

AP[®] German Language

Syllabus 2

Course Overview

German IV/V is an advanced study of language usage and syntax. My primary objective is to develop the highest level of fluency possible for my students. We concentrate simultaneously on speaking, oral comprehension, reading, writing, and culture. The class is conducted completely in German, with the exception of [C1] grammar explanations. This course provides intensive preparation for the AP[®] German Language Exam.

C1—The teacher uses German almost exclusively in class and encourages students to do likewise.

The course has no primary textbook. Instead we use a variety of materials. These include short stories and poetry, primarily from the twentieth-century. I take many of these from *Auslese* and *Lies mit mir! Advanced Reader Level 3*. *Auslese* includes prose by Kafka, Tucholsky, Borchert, Böll, Dürrenmatt and Thomas Mann as well as poetry by authors such as Hofmannsthal, Rilke, Morgenstern and Kästner. I always include one or more pieces of *Jugendliteratur* (*Damals war es Friederich* or *Die Ilse ist weg*). For grammar and vocabulary review I sometimes refer to *Schaum's Outline of German Grammar* and *Schaum's Outline for German Vocabulary*. Students also read current news articles from Yahoo.de and work with song lyrics, video interviews and the listening exercises from *Komm mit! Level 3*. I supplement heavily with authentic materials that are appropriate to the topic we are discussing. I use the AP German Released Exams to prepare students for the AP German Language Exam. [C2]

C2—Instructional materials, activities, assignments, and assessments are appropriate to that of a third-year college course in German.

First Semester Pacing

Overview of a Week

Mondays: I begin every Monday with the same question: “Wer hat etwas Interessantes oder besonders Schönes am Wochenende gemacht?” We spend 5 to 10 minutes talking about our weekends. We also discuss new films, school activities, or sports events, and important or interesting things the students did or experienced. I encourage them to ask each other questions and comment [C5,C4] on what is being said. As always, my main goal is oral practice with material that is meaningful and extremely interesting to them. Once our weekend discussion is over, I present the four idioms for the week and we practice using them. If it is a sharing week (every other week during the first semester), we spend the next part of the period hearing student presentations. If it is not a sharing week, we work on grammar.

C5—The course provides students with regular opportunities, in class or in a language laboratory, to develop their speaking skills in a variety of settings, types of discourse, and topics.

C4—Instructional materials include authentic audio and video recordings that develop students' listening abilities.

Tuesdays and Wednesdays: I begin with an aural comprehension practice [C5] from the videocassettes or CDs that come with the *Komm mit!* textbook. I follow this practice with sharing if it is a sharing week. If not, we begin with our in-class reading.

Thursdays: Because our periods are five minutes shorter on Thursdays, we do our vocabulary work on these days, using *Schaum's Outline of German Vocabulary*. I begin with a vocabulary quiz, we correct the vocabulary exercises I assigned the previous week, and then we move on to sharing if it is a sharing week. We generally

spend two to three weeks on each chapter of the book. We cover half the chapters each year; I use the other half the following year.

Fridays: We begin with a quiz on the week's four new idioms and any of the old idioms, we listen to the day's sharing if it is a sharing week, and then we watch a few minutes of whatever full-length feature film the students have chosen. [C4] During nonsharing weeks, Friday begins with the idiom quiz, possibly followed by grammar work (it depends on what we are working on at the time), and ends with a few minutes of whatever film we are currently watching.

C4—Instructional materials include authentic audio and video recordings that develop students' listening abilities.

Overview of a Month

Weeks One and Three: Four idioms, daily sharing (25–30 minutes each day), reading (two chapters of a novel followed by special activities/group projects, or a [C3] short story followed by special activities/group projects), vocabulary work and quiz, idiom quiz, and 15 to 20 minutes of film viewing.

C3—Instructional materials include authentic written texts such as newspaper and magazine articles, literary texts, and other nontechnical writings that develop students' reading abilities.

Weeks Two and Four: Four idioms, grammar review and practice (15 minutes per day plus an hour-long test at the end of the unit), reading (2–3 chapters of a [C3] novel followed by special activities/group projects, or a short story followed by special activities/group projects), vocabulary work and quiz, idiom quiz, and 20 minutes of film viewing.

