

**GERM 419/673: Variation in Contemporary German  
Fall 2007**

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**Office Hours: T 3:30-5 pm or by appointment**

<b>Course Description &amp; Goals</b>
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This course will introduce basic sociolinguistic concepts in the context of Germany's unique position as a "pluricentric" language. We begin by exploring issues such as the role of German internationally, language change (and resistance to it), social and regional varieties, language attitudes, and language reform. Following this understanding of language variation and change with some historical context, we examine current patterns of language variation, e.g., political, public and media speech, written vs. spoken registers, *Jugendsprache*, "*Gastarbeiterdeutsch*," intercultural differences in language behavior, and gendered styles of communication. Readings are in English and German.

By the end of the semester, students should understand the elements that predict language change and language variation in general, with relevant examples of each from German language and society. In addition, students will have conducted secondary research on such topics, incorporating scholarly and media sources in both English and German. Graduate students will have occasional extra readings, will lead discussion once during the semester, and write a semester paper *in German*. All students will have learned the APA citation and bibliographic format, and will have experience writing a 1-page abstract for their semester project in addition to the paper itself.

**Textbooks:**

*The German Speaking World*. Patrick Stevenson. 1997. Routledge. ISBN 0-415-12985-0  
*The German Language and the Real World*. Patrick Stevenson, Ed. 1995. Oxford. ISBN 0-19-823738-3

There will be additional readings posted on Blackboard: [www.elms.umd.edu](http://www.elms.umd.edu)  
*Please log on after the first class to make sure you can access the course. Watch for announcements and discussion postings (check in every few days).*

**Recommended Reference Sources:**

*Germanistische Soziolinguistik*. Heinrich Löffler. 1985. Erich Schmidt Verlag.  
*The German Language in a Changing Europe*. Michael Clyne. 1995. Cambridge.

- ✚ An excellent database found on the library homepage (through Research Port) is LLBA (Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts)
- ✚ NB: All research should reflect multiple sources, e.g., books, media, scholarly articles, etc., and reflect a balance of German and English. Please note that Wikipedia is not considered a legitimate source for any citation or research of any kind for this class.

## Course Expectations and Assessment

### **Class Participation and Preparation (20%)**

A seminar format requires consistent and lively participation from all students. Weekly readings are listed on the syllabus, with a special column for additional readings or assignments required for grad students where applicable. For 8 of our 15 class meetings, you will write 1 ‘critical’ questions based on the readings for that week and post these to Blackboard in the Discussion Forum (*at least 48 hours in advance of class* please so that others may read and respond). These questions are *not* summaries of the readings, they are critical points that occur to *you* as you read, e.g., remaining questions or implications that were not addressed in the readings. (Posting more than 8 times is fine, but it does not earn extra credit.) If it is NOT a week you wish to post a question, you should still read what others have posted and respond to at least 1 question. I will note participation each week for the online discussions. In other words, I will expect that everyone posts *something*, either a question or a thoughtful response, every week.

Please note these 2 policies: (1) Late work is never accepted; (2) Attendance is taken every day. If you miss more than 1 class in the semester, your participation grade will be affected.

### **Graduate students: Discussion Leadership (10%)**

Once in the semester, each graduate student will lead the discussion on the topic for that day, incorporating additional scholarly and/or media sources for the topic (in general, 2-4 additional sources). A strong element of *critique* or *analysis* is expected: Why is this topic compelling for the development or maintenance of the German language? What are the current academic (and/or non-academic) directions evident for this theme, and where do you see future research going? Your discussion should incorporate empirical research if at all possible (primary, original data). Please make use of the LLBA database (from the Research Port on the library’s homepage). You will be graded on thoroughness of preparation, critical quality of discussion, and quality of questions to class as you facilitate discussion (please include several).

Please limit yourself to 30-45 minutes (you may need to practice in advance to keep to the limit). Handouts (no more than 1-page!) are encouraged so that we can follow you, and you can list relevant citations for us (acc. to APA format). Powerpoint is also possible if you like that format, but it is not necessary.

*NB: We are in a tech classroom, so internet access with sound is available, as are CD/DVD, VCR and audio players.*

**Undergraduate students: Web browsing (10%)**

Twice in the semester, undergraduate students will conduct a web search relevant to the topic of the week. This requires a search of current media for events, legislation, editorials, cartoons, online communities or materials, any (legitimate) source of evidence for the phenomenon we are studying that week. You will be graded on how clearly you contextualize what you have found, i.e., as evidence of how the theme impacts specific speech (or political) communities. On your day(s) to present your search, please limit yourself to 8-10 minutes (hint: practice in advance). Handouts are appreciated, but not required. Internet access is available but should be used intelligently (briefly and with a specific purpose.)

**Midterm: (20%)** Essay and short-answer formats; in-class

**Final Exam: (20%)** Essay format; in-class; see testudo for date/time in mid-semester. The latest day would be Dec. 19. Please do not ask to take this early.

**Semester Project: (30%)**

Each student will choose a topic from the syllabus, but find a specific angle on it and research it thoroughly for a written paper. The written paper will adhere to specific criteria, and requires you to take a *critical* position on the issue. You should also be able to identify both popular and scholarly positions on the issue.

- ✚ Graduate students write in German, 15-16 pages incl. bibliography.  
Undergraduates may write in English (German majors are encouraged to write in German), 10-12 pages incl. bibliography.
- ✚ All students will write an abstract of their paper (as is the format for international journals) in the language that is NOT the language of their paper (e.g., English abstract if paper is in German, German abstract if paper is in English).
- ✚ All students must adhere to the APA guidelines for bibliographic and in-text citations (see online link on Blackboard for crib sheet).

In order to facilitate thorough preparation and constructive feedback, this project should be researched over the second half of the semester *gradually*, with updates on progress to the class.

**Progress points for project:**

- ✚ Week 8: Commit to your topic and begin search for materials: Turn in your topic on a 3x5 notecard in class!
- ✚ Week 11: Turn in a working bibliography of at least 10 relevant sources, according to APA format.
- ✚ Week 12: 3-minute update and outline of your project in-class (oral)
- ✚ Week 14: Abstract of your paper due (see guidelines above re: language)