

German UN2520
Intermediate Conversation
Herbst 2025

MW 10:10am-11:25am

Instructor: Xuxu Song, xs2551@columbia.edu

Sprechstunden: Wed. 4-5pm & by appointment, 404A Hamilton Hall

Come speak lots of German! Students in Intermediate Conversation should have completed the equivalent of two semesters of college German or placed at the Intermediate level at Columbia. This conversation group is designed for students who are either taking Intermediate German I or II and would like additional practice or who only take this class because they wish to maintain their spoken German.

The course is designed to improve your ability to speak and understand and manage German in everyday situations; to provide opportunities to participate in conversational situations on any topics you are interested in; to strengthen and acquire skills to understand German spoken at normal conversational speed; to expand active and passive vocabularies speaking skills; and to maintain a certain level of written German through short written activities. This is a 2-point course and does not count towards the language requirement.

An electronic version of this syllabus will be available here: <https://germanic.columbia.edu/>

Registration information: Columbia Bulletin, Vergil, or the Barnard Registrar.

COURSE GOALS

- 1) to improve your ability to speak and understand and manage German in everyday situations;
- 2) to provide opportunities to participate in conversational situations on any topics you are interested in discussing such as:
 - Deutschland, Österreich und die Schweiz - gestern und heute
 - Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Länder
 - Deutschsprachige Nachrichten, Kunst, Musik, Literatur, Politik, Umwelt, Technologie
 - Deutschsprachiger Film
 - Grammatik Wiederholung
- 3) to strengthen and get skills to understand German spoken at normal conversational speed;
- 4) to expand active and passive vocabularies (through a collective vocabulary list using Quizlet) and speaking skills.
- 5) to maintain a certain level of written German through short written activities, such as reactions to topics/texts and a weekly journal.

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CLASS SESSIONS

Class sessions will consist of a variety of activities throughout the term, including:

- 1) daily warm-ups concentrating on every day needs and community building;
- 2) vocabulary practice (collaborative vocabulary list) through activities or Kahoots, e.g.
- 3) paired or small group conversations and interviews on a variety of topics;
- 4) dialogs/role plays based on everyday situations and videos;
- 5) student presentations, reactions to and discussions resulting from presentations;
- 6) web /audio-visual presentations;
- 7) discussions of short readings on a variety of topics;
- 8) web-based reports by individuals and/or small groups.
- 9) work with various computer media

SEMESTERPLAN

Class content is student-driven and consequently there is no pre-set weekly plan. We will determine which topics you would like to explore and develop our plan together. Our topics and achievements will be documented throughout the semester in a retro-active weekly plan and we will be able to see what we have accomplished by the end of the semester.

COURSE POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

This course is conducted in German. The more you engage and ask questions, the more you will learn. Engagement inside and outside of class is expected and counts significantly toward your grade.

ATTENDANCE

Your attendance at every class meeting is important. Frequent or extended absences impede development of oral/aural skills and will lower your grade or jeopardize your success in class. You will be allowed two unexcused absences which will not affect your grade. Each additional unexcused absence will result in lowering your final grade by 1%. Examples of unexcused absences include, but are not limited to, work for other projects or courses and personal trips or events. If you cannot attend in person due to sickness, an unexpected family or personal matter, or a religious holiday, discuss strategies with your instructor ahead of time or as soon as possible to make up content. Be proactive. If you know you will be missing a class, it is your responsibility to let your instructor know in advance and arrange for any homework to be made up. Classes start promptly. Given the nature of language classes, it is essential that you be on time and that you do not disrupt the class by coming in late. If you have a prior commitment that is going to make you late on certain days, please let your instructor know. Please note that an accumulated 75/110 minutes of being late to class 5 minutes and above will result in an unexcused absence.

DEVICE POLICY

The use of electronic devices, including but not limited to smartphones, tablet computers, and laptops, is generally prohibited during class sessions. While it is important to know how to use relevant permitted electronic resources as you learn the language, e.g. dictionaries, class time is limited and face-

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to-face interactions with peers and instructors are a priority. Your instructor will inform you in advance if this policy will be overridden for classroom activities supplemented with the use of a device.

