

## **German BA Program Assessment AY 2024-2025**

**1. Contact:** Brett Sterling, German Section Head

### **2. WLLC Department Mission**

The Department of World Languages, Literatures, and Cultures believes itself central to the fulfillment of the mission of the Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences, adopted from Senator Fulbright's writings, as follows: "... the highest function of higher education is the teaching of things in perspective, toward the purposes of enriching the life of the individual, cultivating the free and inquiring mind, and advancing the effort to bring reason, justice, and humanity..." Our departmental mission, more specifically, is to serve our students, our state, our nation, and the world, by embodying and demonstrating the values to be derived from knowing ancient and modern languages and cultures. We do this by nurturing and supporting the teaching, research, and service missions of a top-quality faculty; by offering and maintaining a comprehensive range of challenging language and professional development programs; by attracting and retaining a diverse student body; and by promoting innovative research among faculty and students.

### **3. German BA Program Goals**

1. Train students in humanistic thinking and provide marketable language skills
2. Graduates at the BA level should achieve solid basic German proficiency (CEFR level B1).  
Students who have achieved B1-level proficiency will be able to:
  - a. understand the main points of information in conversations and texts on familiar matters relating to work, school and leisure time, etc. when clear, standard language is used,
  - b. deal with most situations typically encountered when traveling in German-speaking countries,
  - c. express [oneself] simply and coherently when talking about familiar topics and areas of personal interest,
  - d. report on experiences and events, describe dreams, hopes and ambitions as well as make short statements and explanations.
3. Students will become familiar with the history and literatures of German-speaking peoples and places.
4. Students will practice critical thinking skills that allow them to assess information and media analytically.
5. Students will learn to articulate and justify their own ideas in the German language.

### **4. German BA Program Assessment Plan**

The German program is in the process of developing a plan to assess learning outcomes holistically. Historically, the BA program has relied on the internationally-recognized language examination created by the Goethe Institut to assess program goal 2 above. Beginning in Spring 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic made it impossible to administer the B1 examination to students in the BA program, as the Goethe Institut did not allow exams to be administered online. In the ensuing three years, the German program has been searching for new assessment measures to replace this benchmark. A first step was the establishment of GERM 42103 (German Civilization) as a capstone course for the BA program with a writing component designed to assess program goals 3-5 above, while also satisfying the Fulbright College Writing Requirement. Over the next two years, we plan also to develop and implement a portfolio-based assessment model that will draw on various text and

assignment types across multiple courses at the 40000-level to assess goals 1-5. While this process is underway, we will rely primarily on the GERM 42103 capstone assignment to assess learning outcomes in the program.

**5. Student Learning Outcome 1.** Students will be trained in humanistic thinking and provided with marketable linguistic skills.

**A. Assessment Measure 1.** German BA Coursework

- The German BA program is invested in humanistic thinking and linguistic skill in German in every single course. GERM 30003 and 40003 (Advanced German I & II) focus on rigorous study of grammatical structures, high-frequency vocabulary, composition, and style. These skills are essential for practical writing skills, as well as reading informative texts. GERM 30303 (Conversation) is an applied course that teaches students how to deal with a range of everyday tasks in spoken German to prepare students for life in a German-speaking context. GERM 30103 (Introduction to Literature) trains students in reading comprehension beyond the level of factual information to notice nuance in meaning, metaphor, and symbolism. The students are also given the task of engaging with literary texts analytically. GERM 42103 (German Civilization) provides students with a baseline of historical knowledge of German-speaking peoples, while asking students at the highest level of the program to analyze a variety of sources in German and present oral reports and a long-form written assignment on topics that fit their personal interests. These courses, which form the core of the German BA, all provide students with practical experience using the language, while also exposing them to new ideas and asking them to reflect on those ideas critically. The higher electives GERM 40103 (Germany and the Holocaust), GERM 40203 (Migration and National Identity), GERM 40403 (German Cinema), GERM 41203 (The German Novella), GERM 41303 (The German Drama), GERM 41403 (German Lyric Poetry), GERM 4700V (German Comics) all expose students the German-language literature, media, and history with analytical assessments throughout the courses. GERM 43303 (Professional German) additionally provides students with specialized vocabulary according to their individual field of study and asks students to complete a number of job-related projects as practical preparation for using German in their various careers. A variety of assessments, too numerous to list, are employed in each course with the shared goal of training students in humanistic thinking and providing them with marketable linguistic skills.
- Indirect assessment