During the last three days before our two-week winter vacation, I allow my students to relax with *Home Alone*. Because I purchased this film in Germany, it has no subtitles. Students love the story and the German is easy to understand.

The Last Week Before the Final Exam: We do a major review of all the short stories and any novel(s) we have read during the semester. The students usually [C7] work as partners to prepare a large poster of a chapter in the novel or one of the short stories. The poster includes the title of the work or chapter, the author, the main action and characters, several important quotations, the theme, and several drawings. I give them two class periods to make their posters; if they do not finish, they must work on their own time. It usually takes two or three days for all sets of partners to present their posters to the class. They must explain in German what they chose for their poster and why. The rest of the class always asks many questions. It is an efficient and impressive way to review a lot of material.

C7—The course provides frequent opportunities for students to integrate the four language skills through the use of authentic materials.

Second Semester Pacing

The second semester is when I swing into high gear with my preparation for the AP German Language Exam. Instead of sharing weeks, we concentrate on gaining familiarity with the question formats and timing of the AP German Language Exam.

Overview of a Week

Mondays through Fridays: We do one AP Exam practice exercise every day: a cartoon picture sequence, a 20-second directed responses section, a cloze passage exercise, an AATG National Test reading comprehension passage, or an oral comprehension exercise from *Komm mit!* After our practice session we work on grammar: verb review, the passive, the conditional, and the subjunctive. We

continue with the in-class reading from first semester. In addition, students must read a page every evening and complete one exercise in *Komm mit!*

Mondays: We begin with a discussion of our weekends (“Wer hat etwas Interessantes oder . . .?”) and then continue with our four idioms a week, which I present on Monday and test on Friday. Every other week, I assign a new essay topic, which is due the following week. I return the previous week’s (first draft) essay, [C6] and students’ corrections to it are due two days later.

C6—The course provides instruction and frequent opportunities to write a variety of compositions in German.

Tuesdays and Wednesdays: The weekly Internet assignment is due on Tuesdays. I return the previous week’s assignment with comments and corrections, and give the next week’s Internet assignment. If an article is especially interesting or relevant, we discuss it, practicing with the new German vocabulary.

Thursdays: I continue the Thursday vocabulary work from the first semester using *Schaum’s Outline*, spending two to three weeks on each chapter. Class begins with a vocabulary quiz and then we correct the exercises that were assigned the previous week.

Fridays: After our idiom quiz and our AP German Language Exam practice speaking activity, I end the week by showing a few minutes of a feature-length film the students have chosen. If we have just finished a major grammar unit, I test students for the full 50 minutes on Friday.

Overview of a Week

Four idioms; five practice AP exercises; daily discussion of nightly reading and exercises in *Lies mit mir!* (5 minutes); Internet assignment collected and discussed; essay assigned or collected; draft returned or revisions collected; reading (2–3 chapters in a novel followed by special activities/group presentations, or a [C7] short story followed by special activities/group presentations); grammar lecture, practice, and test (the timing depends on the difficulty and how quickly the students understand the material); vocabulary work and quiz; and 15 to 20 minutes of film viewing.

C7—The course provides frequent opportunities for students to integrate the four language skills through the use of authentic materials.

Because we are focused on preparing for the AP German Language Exam and do not have sharing weeks in the second semester, each week in the month is similar, if not the same, as the others.

After the AP German Language Exam

A full month of school still remains after the AP German Language Exam. We usually tackle one last book and continue with our idioms and vocabulary work. I give the seniors their two-hour final exam a week early so we can relax with my favorite film for teaching German, *Forrest Gump*. This film is dubbed with no subtitles. Forrest, of course, speaks very slowly and the students can easily understand everything.

The last day is always *Tschüss Tag*. We have been together for four years; it is been a very special time, and the students have formed lifelong friendships. We stay connected by e-mail, and many students come back to visit and let me know how their four years in my classroom have changed their lives.

Teaching Strategies

Reading

Typically, in the first semester my students read one novel, seven or so short [C3] stories, or a combination of a novel and several short stories. During the second semester they usually read one novel, seven or eight short stories, or a combination of one short novel and several short stories.

C3—Instructional materials include authentic written texts such as newspaper and magazine articles, literary texts, and other nontechnical writings that develop students' reading abilities.

