German - BA
Group 1: Cycle 1 - Fall 2017 - Summer 2019

Currently status is: Report Accepted

ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR Group 1: Cycle 1 - Fall 2017 - Summer 2019

Mission Statement

The mission of the Bachelor of Arts degree in German is to provide undergraduate students with the traditional benefits of a liberal education in the context of intensive study of the German language, German literature, German linguistics, and the culture of Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.

Goal 1.

The department expects all students to achieve proficiency in the comprehension of written and spoken German.

Curriculum

Students majoring in German must pass at least 6 (and up to 9) courses at the 300 level and above that are taught exclusively in German. Regardless of whether these courses focus on advanced language skills, linguistics, culture, or literature, all discussions are held in German and all reading assignments are in German. Without an ever-increasing proficiency in their comprehension of written and spoken German, our students would not advance through this sequence of courses.

Students typically take GERM 310 (Intermediate German I), 311 (Intermediate German II) before they move on to the most advanced language and literature courses at the 400 and 500 level; and we encourage them also to take GERM 340 (Introduction to German Literature) before moving on to our advanced literature courses at the 400 level. In 2010 we changed our undergraduate requirements to ensure that students take at least 1/3 of their major classes at the 400- and 500-level. Most importantly, all German majors **have to** take GERM 410: Advanced German Grammar and GERM 411: Advanced German Language Practice. This latter course emphasizes comprehension (and production) of spoken German, and uses current newspaper articles, streaming German news videos, and other authentic materials to improve oral/aural skills as well as awareness of current affairs.

Our system of prerequisites, careful scheduling, and focused major advisement ensures that students progress at an appropriate rate through this curriculum.

Learning Outcome 1.

Students will demonstrate a level of comprehension of spoken standard German that will facilitate interactive communication in German.

Measures and Criteria

Incoming students take a written Placement Test. If they achieve a certain score on that test they have to take Phase II of the Placement Test. This has an oral and written componant. So by the time any student declares a German major they have already either worked their way up to a particular level by passing each class in our own language sequence, or a German faculty member has evaluated their oral and written skills and placed them at the appropriate level. Students who declare German as their major then meet regularly with an advisor, who guides them through the advanced language and culture sequence.

In every course taught in German, students are expected to participate actively in discussions, showing their comprehension of spoken German multiple times every session. This work is generally folded into the "Participation" portion of the final grade for each class. It is assessed specifically only rarely. Several of our courses actually have an oral exam that evaluates comprehension of spoken standard German.

Each year we offer Germ 411, "Advanced German Language Practice," a required course that emphasises oral/aural skills. A standardized rubric is used to evaluate the oral exams at the end of that course for assessment purposes. We use the same (ACTFL-based) rubric each time this course is taught, and compare results on an ongoing basis.

Methods

German majors in 411 will take an oral exam that will be graded according to a rubric developed for NCATE

assessment purposes. That rubric evaluates, among other things, how the content of an answer reflected the content of a question ("Content"); and how readily the student grasped the meaning of the question asked ("Comprehension").

Results

Seven out of nine majors scored 4/4 on the listening comprehension aspects of the oral interview given at the end of GERM 411. The remaining two students scored 3/4.

GERM 411 Spring 2018
GERM 411 Spring 2019

Use of Results

Since the results are good, the methods employed in GERM 411 will be continued. If the instructor feels certain students are behind in listening comprehension, additional practice can be suggested.

Learning Outcome 2.

Students will demonstrate advanced proficiency in understanding the written word.

Measures and Criteria

Incoming students take a written Placement Test. If they achieve a certain score on that test they have to take Phase II of the Placement Test. This has an oral and written componant. So by the time any student declares a German major they have already either worked their way up to a particular level by passing each class in our own language sequence, or a German faculty member has evaluated their oral and written skills and placed them at the appropriate level. Students who declare German as their major then meet regularly with an advisor, who guides them through the advanced language and culture sequence.

In every course taught in German students are expected to read many German texts and participate actively in discussions about them, showing their comprehension of written German multiple times every session. This work rarely is evaluated in isolation, but we do have reading comprehension sections on many of our language course exams.

We use the results of a reading comprehension exercise in an advanced German language class (GERM 410 or 411) to evaluate our majors' proficiency in understanding the written word.

