LEARNING OUTCOMES: GERMAN, MA

Learning Outcomes for the degree of Master of Arts in German

1. Disciplinary knowledge, both factual and analytical. Ours is a very comprehensive graduate program in literature and culture of all periods, visual studies, and linguistics, in which we apply theoretical, digital, and historiographic methods and approaches. We require that students situate their disciplinary knowledge within an interdisciplinary and multicultural context. Graduates will have comprehensive factual knowledge of German literary-cultural periods, movements, authors, and linguistics, as well as the ability to use contemporary tools of analysis. They are able to position themselves within scholarly discourses: broadly at the M.A. level, and, at the Ph.D. level, within their specialties. They express this ability in writing and oral presentation (see outcomes #2 and #4). The program’s foundational course (GER 510) covers learning to conduct research in a tier-one research library, techniques of literary analysis and critical approaches, conventions of scholarly writing, use of bibliographic tools, and learning about the profession. Each subsequent course in the program deepens this knowledge and is designed for students to familiarize themselves with methods of systematic literary study that can yield original findings and practice oral and written scholarly communication.

2. Research and writing expertise. Students are familiar with fundamental research tools in the humanities as well as tools specific to the study of German literature, culture, and linguistics. They can sustain a nuanced argument in academic writing and can produce well-written academic texts in English and in German. In their writing, they display an awareness of the audience and an understanding of how textual choices reflect coherent argumentation. Students know how to conduct research and understand the value of multiple-draft writing. They know how to use proper citation, how to evaluate print and online sources, and they understand and avoid plagiarism. Our students are thoroughly trained in theoretical, historical, and comparative methodologies of research and writing. From the start, students learn scholarly conventions, especially for footnotes and bibliography, including intensive library workshops to become acquainted with key research resources. Students learn and model critical approaches to a literary text through close readings, analysis, and interpretation of key passages in online posts, class presentations, and informal and formal writing; and students learn to develop several possible approaches to literary interpretation and criticism.

3. Teaching preparedness and praxis. Our graduate students participate in a thorough teacher-training program that includes a graduate seminar on teaching methodologies and approaches (GER 582), which trains students in pedagogical best practices as well as in current topics of interest in the field. Students receive ongoing, consistent mentorship from the Director of the Basic Language Program as well as from all faculty members, through a structured system of classroom observations and discussions. They teach across the curriculum, in German, and in English; they teach language as well as literature/culture courses. Students are acquainted with leading language teaching and learning theories, and consider the relationship of those theories to pedagogy. They understand the curricular and institutional contexts within which teaching and learning take place. Their German skills are at a near-native level, commensurate with the demands of the language classroom; in courses taught in English, our students are able to teach writing and argumentation at a very advanced level. Students leave our program ready to teach in any type of German curriculum or institutional context.

4. Professional development. Our students are able to submit and present conference papers successfully; they receive guidance in essential conference behavior, including acting as a respondent and handling question-answer sessions. They gain experience in presenting research by participating in our department lecture forum. They can write abstracts, apply for grants, and are aware of the relevant professional organizations and the advantages of membership. They receive training in professional ethics. They are mentored in preparation for the academic and non-academic job market and in interviewing for a variety of positions. Their German and English language skills are excellent. Ability in German is supported by participation in departmental exchange programs and help with grant applications to spend time researching and/or teaching in German-speaking countries. In the program’s foundational course GER 510, students study the ethics of the profession, and they learn about the profession by writing a professional email, web page content, a CV, MA/PhD reading lists, a grant application, and a conference abstract.

5. Mobility and academic exchange. Students all have substantial experience abroad. They gain this experience by participating in one of our departmental exchanges with German universities and/or by spending time in a German-speaking country conducting research with the support of an external grant (e.g., Fulbright, German Academic Exchange Service). The faculty mentors students through the process of writing grant applications. Our exchanges are bidirectional—we host students here and send them abroad, which means that the graduate students here in Illinois have consistent opportunities to interact with German-speaking visitors.