



INTRODUCTORY GERMAN FOR PROFICIENCY (GER 101-103)

PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY
Fall Quarter 2005

CONTENTS OF THIS DOCUMENT:

Staff, Websites, Lab, Access
Calendar
Chief Goals
Course Background
Course Materials
Major Course Activities
Tests and Other Graded Activities
Grading & Attendance Policies
Overview Syllabus
Standing Study Assignments for all Kontexte
First Assignment

STAFF, WEBSITES, LAB, ACCESS

Course Director: Prof. William B. Fischer, Ph.D.
 Department of Foreign Languages
 Office: 451-D NH • PSU tel (503) 725-5285
 home tel: 232-7881 (8am–10pm)
 email: fischerw@pdx.edu
<http://web.pdx.edu/~fischerw>

Teaching Assistants (••all offices at NH M209B):
 Alla Karimi, Emily Minty, Mary Sykora, Audrey
 Wiest (see [course website](#) for contact
 information and updates)

Inquiries about matters specific to your own class should be directed to your instructor. Contact the [Course Director \(email\)](#) if you have questions or comments about the course itself– design, materials, policies, etc. **Please do not occupy class time with inquiries or comments that concern you alone; use email or office hours for that.**

The course has two websites. The administrative website houses the course calendar, assignments, etc. Its address is:

http://web.pdx.edu/~fischerw/courses/firstyr_g/html

The learning materials website houses what in other courses is the textbook. Its address – *ordinarily* - is:
<http://www.cosmolingua.pdx.edu>

This quarter, however, the materials there are being upgraded and the next version is not yet ready. If you go to that address, you will automatically be transferred to where current materials are. You can reach them directly with this address:

http://www.cosmolingua.pdx.edu/wb_jun05

To save time and keyboarding labor, bookmark the course websites in your browser preference/

favorites list. **NOTE:** The course administration website can be used with any common browser. Until the coming upgrade, however, the course materials (CosmoLingua) site *requires Microsoft Internet Explorer*, with Javascript enabled.

You are expected to check the [administrative website](#) regularly (minimum: weekly) for announcements and other updates. You are also expected to have an everyday knowledge of technology: voice-mail, email, browser management, and related internet skills (using “Acrobat” PDFs, plugins, etc.). The first assignment (see below) is intended to help us see who may need help with such things as entering special characters for German. In class we will also check briefly for technology problems, and may also teach German expressions for some simple technological operations.

The specialized learning lab for Foreign Languages serves the special needs of language students, such as convenient audio and texts with special characters or non-Western writing systems. It is located in NH394N, just across from the main FLL office, and is open all day and into the evening during the week.

Access & special needs: Announced PSU policies will be followed. If you need help with materials or media, or adjustments to test conditions, please inform your instructor.

CALENDAR (FULL VERSION ON WWW)

Sections of the course

	<i>begins</i>	<i>instructor</i>	<i>final exam</i>
MWF 0900	Wiest	T 06 Dec.	0800
MWF 1015	Fischer	W 07 Dec.	1015
MWF 1130	Sykora	Th 08 Dec.	1230
MW 1840	Minty	M 06 Dec.	1930
TTh 0800	Karimi	Th 08 Dec.	0800

Holidays: F 11 Nov., RF 24-5 Nov.

CHIEF GOALS

The primary goal of Introductory German is to acquire the practical proficiency and confidence that will allow you to use the language in everyday situations, primarily for speaking. Much of the classroom time is used for partner and small-group practice of face-to-face communication. A rich collection of authentic cultural materials – menus,

currency, radio broadcast clips, photos of everyday scenes – provides genuine language input and a sense of “being there.” The secondary goal of the course is to give you the knowledge and skills to make use of the German language and the related culture in your other areas of personal interest and your career pursuits. Classroom instruction, assignments, tests and grading are all consistent with these two chief goals.

COURSE MATERIALS

The course is based on *Wie, bitte?*, a multi-media program produced at PSU and Linfield College and earlier published as a conventional textbook. It is available both on the internet and free of charge on a CD-ROM. Which of those two you use depends on the quality of the computer(s) and internet connection(s) you use wherever it is that you study. The current *Wie, bitte?* software requires the Microsoft Internet Explorer browser, v. 5.x or later. IE is pre-loaded on most reasonably recent computers. It can also be downloaded for free at www.microsoft.com. The coming CosmoLingua upgrade is intended to allow for other browsers (Netscape, Safari, Firefox).