ASSESSMENT & GRADING

Daily preparation / homework	20%
Weekly writing assignments	10%
Collaborative Vocabulary List	10%
Oral presentations	10%
Final oral interview	10%
Class attendance and participation	40%

DEPARTMENTAL GRADING SCALE

Letter grade	A+*	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D	F
Numerical index	99.00+	94-98	90-93	87-89	83-86	80-82	77-79	73-76	70-72	65-69	64-

* Only for extraordinary performance across the board; No rounding up.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Grammar:

<https://www.nthuleen.com>

<https://germanstudiesdepartmentaluser.host.dartmouth.edu>

Dictionaries:

English/German and German/English

<https://dict.leo.org/german-english/>

<https://www.dict.cc>

<https://de.thefreedictionary.com/hunger>

German/German

<https://www.dwds.de>

<https://www.duden.de>

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

As the Columbia and Barnard Policy on Academic Integrity makes clear, the work you submit in any class must be your own. Handing in work (homework, vocabulary lists, essays, etc.) that has been edited by a tutor or in any way authored or rewritten by someone other than you is not permitted. In a language class, this means that the common practices of asking someone to look over your work, using online grammar and translation tools (e.g., to translate half a sentence, a complete sentence and/or more), or using AI, are, unless otherwise indicated by your instructor, not permitted. It is crucial that all work is completed by you and reflects your competency in German. The department has created grading mechanisms that minimize the impact of mistakes on your grade, but that will also impact your grade if you do use outside tools. (Your instructor will share more detailed guidelines for specific assignments). If you feel you need tutoring, speak to your instructor or contact Jutta Schmiers-Heller at Columbia or Irene Motyl-Mudretzkyj for Barnard for permissible tutoring guidelines. Please also

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visit the following websites on academic integrity and the honor code:

<https://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/academicintegrity>

<http://www.college.columbia.edu/honorcode>

ACADEMIC, MENTAL, AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

Student life can get very intense, especially during this time. Please take care of yourself. If you feel that you need help in any way, please don't wait but act immediately. Let your instructor know that you are struggling. Our goal is to create a culture of empathy and care in our class community, and we believe such a culture builds upon consistent engagement and clear communication. We will try to create channels for these and model expectations, but we will also rely on you to help build our community and provide feedback so that we can make adjustments when needed. Most importantly, contact your Dean/Advisor so they can help you. In addition, visit Columbia's/Barnard's websites to know what services are available to you:

<https://www.health.columbia.edu>

<https://barnard.edu/health-wellness/student-health>

<https://covid19.columbia.edu>

<https://thefoodpantry.studentgroups.columbia.edu>

<https://cc-seas.financialaid.columbia.edu/deans-fund>

LEARNING PREFERENCES AND ACCOMMODATIONS

We acknowledge in our courses that people learn in different ways. For example, having visuals to support text may work better for some students, whereas others learn better by listening to the instructor. Please talk to your instructor about your learning preferences, so we can make the course work as well as possible for everyone. If you have, or suspect, a disability of any kind, please be sure to contact the office of disabilities (see link below) so that accommodations can be put in place. The earlier we know about it the better it will work.

PLACEMENT EXAM

If you have prior knowledge of German, you need to take the placement exam, so we can help you to find the best level. You can find information on the test here:

<https://germanic.columbia.edu/content/germanplacementexam>

Or you can contact Jutta Schmiere-Heller (js2331@columbia.edu) for Columbia and Irene Motyl-Mudretzkyj (imotyl@barnard.edu) for Barnard.

GERMAN GRAMMATICAL GENDER

Nouns in German have a gender (masculine, feminine, or neuter) that often does not obey any apparent logic. The German language also assigns humans a gender, and German is not special for having a rigid binary gender system. Pervasive gender normativity is reflected in our use of language, and language instruction is one of the spaces in which such traditional structures are reinforced. At

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Columbia and Barnard, we strive to be respectful and inclusive. Whereas we still need to learn language in its normative form, we encourage you to be aware of the implications of such norms and to be attentive to your classmates' and instructors' desires. Please contact your instructor right away should you have any preferred name and/or preferred pronoun by which you would like to be addressed. Although there are limitations to what the language allows grammatically, the German Department faculty and staff are committed to finding solutions that work for everyone.

GERMAN STUDIES

Direct questions about language courses German at Columbia to **Jutta Schmiers-Heller**, 403A Hamilton Hall, x44824 (js2331@columbia.edu). For questions about our major, minor, and concentration (before FA24), contact **Prof. Annie Pfeifer**, 415 Hamilton Hall, x4320(ap750@columbia.edu). Barnard students please contact **Irene Motyl-Mudretzkyj**, 320c Millbank Hall, x44287 (imotyl@barnard.edu).

DEPARTMENTAL ONLINE PRESENCE

Webpage: <https://germanic.columbia.edu> | <https://german.barnard.edu>

Instagram: @cugermanic

X: @CUGermanic

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CUGermanic>

DEUTSCHES HAUS

(420 W. 116 St.) is a center for academic, cultural, and social exchange. Programs and events include lectures, films, conferences, recitals, art exhibits, and gatherings like Kaffeestunde. All levels of German students are encouraged to attend events which provide students with a great opportunity to practice speaking German. <https://germanic.columbia.edu/deutsches-haus>