

Fall 2026: UN2101 – Intermediate German I



Course offerings for Intermediate German I (2101) can be found in the Course Directory:

<https://doc.sis.columbia.edu/#subj/GERM/Fall2026.html>

More specific registration information: [Columbia Bulletin](#), [Vergil](#), or the [Barnard Registrar](#).

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

For all questions about the courses, please contact **Jutta Schmiers-Heller** (js2331@columbia.edu), Language Program Director at Columbia, or **Irene Motyl-Mudretzkyj** (imotyl@barnard.edu), Senior Associate of the German Department at Barnard.

REQUIRED BOOK

- *Anders gedacht*. Motyl, Späinghaus, 2013.
(Columbia Book Store / Book Culture)



COURSE GOALS

Intermediate German I is grounded in a communicative and flexible instructional framework that emphasizes active participation, collaboration, and the development of a supportive learning community. Throughout the semester, students expand their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills while deepening their understanding of German-speaking cultures.

While the primary focus of the course is to further develop students' ability to communicate meaningfully and express increasingly complex ideas in German, the course also emphasizes structural accuracy by helping students refine their understanding and use more advanced grammatical patterns. To support these objectives, the course prioritizes immersive learning by maximizing spoken German during class sessions. Students who successfully complete the course with a minimum grade of B should be able to:

- speak and understand German well enough to converse comfortably with another speaker of German about themselves, their family, interests, daily activities, and more specific topics related to the culture of German-speaking countries, including travel, multiculturalism, Weimar Republic, and the two German states.
- read and understand the main ideas and most important supporting details of a variety of authentic and edited texts of varied length (e.g. brief newspaper articles, summaries, poems, short stories) and be able to locate specific information in such texts;
- write reasonably coherent and grammatically sound texts (e.g. letters, summaries, text interpretations and descriptions) related to everyday topics, experiences, and class readings (on culture, literature and history);

- understand the main ideas of spoken German in formal oral texts (e.g. interview and news reports), as well as conversations on familiar topics;
- understand and discuss a variety of authentic videos and film clips;
- demonstrate mastery of major grammatical concepts and usage of high frequency verbs (in present, past and future tenses in active and passive voice; as well as in the subjunctive mood).

EXPECTATIONS AND POLICIES

This course is primarily conducted in German. Come ready to experiment and contribute!

- Improving your proficiency in German requires **speaking the language** as much as possible in class, whether during whole-class discussions or in small groups and pairs.
- **Stay engaged.** The course covers a lot of ground every day. The more you participate and ask questions, the more you will learn. Active engagement both in and outside of class is expected and constitutes a significant portion of your grade. Plan to spend about two hours working outside of class for every hour spent in class.
- **Homework.** Homework assignments are designed and scheduled to align with the content covered in class. Daily homework provides additional practice and is usually due before the next class meeting. Larger assignments allow for more flexibility. If you are unclear about assignment requirements, contact your instructor as soon as possible rather than waiting until after a deadline.
 - **Late homework:** Homework must be submitted on time in the requested format (paper or electronic) to receive full credit. Assignments submitted late will incur a 5% deduction for each day they are overdue. Homework submitted more than 10 days after the deadline will not be graded.
- **Attendance.** Your attendance at every class meeting is important. Frequent absences jeopardize your success in the course.
 - If your class meets 3 times a week for 75 minutes each, you are allowed **three (3) unexcused absences** without penalty to your attendance grade; if your class meets twice a week for 110 minutes each, **you are allowed two (2) unexcused absences**. Any additional absences or repeated tardiness will negatively affect your overall performance, particularly on days when you are scheduled to present.
 - Attendance grades are calculated as follows:
 - **0-3 absences/0-2 absences: 100%**
 - **4 absences: 90%**
 - **Each additional absence: attendance grade is reduced by 5%**
 - Absences will not count against your attendance grade if they result from participation in an officially sanctioned University athletic event (with required documentation of your participation) or the observance of a religious holiday (see: [Religious Holidays](#)). No additional absences will be excused. Please understand that aside from the circumstances listed above, it is not possible for the instructor to fairly assess the many individual reasons students may miss class, even when those reasons are understandable. This policy is intended to balance flexibility with fairness for all students.
 - If you are unable to attend class, it is your responsibility to notify your instructor in advance or as soon as possible and make arrangements to complete any missed work.
 - Classes start promptly. If you have a prior commitment that may cause you to arrive late, please inform your instructor in advance. If you are consistently late without an excuse, your

instructor will give you a warning. If it persists, you will receive an **unexcused absence**. All instances of lateness will be recorded and may negatively affect your grade.

- **Device Policy.** The use of electronic devices, including but not limited to smartphones, tablets, and laptops, is prohibited during class sessions. While learning to use appropriate digital resources is an important part of language study, class time is limited, and face-to-face interaction with your peers and the instructor is a priority. Your instructor will inform you in advance if a particular class activity requires the use of an electronic device.

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, essays, etc.) that has been edited or in any way authored, translated, or rewritten by someone—something—other than you is not permitted. In a language course, this means that the common practices of asking someone to look over your work, using online 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. **A truly meaningful language education requires that you take an active role in your learning process, put forth consistent effort, and learn from any mistakes.** Linguistic development, in particular, depends on authentic practice and is ultimately a personal process. 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).

AI technologies can offer valuable support for language learning when used thoughtfully. Rather than prohibiting these technologies entirely, we will explore responsible and appropriate ways to incorporate them into the learning process. Throughout the semester, we will discuss the opportunities and limitations of AI in language learning and work together to develop meaningful, productive, and responsible ways to use these technologies to support language development.