**i. Key Personnel**

- Dr. Kathleen Condray (GERM 30003, 30303, 41203, 43303)
- Dr. Jennifer Hoyer (GERM 30103, 40103, 40403, 41403, 42103)
- Dr. Brett Sterling (GERM 30003, 40003, 41303, 4700V)
- Dr. Alexandra Hagen (GERM 10103, 10203, 20103, 20203)

**ii. Recommendations.**

- To present, the German section has not developed a uniform assessment measure for this particular student learning outcome. The learning outcome is central to the mission of the German BA, and as such permeates all courses within the program and informs individual assessments and assignments in each. The section will endeavor to create a more precise assessment for this goal in the form of a portfolio to gather work throughout a student's time in the BA program to more clearly provide a measure of success for this learning

outcome. This has begun in the Intermediate language sequence (GERM 20103 & 20203) and will be expanded to other courses over the next few years.

**B. Assessment Measure 2.** Coursework in GERM 43303 (Professional German)

- Students in GERM 43303 learn practical skills for using their German in the context of students' chosen careers (often business and engineering, but not limited to these fields, and humanities students also take this course). Students learn vocabulary targeted to navigating career tasks, including specialized vocabulary relating to the economy, research and development, and corporate workplaces as well as specialized vocabulary in individual student fields, while completing several practical projects during the course of the semester. These projects include writing a resume, participating in a mock job interview, composing an elevator pitch, analyzing an article in the student's field, presenting a product, and explaining a research or foundational topic of the student's choice, all in German. These assignments prepare students for working in a German-speaking country, especially students in the International Engineering Program. Beyond preparing students for navigating business and academic culture in another culture and language, the skills practiced in GERM 43303 are generally applicable for students' career readiness. Each project is assessed according to linguistic accuracy and appropriateness for the individual context.
- Indirect assessment.

**i. Key Personnel**

- Dr. Kathleen Condray

**ii. Summary of Findings.**

- Due to FERPA considerations, the average course grade is not listed in this publicly available document, but the number exceeded the acceptable target and showed mastery of the course topics.

**iii. Recommendations.**

- This course utilizes best practices for this sort of instruction. In fact, Dr. Condray presented this course as a model of its kind at the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages conference. Nationally, Professional German courses have transitioned away from the use of a traditional textbook. Instead, most universities now use a project-based model, which allows instructors to tailor material to current issues in the German-speaking business world. This has allowed the course to include innovative new material, such as utilizing AI as a virtual partner for the mock interview project. In a research project following university protocols, Dr. Condray assessed students before and after the project and determined that using AI as a practice interviewer helped students feel less nervous about discussing their strengths in the target language and more prepared for a discussion with a human interviewer. We will continue this activity in the fall of 2025.

**C. Assessment Measure 3.** Coursework in GERM 30303 (Conversation)

- Students in GERM 30303 learn how to navigate everyday life in a German-speaking country by practicing their spoken language skills in a variety of common scenarios. The bulk of the course focuses on acquisition of essential vocabulary for contexts that students are likely to encounter when living abroad, e.g. going to the bank, grocery shopping, going to the doctor, taking university courses, traveling, etc. During class time, students practice role playing situations with partners to prepare them for successfully dealing with common situations in real life. In addition

to weekly vocabulary quizzes, students are assessed by an oral midterm and final exam, each of which is graded on the basis of the student's pronunciation, their ability to effectively deal with everyday situations, and their ability to speak freely on a specific topic (a self-description and description of their hometown/home country). This course is explicitly practical in scope and is intended to help students use their language skills in an immersion environment outside of the US or in interactions with first-language German speakers.

- Indirect assessment.

**i. Key Personnel**

- Dr. Kathleen Condray

**ii. Summary of Findings.**

- Due to FERPA considerations, the average course grade is not listed in this publicly available document, but the number exceeded the acceptable target and showed mastery of the course topics.

**iii. Recommendations.**

- This course is revised every year due to the rapidly changing nature of spoken modern German. For example, words that did not exist a decade ago regarding technology and social media have been incorporated into necessary vocabulary, and words that are no longer in common usage have been removed from vocabulary lists. Course activities have also been modified accordingly to reflect current trends in German-speaking countries. For example, whereas the German train system was once the most reliable and affordable mode of transport for our students living abroad, many German students now prefer to travel via budget bus routes (such as Flixbus) or low-cost airline carriers. We show our students how to find and access these resources. This includes new technological resources. A unit on AI allows students to explore the use of ChatGPT, Gemini, Character.ai, and Adobe Firefly in practicing language usage, after an initial discussion of the positives and negatives of AI usage. Guest Lecturer Dr. Curtis Maughan led students through a lesson on "Playing Kafka" a Serious Game that allows students to explore the works of Franz Kafka by interacting with characters and solving word puzzles in a video game format. We will continue to monitor developments to incorporate technological and other innovations into this course for next year.