Every year I vary the selections we read in German IV/V. I usually begin the year with a series of short stories. Over the years, I have built up an extensive short story collection. Most are from the twentieth century, with the majority coming from the postwar period. In addition to these collected pieces, I also use *Auslese*, an excellent anthology that includes poetry. When we work with poetry, I introduce a study of concrete (picture) poems and ask students to create their own poems and picture poems. I am always impressed with their creativity.

In addition to our study of the short stories in *Auslese*, my students read several pieces of *Jugendliteratur*. I have developed all of the support materials (e.g., vocabulary aids, writing assignments, group and partner activities and assignments, speaking practices, and visual projects) for all of the selections we read. I give students the vocabulary lists ahead of time so that no one needs to ask what something means. In this way I can keep the instruction completely in German. See the student activities section of this syllabus for examples of some of the writing activities I do to reinforce my students' reading.

In class during the first semester I always have one of the students summarize in German what we read in class the day before and another student summarize what was assigned for homework. I answer any questions about the homework reading pages. If we have just completed a chapter, we all share our new titles for the chapter. Depending on the book we are reading, the students' abilities, and the difficulty of the German, we generally average a chapter a day (3–4 pages) or so. What we do not finish in class, I assign for homework.

In the second semester I add three additional aspects to our reading. First, I assign some of the short stories from *Lies mit mir!* for students to read alone at home. I want them to develop their reading skills so that they can read without my help. Second, I also assign the excellent comprehension and vocabulary exercises that follow each of the reading selections. I usually assign one page and one exercise per evening. Third, I allow students only a couple of minutes of class time to ask questions about the stories and to clarify any misunderstandings before we correct the exercise. My goal with this approach is to shift the burden of comprehension onto the students and spend minimal class time on it.

To help students practice for the AP Released Exam, I use the reading passages from old AATG (American Association of Teachers of German) National Tests. I try to do several selections in class each week with the students. We read the selections, answer the questions, and discuss our answers and any problems that they may have had with them.

Writing

The writing exercises my students do during the first semester are described in [C7] detail in the student activities section of this syllabus. In the second semester they have a standing weekly Internet assignment. I ask them to go to Yahoo.de and click on the current news link. They are to choose one article, print it out, and complete a worksheet in German. The worksheet asks for the following (in German) about each article: its title, its date, a four- or five-sentence summary of the article, a four- or five-sentence explanation of why the article is important, and five new vocabulary words defined and used in sentences.

C7—The course provides frequent opportunities for students to integrate the four language skills through the use of authentic materials.

I have found this weekly activity to be very successful. The students are enthusiastic because they have the freedom to choose an article they find interesting. They are also amazed at how differently the news is reported in Germany than in the United States. It is an excellent cultural immersion tool because it allows students to see current events from a German/European viewpoint. At the same time, they improve their reading comprehension and add current expressions to their vocabulary. The assignment is interesting for me, too. It is fun to see what my students choose and what they get out of the articles. As an added bonus, the articles can be used as a springboard for class discussions of current events.

I have amassed a large collection of essay questions from old AP German Language Exams. During the second semester I give my students one question [C6] every two weeks. At first, I give them the easier topics, let them do the writing at home with no time limits, and allow them to use dictionaries. I correct their grammar and use the AP Exam scoring guidelines to grade their essays. The students must revise and correct their essays, and I grade them again. It is a lot of work for all of us, but there is no other way to practice writing other than to write. As we get closer to the May exam date, students must write their papers in class with no dictionary help. The final step is to allow them only 40 minutes for writing. When transitioning to in-class writing, I usually try to choose easier topics at first.

C6—The course provides instruction and frequent opportunities to write a variety of compositions in German.

In addition, I have numerous cloze passage writing exercises, many of which I have made myself. We complete at least one per week in class during the second semester. I give students 10 minutes to do the exercise on their own and then we correct it. I require them to keep a “sin sheet” on which they list the common constructions that reoccur in the cloze passage exercises. This list then becomes a study guide for their AP German Language Exam review.

