German 420: The Theme of Love in German Culture
Spring 2005
(for students studying in Strasbourg)
http://web.centre.edu/ger/420/
(send an email to wilsoni@centre.edu for username and password)

instructor: Ian W. Wilson
phone: 1-859-238-5241
email: wilsoni@centre.edu

I. Course Description and Goal

This course uses the lens of love to examine a variety of works of German literature. Some of the works we will discuss have become part of the German canon. Other works are quite contemporary, though still very literary. All approach the theme of love from different directions and with different emphases. The course will pose the following questions: Why does love play such an important role in cultural artifacts like novels, plays, operas, music, film, etc.? Why do all the best and best-preserved love stories end badly? What are the social uses of cultural representations of love over time? What historical, cultural and philosophical shifts have occurred in German culture's use of love?

II. Course Objectives

A. to introduce you to some basic texts and ideas of German literature, culture and history;
B. to understand the ways love has been represented in German culture for the last 850 years;
C. to develop your skills in written and oral analysis of cultural artifacts; and
D. to have opportunities to improve your reading, writing, speaking and listening skills in German.

III. Course Materials

Required texts:
Judith Hermann, „Acqua alta“ (2003; handout)
Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Emilia Galotti* (1772; Reclam; 3-15-000045-9)
Thomas Mann, *Der Tod in Venedig* (1912; Fischer; 3-596-20054-7)
a German grammar text (*Handbuch zur deutschen Grammatik* or *German in Review* for example)
a good German-English dictionary (such as Collins, Cassel's or Oxford-Duden)
(perhaps) a German-German dictionary (like Langenscheidt's *Deutsch als Fremdsprache*)

Required film:
a current German-language love story to be seen in a theater in Europe (and reviewed)
IV. Course Requirements

A. Attendance

Due to the unusual nature of this part of German 420, you must agree to a time every week to meet together to discuss course matters (in German). You must travel to Germany, find a café, restaurant or bar, and hold your discussion there. Attendance at each weekly meeting is required. In case of extraordinary illness, the group should reschedule that week’s meeting.

B. Class Participation

I will not be present to grade you on your participating in group discussions, but a portion of your course grade (10%) will be calculated solely on the basis of your participation. The majority of this grade (3/4 of it) will be derived from grades you give all group members: twice during the semester, all 5 group members, including yourself, will assign you a grade from 1-10 based on your participation. I will average these 10 grades together to determine your participation grade. We will discuss a “rubric” to be used for these grades in our orientation meeting before you travel to Strasbourg. Please write the rubric below:

- 10 = excellent = good points, analytical comments, guided discussion
- 9 = good = many comments
- 8 = fine = some comments
- 7 = average = whole book read, few or no comments
- 6 = below average = partial reading, few or no comments
- 5 = poor = little reading, no interest shown
- 4 = bad = (less than 5)
- 2-3 = very bad = not reading at all
- 0-1 = very, very bad = not speaking at all

The remaining 1/4 of your participation grade will be comprised of a brief weekly summary of your discussion. One student will be responsible for this summary each week. Since you will meet twelve times, each student will be responsible for at least two summaries. Two students will be responsible for three summaries. It is up to you to decide how to choose who writes three summaries. You will receive a grade only for the summaries you write.

C. Reading Assignments

When tackling a reading assignment for this class, it is best to try to do your best with the help of the glosses I will provide you with (via email) for each text and the occasional use of your dictionary. After you familiarize yourself with the content, you will be better able to judge which additional German words you need to look
up in order to understand the overall meaning. Do not attempt to look up every word you don’t understand, as this will take an inordinate amount of time. Part of learning a language is learning to make educated guesses based on context. Write the most important new words you have looked up in a notebook and try to work them into your active German vocabulary. Although you are not expected to master every nuance of each text, you should reread all confusing or difficult passages as many times as necessary for you to be able to contribute intelligently to class discussion, even if that means simply being able to ask your fellow group members for assistance. After reading, make notes in German about the text to help you understand and remember the main points. Also write down in German any questions, ideas, or problems that occur to you so that you can bring these up in the class discussion. Please note that all of these books were published in Germany; the *Reclamhändchen* may have vocabulary sections at the back to help with a limited number of antiquated words and phrases and cultural references. I will provide other assistance on a book-by-book basis. It will be your responsibility to print out the glosses for each text. I will email them to you, and they will also be available on the web at [http://web.centre.edu/ger/420/](http://web.centre.edu/ger/420/). Without these glosses, reading the course material will be much more difficult if not impossible. Note that the glosses will be on a password-protected portion of the website. The username and password appear at the top of this syllabus.

For 10 of your 12 meetings, one or two students will be assigned responsibility for a lyric poem, which they will read aloud and briefly explain. All students should have read these poems before the meeting. They will also be available on the web at [http://web.centre.edu/ger/420/](http://web.centre.edu/ger/420/), also in the password-protected portion. Each student will present three poems: the first two will be presented during a two-poem week, the third during one of the final weeks, when it will be the only poem presented.

**D. Film Viewings**

Due to technical challenges posed by European DVDs, you will not view the same films as students enrolled in German 420 in Danville. Rather, you must find a current German-language release that has a love story as a central part. You will then write a review of the film. (See below for details.)

**E. Writing Assignments**

There are four types of writing assignments for this course.