**6. Student Learning Outcome 2.** Students will achieve CERF B1-level competency in German.

**A. Assessment Measure 1.** Coursework in GERM 40003 (Advanced German II)

- GERM 40003 is a sixth-semester language class that culminates the language instruction sequence in the German program. The course focuses on complex grammatical structures, high-frequency vocabulary, and composition. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, this course included explicit preparation for the internationally recognized Goethe Institut language exam at the B1 level. Although we no longer administer the exam to students, the content and assignments of the course are still pegged to B1-level competency. This is practiced through the use of vocabulary lists and quizzes derived from the B1-level vocabulary list, and in composition assignments that ask students to complete concrete tasks in various text types (e-mails, short opinion essays, reporting events). Students are also routinely asked to read news articles and watch videos on current events, then to summarize the information found there. These assignments are all geared toward the B1-level skills:

- understanding the main points of information in conversations and texts on familiar matters relating to work, school and leisure time, etc. when clear, standard language is used (Assignment: short reading texts and daily conversation with partners)
- expressing oneself simply and coherently when talking about familiar topics and areas of personal interest (Assignment: daily conversation with partners)
- reporting on experiences and events, describing dreams, hopes and ambitions as well as making short statements and explanations (Assignment: mid-length writing assignments on reported events, possibilities, and future events)
- Indirect assessment.
- Assignments were graded according to different criteria, with writing assignments graded for content/creativity and linguistic accuracy, reading assignments assessed via content quizzes, and conversation practice allowed to progress freely with oral feedback from the instructor.

#### **i. Key Personnel**

- Dr. Brett Sterling

#### **ii. Summary of Findings.**

- Due to FERPA considerations, the average course grade is not listed in this publicly available document, but the number exceeded the acceptable target and indicated a high degree of success for most students at reaching B1-level competency.

#### **iii. Recommendations.**

- GERM 40003 is a challenging course based on a traditional model of language instruction that focuses on grammatical accuracy. The German section is in the process of moving away from this model to one that is more applied and responsive to individual student interests. Moving forward, we intend to reformat the course to focus more on composition and analysis than on rote grammar instruction. Work completed in the course will likely be part of an overarching portfolio that students will compile throughout the course of the BA program. Dr. Sterling will begin implementing these changes in the precursor class, GERM 30003, in Fall 2025 and will carry those changes into GERM 40003 in Spring 2026.

**7. Student Learning Outcome 3.** Students will become familiar with the history and literatures of German-speaking peoples and places.

#### **A. Assessment Measure 1.** GERM 42103 (German Civilization) Capstone Project

- Students began the course GERM 42103 by researching and reporting on major current German and Austrian political parties, which introduced most historical and political issues. Then, each student chose a topic of interest to them, which they spent the remainder of the semester researching. Toward the end of the semester, students did oral reports on their projects (in German). The students then had the final assignment of preparing a 10-15 page research paper (in English), with a 1250-word self-assessment for GELO 6.1. These final projects were titled “Our Ideal Textbook,” the idea being that students choose an under-researched topic to work on, and through their research they both learn the more familiar aspects of Germanic cultural history while shedding light on less familiar topics and connecting them to the more well-known history. This assignment is the capstone assessment for the German BA and fulfills the Fulbright Writing Requirement.
- Direct assessment.

- The following criteria were used to evaluate the Capstone projects:
  - **C-level work** is generally descriptive with little evidence of critical thinking. Opinions are presented as universal or as facts. Some factual inaccuracies are present. Sentences are incomplete or run on. Citations, if there are any, are too long. There has been little effort at proofreading. It is clear from context that the writer does not understand the words they are using. Register is too casual. The paper may also be too short.
  - **B-level work** has some description but also includes evidence of analysis and critical thought, though it is insufficiently followed through. Some slight misinterpretation of information may appear. Citations are appropriate length but are not explained or contextualized. Some spelling or style errors may be present. Sentences are complete and do not run on. Register is consistent and appropriate. The paper may be just long enough, but still slightly short of the requirement.
  - **A-level work** has a balance of description and analysis/critical thought, and the critical thought is followed through. Possibly very slight misinterpretation of complex information, but really only very slight. Almost no spelling or style errors. Sentences are complete and do not run on. Register is consistent and appropriate. The paper has met the length requirement.
  - Sources are evaluated to establish how many different kinds of sources they have versus how many they are drawing actively upon; whether there are any in German; whether there are any academic sources.
  - Evidence of critical thinking is present when students are not simply reporting from one source, but are rather consulting and drawing on several in order to draw a conclusion, or clear indication of engagement with one or more sources to the extent that they are taking a critical distance and not simply accepting what is stated at face value.
  - Evidence of analysis includes demonstrations of synthesis or processing of information, for example drawing a mathematical conclusion from various numerical data points, or 'reading between the lines' in any primary source.

