

German 385  
Fall Semester 2017  
Special Topics: Twentieth-Century Prose  
MWF 12:00-12:50  
[http://faculty.mercer.edu/weintraut\\_ej](http://faculty.mercer.edu/weintraut_ej)  
mercerdeutsch@gmail.com

Office Hours MW 2-3; R 9:30-11:30  
202B Knight Hall  
301-2894 / 301-2916  
Office Hours: M 10-11; T 1-2; W 3-4  
**and by appointment**

### **What is this course about?:**

This course focuses primarily on further developing your skills in reading, writing, and speaking the German language. This will be achieved to a large degree by discussing works dealing with the division and unification of Germany. Your ability to read texts of varying levels of difficulty and to discuss matters of cultural import meaningfully should improve through class participation, leading class discussions, and writing assignments. Special emphasis will be placed on idiomatic language usage. You should become much more proficient in phrasing your thoughts with greater precision and sophistication. I may ask you to consult with me periodically throughout the semester to work on particular strengths and weaknesses in your language skills. The work required in this course will help prepare you for successful completion of the internationally recognized *Zertifikat Deutsch* examination administered through the Goethe Institut.

### **Recommended Texts**

Wells, Handbuch zur deutschen Grammatik (Holt Rinehart)

### **Required Texts** (available from Mercer Bookstore)

Klaus Kordon, Die Flaschenpost (978-3-407-78378-3)

Thomas Brussig, Am kürzeren Ende der Sonnenallee (978-3-596-14847-9)

Jana Hensel, Zonenkinder (978-3-499-23532-0)

Christa Wolf, Was bleibt (978-3-518-45916-4)

### **Why are we reading these books?**

In the courses you have taken so far you have acquired a fairly solid grammatical foundation. However, there are two areas that need to be strengthened: range of vocabulary and knowledge of contemporary culture. I have selected prose works that will address both of these shortcomings. These works are not laden with symbolism and other literary devices, but present straightforward narratives dealing with everyday occurrences in the eastern part of Germany between 1980 and 2002. This will allow us not only to discuss what happens in each work, but also to focus on the words and structures used to convey this information. These novels will be supplemented from time to time with shorter works of historical and cultural interest that might be more demanding.

We'll start the semester reading Klaus Kordon's Die Flaschenpost (1987). This work was written originally for middle schoolers, but has been used in introduction to literature courses at a few American universities. The plot is easy to follow and the character development is compelling. Chapter-by-chapter the pre-teen characters (as well as the reader) learn about the causes and effects of the division of Germany prior to 1989.

Thomas Brussig's film Am kürzeren Ende der Sonnenallee (1999) was so popular that he wrote a novel based on his screenplay. In this novel Brussig writes a humorous tale about the trials and tribulations of East German teenagers growing up near the Berlin Wall. Both the film and the novel are considered to be representative examples of the *Ostalgie* trend that emerged in the late 1990s.

In Zonenkinder (2002), twenty-five-year-old Jana Hensel reflects on the experiences of her generation as they transitioned from the socialist GDR to the capitalist *Bundesrepublik*. She offers her perspective on a wide variety of everyday subjects, such as clothing, schooling, sports, and environment. This is another work that indulges the *Ostalgie* sentiment.

The most linguistically demanding work that we will read this semester is Was Bleibt by Christa Wolf, one of the most significant German authors of the twentieth century. Wolf writes a disturbing account of her life under Stasi surveillance in the late 1970s. The novel sparked the *Literaturstreit* controversy in the 1990s because Wolf did not submit the work for publication until after the wall collapsed—evidently not daring to criticize the socialist regime while it was still in power.