Methods

Majors in GERM 411, will complete a reading comprehension exercise toward the end of the spring semester. The instructor in GERM 411 will report on the Reading Comprehension exercise to the program director.

Results

Seven out of nine majors scored 80% or higher on reading comp exercise given in GERM 411. Two scored between 60% and 70%. The results correspond to intermediate high for most students.

GERM 411 Spring 2018
GERM 411 Spring 2019

Use of Results

The results are good, but not as high as for listening comprehension. Texts from various media on current events are read in this course, but it is reading is not the main focus in GERM 411: Advanced German Conversation. At present language courses, in general and in our program, tend to focus more on speaking and listening than reading (and writing). There has been an attempt in our program to assign more readings in the first three years of German to help bring them up to the advanced level. Even more should be included, but these courses need to focus on all four skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing. Reading is a focus in the two required literature courses: GERM 340 and 400 level literature sequence (one required), which students have not necessarily taken before GERM 411. It will be suggested that the reading assessment be given at the end the 400 level literature course.

Goal 2.

The department expects all students to acquire the ability to express themselves effectively in German, both orally and in writing.

Curriculum

Students majoring in German must pass at least 6 (and up to 9) courses at the 300 level and above that are taught exclusively in German. Regardless of whether these courses focus on advanced language skills, linguistics, culture, or literature, all discussions (in which students are expected to participate actively) are held in German and all writing assignments are in German. Furthermore, when German majors are taking GERM courses that are being taught in English (they may take up to 3 of these for major credit), they are expected to do all the readings in German and write any essays assigned in German. Students typically take GERM 310 (Intermediate German I), 311 (Intermediate German II) before they move on to the most advanced language and literature courses at the 400 and 500 level; and we encourage them also to take GERM 340 (Introduction to German Literature) before moving on to our advanced literature courses at the 400 level. In all of these courses, students write (and revise) essays and reader responses papers in German. As mentioned in Goal 1, all German majors now have to take GERM 410: Advanced German Grammar and GERM 411: Advanced German Language Practice. This latter course emphasizes production (and comprehension) of spoken German, and uses current newspaper articles, streaming German news videos, and other authentic materials to improve oral skills as well as awareness of current affairs. Without an ever-increasing proficiency in their production of written and spoken German, our students would not advance through the sequence of required courses at the 300-, 400-, and 500-level.

Learning Outcome 1.

Students will demonstrate intermediate to advanced level of proficiency in writing German, i.e. express a wide range of needs, experiences, and ideas in German.

Measures and Criteria

Incoming students take a written Placement Test. If they achieve a certain score on that test they have to take Phase II of the Placement Test. This has an oral and written componant. So by the time any student declares a German major they have already either worked their way up to a particular level by passing each class in our own language sequence, or a German faculty member has evaluated their oral and written skills and placed them at the appropriate level. Students who declare German as their major then meet regularly with an advisor, who guides them through the advanced language and culture sequence.

In every course taught in German students are expected to write essays, reports, response papers, homework exercises, etc., in German. This work is evaluated more constantly and rigorously than almost any other aspect of language learning. In almost every course we teach, our faculty uses rubrics designed by our departmental NCATE accreditation team to grade essays. Each year we use the results of one essay written in one of our Advanced German Literature courses (GERM 420, 430, 440, 450, or 460) graded using an NCATE rubric to assess student levels in written German.

Methods

German majors in 450 will write an essay that will be graded according to a rubric developed for NCATE assessment purposes.

Results

In the aspects of the rubric used to grade final papers in GERM 450 related to written expression four of six majors scored 94% or higher, while two scored above 86%. For most students this corresponds to advanced low in writing.

Results for GERM 460 where not available due to the fact that the instructor's paper files were currently not accessible after the flood in the Humanities Office Bldg.

GERM 450 Spring 2018

Use of Results

These results, though incomplete, are excellent and point to success in our advanced grammar and literature courses.

Learning Outcome 2.

Students will demonstrate intermediate to advanced level of proficiency in speaking German, i.e. express a wide range of needs, experiences, and ideas in German.

Measures and Criteria

Incoming students take a written Placement Test. If they achieve a certain score on that test they have to take Phase II of the Placement Test. This has an oral and written componant. So by the time any student declares a German major they have already either worked their way up to a particular level by passing each

class in our own language sequence, or a German faculty member has evaluated their oral and written skills and placed them at the appropriate level. Students who declare German as their major then meet regularly with an advisor, who guides them through the advanced language and culture sequence.