#### **i. Acceptable and Ideal Targets**

- 70% of graduating seniors will score a grade of 85% or above on the GERM 42103 Capstone Project. Ideally, 85% of graduating seniors will score a grade of 85% or above on the Capstone Project.

#### **ii. Key Personnel**

- Dr. Jennifer Hoyer

#### **iii. Summary of Findings.**

- In Spring 2025, the average score on the oral component of the final project was an 86.75%, and the average score on the written component was 89.3%. 80% of students scored at or above the target of 85% on the written and oral components of the project. For AY 2024-2025, we exceeded our acceptable target for this assessment measure for all students enrolled and are very close to our ideal target.
- Students were overwhelmingly successful in completing the assessment. This is a new addition to the German BA program, and the results thus far are extremely promising.

Completed projects demonstrated not only a broad knowledge of the history of German-speaking peoples, but also a wide variety of topics chosen based on students' personal interests, including projects on fairytales and national identity; Operation Paperclip; Aldi; Black German experiences; Pennsylvania Dutch and German; and the histories of Czech Germans and Volga Germans.

- Thus far, we are highly satisfied with the results of specific assessment and are convinced that most students are indeed meeting program goals.

#### **iv. Recommendations.**

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- From Spring 2025, for Spring 2026:
  - Make a minimum number of sources in German an explicit requirement; replicate in 2026
  - Make citation of sources in German an explicit requirement; replicate in 2026
  - Make rough draft due earlier; for 2026, the entire course will need to be about the paper, hence a full rough draft will be due mid-semester.
  - Make the written paper due earlier in the semester, before the oral report, to allow for more revision time; for 2026, a full rough draft will be due before the oral report.
  - Create 1-2 days in the syllabus dedicated to discussing and practicing examples of requirements, like synthesizing and drawing conclusions in your research or the difference between quantitative and qualitative reasoning. This will be explicitly implemented for spring 2026.

#### **B. Assessment Measure 2. Coursework in GERM 30103 (Introduction to Literature)**

- Students in GERM 30103 read a variety of works from German-language literature, including several poems; the radio-play "Herr Biedermann und die Brandstifter" (Frisch); the novella "Die Verwandlung" (Kafka); and the short story "Die Geschichte vom Kreis und Viereck" (Otoo). The course covers material from the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, from writers of various backgrounds. In each case, the instructor briefly addressed historical context and its relevance for content as well as form.
- Indirect assessment.

##### **i. Key Personnel**

- Dr. Jennifer Hoyer

##### **ii. Summary of Findings.**

- GERM 30103 was offered in Fall 2024. Due to FERPA considerations, the average course grade is not listed in this publicly available document, but the number exceeded the acceptable target and showed mastery of the course topics.
- GERM 30103 has historically been students' first exposure to German-language literary reading, though with changes for our first- and second-year language sequence, this will no longer be the case going forward. The course will pick up where GERM 20103 leaves off and help students to continue to develop skills reading and analyzing literature as preparation for higher electives on specific genres. The course contributes to the baseline of knowledge and critical skills for completing the BA program.

##### **iii. Recommendations.**

- For Fall 2024, I reduced the reading load from 4 to 3 texts: “Herr Biedermann,” “Die Verwandlung,” and “Die Geschichte von Kreis und Viereck;” this was supplemented by an author visit, for which students read excerpts from the author’s work and were able to discuss them, in German, with the author.
- For Fall 2024, the course was redesigned to continue the trajectory created in GERM 20103, practicing identifying literary structures and learning to express thoughts about and syntheses of literary texts (broadly construed) in written and oral form.
- For Fall 2025, we will read “Herr Biedermann,” “Die Geschichte von Kreis und Viereck,” “Die Verwandlung,” and a shortened youth novel, “Krabat.”

