

Welcome to SpeakEasy, otherwise known as German 320, but really also a world in itself!

German 320, in its current form, is only three years old. It is a new version of an existing course, but it maintains some goals from previous years. *The chief learning goal has been and still is to prepare participants for a modern working environment in which German is used both professionally and socially.* Thanks to a PSU Faculty Enhancement Grant which was awarded in 2001, a new goal has been added: to establish a business, both local and e-commerce, in which German (and later, other languages) are both the target for learning and also the medium of business communication.

The focus of the business is development and distribution of products for “real-world” language users, such as specialized vocabulary and phrase lists (“German for Skiers”, “German for the Emergency Room.” Travelers will be able to download the lists from the WWW or purchase them in bookstores or airports and carry them in their pockets for ready reference. Whether or not the “business” becomes an actual business is less important than the experiences the participants gain while simulating and trying to establish it. But it will be a sign of extraordinary success if the business actually comes into being and can be passed on to a new crop of participants.

The course has two linguistic goals:

- 1) Moving closer to, or further along in, the “Advanced” level of the ACTFL Proficiency scale in speaking and writing, where the occupational realm becomes important;
- 2) Developing a “hothouse special” competence—a specialized knowledge above your general maintenance level—in the vocabulary and speech register of the white-collar business world.

Over the first few days of the course you will learn much more about what those terms and concepts mean, and how your learning will be assessed. It is enough to say here that most of your learning will occur as you *do* things using German, rather than by studying grammar rules, memorizing vocabulary lists, or writing out academic exercises. Nevertheless, you are also at a stage in developing your German where you should prepare to learn about the language – in the language –

systematically in the course of carrying out realistic work-related activities.

We will begin the quarter by doing what would be natural when one starts a new job: making acquaintances, describing job-related competencies, and engaging in “small talk.” Very soon we will proceed to start our new business: structure our organization, determine the basic features of our product and how we will market it, and assign responsibilities to our “employees.” After that we will design the product, develop the related skills, and then produce and distribute the product. Along the way we will deal with such matters as quality control, employee performance, and planning the future.

The nature and sequence of activities and assignments, and also the standards of performance, will be determined by the needs of the business. You can expect to carry out a range of business activities in German: word-processing, basic accounting, marketing, equipment management, personnel matters, and so on. For example, you will write a job application letter and give some kind of technological demonstration. But you are also actual students, and so some assignments will be less realistic and will serve a “support” function for your learning, such as development of a specialized personal vocabulary. In between those two realms will be the central method of documenting your performance: a portfolio which includes your course work and can serve as the foundation for documentation of your competence if you really do apply for employment or study abroad in a German-speaking environment.

Many of the details of the course will have to be negotiated during the first few weeks, as we see who the participants are and what their current levels of competence are. Soon after the first meeting of the course, and when I have received your initial email message, you will receive the draft outline of the rest of the course and the first set of assignments for it.

So, let’s get started! / Fangen wir doch an!

Aufgabe 1. Eine Email an Dr. Fischer (fischerw@pdx.edu) baldigst schicken, damit eine E-Karte mit Ihren Personalien in unserem Adreßbuch erstellt werden kann.