Speaking

Every other week throughout the first semester is sharing week. This class [C5] activity is similar to the “show and tell” exercise elementary school teachers use to teach their students how to speak in front of the class. Students may bring in something—or someone. We have had little sisters and brothers, cats, dogs, a snake, and even a chicken come to the class to be shared! Or they may simply talk about something they feel is important. Initially I allow students to use a small card with a few key words, but they quickly outgrow this crutch. The student speaks for a couple of minutes and then the class asks questions. I encourage questions that cannot be answered with one or two words.

C5—The course provides students with regular opportunities, in class or in a language laboratory, to develop their speaking skills in a variety of settings, types of discourse, and topics.

Five to six students make sharing presentations each day during a sharing week, which allows all 25 to 30 students in the class to have a turn. Each presentation lasts about five minutes, depending on how long the presenter speaks and how many questions the other students ask. I grade the presenter on a scale of 1 to 10, which is similar to the scale used for the speaking component of the AP Exam. I use 10 instead of 9 as the top score because the math is easier! The students who ask questions also receive points; the goal is to get students to do as much speaking as possible.

My students love sharing week because it is always interesting and always something in which they are personally very involved. The presentations are extremely creative and often humorous. Although I try to limit the sharing to the first 20 minutes of class, students think they are getting away with not doing the “real” work of the class and sometimes try to extend the sharing into “my” time. I have found that my students’ speaking skills skyrocket as a result of our sharing.

Unfortunately, the demands of the AP German Language Exam preparation do not allow us to continue our sharing weeks in the second semester. Instead, we practice with a large collection of six-picture cartoon series. I have many picture sequences from old AP German Language Exams. Other sources for cartoons are *Vater und Sohn* and *Comics and Conversation*.

Because we have no language lab, students work with partners on the cartoon series. I train them to spend their two minutes of planning time filling out a six-part grid with the key words and concepts they want to use during the speaking time. That way, if they start to panic, they have their lists in front of them. When the planning time is up, one student relates the cartoon story for two minutes while the other student listens. Then they change roles. The next time we do a cartoon, the second speaker gets to go first. In this way students can give each other feedback and help each other with vocabulary and expressions. I have students rotate partners frequently. After both students have had a chance to tell the story, I call on one of the better students in the class to tell the story for everyone while I time the two minutes. We discuss the vocabulary the student used, what was particularly good in the response, and what special touches were included; and we make suggestions.

I have also developed a very long list of 20-second directed responses prompts. Again, the students work in pairs. I give the prompt orally and time the 20 seconds the speaker has to respond to the listener. I go through all six prompts. Then the students change roles and I repeat the same prompts. We go through the six prompts for a third time as a class; I give the prompt and call on three or four students to give their responses. In this way we hear a variety of answers and vocabulary.

A few weeks before the AP German Language Exam we practice both the cartoon series and the 20-second directed responses with individual cassette tape recorders, which are provided by the school’s Parents Club. It is important for students have actual practice with the recording device so they understand how to hold it, how to speak into it, how loudly to speak, and how *not* to stop recording unless told to do so! This process also teaches them to concentrate on their own speaking in a room that is very loud. We do one cartoon series and at least one

set of six 20-second directed responses a week. If I have six to eight minutes left at the end of a class period, it is enough time to do an extra 20-second directed responses set.

Listening Comprehension

I have a PAL VCR and a multiregion DVD player that play European videos and DVDs, so I can show the full-length feature films purchased during trips to Germany. Because these dubbed films without subtitles are made in Hollywood and my students are already familiar with the stories, they are able to understand the dialogue relatively easily. This is a painless way for them to practice listening comprehension. It takes a number of weeks to complete a film because I allow them to watch for only 15 to 20 minutes on Fridays. I usually let the class to select which film we watch, but a few that I have found to work well are the German-dubbed versions of *The Wedding Singer*, *Home Alone*, *Forrest Gump*, *Meet the Parents*, and *The River Wild*. Two German-made films that are excellent are *Bella Martha* and *Jenseits der Stille*. I am careful to avoid films that are R-rated or that do not have clear German. [C4]

C4—Instructional materials include authentic audio and video recordings that develop students' listening abilities.