Hard copy of those materials which can be printed without using too much paper and ink is available at Clean Copy, on Broadway across from Cramer Hall, at a cost of about \$30.00. (The package does not include the many color graphics that are on the CD-ROM and website.) There is no expensive commercial textbook to buy, and you may not even want or need to buy the photocopy package. You might use the money you save here to buy something you like when you do your first project.

Other materials for the course may include office supplies (binder, blank audio or video tape, blank CDs, etc.) for your projects or course performance portfolio. Your expense for such items should be no more than \$10, and may even be nothing if you have materials on hand to recycle.

A small paperback dictionary may be useful. Ask your instructor for recommendations. **Other language books and study aids are NOT recommended. DO NOT BUY 501 German Verbs**, grammar reference books, or the various “quick fixes” the bookstores carry and someone may recommend to you, perhaps from experiences in another course. It is unlikely that those materials can give you something you think your course materials lack but that is nevertheless somehow necessary for success in the course. Diverting your time to them may keep you from learning what you actually need to know. To cite a common example: this course does *not* have tests where you fill in blanks in

sentences or on verb charts, or where you need to know technical terms about grammar.

If you think you need a **tutor**, make sure that the tutor knows what you are supposed to learn and how you will be tested.

MAJOR COURSE ACTIVITIES

In class: Most classroom time will be devoted to using German, not to talking about it in English, and certainly not to grammar lectures and exercises. Language will be modeled in context, you will try to use it yourself to accomplish a real communicative purpose, and your instructor will help you do it better. There will be much speaking with partners and in small groups—and not just in class.

Also important is exposure to the language through listening and reading materials from a variety of sources. Your instructional materials contain a rich collection of genuine graphic and audio items, more than any “paper” textbook could offer at any reasonable price. You will be encouraged to encounter these authentic materials as though you were living in the target culture—not translating them, but gathering information from them and using it to communicate with others.

Some classroom time and assignments, especially in the first quarter, will be devoted to helping you understand how you yourself learn, and how language is learned. Misconceptions in these areas can lead to wasted time and effort. Similarly, the purposes of learning activities and the standards by which performance is judged will be made clear. You will have every opportunity to know what to do to succeed—both on the first try and later, when you will have the opportunity to improve your work and have it re-scored.

Some classroom time will also be devoted to preparing you for long-term (even “life-long”) learning. That is, we want you to develop a sense for how knowledge of a language and its culture can be of value later, whether in your career or in the enrichment of your personal life. Our course harmonizes with PSU President Bernstine’s “Internationalization Initiative.”

Where possible, testing and bureaucratic activities will be moved outside the classroom. This is one benefit of the grant support that our course has attracted (see “Course Background” below).

Other activities: Formation of study groups will be encouraged. There are also several regularly-scheduled local extracurricular German activities, including informal conversation groups. Information will be announced and posted.

COURSE BACKGROUND

The current version of Introductory German is a revised stage of a course that was completely restructured in 1997-98. There are four major changes from the years before that: 1) The basic course materials are multi-media and are provided free of charge (=covered by the course tech fee). 2) The class is conducted in a technology-assisted room. 3) There is more emphasis on “customizing” the course content to the individual student. 4) The course has been revised to harmonize with the methods and standards now being used in Oregon public schools and by the Oregon University System in its policies governing admission to state universities, including PSU.

Some of that activity has been supported by grants that have recognized the quality of the program. In 2001 the FLL Department also received a multi-year \$200,000 Pew Foundation grant to redesign large-enrollment language courses. The grant application was initiated and its academic content largely written by Dr. Fischer. Innovations in first-year German were important to our successful application.

The course, and other of Dr. Fischer’s courses, have attracted several other grants and won two PSU awards for excellence in teaching with technology.

TESTS AND OTHER GRADED ACTIVITIES

Tests in first-year German will measure your ability to communicate in real-world situations, not your intellectual knowledge of grammar or your ability to memorize vocabulary lists. Standards will be presented clearly. You will be coached to meet them, asked to evaluate yourself, and offered the opportunity to improve your performance and raise your grade.

You will be asked to learn vocabulary and grammar that are less complex than is attempted in traditional courses, but you are expected to learn them better, and for use in real-time communication. You will also be taught strategies that let you make better use of the language you do have. The time gained from not attempting the unnecessary or impossible should help you learn better. It will also allow you to explore how German can relate to the rest of your life.

Languages are meant to be used, not just studied. At the very beginning of the course you will begin projects that encourage you to find German even right around you in the here and now, and to explore how and what German can contribute to your career, your leisure interests, and your cultural enrichment. You might, for example, watch a German soccer game (or classical concert) on TV,

look up some basic vocabulary, and send your fellow students and teacher a simple message about what you did. Or, if you are of German ancestry (and there is a very good chance that you are), you might look into your genealogy and tell the class briefly (in German) about the old photo or family Bible you brought with you.

