

# GRADUATE PROGRAM

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## GRADUATE PROGRAM IN GERMAN LITERATURE AND CRITICAL THOUGHT

The Department of German Literature and Critical Thought offers a graduate program that focuses on the theoretical and cultural foundations for the development of German literature and critical thought from 1750 onward. In order to acquire a thorough understanding of these foundations, students take a two-year sequence of six required (core) courses and two pro-seminars. Working closely with an academic adviser, students also choose seven electives based on their own interests and the direction of their individual program. In addition to Yiddish studies, which is an integral part of the department's graduate-course offerings, Northwestern houses a wide group of related disciplines in which students in the German program are encouraged to participate, including Art History, Comparative Literary Studies, Gender Studies, History, Philosophy, Religion, and Screen Cultures.

The graduate program is home to the annual Northwestern University Department of German Speaker Series. The lectures, which take place approximately once a month over the academic year, are organized entirely by the graduate students, who invite scholars from around the world to discuss papers or pre-distributed materials with the academic community in Chicago.

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

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The graduate program in German Literature and Critical Thought is designed to provide a framework within which students can develop their interest in the relationship between modern German culture and literature and the broad array of discourses — philosophy and critical theory; literary theory and aesthetics; intellectual, conceptual, and cultural history; political theory; psychoanalysis; media studies; etc. — broadly described as critical thought.

Students in the graduate program undertake a course of study that provides them with both broad-based knowledge of theoretical and philosophical texts and a solid training in the German literary canon. Seminars in the German graduate program range from examinations of specific literary topics and authors to innovative explorations of theory-oriented themes and problems. The aim of each seminar is to make it possible for students to acquire the skills to develop a complex and compelling project of their own, which can then provide the basis for an innovative dissertation at the intersection of literary studies and theoretical concerns.

The Department of German at Northwestern is a dynamic and diverse department, with particular strengths in modern critical theory, philosophy, literary theory, and aesthetics; media studies; theology and religious studies; intellectual and cultural history; psychoanalysis; and German-language literature from the Goethezeit to the present. For graduate students, the department also offers the opportunity to participate in Northwestern's vibrant network of interdisciplinary clusters and programs, including programs in Critical Theory, Comparative Literary Studies, Poetry and Poetics, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Jewish Studies, Global Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies, and Critical Studies in Theater and Performance, allowing students to expand their studies in collaboration with students and faculty across the university. The department has strong ties with several German universities and institutions (including Frankfurt, Vienna, Münster, Bochum, and ZfL Berlin) and is closely associated with the Northwestern Paris Program in Critical Theory, directed by Professor Samuel Weber, which offers students additional fellowship aid to spend a year in Paris pursuing research on current topics in philosophy and theory.

A second focus of the graduate program is the development of each graduate student's skills as a teacher, mentor, and communicator. In addition to its tenure-line faculty, the department includes a highly acclaimed group of instructors committed to fostering an engaging pedagogical environment at Northwestern, with whom graduate students work and receive training from as both language instructors and teaching assistants.

## ADMISSIONS

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The Graduate School (TGS) at Northwestern requires all prospective students to apply for admission. Please see the [TGS Admissions page](#) where you will find the online application. In addition to the Application for Admission and Financial Aid, the German department also requires the following documents for application to the Ph.D. program.

- Copy of transcripts;
- Three letters of recommendation;
- A statement of purpose in which the student indicates the reason why he or she would like to pursue graduate studies in the German department and outlines some of the major lines of inquiry that he or she would like to develop;
- A paper or writing sample representative of their work.
- We do NOT require the GRE from our applicants.
- TOEFL requirements:
  - Internet-Based Test Score minimum requirement of 90; Minimum for the Computer-Based Test is 213 and the Paper-Based Test is 550. The minimum score for the IELTS is 7.
  - International students need NOT take the TOEFL or IELTS if
    - they can provide official transcripts verifying an undergraduate degree from an accredited four-year institution or equivalent, where the language of instruction was English or
    - they can provide official transcripts verifying a graduate degree from an accredited institution where the language of instruction was English.

- International students who have received a degree from an accredited, English-speaking institution will not be required to take the new language test (Versant) or attend language course work.

If you have questions, feel free to contact us at [german@northwestern.edu](mailto:german@northwestern.edu).

Prospective students are welcome to visit campus informally and to stop by the department for general information. Admitted students are encouraged to attend a Visiting Weekend in early March, during which time they meet with faculty and current graduate students, tour the library and other campus facilities, and if possible, attend a graduate seminar.