Additional aural comprehension practice includes the use of the interviews on the videos that come with *Komm mit!* These exercises take 5 to 10 minutes of class time. I ask the students to listen for specific information or to answer specific questions I have given them before the viewing. I also use the listening comprehension practices that come with that textbook; I think they are too difficult for German III students but appropriate for my advanced class. I try to do several each week.

Grammar Work

I use *Schaum's Outline of German Grammar* to reinforce the more difficult aspects of German grammar. I have taught the basic grammar in the first three years of the language study, but during the first semester we review the most difficult concepts, such as adjective endings, relative pronouns, the prepositions and their cases, word order, and irregular verbs. Most of these grammar units take two weeks, and at the end of the second grammar week I give a test that takes the full class period.

In February I do a major review of the irregular verbs and their tenses. When we have finished this review, I teach the passive, the conditional, and the subjunctive. The passive and the conditional generally take two weeks each; the subjunctive often requires three weeks. I give a period-long test after completing each grammar unit.

After a presentation, we practice the new grammar in class. I try to devise activities that involve students' personal interests to make the practices more meaningful. I assign the homework (due the next day) out of the book, and we have a big test when we are finished with a unit. If possible, I try to devise a writing assignment that forces the use of whatever concept we have just finished studying (due a week later).

Vocabulary Building

In addition to the vocabulary work we do in connection with the reading selections, I use *Schaum's Outline of German Vocabulary*. We spend several weeks throughout the year on each unit, doing the exercises and learning the lists of words. I give students weekly quizzes on the lists and one big test at the end of the unit.

Idioms

We work intensively with idioms during both semesters. I teach four new idioms every week and test students on them at the end of the week. The testing is cumulative throughout the year. I expect students to incorporate the idioms into their speaking and writing.

Student Evaluation

I use the following formula to determine the semester grade for my advanced class.

Grade	Worth
First quarter	40%
Second quarter	40%
Final exam	20%
Semester total	100%

Each quarter grade is based on the accumulation of points earned for specific types of assignments and evaluations.

Assessment	Points
Sharing week grade	100 points, based on the quality of the presentations and the number of questions asked of the other presenters
Oral presentation grade	100 points, based on the quality and frequency of the participation, group work, and presentations
Large grammar tests	100 points each
Homework grade	50 points, determined by the number of assignments completed
Essays	30 points each, plus 20 points for revisions
Weekly Internet assignments	22 points each
Weekly idiom quizzes	20 points each
Weekly vocabulary quizzes	20 points each
Test corrections	10 points each

Student Activities

Sample Reading and Writing Activities

This section contains many examples of the reading and writing activities I do with my students when we are working on a book. I have organized the examples in a way that follows our progress through the book.

Prereading Activities

These activities are done during the class period. The nature of the material we are reading determines which ones I select for students to do; some of these [C3] activities lend themselves better to different themes or topics than others. The number of activities we do also depends a lot on how the class reacts to them. Sometimes the students really get into a specific activity. When this happens, I let them go further with it, which, of course, takes more time.

C3—Instructional materials include authentic written texts such as newspaper and magazine articles, literary texts, and other nontechnical writings that develop students' reading abilities.

- I introduce the title of the reading and invite the students to anticipate what the story will be about. We do this as a discussion, or I write the title on the overhead projector and the students add their ideas. (5–10 minutes)
- I use a picture or photograph as a stimulus and the students list or say what comes to their minds. (5 minutes)
- I use the book cover (with or without the title) as a stimulus. The students list what comes to their minds and then we discuss it. (5 minutes)
- I use a single, significant word as a stimulus and follow with a discussion. (5 minutes)
- I use a poem that introduces or ties into the reading selection and follow with a discussion. (15 minutes)
- I use a song that introduces or ties into the reading selection and follow with a discussion. (15 minutes)
- I list the chapter titles for the book in a mixed-up order and have the students arrange them in what they feel is the correct order. They must, of course, explain their reasoning in German. This can be done as individual or partner work. (20 minutes)
- I present biographical information on the author as a partner activity. Each student has half the information, and the two partners must exchange their information to answer all of the questions. (20 minutes)

Early Reading Activities

Once we begin the new book or chapter, students volunteer to read aloud [C3,C7] so that they can practice pronunciation. I constantly interrupt with comprehension questions or further explanations in German of what we have read. If we are dealing with an important cultural theme like *Ausländer*, we will stop and have a full discussion in German. The evening's assignment always includes rereading

C7—The course provides frequent opportunities for students to integrate the four language skills through the use of authentic materials.

what we have read together in class before reading the new assigned pages. I often include an additional, creative assignment, such as one of those that follow here, to go with the reading.