### **C. Assessment Measure 3. Coursework in Higher Electives**

- The German BA program focuses on literature, media, and history in courses at the 40000 level. The three literary genre courses GERM 41203 (German Novella), GERM 41303 (German Drama), and GERM 41403 (German Lyric Poetry) all provide a historical overview of a particular literary genre and its development up to the present. This overview includes discussing literature in a particular historical context, while also comparing themes in individual works to the present day. GERM 41203 and 41303 have students read approximately 14-16 works over the course of the semester, while GERM 41403 covers numerous poem types (including poem cycles), poetic theory, and a study of the history of poetic development. While each class assesses work differently according to instructor, final assessments are generally project based, asking students to synthesize information from the course and transform it into a creative project, from short film trailers to poems of the students’ own creation. Students are also asked to engage analytically with the form and content of individual works during seminar-length discussions in German.
- In GERM 47003 (German Foodways), students explored what food can teach us about linguistics, history, politics, economics, sustainability, business, and technology. Weekly units included: foodways and the Middle Ages/Humanism, Migration and Germans in America, the Third Reich: Politics and Food, the Cold War: Shortages and Power, Alcohol (Reinheitsgebot--the German purity law--and Prohibition), Regional Specialties, Food and the Economy, Sustainability, Wellness and Food as Medicine, Food and Religion, and Food and the Digital World. Students cooked recipes in class such as Dinkelbrei (a medieval spelt porridge) and Palatschinken (Austrian crepes for a unit on linguistic diversity during the Austro-Hungarian empire), planted their own miniature lettuce garden to take home (for a unit on the importance of home gardens to German settlers in America), and tried an East German coffee substitute made of malt, drunk when shortages made regular coffee unavailable. A sample of final projects created by students for this class included: the creation of a video game utilizing a medieval German cookbook in which players interact with the author, read the recipe, and collect ingredients in the target language, research posters on the intersection of art and food as well as the science and economic factors involved in bee keeping in Germany, and a creative short story written in German that traced the raising of pigeons as a source of eggs and meat as well as the use of pigeon dung as an agricultural product. This course was an overwhelming success with the students. It will be offered again in the spring of 2026 and will be considered for status as a regular course depending on the outcome of its second offering.
- Indirect and direct assessments.

#### **i. Key Personnel**

- Dr. Kathleen Condray (GERM 41203)
- Dr. Brett Sterling (GERM 41303)



- Dr. Jennifer Hoyer (GERM 41403)

#### **ii. Summary of Findings.**

- GERM 41203, 41303, and 41403 were not offered in AY 2024-2025.
- Due to FERPA considerations, the average course grade is not listed in this publicly available document, but the number exceeded the acceptable target and showed mastery of the course topics.
- This sequence of courses has always been extremely traditional, with a high-stakes mid-term and final examination. As the German section contemplates curriculum redesign, we anticipate replacing our traditional, literature-based courses with more thematic upper-level seminars like the existing German Migration and National Identity (GERM 40203) and German-language Comics (GERM 4700V) courses. In Spring 2025, we piloted two new special topics courses on Berlin (Dr. Hagen) and German Foodways (Dr. Condray). These sections were highly successful, and German Foodways will be offered again in Spring 2026. In the same semester, Dr. Sterling will pilot a course on German media that will focus on current events, media literacy, cultural knowledge, and new modes of text creation in written and spoken forms. This course will be a key measure for assessing the following learning outcome (see below #8: Student learning outcome 4). These and other courses will gradually replace the legacy literature courses.

**8. Student Learning Outcome 4.** Students will practice critical thinking skills that allow them to assess information and media analytically.

#### **A. Assessment Measure 1.** Coursework in GERM 30103

- In GERM 30103, students practice “literature” not as a thing but as a mode of reading that means paying close attention to multilayered word-use (for example the various meanings of “Verwandlung” or “gerade/Gerade”), needing to infer unstated information from details (for example why something happens in a story, or the different ways an outcome can be interpreted), or cross-historical intertextual dialogue (Otoo’s use of fairy tale tropes, the town “Seldwyla” in Biedermann). Most class periods involve solving complex queries about a literary text that students are reading.
- Indirect assessment

#### **i. Key Personnel**

- Dr. Jennifer Hoyer

#### **ii. Summary of Findings.**

- GERM 30103 was offered in Fall 2024. Due to FERPA considerations, the average course grade is not listed in this publicly available document, but the number exceeded the acceptable target and showed mastery of the course topics.
- Across classwork and two larger critical thinking/analytical projects, students engage in literary analysis of texts as well as critical thinking about each other’s ideas.
- Students learn to engage in analysis and critical thinking in the target language.
- The greatest challenge is helping students undo the thinking pattern that literature means free association while scientific data only has one possible reading. Both are the opposite of critical thinking.

### **iii. Recommendations.**

- Most class periods starting fall 2023 will include 15-minute writing practice with no use of resources allowed. This has two purposes: first, the students will be able to start practicing formulating and articulating their thoughts using their own language skills; second, the students will have a low-stakes mode of refining their ideas and their ability to justify them. This recommendation from AY 2022-23 was implemented and was highly successful. This will continue.
- Add at least one activity that helps students see that interpreting conventionally scientific data also requires literary reading skills—close attention to pattern, shades of meaning, and the potential for more than one conclusion. This recommendation from AY 2022-23 will be implemented in Fall 2024.
  - For Fall 2025, this activity will likely become part of a larger project in which students compare, contrast, and interpret 2 works using analytical methods from their other majors and minors.

