



# INTRODUCTORY GERMAN FOR PROFICIENCY (GER 101-103)

## PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY

Fall Quarter 2009

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### STAFF, WEBSITES, LAB, ACCESS

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#### Teaching Assistants:

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Inquiries about matters specific to your own class should be directed to your section's instructor. Contact the Course Director 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 First-Year German administrative website houses the course calendar, assignments, etc. Its address is:  
[http://web.pdx.edu/~fischerw/courses/firstyr\\_g/html](http://web.pdx.edu/~fischerw/courses/firstyr_g/html)

To save time and keyboarding, bookmark the course site in your browser bookmarks / favorites list. You are expected to check the site 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, adjusting plugins and sound players, 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 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 NH 394N, just across from the main FLL office on the third floor of Neuberger Hall, and is open all day (Monday through Saturday) and into the evening during the week (telephone: 503 725-5270).

**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>location</i>	<i>instructor</i>	<i>final exam</i>
MWF 0900	NH 8	TBA	T 08 Dec. 0800
MWF 1015	FAB 40-07	Fischer	W 09 Dec. 1015
MWF 1130	NH 8	TBA	R 10 Dec. 1230
MW 1840	SH 239	Minty	M 07 Dec. 1930
TR 0800	NH 8	McDonnell	R 10 Dec. 0800

**Holidays:** W 11 Nov., RF 26 & 27 Nov.

### CHIEF GOALS

**The primary goal of Introductory German** is to acquire the practical proficiency and the 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, even 360 "virtual reality" panoramas – 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. Tutorials early in the course will familiarize you with the goals and help you understand how to learn toward them.

## COURSE MATERIALS

The course is based on *Wie, bitte? – Introductory German for Proficiency, a multimedia program produced at PSU*. It is available on a CD-ROM, free of charge. Disks will be distributed on the first day of class, and replaced, also free of charge, as needed. The software will run faster if you copy it to the hard drive of your computer. Audio, movie, and specialized graphics (Virtual Reality panoramas) are managed by [QuickTime, available for free download via this link](#). (Your computer almost certainly came with it.)

The reasons for a multimedia CD-ROM, rather than a conventional printed textbook package, are:

- 1) Learning a language for real communication requires a rich linguistic and cultural input. That is far easier to deliver and study with multimedia.
- 2) Electronic learning materials can be updated far more frequently than can printed textbooks.
- 3) A CD-ROM is far cheaper than a textbook.

From the course website you can download and print, if you want to, your own copies of essential text files (dialogs, vocabulary lists, the Reference Grammar, etc.). From the CD-ROM you can also print the Kontext overviews and structures screens. You might wish to do this if you will be away from a computer when you want to study. Please be conscientious about paper and ink. In PSU labs you can print using your student printing allowance, and the lab printers can do two-sided printing.

**Other materials for the course** may include office supplies (binder, 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, or an on-line 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” that 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 common examples: 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. You will indeed learn German grammar, but only as much as you need for practical**

communication, and not by studying abstract rules and analyzing the language intellectually.

See the course website for the policy about use of dictionaries and on-line translators for assignments, projects and tests.

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. PSU has a free tutoring program that includes German.

## 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. Grammar and vocabulary will be introduced as needed.

Also important is exposure to the language through reading and hearing materials from a variety of sources. Your course materials contain a rich collection of genuine graphic and audio items, more than any “ink-on-paper” textbook could offer at any reasonable price. You will be encouraged to encounter these authentic materials, and others you find on your own while doing your projects, as though you were living in the target culture – not translating them, but gathering information from them and using it to communicate with other people.

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 the 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. For most activities you will be given the plain-English scoring guide ahead of time.

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 further education, your career, or in the enrichment of your personal life. Our course harmonizes with PSU’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 and special-interest 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 classroom. 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, have been published in the national German teachers’ professional journal, named as national “best-practice” courses, and have 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 reinforce your learning, revise or retake your tests, 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, since German-Americans are the largest ethnic group in the U. S.), 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 weekly graded assignments, 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 used to improve placement, assess teaching quality, and gather research data for improving language programs at PSU and nationally. These 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 from downloads to participants’ own computers. No test will be conducted without prior announcement on in class and either by email or on the course website, 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 <<http://www.account.pdx.edu>>.) Be aware that some free email providers restrict the kinds and quantities of material you can transmit and receive.

Electronic documents that consist of text should be sent in .doc, .rtf, or (less preferable) .pdf format. Documents in .docx format are NOT acceptable.

## GRADING

**Major tests count, together, about 50% of your grade. Personal-interest projects together count about 25%. Weekly assignments together count about 20%. The several initial assignments together count about 5%. Individual instructors may adjust these proportions, but only slightly, to fit their supplementary activities.**

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 in your further study and use of German. 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 policies](#) 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 3 projects may be assigned each quarter. There are three reasons for the projects: 1) They allow you to make the language serve your own interests. 2) Long-term language proficiency involves relating language skills to the rest of your world. 3) 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 projects, your class assignments, and even your tests. Look at the projects 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 pay the price for not taking the course seriously.

**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.

## 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 10% of the total grade, which is equal to one-third of a grade point, or a minus on a letter grade (or failure to maintain a plus). 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 FOR GER 101**

The current syllabus is posted on the course website and is accessible by the link to the course number under “Schedule & Assignments” (links “101”, “102”, “103” as appropriate). During the first three weeks some time will be devoted to intake surveys, tutorials, and other necessary preparations. We will usually cover one Kontext each week. When there are tests, we may go more slowly, and there will be time for review.

**For the first two weeks of GER 101** 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 and audio broadcast materials. Recommended time: 1 hour per Kontext*

*Weekly assignment and self-evaluation: 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: The first assignment is the only one you will receive printed on paper. All assignments are posted on the course website, usually in several places. Probably the most convenient location to get them is the “Schedule & Assignments” page, which is linked at the top of the site’s list of contents. Select the number of this quarter’s course (101, etc.).

The first assignment is to email your instructor, so that the teaching staff can create their email address books, make sure you are really in the course, and check whether you can recognize, copy, send and receive German text, including the German special characters.

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
- Assignment #3: 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, as Assignment #1 directed you to do, 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”. Then resolve to read and follow directions carefully from here on. ;=)