If you feel you would benefit from tutoring, please speak to your instructor or contact Jutta Schmiere-Heller at Columbia or Irene Motyl-Mudretzkyj for Barnard for permissible tutoring guidelines. Please also visit the following websites on academic integrity and the honor code:

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

ACADEMIC, MENTAL, and PHYSICAL HEALTH

Student life can get very intense. 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 flexibility and care in our class community, and we believe such a culture builds upon consistent engagement, empathy, 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://health.columbia.edu/services/ods>

<https://www.barnard.edu/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.

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 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.

PLACEMENT EXAM

If you have prior knowledge of German, you must take the German 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 (imudretz@barnard.edu) for Barnard.

GERMAN STUDIES

Direct questions about language courses German at Columbia to **Jutta Schmiere-Heller**. For questions about German major, minor, and concentration (before FA24), contact **Prof. Annie Pfeifer**, 415 Hamilton Hall, x4320 (ap750@columbia.edu). Barnard students should contact **Irene Motyl-Mudretzkyj** (imotyl@barnard.edu).

DEPARTMENTAL ONLINE PRESENCE

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

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/cugermanic/>

X: @CUGermanic

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

DEUTSCHES HAUS

Deutsches Haus, located at 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>.

ASSESSMENT

The portfolios highlight students' progress toward self-defined objectives requiring creativity, self-discipline, and interdisciplinarity. Specific assignments may vary between instructors, but by the end of the semester, portfolios should typically contain:

- A cover page
- Your learning goals and strategies
- 2 writing assignments
- Your individual vocabulary lists of 20 entries per unit
- Outline and slides of your oral presentation
- The final group project
- A reflective piece on all your assignments
- A cumulative self-evaluation of your learning process

GRADING

Preparation and engagement (attendance or equivalent, preparation for class, journals, engagement with asynchronous creative assignments - specific components may vary)	20%
Homework and quizzes	15%
Vocabulary lists	10%
Writing assignments	15%
Oral presentation	10%
Final project	10%
Final oral interview	10%
Portfolio (Learning goals and strategies, major assignments, creative assignments, reflections, final self-evaluation) - Completion and thoughtful reflections	10%

Departmental grading scale

Grades are calculated in terms of percentages, and do not conform to a curve.

Letter Grade	Numerical Index	Letter Grade	Numerical Index
A+*	99.00+	C+	77-79
A	94-98	C	73-76
A-	90-93	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D	65-69
B	83-86	F	0-64
B-	80-82		

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

KURSPLAN

The weekly plan is subject to change based on class needs.

Woche	Thema	Sprachliche Funktionen	Größere Aufgaben
1. Woche Week of Sept. 7 Sept. 7 - Labor Day UN-Hol	Kennenlernen, Einführung in den Kurs Einheit E: Reisen Reisen - warum?	Wiederholung: Verben, Präsens, Perfekt Regelmäßige/trennbare Verben	
2. Woche Week of Sept. 14	Reisetrends	Pronomen Gründe und Zwecke angeben (weil, um...zu, Modalverben)	
September 17	Sept. 17 – last day to add a class. Last day to receive tuition refund for a class dropped.		
3. Woche Week of Sept. 21	Aufsatz 1 - Version 1 im Kurs Lernstrategien und Ziele Einheit 4: Die Comedian Harmonists Geschichtlicher Hintergrund Weimarer Republik	Formelle Sprache: Präteritum	Aufsatz 1 Version 2 Ende der Woche
4. Woche Week of Sept. 28	Weimarer Republik Film: Comedian Harmonists	Reflexive Verben mit und ohne Präpositionalobjekt	Mini-Referate Weimarer Republik
5. Woche Week of Oct. 5	Film: Comedian Harmonists	Erweiterte Beschreibungen: Relativsätze/ Relativpronomen	
6. Woche Week of Oct. 12	Film - Enddiskussion Einheit 10: Das Leben im anderen Deutschland Einführung und Nachkriegszeit	Formelle Sprache: Passiv vs. Aktiv	Aufsatz 2 Version 1
12. Oktober	Last day to drop a class		
7. Woche Week of Oct. 19	Film: <i>Good bye, Lenin!</i>	Temporale Sätze	Aufsatz 2 Version 2
21. Oktober	Midterm Date but we do NOT have a midterm exam. Time for feedback!		

8. Woche Week of Oct. 26	Film: <i>Good bye, Lenin!</i>	Genitiv	
9. Woche Week of Nov. 2	Die Stasi Film: <i>Das Leben der Anderen</i>	Verben mit Präpositionalobjekten; Da-/wo-Komposita	Aufsatz 3 Version 1
Nov. 2 + 3	2. + 3. November: Academic Holiday + Wahltag: Keine Kurse		
10. Woche Week of Nov. 9	Reflektion: Die Wiedervereinigung - und jetzt? Einheit 3: Multikulturelles Leben Einführung	Genitiv; Präpositionen mit Genitiv: <i>während, trotz, wegen, anstatt/statt</i> Vokabeln zur Diversität	Aufsatz 3 Version 2
11. Woche Week of Nov. 16	Migration Einwanderung und Einbürgerung	Konjunktiv II im Präsens	
12. Woche Week of Nov. 23	Kaminer: <i>Sprachtest + Wie sage ich es meiner Mutter</i> Interview	Konjunktiv II im Präsens; <i>bekommen</i> vs. <i>werden</i>	
Nov. 25 + 26 + 27	University Holiday Thanksgiving-Ferien – Keine Kurse		
13. Woche Week of Nov. 30	Afrodeutsche		Projektarbeit
14. Woche Week of Dec. 7 + Mo, Dec 14	Arbeit an Schlussprojekten		Interviews
Reading Week	Mündliche Interviews	NO WRITTEN FINAL EXAM	Portfolios
Please Note:	There is no written final in this course. Final components are the completion of all assignments, the portfolio and an oral interview.		