## **B. Assessment Measure 2. Coursework in GERM 40003**

- In GERM 40003, students are presented with news items on current events, culture, and technology at the beginning of every class session. Students are thus exposed to events and real time and asked to engage with the language used to describe those events. Listening exercises are conducted using news broadcasts and topical videos that require students to parse shades of meaning and draw conclusions from the information provided. Individual reading assignments are drawn from major media outlets like Die Tagesschau, Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen (SRF), and Österreichischer Rundfunk (ORF) and subsequent quizzes assess the students' comprehension, while also asking them to identify main ideas or elements that are of particular interest to themselves.
- Indirect assessment

### **i. Key Personnel**

- Dr. Brett Sterling

### **ii. Summary of Findings.**

- Over the course of the semester, students' progress from having great difficulty understanding written and spoken news items to developing a greater sense of how the news functions in German. Course evaluations repeatedly reflect that students enjoy and are challenged by the consistent focus on current events. Indeed, students have reported that they learned more about politics and social issues in this course than in courses on Political Science and International Relations.

### **iii. Recommendations.**

- Presently, GERM 40003's focus on current events is often secondary to grammatical instruction. In the next two years, this course will be redesigned to focus less on explicit grammar instruction, and more on application of linguistic knowledge to reading and writing tasks centered around current events. This will increase the course's focus on critical thinking, while moving away from completion assessments. Additionally, the media literacy practiced in this course will feed into a planned course on German Media to be piloted in Spring 2026.

## **C. Assessment Measure 3. Coursework in GERM 42103**

- In GERM 42103, students practice reading different kinds of sources on similar topics in order to discuss how and why a particular source interprets or reports information. The oral reports have an “interaction” component where students are assessed on how they engage with each other’s work—what questions they pose or comments they make that demonstrate that they are thinking about what they are hearing/reading/seeing. Daily journals were a consistent site of this work. In spring 2023, the instructor met with each student three times during the semester to talk about their progress in writing/reading/listening/speaking; this was not done spring of 2024 or spring 2025, owing to high enrollment; another approach to individual feedback needs to be developed. The instructor advised students not just to summarize what one hears or reads, but to synthesize information across topics or genres, to pose questions, to turn the information around in the mind and wonder about what it is, what it does, what it means. Students were all tasked with working on this skill. Students engaged in self-assessment tasks during the last week of the semester, analyzing the improvement they could see in listening and writing skills. Most could see in their own work evidence of improvement—they could specifically state how they found themselves questioning or thinking about what they read/see/hear and think.
- Indirect assessment

#### **i. Key Personnel**

- Dr. Jennifer Hoyer

#### **ii. Summary of Findings.**

- GERM 42103 was offered in Spring 2025. Due to FERPA considerations, the average course grade is not listed in this publicly available document, but the number exceeded the acceptable target and showed mastery of the course topics. This was an exceptionally talented group.

#### **iii. Recommendations.**

- Add in two activities in the first three weeks of class that focus on studying different media source analysis of one political topic. The goal is to have students determine the differences between the different sources’ use of rhetoric, and to reach informed conclusions about the perspectives governing these rhetorics.
  - This was implemented in spring 2024. Will continue in spring 2025.
  - The students, however, require explicit and exclusive focus on writing a research paper, so for spring 2026, this type of activity will be explicitly addressed in the context of their research paper.
- Reintroduce the activity of comparing different political parties’ positions on one topic in order to closely read their rhetoric.
  - This was implemented in spring 2024; will do a similar comparative method in spring 2025, possibly with a different theme (states rather than political parties, for example).
  - For spring 2026, the course will focus exclusively on their own research paper, so this activity will cease until further notice.
- Add in activities throughout the semester with guided practice in “reading” images in a context for meaning and implication.
  - This will continue as part of the research paper.
- Owing to the high number of students enrolling in this class that have never written a research paper before, make a draft of the final research paper due during the third-to-

last week of class, while students are presenting their oral reports, to allow time for more substantial revisions.

- It has become evident that students need to focus exclusively on writing the research paper, thus this will become the exclusive focus of the course and a full draft of the paper will be due mid-semester.

