest that an oral could be scheduled under such circumstances.

The actual writing phase of the qualifying exams and dissertation proposal must be completed within a consecutive six-month period. In rare circumstances, this period may be adjusted to suit the needs of students still taking courses. The chair of the exam committee officially clocks the exams' starting time, communicates it to the Director of Graduate Studies, and reminds the candidate to finish the process within the allotted time frame. A student may attain ABD status only when all phases of the qualifying exam process have been completed.

Dissertation

1) Acceptance of Student as a PhD Candidate

No student is officially accepted as a candidate for the PhD until all requirements are met and the Department has approved the dissertation topic.

2) The Principal Dissertation Advisor and the Research Advisory Committee (RAC)

A Research Advisory Committee consisting of three faculty members must approve the dissertation topic. That committee is ordinarily chaired by the student's principal adviser and must have the approval of the Graduate School. Only tenured faculty may serve as principal dissertation advisers; tenure-track faculty may participate as regular members of the RAC. Since the primary responsibility for advising the student lies with the principal dissertation adviser, s/he should be the first to receive the dissertation proposal (or any draft thereof), the Title, Scope, and Procedure form, and any draft(s) of chapters of the dissertation in progress. The principal dissertation adviser will be responsible for scheduling regular Research Advisory Committee meetings with the student.

3) The Dissertation Abstract

Within two weeks after passing the oral presentation of the dissertation proposal, the student is required to submit a short version of the dissertation proposal of not more than 750 words to the principal dissertation adviser who will circulate it to the faculty for review. By this time the student should also have designated, in consultation with the principal dissertation adviser, the Research Advisory Committee. The dissertation abstract will later be adapted for the Title, Scope and Procedure form required by the Graduate School.

4) The Title, Scope, and Procedure Form

The Title, Scope, and Procedure form is submitted to the Graduate School no later than the end of the fourth year of graduate study. It requires the signatures of all departmental committee members. This form can be obtained from the Student Coordinator or the GS website. It should be completed in consultation with the principal dissertation adviser, who will circulate it among the Research Advisory Committee members for signature. The section entitled "Scope of Dissertation" outlines the dissertation project by describing its general aim and purpose, content, period, author(s), and individual texts to be discussed. The section entitled

“Procedure” outlines the methodological point of entry and literary historical approach taken toward the dissertation’s subject matter. This may include mention of specific theories, methods, or studies and/or individual scholars whose work will serve as a foundation for the thesis argument.

5) *Research Advisory Committee Meetings*

Each graduate student is expected to meet regularly with his/her principal dissertation adviser concerning his/her progress. Once the adviser has vetted individual dissertation chapters, the dissertee is required to circulate those chapters among the additional committee members for their approval as well. In cases where there is concern about the progress of a given thesis, any member of the Research Advisory Committee may call for an annual meeting to review a student’s research to date and to map out the final stages of the dissertation.

6) *The Dissertation Defense*

Prior to scheduling the defense, students are required to file the Dissertation Defense Committee form with the Graduate School (obtainable from the Student Coordinator or the GS website). The dissertation must be defended orally before an interdepartmental committee consisting of five faculty. This should include 3-4 members from the German Department and 1-2 outside members. Faculty and graduate students may attend the dissertation examination with the permission of the dissertation adviser.

Final copies of the dissertation should be supplied to all readers no later than one month in advance of the oral defense.

Interdisciplinary Studies

Graduate students may wish to take courses in areas other than German. With this in mind, the program is designed so that PhD candidates may take a total of 12 credits in other areas; exchange students pursuing a master's degree may take six credits in another area of study. Students will not generally enroll in more than one course outside of the department in any given semester. Of special interest are graduate offerings in art history, comparative literature, digital humanities, English, film and media studies, history, music, philosophy, romance languages, and women, gender, and sexuality studies.

Joint Program with Comparative Literature

The joint PhD degree program in Comparative Literature and German consists of a complete graduate program in German and intensive course work in comparative methodology and literary theory. Students in the joint German/Comparative Literature program must complete all requirements for the German PhD in addition to the core requirements (including CL 402 Introduction to Comparative Literature) set by the Committee on Comparative Literature. For additional information click [here](#).

Certificates Offered

Four certificates offered at Washington University are available to PhD students in German:

- *Graduate Certificate in Film and Media Studies*: This program is designed to provide PhD students with interest in the theories and history of “visual culture” an opportunity to extend their formal intellectual training into film and media studies. Students accepted into the graduate certificate program in Film & Media Studies acquire knowledge in film and media studies approaches to criticism, history, and theory. For more information, see the [Graduate Certificate in Film and Media Studies](#) page on the Film and Media program’s website.

- *Translation Studies certificate*: The certificate in Translation Studies provides graduate students with training in the theory and practice of translation that focuses on the nuances of culture and language. This certificate is offered through the Comparative Literature program. For more information, please see the [Graduate Certificate in Translation Studies](#) page on the Comparative Literature Program website.
- *Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies certificate*: The Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) graduate certificate program offers graduate students the opportunity to broaden their course work to include the interdisciplinary study of gender and feminist theory. Students who complete the certificate have the option, on recommendation of the department chair and/or director of graduate studies, to participate in a joint TAsip between the department and the WGSS program. For more information on the certificate and its requirements and opportunities, see the [Graduate Certificate Program](#) page on the WGSS website.
- *Certificate in Language Instruction*: The Graduate Certificate in Language Instruction is an interdisciplinary certificate related to the fields of applied linguistics, second language acquisition, psychology, neuroscience, and other disciplines that has important implications for the way we teach foreign languages. Students choosing to pursue the Graduate Certificate in Language Instruction explore how an understanding of second language acquisition processes both enriches our knowledge of how the mind works and serves to better inform the ways that foreign language teachers design and implement curricular approaches for different levels and skills. The Graduate Certificate is designed for students enrolled in doctoral degree programs. For more information, please see the [Graduate Certificate in Language Instruction](#) page on the Department of Education website.
- *Data Science in the Humanities (DASH)*: The curriculum for this certificate program addresses data management, statistics, text analysis, geospatial analysis, digital prosopography, data visualization, and information design. This will acquaint any PhD student with new methodologies and techniques, and will foster an awareness of the theoretical implications of using them. Students interested in pursuing the DASH Certificate should [contact the program director](#). PhD students in good standing should apply before the end of their second year. Applicants should write a letter detailing their interest in data science or digital humanities as well as any relevant background; their letter should be supplemented by a letter of support from the DGS of the home doctoral program.

Students wishing to participate in a certificate program must apply by the end of their first year at Washington University, unless otherwise specified by the home department of the certificate program. Permission must first be granted by both the Chair and the Director of Graduate Studies before students file their applications. No more than one certificate program can be added to a regular course of graduate studies. Completion of certificate requirements generally adds a minimum of one semester of coursework to a student's degree program.

Minor

The Graduate School requires twelve hours of course work for a minor. The department in question determines any additional requirements.

Minor in German

PhD candidates in other departments may acquire a minor in German by taking twelve hours of advanced work in German.