Tests and other assessments will consist of (1) evaluations of classroom performance, outside study activities, and projects; (2) (if needed) classroom evaluations and quizzes (perhaps ungraded but in any case required) that will help you prepare for (3) formal evaluations of your speaking, writing, reading and listening proficiency according to established national standards and to the Oregon second-language benchmarks. There are no “blockbuster” mid-terms or finals, in the sense of tests that can by themselves devastate your course grade, or let “cramming” save you from otherwise poor performance by allowing you to get by on short-term memory. But major evaluations will occur around the fourth and seventh weeks of the course and during the last week of classes and finals week. You can expect 3 major oral and writing tests, occasional quizzes, and possibly 2 major listening and reading tests.

At least once during the year, including early in fall quarter, you will take one or more of several kinds of baseline test, such as the WebCAPE or the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview. The tests are being introduced to improve placement, assess teaching quality, and gather research data for improving language programs at PSU and nationally. The tests are required, but your scores will not affect your course grade. You may choose to have your data excluded from study. If you do consent to its use, your identity will be kept private.

Tests are conducted in the regular classroom, in PSU computer labs, in faculty offices, and over the internet on participants’ own computers. No test will be conducted without prior announcement on the course website and once in class, beginning one week before the test.

Assignments that consist of text (or even text with graphics) should be turned in by e-mail if at all possible. You may use your own private email account, or your PSU Odin address. If you do not yet have one, get one immediately. (Go to SMC 18 or <www.account.pdx.edu>.) Be aware that some free email providers restrict the kinds and quantities of material you can transmit and receive.

GRADING

Grading is NOT based on a curve. The [American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages \(ACTFL, <www.actfl.org>\)](http://www.actfl.org) has established the standards for performance that are now dominant in our field and that form the basis of the state K-16 standards in Oregon. These standards have generated scoring guides much like those now being used in Oregon K-12 schools. The staff will explain those standards to you and will rate you according to them. Sometimes you will rate yourself too.

The ACTFL Proficiency Standards define performance levels. They are summarized in the course materials, they will be explained in class, and later you will evaluate your own proficiency and what you hope to attain later in the course. Research in our area furnishes a reliable indicator of what can be expected. All students who achieve the performance level for a specified standard will receive the corresponding grade for that part of the course. And the *end* of German 103, students who are at the Intermediate-Mid level in both speaking and writing will be at the “A” grade level, although their grades may be affected by their performance in other parts of the course or by penalties for poor attendance.

For precise evaluation of assignments and tests the course uses the same 6-level scoring guide used in Oregon K-12 schools and elsewhere across the nation. The level for satisfactory (not just “passing”) performance is 4. In terms of PSU letter grades, the 4 corresponds to a B-. This in turn corresponds, at the end of German 103, to a proficiency of ACTFL Intermediate-Low in speaking and writing, provided performance in other areas (projects, etc.) is strong. Your first assignment will show you how scoring guides are used in the course. Grade standards and weighting are posted on the [course website](#).

Up to one full point (25%) of your possible four-point grade is made up of the personal interest projects mentioned earlier. They will also be assessed with scoring guides. Up to 5 projects may be assigned. There are two reasons for the projects: 1) Long-term language proficiency involves relating language skills to the rest of your world. 2) In the class there may be “false beginners” – people who have previously learned some German and who may therefore not really belong in a first-year class. False beginners, if they are clearly beyond the first-year level, will be encouraged to move to a more advanced course. They may also apply for up to 12 hours of credit by examination, for which they may receive up to an “A.” If they remain in first-year German, **no matter how advanced their language skills, neither they (nor anyone else) will be able**

to receive a grade higher than “B” unless they do the regular class assignments and complete the personal interest projects with work of high quality.

If you are a true beginner, you need not worry. The projects will be formulated in such a way that you can do well on them even if you are having difficulty with the language. You will often be able to revise your class assignments and even your tests. Look at them as a way of raising your grade. The same is true of the early assignments: you can do well on them even if you feel you are not learning the language well. “False beginners” who slight them will part a price for doing that.

There is no “extra credit,” in the common sense of the term. Extraneous activities cannot substitute directly for acquiring language competence. But there is an **easy way for you to improve your grade:** revise the work you do in the course and resubmit it for re-evaluation. Your instructor will be available to help you. Revisions of assignments, projects, and tests are due one week after your material is returned to you, unless otherwise announced.

