Rationale for the Revision of the German M.A. and Ph.D. Program

The Department of Germanic & Slavic Languages would like to include mandatory courses to its M.A./Ph.D. Program in German. Ph.D. candidates entering the German program at Vanderbilt with a B.A. or M.A. have vastly different backgrounds. To close gaps in knowledge and to guarantee a similarly high level of canonized texts and media as well as up-to-date scholarship, the department introduces three “Foundations” courses in the areas of a) cultural studies (Foundations I: Transition Points of Modern German Culture); b) theory (Foundations II: Theories of Literary and cultural Analysis); and c) methodology (Foundations III: Modes of Scholarly Work and Writing). We believe that these courses would provide students with a solid basis for future studies, their Ph.D. projects, and their professional endeavors.

Furthermore, we would like to gradually update our course offerings since courses not taught any longer would be erased from the current catalog. We request that two such courses be approved by the CGE: Ger 8207 (Nature: History of an Illusion) and Ger 8208 (Romanticism: An Aesthetic Idea and Its Transformation).

Due to the suggested changes, the total number of credit hours that students would have to receive through course work would change from 42 to 60 (students entering the program with a B.A.), and 36 to 42 (students entering the program with a M.A.). The mandated total number of 72 credit hours to graduation would remain the same.

The department’s tenured and tenure-track faculty approved these changes with a vote of four in favor and one abstained (research leave) on April 29th, 2015.
GRADUATE studies in German at Vanderbilt lead to the M.A. and the Ph.D. The program leading to the M.A. degree is designed primarily to deepen and broaden the student’s knowledge of German culture, literature, and media from its beginnings to the present day, with special emphasis on major areas not usually covered in-depth in an undergraduate course of study. The program is also intended to lay the groundwork for possible continuing study toward the Ph.D.

In order to be admitted to candidacy for the Master of Arts degree, a student is required to prove ability in writing and speaking German to the satisfaction of the department.

Candidates for the master’s degree must meet three separate requirements: complete 30 credit hours of formal course work, submit written evidence of research abilities, and pass an oral examination based on course work and the departmental core reading list. Nine of the 30 credit hours are to be at the 3000 level and above in the department, and a minimum of 3 credit hours should be in a graduate seminar. Up to 6 credit hours may be transferred from outside the university. The oral examination is normally taken at the end of the student’s third semester. As a rule, independent study will not fulfill the requirement of formal course work. Evidence of research abilities will usually take the form of a research paper of twenty-five to thirty pages that is based on a term paper and is to be submitted no later than the end of the student’s fourth semester at Vanderbilt. As an alternative, students may choose to complete 24 credit hours of formal course work and to write a master’s thesis. The latter is a research paper of sixty to eighty pages in length that gives evidence of scholarly competence and independent, critical thought. The research-writing requirement for this latter option is satisfied after the formal course work and the oral examination have been completed.

The department expects candidates to meet all formal course requirements for the master’s degree within three semesters. The student must maintain a minimum B average, provide evidence of scholarly research abilities, and pass the oral examination to receive her/his degree. The M.A. examination committee consists of three faculty members drawn from the department; usually—but not necessarily—the chair or the director of graduate studies serves as one of the examiners.

In order to be admitted to candidacy for the Master of Arts degree, a student is required to prove ability in writing and speaking German to the satisfaction of the department.

All candidates awarded a Teaching Assistantship will enroll in Foreign Language Teaching Theory and Practice during their first term of teaching. The student arranges her/his program in consultation with the director of graduate studies and in recognition of departmental objectives.

Through the Combined B.A./M.A. (4+1) Option, the department offers exceptional students the opportunity to earn both the B.A. and the M.A. in five years. Students will be provisionally admitted to the 4+1 program only by approval of the department. Further information about the program is available from the director of graduate studies.
Doctor of Philosophy

Admission to the program does not imply acceptance for candidacy in the Ph.D. program. Performance well above the minimum Graduate School requirement of a B is expected for admission to the Ph.D. program. Candidates normally obtain the M.A. before going on for the Ph.D. The purpose of the doctoral degree at Vanderbilt is to develop the talented candidate’s capacity to make independent contributions to the field of German literature, media, and cultural studies. Transfer students should consult the Graduate School requirements for the doctorate.

The Ph.D. degree requires at least two academic years of graduate study beyond the master’s degree. A total of 72 credit hours beyond the B.A. degree is mandated by the Graduate School, thus 42 credit hours beyond the M.A. at Vanderbilt are necessary. A minimum of 36 of these credit hours are done in formal course work; most should be at the 6000 level and above with a minimum of 12 required seminar hours. Moreover, at this advanced level of study, the candidate will have considerable latitude in developing a focus (9 credit hours) in a related discipline or in cross disciplinary studies relevant to Germanics, for example, in comparative literature, critical theory, philosophy, political science, or history. The department encourages students of German to incorporate an interdisciplinary dimension into their doctoral work that might include the philosophy of language, political and social history, women’s writing and the production of culture, censorship practices, or the impact of philosophy on aesthetic concepts and forms. Students completing a dissertation have the option under certain conditions of enrolling in 9995, half-time research (maximum of six years), a total of 72 credit hours to graduate. Students who enter the program with a B.A. are required to take 60 credit hours of formal course work; students who enter the program with an M.A. are required to take 42 credit hours of formal course work. Courses that count toward the formal course work requirement include the 6 core courses listed below and all of the other graduate courses listed in the Catalog for the German Ph.D., with the exception of credit hours taken for non-candidate research and dissertation research. A maximum of two courses (6 credit hours) offered by other departments may count toward the formal course work requirement with the approval of the DGS. All formal course work needs to be completed in order to pass the Qualifying Exam. In some cases, students entering the program with an M.A. may transfer up to 25 credit hours in consultation with the DGS; such transfer credits, however, cannot be used to offset any of the required formal course work. Remaining credit hours to complete the mandated 72 credit hours include non-candidate and dissertation research. Each student is required to take the following courses (18 credit hours) as part of their required 60/42 credit hours of formal course work:

- GER 7101: Foundations I: Transition Points of Modern German Culture [3]
- GER 7102: Foundations II: Theories of Literary and Cultural Analysis [3]
- GER 7104: Pre-Exam Colloquium [3]
- SLS 6030: Foreign Language Learning and Teaching [3]
- GER 8301 Pre-Dissertation Colloquium [3]

The director of graduate studies in German assists in devising related areas of concentration so that the student, at this stage, can be narrowing her/his focus for a dissertation topic. Faculty
members actively assist students to determine the most promising topics for innovative research by pointing out interesting knowledge gaps, theoretical issues, or interdisciplinary questions.

A reading knowledge of French is usually expected, but another language may be substituted with the approval of the examination committee if it is felt that this language is relevant to the candidate’s area of concentration or dissertation research. The second language requirement must be fulfilled before the candidate may take the comprehensive examination.

The teaching program option offers up to 12 credit hours in the area of teaching methodology (courses, research projects, and teaching internships). Work in this area does not count toward minimum degree requirements; 4 credit hours are normally the minimum in this program. Students opting for the full program should expect to add at least one semester to their course of study.

New Catalog Copy

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