Conversation / Composition: Language & Society

GERM-UA 111
DOREEN DENSKY
MW 4:55-6:10P
FALL 2021

Required for the German major. Aims to improve students' proficiency in writing and speaking German in three functional areas: description, narration, and argumentation. Grammar and vocabulary are reviewed and practiced as appropriate. Students examine and discuss texts of various genres, then draft and present work of their own in each genre. Discussion and writing components are closely coordinated. Activities include presentations, peer review, guided writing, and editing.

In this course, students will not only practice the German language at the advanced level, but also look at the effects of language on society – and society’s effects on language. We will explore a variety of media (German literature, song lyrics, journalistic writing, political speeches, commercials, web sources) and analyze examples from everyday parlance to address questions such as: Why does language change over time? To what extent can it be used and abused as an instrument of power or manipulation? Which discussions unfold around multilingualism in society? Finally, how have globalization, the Internet, and efforts toward more inclusive language use impacted language policy and cultural attitudes toward language in recent years?

Let’s talk about it (in German).

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TECHNIQUES OF TRANSLATION

GERM-UA 153 | TR 8:00-9:15am | Fall 2021 | Taught in German

ANDREA DORTMANN

This course introduces students to the history, theory, and practice of translation through German and English texts taken from a variety of cultural backgrounds. While engaging in the craft of translation first hand, students will encounter diverse contrastive grammatical, syntactical, and stylistic problems, thus gaining a deeper understanding of the German language. The course also stresses the acquisition of vocabulary and complex idiomatic structures necessary for effective reading comprehension as well as written expression. A background reader in English will familiarize students with historical and theoretical implications of translation. Photocopies of primary texts in German (and English) to be translated will be distributed by the instructor. Materials may include newspaper and magazine articles; recipes; TV- and print advertisements; scientific and philosophical articles; pop material such as hip hop and rap songs, cartoons; Literary texts: prose, theater, poetry, libretti, among others. In addition to those weekly translation assignments, which will be critically assessed in class, we will translate one or more longer prose texts from German to English as a class. This work will accompany our course throughout the semester.
The objective of the seminar is to show how Nietzsche revolutionized Western philosophy and how this transformation influenced significantly what is known as “Continental Philosophy,” which includes such figures as Heidegger, Derrida, and Deleuze.

Particular attention will be paid to the meaning of Nietzsche’s pronouncement that “God is dead”; his declaration that the world is “Will to Power” and an “aesthetic phenomenon”; and his idea of “Eternal Recurrence.” Also discussed will be the role language plays in Nietzsche’s view on epistemology and ontology, his revaluation of morality, and his influence on the arts.

This course is taught in English.
It can feel today as if we are drowning in a world of signs, with digital technologies conveying unprecedented amounts of text and image all over the globe. Problems like misinformation, the politics and economy of social media, and conspiracy theories are all issues of how we make sense of the messages conveyed to us. Semiotics is the study of signs, the concrete forms these messages take. The course will visit major stations in the history of semiotics, from Augustine of Hippo to German Idealism, Karl Marx, and beyond. In modern semiotics, we will focus on the twin legacies of Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce, with readings from figures like Roman Jakobson, Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, Rosalind Krauss, Julia Kristeva, Max Bense, Stuart Hall, Harun Farocki, and Hito Steyerl. The block seminar will be split each week between this theoretical tradition and objects to be interpreted. In addition to literary and visual art (texts by Franz Kafka, W.E.B. Du Bois and Edgar Allan Poe, Otto Neurath's Isotype language, Farocki's and Steyerl's film and digital works) we will analyze memes, data visualization techniques, political and targeted ads, and other forms of contemporary semiotics. Students will be asked to find semiotic objects for collective analysis. The goal of the course is to gain not only an overview of the semiotic tradition, but a critical orientation in today's world of signs.

Taught in English.
To “romanticize” the world, according to the poet Novalis, is “to give the common a higher meaning, to make the familiar strange, to make the known the unknown, to make the finite seem infinite.” For a charmed generation of poets and artists, young enough to share in the enthusiasms of the French Revolution, the world in 1800 seemed ready for remaking. Taking their cue from Immanuel Kant, who made subjective experience itself—not the objective world—the starting point of philosophical inquiry, they invented a new poetry and a new art, new languages of self-expression. Natural and sincere, introspective and visionary, pious but also scientific, nostalgic or politically engaged, the Romantics sought both a new intensity of experience and a loss of self in communion with the Whole. The course will engage with the authors Goethe, Hölderlin, Novalis, Günderrode, Tieck, Wackenroder, Kleist, Hoffmann, Droste-Hülshoff, and Grimm; the painters Overbeck, Cornelius, Friedrich, and Runge; and the philosophers Kant, Schiller, Fichte, Schelling, Schlegel, and Hegel.
Enlightenment, a European intellectual and social reform movement of the 18th century, advocated reason as the primary basis of authority and the means to scrutinize previously accepted doctrines and traditions. Thinkers in England, France, and later in Germany began to question the authoritarian state and the orthodoxy of the Church. They attacked intolerance, censorship, and social restraints and were arguing in favour of the emancipation of the bourgeois individual on the basis of universally valid principles. This course will give an introduction to German Enlightenment by close readings of philosophical and literary texts. The analysis will focus on concepts of freedom, humanity and education, the significance of feelings and emotions for the constitution of individuality, and the critique of reason in late Enlightenment. Authors include among others: Gottsched, Lessing, Herder, Goethe, Kant. Readings and discussions in German.

ANDREA KRAUSS
MW 9:30 – 10:45a | FALL 2021