Instructors are allowed to introduce specialized assignments and quizzes in their own sections, up to 10% of the total grade.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Class attendance may be recorded, either every day or by spot-checking. Instructors will set their own policy about the effect of attendance on grading, with penalties up to one-third of a grade point, the equivalent of a minus on a letter grade. Whatever the policy, if you are a true beginner in German it is highly unlikely that you can do well in the course without attending most class meetings. You are welcome to attend as many additional meetings of other sections as you wish, as long as there is space. Think of our course as the linguistic equivalent of an exercise club. Your “membership” entitles you to as many sessions of class as you want, as long as the “gym” is open.

OVERVIEW SYLLABUS (FULL VERSION ON WWW)

During the first three weeks, some time will be devoted to intake surveys, tutorials, and other necessary preparations. During those three weeks we will cover the first two Kontexte (chapters) of *Wie, bitte?* After that, we will cover one Kontext each week.

For the first three weeks the basic goals are:

- Novice-low vocabulary and memorized phrases as presented in Kontexte 1 & 2 (alphabet, numbers, greetings, introductions, topics of study, survival geography, simple questions)
- Technology & resource orientation, study skills, first project assignment, and familiarization with individual perspectives and goals.

STANDING STUDY ASSIGNMENTS FOR ALL KONTEXTE (12 HOURS/KONTEXT)

Outside class, expect to invest two hours of preparation or follow-up for each hour of classroom time (total: 12 hours/week). Your activity includes preparation for in-class learning and for completion of outside assignments, such as personalized projects. Some of your study time will consist of “hitting the books” (or software). Some of it, however, will involve activities that are not so “bookish” (“softwarish”?), and are possibly even fun, such as eating in German restaurants, viewing German movies, or using the internet to find out whether some German group pursues the same weird hobby or likes the same music you do.

Early in the course you will be advised about how to study and learn, and the course website has a checklist for how to gauge your effort and progress. Here is a brief preliminary tutorial and suggested time budget:

Say and learn Kontext vocabulary. Structured activities will be discussed in class. Recommended time: 1 hour per Kontext

Practice dialogs, out loud and, if possible, with a friend. Recommended time: 2 hours per Kontext)

Study Kontext “Structure” sections, beginning after second week of course. Recommended time: 1 hour per Kontext.

Vocabulary development, reading practice, and cultural study with Kontext graphics. Recommended time: 1 hour per Kontext.

Vocabulary development, listening practice and culture study with audio broadcast materials. Recommended time: 1 hour per Kontext.

Current project and other writing assignments. Recommended time: 3 hours per context.

Revision of assignments and tests. Recommended time: 1 hour per Kontext (starting after second week of class).

Rest of recommended study time (2 hours / week) as you see fit. But don't skip it.

FIRST ASSIGNMENT (DUE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER YOU GET IT, AND CERTAINLY BY THE END OF THE FIRST WEEK OF THE CLASS)

NOTE: All assignments are posted on the course website. The web versions take precedence over printed versions like the one you are reading here.

We want to record your contact information and check whether you can handle the German special characters. If you do not have your own internet provider and email service, you should get PSU internet and email access (“Odin”) right away (<www.account.pdx.edu>), or arrange some other email and internet service. After you have read *all* of this orientation sheet, go to the course website and, under “schedule / assignments / course documents,” find and read “Assignment #1 Scoring Guide.” Then, using the email address that you want your instructor to use to contact you, retype (not just copy and paste) the German message below, adjust it to fit the time of day and your name, and email it to your instructor:

Hallo und Guten Morgen/Tag/Abend!

Mein Name ist [your name]. Das deutsche ABC ist wie das englische, aber mit ä, ö, ü, Ä, Ö, Ü und ß.

The **course website** has a tutorial about how to get German special characters on your computer.

Upcoming activities:

- Assignment #2: Explore the course materials and compare what you find there to what you expected to encounter in this course and, if you have had some other language study already, what you experienced there. You'll also be telling whether you liked what you found here and experienced there.

- Project #1: Find German all around you
- WebCAPE baseline and placement test.

DO NOT START THESE OTHER ACTIVITIES UNTIL YOU ARE TOLD TO DO SO. Further instructions will be released then.

Oh—almost forgot! One last thing: now that you appear to have read all of this handout, be sure to end your Assignment #1 email message with the phrase, “Auf Wiedersehen!” If you already sent your email without doing this, send a second one that just says “Oh, Entschuldigung (=excuse me). Auf Wiedersehen,” and resolve to read and follow directions carefully from here on. ;=)