The Application Deadline for admission to the German Ph.D. program at Northwestern University is Jan. 15, 2020.

# COURSEWORK

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## LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Courses offered in the department of German are sometimes taught in English and sometimes in German. Graduate students are expected to have near native fluency in English and advanced knowledge of German in addition to a third language relevant for their research area.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There are a total of 15 courses required for the PhD.

### Core Courses (6 courses)

- GERMAN 401 German Literature and Critical Thought, 1750-1832 (1 Unit)
- GERMAN 402 German Literature and Critical Thought, 1832-1900 (1 Unit)
- GERMAN 403 German Literature, Critical Thought, and New Media, 1900-45 (1 Unit)
- GERMAN 404 German Literature, Critical Thought, and New Media since 1945 (1 Unit)
- GERMAN 405 Basic Issues in Foreign Language Teaching (1 Unit)
- GERMAN 406 Contours of German History since 1750 (1 Unit)

### Pro Seminars (2 courses)

German 407 Pro Seminar

Pro Seminars are spring quarter courses in which students develop a research-level paper, often in conjunction with previous or contemporaneous work in other courses. Students will present their own work in at least one Pro Seminar within the first three years of study.

## Electives (7 courses)

Students will choose seven electives, graduate level courses either in the Department of German or in related disciplines.

## ADDITIONAL DEGREE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PH.D.

- Participation in the various departmental colloquia throughout the year, including those devoted to professional development;
- Qualifying Examinations—generally taken in winter quarter of the 3rd year;
- Dissertation Prospectus—must be completed by the end of fall quarter of the 4th year;
- German Language Examination (usually taken during the first year);
- Third-language Examination, which can be accomplished by taking a graduate or upper-level undergraduate course in the relevant language; by passing a reading exam; or by taking an intensive language course during the summer equivalent to second year of college study;
- Ph.D. Dissertation, a body of original independent research; and
- Oral Defense of the dissertation.

## TYPICAL COURSE OF STUDIES

- First Year: Fellowship Year. Students take three courses in the fall and winter quarter, and two courses plus one Proseminar in the spring quarter. They take the German Language examination.
- Second Year: TA-Ship. Students take two courses in the fall and winter quarter, and one course plus one Proseminar in the spring quarter. In addition, students assist with a large lecture-course in English each quarter.
- Third Year: TA-Ship. Students take the qualifying examination in the winter quarter, and they participate in one Proseminar in the spring quarter. In addition, students teach the German 101 sequence.
- Fourth Year: Fellowship Year. Usually taken at a German University and supported either by Northwestern funds or outside grants for which students are required to apply. Prospectus in the fall quarter, work on the dissertation.
- Fifth Year: TA-ship. Students teach the German 102 sequence. They continue work on the dissertation, and they take the third-language examination. The dissertation defense will take place in the spring quarter.

## ABOUT TEACHING AS A GRADUATE STUDENT

Teaching is an essential element of the education and training experience of graduate students at Northwestern in general and the German Department specifically. At least one year is required by the Graduate School. We engage in active discussions with students at the

end of each year concerning teaching possibilities and assign courses with a view toward creating the best teaching portfolio as possible.

## SAMPLE COURSES

### The Construction of the Aesthetic: Kant, Goethe, Kierkegaard, and Benjamin

The aim of this seminar is to reflect on two opposing constructions of aesthetics: the first, developed by Kant, makes aesthetic judgment into the final element of the enterprise of critical self-reflection on which a solid philosophical system can be built; the second, developed by Kierkegaard, presents aesthetics as a mode of life lived in the perpetual avoidance of decision, which constitutes the first, altogether fallen “sphere of existence.” The seminar begins with an analysis of Kant’s Critique of Taste (in the Critique of Judgment); in the second part, it turns to certain sections of Kierkegaard’s Either/Or and Concept of Anxiety; and it concludes with an examination of the long essay Benjamin wrote in the early 1920s on Goethe’s novel *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (Elective Affinities, 1807). In addition to Benjamin's essay, we read some of his related earlier writings, where he stage critical confrontations with Kant and Kierkegaard. The final part of the seminar will also consider, time permitting, the “inaugural dissertation” Adorno wrote under Benjamin's influence in the early 1930s (after an earlier, failed “inaugural dissertation” on Kant), Kierkegaard: The Construction of the Aesthetic.