The first type is written answers to questions I will post online at [http://web.centre.edu/ger/420/](http://web.centre.edu/ger/420/) and also email you. You should print out my questions and write answers before attending each discussion. Then revise your answers based on your discussion. I expect that there will be a great deal of similar ideas expressed in answers between students, but they must not be identical. Additionally, each set of questions will have at least one opinion question that only you can answer. Once you have revised these answers, you should type them up and email them to me. There will be 12 such assignments over the course of the semester. **They are due by 11:59 pm (Danville time) on the Thursday of the week which they cover.**

The second type of assignment is a German-language love poem of your own. It need not be serious, but it would be beneficial for you to use one of the poems from the class as a basis of your poem. Aim for a poem of at least 12 lines. Email me your poem. **It will be due by 11:59 pm (Danville time) on Wednesday, 16 March.**

The third type of assignment is to write brief review of the German film you see. This one-to-two-page, typed, double-spaced German-language review should put the film into the context of the course materials up to the point of the assignment’s due date. More than simple opinion is required; you should attempt to
analyze the film’s structure on the level of story, character and filmmaking. Would you recommend this film to me? Why or why not? Email me your review. It will be due by 11:59 pm (Danville time) on Wednesday, 13 April.

The final assignment is a small group project (Semesterarbeit). Work on this project should begin relatively early in the semester and will involve a number of preliminary steps. The project will culminate in a paper of 23-to-35 pages that incorporates one 4-to-6-page paper written by each course participant into one large paper with a common introduction, conclusion and transitions. It should also contain an analytical portion that attempts to tie the issues of the course and the ideas raised in each individual paper together in more than a summary fashion. Your individual paper will be graded separately (25% of your course grade), but all students will also receive a grade on the whole project (5% of your course grade, all students receive the same grade). Finally, 10% of your course grade will be comprised by the grades (on a scale from 1-10) all group members (including yourself) give you regarding your participation in the group project. See the rubric above for grading guidance.

In your 4-to-6-page individual paper, you should seek to compare the view of love of one of the lyric poems presented by a course participant and that in one of the longer texts from the course. **You must go beyond description of the way love is presented in the texts to receive a grade higher than C on your individual paper: be analytical and critical—endeavor to say something new and interesting.** **Surprise me!** While multiple students may write about the same long text and multiple students may write about the same poem, no two students can compare the same poem with the same long text. As you move through the semester, think about the issues raised by each of the texts you read to make your writing process easier. You need not make reference to outside sources in this paper, though you may if you want to. Though you must emphasize two texts in your comparison, you may make brief references to others, too. Author biographies should play little or no role in your paper.

To avoid duplication and to coordinate efforts for the overall project, group members should speak together early and often about their ideas. When you begin to tie your ideas together, think about general analytical statements you might be able to make about the themes of the course using your individual papers. You should also include references to the last long texts of the course in the synthetic group portion of your paper. Including an introduction and conclusion to the whole project, the group portion of the paper should add 3-5 pages to the total page length of all the individual papers when put together.

This project will have three preliminary steps and one final due date. Failure to complete any one of the preliminary steps below will reduce your final individual paper grade by 10%.

1. **By 11:59 pm (Danville time) on Wednesday, April 6**, I must have received via email from you an indication of which poem and which longer text you would like to compare.

2. **By 11:59 pm (Danville time) on Wednesday, April 20**, I must have received via email from you a thesis statement and an outline for your individual paper.

3. **By 11:59 pm (Danville time) on Wednesday, May 4**, I must have received via email from one student a thesis statement and an outline for the whole group project.

4. One person should email the entire project to me. **This project will be due by 11:59 pm on Monday, 16 May. THIS PROJECT WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED LATE.**
All written work for the course must be in German, typed, double-spaced with 1” margins all around and in 12 pt. size of either Times New Roman or Garamond (except the weekly „Fragen zum Text,“ which must be in German but need not follow any other formatting rules). I will not accept papers with any other margins, fonts or font sizes. You must also learn how to produce German characters such as Umlaute or the ß on the computer—do not simply write them in! Unless prior arrangements have been made, all assignments must be emailed to me by the day they are due (by 11:59 pm Danville time). The grades of late assignments will be lowered 10% per calendar day they are late. Computer malfunctions are not considered acceptable excuses for late work. Send it early if you have to.

All material must be your own work. I define plagiarism, modifying the definition from Webster’s 9th New Collegiate Dictionary, as the act of taking, borrowing or stealing the ideas or words of another (without his or her consent) and passing them off as one’s own (i.e., without attributing them to the original source). When writing, please write in German from the beginning. DO NOT write in English and then translate. You may of course use any printed dictionary and any grammar book for help. You may also contact me (by email or phone) for assistance. Online, YOU MAY USE ONLY the dictionary website dict.leo.org and the grammar website www.canoo.net for assistance with your essays. Any use of a translating website will be considered academic dishonesty and brought to Associate Dean Johnston’s attention. You may also consult Prof. Keffer for whatever advice or assistance (short of outright correction) he might be willing to offer (at his discretion and pleasure). You may also advise and assist each other (again, short of outright correction).

F. Exams

There will be no exams in this course.

G. Performance of Tristan und Isolde

Though not required, I have noted on the syllabus a number of performances of Wagner’s opera in Stuttgart. I recommend fitting in such a performance if possible.

H. Grading

10% participation (3/4 graded by all group members; 1/4 based on weekly summaries)
20% short papers (2)
30% homework („Fragen zum Text“)
40% Semesterarbeit
   25% individual portion of Semesterarbeit project (graded by me)
   10% participation in Semesterarbeit project (graded by all group members)
   5% overall grade on Semesterarbeit project (graded by me; all group members receive the same grade)
V. Schedule of Meetings

5. Woche (14.-17. März)  Schnitzler, *Liebelei*
(3. April)  Vorführung von *Tristan und Isolde* bei der Staatsoper Stuttgart)