In every course taught in German students are expected to participate actively in discussions, showing their ability to express themselves in German multiple times every session. This work is generally folded into the "Participation" portion of the final grade for each class. It is assessed specifically only rarely, altough several of our courses actually have an oral exam that evaluates the production of spoken standard German.

GERM 411 is our "Advanced German Language Practice" course. It emphasises oral/aural skills, is required for majors, and is offered every year. A standardized rubric is used to evaluate the oral exams at the end of that course for assessment purposes. We will use the same (ACTFL-based) rubric each time this course is taught, and will compare results on an ongoing basis.

Methods

German majors in 411 will take an oral exam that will be graded according to a rubric developed for NCATE assessment purposes. That rubric evaluates, among other things, "Pronunciation," "Comprehensibility," "Accuracy," "Fluency," and "Use of Communication Strategies."

Results

Seven of nine majors scored above 88% or above on the rubric (5/6 of which focuses on speaking) used for the oral interview given at the end of GERM 411. The remaining two scored between 70 and 80%. These results correspond to intermediate high or above for most of the students.

GERM 411 Spring 2018
GERM 411 Spring 2019

Use of Results

These results are not quite as high as the listening comprehension results, but still higher than the results for reading comprehension. While it is to be expected that listening comprehension outpaces acquisition of speaking skills, addition practice can be prescribed for students who are lagging behind. Study abroad is the best way to improve speaking skills.

Goal 3.

The department expects all students to develop the ability to think critically and analyze texts, including some of the major texts in German literature. Familiarity with the cultural and historical contexts out of which such texts emerged (cultural competency) should also be demonstrated.

Curriculum

The German program does not have an absolute distinction between "language" courses and "literature/culture" courses. This is an artificial distinction--students need excellent German to take our advanced literature/culture courses; and in our "language" courses we almost always include shorter literary texts as well as other examples of German cultural expression.

In GERM 310, a major course that is a prerequisite for a number of advanced German courses, students engage with "authentic" texts and are trained in techniques for reading, thinking about, and analyzing them. Moving on, they learn the basics about literary genres and periods in GERM 340, and follow up with more intensive courses about particular periods of German literature in such courses as GERM 420 (Medieval German Literature), GERM 430 (The German Enlightenment), GERM 440 (Nineteenth Century German literature), or GERM 450 (German Literature and Culture 1890-1945) or GERM 460 (Post-war and Contemporary German Literature). All of these courses are taught in German. Majors are now required to take at least two of these courses.

We have always offered courses in English on German culture, designed not just for our majors and minors but to appeal to the wider student body. We regularly have courses on World War II in German Film, German Green Technologies, Viking Mythology, etc. We believe that in such courses (in which our majors are still expected to do readings and essays in German) German majors have opportunities not only to learn about more diverse or specialized aspects of German culture, but also to practice their critical thinking and analytic skills on a different level, that of their native language.

Learning Outcome 1.

Students will demonstrate basic skills as well as cultural competency in analyzing German literary, philosophical, and political texts from a variety of historical periods and literary genres; and communicate their insights, both orally and in writing.

Measures and Criteria

Whether they are learning the basics about literary genres and periods in GERM 340, discussing German films in German 311, or taking more intensive courses about particular periods of German literature, German majors are asked to practice textual analysis throughout their course of study at USC. Similarly, they are building up cultural competency in almost every course they take, whether they are looking at the cold war conditions in a divided Berlin (GERM 398y) or discussing the emergence of German dialects in central Europe (GERM 516).

Methods

In GERM 450, students will write a critical analysis of a work of German literature in which they discuss the form and content of the work as well as its historical context. This will be graded using a rubric tied to NCATE cultural competancy standards, and reported to the German program director.

Results

Five of six majors scored 90% or higher in the aspects of the rubric used to grade final papers in GERM 450 that relate analysis of literary and other texts, while one scored 88%.

Results for GERM 460 where not available due to the fact that the instructor's paper files were currently not accessible after the flood in the Humanities Office Bldg.

GERM 450 Spring 2018

Use of Results

These results, though incomplete, are excellent and show the level of skills developed in required literature courses: GERM 340 and a course from the 400-level literature sequence.