### Writing the Revolution

The flyer for a recent conference on the poetics of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe notes: “Research on Goethe’s late style continues to be a desideratum.” The aim of this seminar is to fill this gap by analyzing some of the most canonical texts of Goethe’s late works: *The Elective Affinities*, *The Italian Journey*, *Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman Years*, *Faust II*, *The West Eastern Divan*, *On Morphology*, among others. Guiding questions for the investigation are: What is a “late style” as discussed by Walter Benjamin, Theodor W. Adorno, Hans Blumenberg, and Edward Said? How does Goethe fit into the changing cultural understanding of time structures around 1800? Was he naïve or sentimental? How did the notion of “World Literature” emerge? What is Goethean science? All these questions can only properly addressed by looking at Goethe’s writings through the lens of his intense philosophical reception in the early 20th century (Simmel, Rosenzweig, Cassirer, Kommerell).

### Theories of Realism

This course looks at the notion of realism as both historical literary movement and epistemological/aesthetic problem. We will read classic theories of realism by Hegel, Auerbach, Barthes, Lukács, Blumenberg, and others, as well as significant new work by

contemporary critics and theorists, together with exemplary texts of nineteenth-century European realist prose fiction. The temporal focus of the class will be mid- to late-nineteenth-century Europe and the particular literary form that dominated at this time; however, we will also go beyond this to look at the philosophical and ideological underpinnings of the notion of “realism” itself. Special attention will be devoted to the following questions: the purpose of genre, the place of the human, the relationship between realism and reality (or the real), the elevation of the ordinary, and the possibilities and limits of representation.

### Affective Passages

What is “affect theory”? What is “the history of emotions”? This course charts seminal critical theoretical approaches to literary and cultural analysis through the lens of emotion and affect theory. Beginning with post-Freudian psychoanalysis, the class considers how (or even if) subjectivity and attachment are staged in theory, literature, and film. Is affect merely an expression of contained, individual inner states? How do emotions form and mediate the subject’s relationship to the world? In response to questions such as these, the class will consider connections between emotion and politics and the ways in which this relationship is staged in different media from emotions-on-the-couch to post cinematic affect.

### Hannah Arendt: Poetry, Politics, and Thought

This course takes its point of departure from a careful reading of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt’s massive study of Nazi totalitarianism and its origins in anti-Semitism and European imperialism. For the first three weeks of the class, we will read the three sections of the *Origins* along with a selection of Arendt’s contemporaneous writings on issues at the heart of her study: wide-scale statelessness and forced migration; racism and imperial expansion; totalitarian propaganda and the “holes of oblivion.” Arendt recognized that the *Origins* posed a question that remained unanswered in that work: faced with the manufacture of living corpses, what preserves our humanity and redeems our actions? Arendt’s next major work, *The Human Condition*, thus moves toward an analysis of the conditions and modes of human activity: from the biological life process, to the world-creating capacity of *homo faber*, to the urgency and fragility of human action. As we read *The Human Condition*, which seeks to answer the question posed by the *Origins* by accounting for what European philosophy has generally failed to analyze with sufficient clarity — namely, the dimensions of the “active life” — we examine Arendt’s attempt in the same period to review and, in her own way, deconstruct the concepts of thinking around which the ideal of a “contemplative life” concretized. This prepares us for a reading in the final weeks of the seminar of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, where she re-conceptualizes evil as a certain implementation of systematic thoughtlessness. As we examine these three major works, each of which is a reflection on the relation between language and politics, we will continually attend to the varying ways in which Arendt sought to understand where poetry

stands in relation to human “conditionality,” and we will use her often-neglected suggestions in this regard to develop an Arendtian poetics.

### Basic Issues in Foreign Language Teaching

“Theory and Practical Applications: Basic Issues in Foreign Language teaching” provides students with a theoretical and practical knowledge base for teaching a foreign language within a college-level American educational context by focusing on basic principles of second language acquisition and language teaching methodology. Throughout the quarter, we will be reading and discussing texts that address theoretical issues pertaining to language learning, pedagogy, and curriculum and we will examine these issues from the practical context of the language classroom and draw explicit linkage between theory and practice. In that sense, German 405 is neither a basic “how to” course for teaching methods, nor a pure Second Language Acquisition course. Rather, by engaging in a discussion of major questions and issues important for a number of interrelated fields such as linguistics, second language acquisition, sociolinguistics, education and language pedagogy, students will be introduced to the practice of self-directed and reflective teaching. This means that students are expected to evaluate theories and research, as well as their own assumptions concerning language learning and teaching.