**How will my performance be graded?**

	<i>Fractional grades after x.44 are rounded up (e.g. 65.45 = 66)</i>			
A (90-100)	B+ (86-89)	B (80-85)		
C+ (76-79)	C (70-75)	D (65-69)	F (00-64)	
Class Participation .....			10%	
Written Homework .....			10%	
Compositions (4) .....			24%	
Leading Class Discussion (5) .....			30%	
Quizzes (4) .....			16%	
Final Exam (15 December, 9 to noon) .....			10%	

*“Students requiring accommodations or modifications for a disability should inform the instructor at the close of the first class meeting or as soon as possible. The instructor will refer you to the ACCESS and Accommodation Office to document your disability, determine eligibility for accommodations under the ADA/AA/Section 504 and to request a Faculty Accommodation Form. Disability accommodations or status will not be indicated on academic transcripts. In order to receive accommodations in a class, students with sensory, learning, psychological, physical or medical disabilities must provide their instructor with a Faculty Accommodation Form to sign. Students must return the signed form to the ACCESS Coordinator. A new form must be requested each semester. Students with a history of a disability perceived as having a disability or with a current disability who does not wish to use academic accommodations are also strongly encouraged to register with the ACCESS and Accommodation Office and request a Faculty Accommodation Form each semester. For further information, please contact Katie Johnson, Director and ADA/504 Coordinator, at 301-2778 or visit the ACCESS and Accommodation Office website at <http://www.mercer.edu/disabilityservices>”*

***I reserve the right to determine on a case-by-case basis whether circumstances (e.g. hospitalization, family tragedy) make it appropriate to waive provisionally any policy described below***

**Class Participation and Attendance Policy:** I expect you to come to each class session well prepared to contribute meaningfully in German to class discussion. I will subjectively evaluate the quality of your participation on a daily basis on a five-point scale ranging from “100” (extraordinary, awe-inspiring contributions) to “50” (attending class, largely awake, if not entirely attentive); failure to attend class results in the grade of “0”. For example, you can earn a “100” by being exceptionally well prepared for class **and** by making truly exceptional contributions; you can earn a “75” by being adequately prepared for class **and** making an occasional remark about the topic being discussed; you earn a “50” just by showing up to class and remaining awake. Should you miss more than **four** class sessions unexcused, I will deduct from your final course grade 2 points for each class session missed. Your class participation will be graded daily based on my perception of your preparedness for and contributions to discussion.

**Written Homework** based primarily on reading and grammar assignments will be assigned and evaluated on a regular basis. Homework must be submitted before the beginning of the class session for which it was assigned; late submissions receive NO credit. Each component of a homework assignment is graded: excellent (5) – above average (4) – average (3) – deficient (2) – not submitted (0). I expect you to respond to questions by integrating newly-learned structures and vocabulary in your answers and by avoiding simple usage. Homework assignments and other ancillary materials will be updated regularly on Canvas. As a matter of policy I do not offer any extra-credit work.

Technological glitches are frequently unavoidable and always to be anticipated. I strongly urge you to complete any web-based assignments before the announced deadline. If you suffer some form of technological breakdown which makes it impossible for you to complete the work at your preferred time, please contact me **immediately** by email or by phone so that I am made aware of your difficulties. I reserve the right to determine whether the glitch is serious enough to warrant an extension of the deadline for submitting the assignment.

**Leading class discussion:** Throughout the semester you will be asked to demonstrate your proficiency in speaking German by leading the discussion for particular class sessions. This entails several activities:

- identifying at least two passages that you think are essential to understanding what happens in your text, and explaining why you think they are essential
- asking meaningful questions about the language or theme of your text;
- clarifying what you do and do not understand about the text;
- engaging others meaningfully in the discussion.

A meaningful question is something that encourages interpretation or creative thinking, something like “Why does Owl find Tigger so annoying?” This kind of question requires exploration of the text for viable answers. However, “What is Owl’s reaction when Tigger arrives?” is not a particularly meaningful question, since it could possibly be answered with a single word.

Your final grade for leading discussion will be determined by the **five** occasions on which you performed best. Criteria for evaluation of the class discussion are appended to this syllabus. Your leading discussion will be evaluated by me and two other class participants according to the rubric attached to this syllabus. Each evaluator will earn homework points for the quality of his/her feedback on the rubric: either insightful and helpful (10), mediocre and generic (5), or not helpful/not submitted (0). Leading class discussion does **not** contribute to your class participation grade.