**D. Assessment Measure 4.** Project in GERM 43303 (Professional German)

- One of several projects in GERM 43303 requires students to find, analyze, and create a short presentation about a technical article from their field of study. The project is designed to make students engage with specialized vocabulary in German from their own field and present that material to an audience that is unfamiliar with the field in question. Students are also required to analyze the content of the article, judging its content on accuracy and applicability within the student's field of study. Finally, each student is required to write a report on at least 40000 words in German that includes a summary of the article's main points and the student's review of the content. The project is graded on content (successful execution of the project prompt) and grammatical accuracy in German. Students are allowed to revise and resubmit this assignment in order to correct for any errors in German.
- Indirect assessment.

**i. Key Personnel**

- Dr. Kathleen Condray

**ii. Summary of Findings.**

- Due to FERPA considerations, the average course grade is not listed in this publicly available document, but the number exceeded the acceptable target and showed mastery of the course topics.

**iii. Recommendations.**

- This assignment allows students to tailor content according to their major field, to discover and read leading journals published in their fields in German, and to practice their ability to read, summarize, and critique information in the target language. It will be continued in the next iteration of the course.

**9. Student Learning Outcome 5.** Students will learn to articulate and justify their own ideas in the German language.

**A. Assessment Measure 1.** Coursework in GERM 30103

- In GERM 30103 during Fall 2024, each student prepared and presented two creative projects related to one or more literary works, meaning they had to first present their ideas in German, and then answer other students' (and the instructor's) questions about their ideas in German. Each student also wrote an interpretation essay (in class, in German) about Kafka's "Verwandlung," in which they were tasked with articulating and justifying their reading—via close reading alone—of Kafka's novella. The rules were: students could justify their reading with dictionary-defended semantic context, grammar structures, or textual logic emerging from a combination of semantics and grammar. Historical context was allowed with use of sources, but that had to be cleared in advance.

- In fall 2024, students presented informally on their creative projects synthesizing and analyzing two texts. Projects ranged from mathematical origami to Newton's laws of motion applied to political action.
- Direct assessment

#### **i. Acceptable and Ideal Targets**

#### **ii. Key Personnel**

- Dr. Jennifer Hoyer

#### **iii. Summary of Findings.**

- GERM 30103 was offered in Fall 2024. Due to FERPA considerations, the average course grade is not listed in this publicly available document, but the number exceeded the acceptable target and showed mastery of the course topics.
- Across classwork and three larger critical thinking/analytical projects, students engage in literary analysis of texts as well as critical thinking about each other's ideas in the target language.
- Preventing overuse of resources (dictionaries, translation software, idea generators) is becoming more of a challenge. This has been dealt with by allowing writing only in class and with no resources.

#### **iv. Recommendations.**

- Most class periods starting fall 2023 will include 15-minute writing practice with no use of resources allowed. This has two purposes: first, the students will be able to start practicing formulating and articulating their thoughts using their own language skills; second, the students will have a low-stakes mode of refining their ideas and their ability to justify them.
- For most in-class activities beginning fall 2023, students will have limited time allowance for use of resources.
- These were both implemented in fall 2023 and will continue in fall 2025.

### **B. Assessment Measure 2. Coursework in GERM 42103**

- In GERM 42103 during Spring 2023, students practiced articulating their ideas in German each class period via the 15-min writing exercise. The instructor marked them each time for grammar as well as content. Students often had five minutes in a class period to review the instructor's remarks (and during these five minutes they could use resources), and were asked to demonstrate improvement over time, not by fixing the errors each time or adding to entries, but rather by doing more/better the next time (they could always refer back to previous entries, but while writing they were not permitted to use any other resources). Oral reports were also exercises in articulating and justifying the students' ideas in German, both in the presentation itself and in the Q&A. The efficacy of their articulation was assessed on how well their classmates understood what they said (this was gleaned either from questions or from the journals). Their justification efficacy was assessed from the presentation as well as the answers during Q&A.
- Direct assessment

#### **i. Acceptable and Ideal Targets**

- 70% of graduating seniors will have demonstrated improvement in their ability to articulate and justify their own ideas in German. 90% of graduating seniors will have demonstrated improvement in their ability to articulate and justify their own ideas in German.

## **ii. Key Personnel**

- Dr. Jennifer Hoyer

## **iii. Summary of Findings.**

- The average score for improvement in writing over the spring semester 2025 is 85%.
- A student's score represents the instructor's assessment of tracked improvement over 15 weeks, as well as the student's own sense of improvement over the semester.
- Midway through the semester, students identified from a sample of 3 weeks' corrected writing one or two specific areas of style or grammar they needed to focus on.
- On the last day of class, students were asked to review journal entries across the semester, and describe where improvement in areas of focus was evident.
- C = little to no improvement; B = some improvement, but not as much as it could have been; A = much improvement (not perfection!), or in the case where a student is sufficiently advanced, clear evidence of consistent improvement in nuanced style or grammar features.
- In most cases, the student and instructor assessments were in alignment.