## REQUIREMENTS

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Successful completion of the Ph. D. degree in German requires:

- Obtaining approval of a dissertation prospectus by the end of the fall quarter of the fourth year;
- Submission of a dissertation approved according to the rules of The Graduate School; and
- Defending a completed dissertation.

## REGULAR ASSESSMENTS

Graduate students have a right to periodic evaluations of their academic progress, performance, and professional potential. Students are encouraged to discuss their progress with their professors, to exchange ideas for research projects, to submit any plans for future research and/or papers in advance for evaluation at any stage in the quarter. Students are also encouraged to maintain regular contact with their professors for academic consultations throughout the course of their studies at Northwestern.

## FIRST-YEAR REVIEW

At the end of the spring quarter, first-year students submit two papers that they have completed during the course of the year. The papers will be reviewed by the tenure-line faculty as a whole. These papers should demonstrate that the student is prepared to write



incisive essays that could eventually be published in appropriate scholarly venues. A written report concerning the student's progress is sent at the end of the spring quarter to the student and it is the basis of a discussion with the Director of Graduate Studies.

## **SECOND-YEAR REVIEW**

By the end of the spring quarter of the second year, students must have organized (in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies) their qualifying examination committee. The names of these three advisers are submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies and the chair of the German department along with a brief outline of the three areas under which the examination will take place.

## **QUALIFYING EXAM**

(usually taken in the winter quarter of the third year)

The examination is principally concerned with literary works. In consultation with their advisors, students develop three independent lists of works. The three lists should, as a whole, include representatives of all major genres (drama, prose, poetry), and they should include literary works from the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries (both pre- and post-War). Students generally develop three kinds of list: one devoted to a particular genre, another to a particular period, and a third that concerns a particular author, including his or her influences. The idea that animates the drafting of the three lists is the following: each list should be the basis for a middle- or upper-level class on the relevant topic, a class, moreover, which introduces advanced undergraduates to some of the major works in modern German literature.

Students generally work with committees composed of three advisers, each of whom helps develop a single list, although occasionally the entire committee helps with all three. Once a student is confident that he or she is fully in command of the lists, the members of his or her committee pose three questions in writing, and the student is given two weeks to write out 12- to 15-page "position papers" about each of the questions. (There is no need for bibliographical material.) An oral examination (lasting around two hours) takes place within a week of the submission of the papers. The examiners will notify the student whether he or she has passed no later than five days after the examination. The qualifying exam must be passed before the beginning of the fall of the student's fourth year.

If the student fails one of the three components of the exam, he or she can retake that component within 30 days. If the student fails more than one component, then he or she will not be allowed to retake the examination. In order to continue in the program, students must pass all three components.



# DISSERTATION PROSPECTUS

(completed during the fall quarter of the fourth year)

The dissertation prospectus should be conceived in the form of a grant proposal. It is composed of the following five sections:

- An abstract of the project, comprehensible to an audience of broadly educated humanists.
- A general description of the dissertation, which defines the topic under discussion, provides an account of the basic questions to which it will respond, and locates the project in the critical literature on the topic.
- Specification of the methodologies that will be used or developed in the course of researching and writing the dissertation.
- Articulation of the dissertation into its various chapters, each of which is briefly described.
- Bibliography of both primary and secondary sources.

The usual length is at least 15 pages, not more than 25 (not including bibliography).

The prospectus should be completed by the fifth week of the fall of the student's fourth year, whereupon it is submitted to the chair of the student's dissertation committee. By the end of the fall quarter the student defends the prospectus before the entire faculty of the department as well as any extra-departmental member of the dissertation committee.

# PH.D. LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT

(completed before the dissertation defense)

The Department of German strives to provide their doctoral students with the best training and broadest practical experience possible in teaching and research. Knowledge of at least one other language besides German and English is required for both, research and teaching. Therefore, the language requirement entails:

- Native or near-native fluency in English;
- Advanced proficiency in German language (oral and written). For information see the page on German Language Proficiency.
- Knowledge of at least one further language. This can be accomplished by one of the following: a) taking a graduate or upper-level undergraduate course taught in the relevant language; b) passing a reading examination administered by the department; or c) taking an intensive language course during the summer (equivalent to finishing two years of college language study).

# NON DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

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Northwestern University does not discriminate or permit discrimination by any member of its community against any individual on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, parental status, marital status, age, disability, citizenship status, veteran status, genetic information, reproductive health decision making, or any other classification protected by law in matters of admissions, employment, housing, or services or in the educational programs or activities it operates. Harassment, whether verbal, physical, or visual, that is based on any of these characteristics is a form of discrimination. Further prohibited by law is discrimination against any employee and/or job applicant who chooses to inquire about, discuss, or disclose their own compensation or the compensation of another employee or applicant.