**Compositions:** You will be writing a composition for each of the works we read this semester. Objectives for each composition will be described when the assignment is made. Failure to submit any composition by the announced deadline will result in a penalty of 10 points per calendar day. You may rewrite any composition for a higher grade during the semester, as long as you (1) let me know **within two class days** after receiving the evaluated composition that you wish to submit a revision; (2) consult with me about the kinds of improvements that I would like you to make; and (3) submit the composition by the negotiated deadline. No revised composition will be accepted for credit if it is submitted after the Thanksgiving Holiday (except for the fourth composition). Rewrites will be graded as follows: the original draft counts for 60%, and the revision counts for 40% of the final grade for that assignment.

Within five calendar days of receiving an evaluated composition, you are required to respond in writing to any marginal comments I make, **even if you are happy with your grade and decide not to revise your work**. Failure to do so will reduce your grade by 10 points

**Quizzes and Tests:** Several quizzes on discrete vocabulary and grammar items will be announced two class sessions in advance; you may be required to complete these quizzes on Canvas. The average of your **four highest quiz grades** determine your final grade for quizzes. Failure to complete a quiz by the published deadline will result in the grade of “zero.”

The **Final Exam** must be taken on Friday, 15 December, between 9 and noon. This exam will cover vocabulary, grammar, and cultural information that was presented throughout the semester. Some sections of the exam might need to be completed on Canvas.

**Access to Course Grades:** Grades will be posted and updated weekly on Canvas. I strongly encourage you to check these data on a regular basis; please report any discrepancies or inaccuracies to me immediately. I also invite you to discuss your progress with me as often as you wish. I will not discuss your grades over the phone, via e-mail, or with anyone but you. If you receive a failing grade on any test, you **must** consult with me immediately.

*Cell phones, text messengers, pagers and MP3 players must be turned off before entering the classroom. First-time violators will receive a warning; for every subsequent infraction two points will be deducted from the final course grade.*

*You are expected to observe the provisions of the Mercer Honor Code. Unless otherwise authorized, you may not solicit help on any class assignment from native or near-native speakers of German. I will report any perceived violation of the Honor Code immediately to the Honor Council.*

**DRAFT**

## Assessment of Leading Discussion

Name of Speaker:

Date:

### Comprehensibility (x 1)

understandable at all times; pronounced words correctly	84	92	100	
not consistently understandable; had trouble pronouncing words correctly	52	60	68	76

### Syntactic and Grammatical Accuracy (x2)

Sophisticated sentence structure (excellent use of conjunctions and relative clauses); excellent use of grammar (e.g. verb tenses, noun cases, prepositions)	90	95	100	
Satisfactory sentence structure (occasional problems with conjunctions, relative clauses and word order in simple sentences); occasional errors in grammar usage (e.g. verb tenses, noun cases, prepositions)	70	75	80	85
Poor sentence structure, or relied too much on simple sentences (frequent problems with conjunctions and word order; frequent errors in grammar usage (e.g. verb tenses, noun cases, prepositions)	50	55	60	65

### Vocabulary (x2)

Broad and accurate range of vocabulary; appropriate use of idiomatic expressions; excellent use of rhetorical strategies for communication	90	95	100	
Adequate range of vocabulary for the topic; satisfactory use of idiomatic expressions; sufficient use of rhetorical strategies for communication	70	75	80	85
Inadequate range of vocabulary or inappropriate selection of vocabulary; poor or lacking use of idiomatic expressions and rhetorical strategies	50	55	60	65

OVER →

**Content (x5; all five grades averaged into one)**

Asked meaningful questions about the language or theme (x2)	60	68	76	84	92	100
Offered a clear interpretive analysis (x1)	60	68	76	84	92	100
Engaged others in discussion (x1)	60	68	76	84	92	100
Clarified what s/he did and did not understand about the text under consideration (x1)	60	68	76	84	92	100

**Strengths**

**Weaknesses**

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<http://berlinermaueronline.de/faq/index.htm>

<https://www.rbb-online.de/extra/25-jahre-mauerfall/beitraege/Fragen-und-antworten-rund-um-berliner-mauer-und-mauerfall.html>

<https://www.berlin.de/mauer/geschichte/bau-der-mauer/> (zweites Video)

<http://www.news4kids.de/wissen/gesellschaft/article/als-die-berliner-mauer-gebaut>

<https://www.berlin-mauer.de> (fantastische Videosammlung!)

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