## **iv. Recommendations.**

- AY 2022-2023 was the first year of using this journaling activity. This round was extremely successful. For AY 2025-2025: replicate results in order to determine the efficacy of this practice over time.
  - few of the students in the class spring of 2025 had also been in GERM 30103 in fall of 2024, and thus most had not done this activity before. We started at a higher level, and had a correspondingly higher bar in spring 2024. The average improvement grade in spring 2024 was an 86%. In 2025, the starting point in fluency was higher, but in writing practice lower, so the average for improvement was reduced one percentage point.
- In 2023-2024, it was observed that the practice of self-assessment appears to distress a particular set of students. Work on approaching self-assessment in a way that encourages everyone to engage in making progress for their own edification as a positive experience.
  - This was less of an issue in spring 2024. It is unclear why, but will continue to refine approaches to self-assessment such that students feel a sense of accomplishment and agency in goal setting and achievement.
  - In 2025, this hardly came up at all, despite the number of students for whom this activity was new; far more likely was the learning curve of not assessing success based solely on grammatical accuracy and rather focusing on improvement in that and also other areas. Once students can let go of their entire grade being based on grammatical accuracy, they flourish.
- For spring 2025:
  - More explicit work in listening comprehension is needed.
  - This was implemented with an assessment on day 2 and day 31; the assessment demonstrated that coursework alone improved listening comprehension considerably for most students. For 2026, more explicit listening activities for vocab and spelling acquisition should be introduced to see if that improves the assessment results achieved in spring 2025.

## 10. Overall Recommendations

- AY 2022-2023 was the first time that the German section utilized this format for assessing the BA program. The novelty of this approach has spurred reconsideration of how learning outcomes are measured throughout the BA program. The overarching recommendation is to tailor assessments throughout the program to provide tangible data to demonstrate successful attainment of stated program goals and individual learning outcomes. The current plan within the German section continues to focus on redeveloping curricula in several courses (specifically GERM 30003 and 40003, with replacements being developed for the legacy higher electives GERM 41203, 41303, and 41403; redesigns are underway in GERM 10003-20103, as well) to adapt program offerings to move away from a focus on grammar instruction and to better reflect students' interests. We envision a greater focus on themes in higher-level elective courses and an expansion of course content to include multiple media, rather than a focus on literary genres. In service of this goal, we plan to redesign our assessment plan based on a portfolio model. Each course within the German BA would begin to include assignments and assessments more directly related to the program's stated learning outcomes, all of which would be eligible for inclusion in a portfolio to be submitted at the culmination of the BA program.

## 11. Action Plan

- Assessment Measure 5.A (Student Learning Outcome 1):
  - During AY 2025-2026, the German Section will outline a model for a program-encompassing portfolio assessment. By May 2026, we hope that this plan will be fully articulated and ready to implement incrementally across various courses. The German Section initially planned to have this plan in place by May 2025, but we have continued to adjust our ongoing curriculum redesign in the first four semesters. We have thus spent much of AY 2024-2025 working with Dr. Hagen (Dr. Condray and Dr. Sterling taught sections of GERM 10103 and 20203 respectively) and aligning our plans for curriculum changes across the BA program.
  - Curricular redesign will affect GERM 30003 and 4000003. Dr. Brett Sterling will begin developing course changes to GERM 30003 in Summer 2025, prior to a planned rollout in Fall 2025. Depending on the success of this new course model in Fall 2025, work will begin to redesign GERM 40003 by Spring 2027.
  - Work has begun to redesign lower-level language courses at the first and second year, spearheaded by Dr. Hagen. Courses are being updated to pursue the objectives that will be put in place in GERM 30003 and 40003. This will ensure that courses at the lower level will articulate with those within the BA program.
  - In an effort to move away from a traditional literary program, the German Section has begun developing a slate of upper-level courses (40000-level) that address topics that our students are interested in. In addition to existing courses on Migration and National Identity and Comics, which have been very successful in the past, we piloted seminars on Berlin (Dr. Hagen) and German foodways (Dr. Condray) in Spring 2025. This will be followed by a course on German Media in Spring 2026. We feel that this will help us retain students and increase enrollments above and beyond what our legacy courses have achieved.
- The Action Plan for Assessment Measure 5.A represents a massive investment in program development which will take several years to implement. Once we have articulated a plan to address this specific Assessment Measure, we will be better positioned to address and create other Assessment Measures according to this overarching plan over the next 3-5 years.