Northwestern University complies with federal and state laws that prohibit discrimination based on the protected categories listed above, including Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Title IX requires educational institutions, such as Northwestern, to prohibit discrimination based on sex (including sexual harassment) in the University's educational programs and activities, including in matters of employment and admissions. In addition, Northwestern provides reasonable accommodations to qualified applicants, students, and employees with disabilities and to individuals who are pregnant.

Any alleged violations of this policy or questions with respect to nondiscrimination or reasonable accommodations should be directed to Northwestern's Office of Equity, 1800 Sherman Avenue, Suite 4-500, Evanston, Illinois 60208, 847-467-6165, [equity@northwestern.edu](mailto:equity@northwestern.edu).

Questions specific to sex discrimination (including sexual misconduct and sexual harassment) should be directed to Northwestern's Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equity, 1800 Sherman Avenue, Suite 4-500, Evanston, Illinois 60208, 847-467-6165, [TitleIXCoordinator@northwestern.edu](mailto:TitleIXCoordinator@northwestern.edu).

A person may also file a complaint with the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights regarding an alleged violation of Title IX by visiting [www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/complaintintro.html](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/complaintintro.html) or calling 800-421-3481. Inquiries about the application of Title IX to Northwestern may be referred to Northwestern's Title IX Coordinator, the United States Department of Education's Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, or both.

# INTERDISCIPLINARY PARTNERS

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## WORK IN RELATED PROGRAMS

Graduate students in the German Literature and Critical Thought program have the possibility to work with a wide variety of associated departments, faculty, and programs. Graduate seminars in the department of German are regularly cross-listed with programs including but not limited to [Comparative Literary Studies](#), [Philosophy](#), [History](#), [Classics](#), [Art History](#), [Jewish Studies](#), [Gender and Sexuality Studies](#), [Performance Studies](#), [Political Science](#), and [Screen Cultures](#), and students are also encouraged to seek out courses and collaborative opportunities in other departments. Both the German department and associated graduate programs also regularly invite distinguished intra- and international visitors for both talks and seminars on topics germane to a broad array of scholarly interests.

## PARIS PROGRAM IN CRITICAL THEORY

The Northwestern University [Paris Program in Critical Theory](#) is directed by Professor Samuel Weber, Avalon Professor of the Humanities at Northwestern University. This program gives advanced graduate students from a wide variety of disciplines a unique opportunity to familiarize themselves with French and European theoretical research by spending one year in Paris. The Program provides full fellowship support for one year to up to five highly qualified graduate students from Northwestern. In the fall quarter, students participate in a weekly interdisciplinary seminar organized by Professor Weber. The Director also assists students in making contact with leading European scholars and researchers in their respective fields. Students spend the rest of the year in study and/or research according to their individual projects. Ph.D. students who have advanced to candidacy by the fall of the year they will spend in Paris and who have sufficient knowledge of French to be able to function in an academic setting can apply.

## GRADUATE INTERDISCIPLINARY CLUSTER INITIATIVE

Graduate students in Humanities and related fields are encouraged to participate in the [Interdisciplinary Cluster Initiative](#), a program designed to help graduate students during their academic career at Northwestern by fostering connections with students and faculty in other programs with whom they might have natural intellectual affinities. Interdisciplinary clusters in different areas of intellectual inquiry have been developed by faculty across schools and programs and will provide a second intellectual home. Clusters offer their own discrete courses as well as sponsor a number of activities and events for students and faculty. Prospective students have the opportunity to select on their application to graduate school the cluster with which they would like to affiliate, though choosing a cluster is not a requirement for admission. Students may affiliate with a cluster at any point during their study at Northwestern. For more information, visit the [website of the graduate school](#).

# GRADUATE STUDENTS FINANCIAL SUPPORT

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Students who are awarded doctoral fellowships receive five years of full support (including summers), including tuition, a monthly stipend (\$2700), and health insurance. Two out of the five years of doctoral support are non-teaching years; for the other three years, students serve as teaching assistants for the department's undergraduate language and literature program, receiving training as well as practical experience in college-level pedagogy. There are also sufficient funds to support graduate student attendance at professional meetings and conferences, as well as an ongoing lecture and colloquium series curated by the graduate students, which brings in established and upcoming faculty from institutions in the U.S. and abroad.

Additional information on graduate student funding can be found on the [TGS website](#).