- Students write a new title for the chapter. (Due the next day)
- Students draw or find a picture of a specific character. (Due the next day)
- Students write a *Diamant* (a five-line nonrhyming poem) for a character following this format: line 1, the character's name; line 2, two descriptive verbs in the infinitive; line 3, three adjectives; line 4, a four-word sentence; and line 5, a final descriptive noun synonym for the character. The poem that results is in the shape of a diamond. The students do fabulous things with this assignment. (Due one or two days later).
- Students develop a concrete poem for a character or something that happened in the reading (a synonym word that is presented as a picture). (Due one or two days later)
- Students write a name poem by writing the character's name vertically, with each letter serving as the beginning of an adjective or noun that further describes the character. (Due one or two days later)
- Students keep a "Who? What? When? Where?" log for each chapter. (Continued for homework each evening)
- Students do other activities as assigned—activities that reinforce what they have learned but force them to synthesize and take the language to a higher level. (Due one or two days later)

Midpoint Reinforcement

When we come to the end of a chapter or other logical stopping point, I usually [C7] have a special group activity.

- Students work in groups to draw a large picture of the character and then justify (in German) why they drew the character the way they did. We hang the pictures around the room and discuss them before voting on which one is truest to the text. I give the students one class period or part of a period to make their drawings and decide what they are going to say for their presentations. The presentations and discussion usually take part of the next class period.
- Students work in groups to make a large map of the chapter that includes the title, the action, important quotations, illustrations, and any important concepts or themes. The students present their maps to the class, and we discuss and critique them. As always, all of the discussion is in German. I give the students one or two class periods to make their maps and plan their presentations. The presentations usually take a class period.

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- Students work in pairs to create a character map. The character's name is written on a large piece of paper. The students draw the character's picture and then select descriptive words or phrases for the character from the text and write the words around the picture. A variation is to write the significant events that involve the character. The students present their posters to the class and explain their choices. I give them a class period to make their maps and plan their presentations. The presentations usually take part of the next class period.

End-of-Book Activities

When we have finished a book or story, there are a number of writing activities [C6] students can do.

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- Students choose two characters and have those characters write letters to each other. (Due a week later) I allow part of a class period for students to read the letters aloud in class the day they are due.
- Students make original valentines for one character to give to another (the characters do not necessarily need to come from the same book or story). We present the valentines on Valentine's Day and display them in the classroom. I make the assignment a week before Valentine's Day; the presentations take part of the class period.
- Students answer the question: "What would these characters write to each other 10 years from the end of the story?" I choose the best or most interesting answers to read to the class. (Due a week later)
- Students write a continuation for the story. I choose the best or most interesting continuation to read to the class. (Due a week later)
- Students write a new ending for the story. I choose the best or most interesting ending to read to the class. (Due a week later)
- Students rewrite the story in dialogue form instead of prose. I choose the best or most interesting rewrite to read to the class. (Due a week later)
- Students rewrite the story from another character's point of view. I choose the best or most interesting rewrite to read to the class. (Due a week later)

A variation on the last four activities is to put the students into groups and have the students take turns reading their work to the rest of the group; the group then chooses the piece to be read to the entire class.

Test Review

To review for a test on the book or story my students do one of the following two activities.

- They prepare a series of 10 to 12 key sentences lifted directly from the story or chapter, print out the list, cut the list apart, rearrange the order of

the sentences, and put the sentences in an envelope. Another student has the task of arranging the sentences in the correct order. This works well as a group or partner activity. (Due two days later. The activity takes part of a class period.)

- I choose the key words from the story and write them on index cards. I give each student two cards in random order. The cards are numbered so that the students explain the significance/importance of their words to the story in the correct chronological order. (I give students five minutes to plan what they will say; it takes part of a class period for them to speak about all the cards.)

These are only a few ideas for reinforcing the reading material and practicing with the language. The important thing is to provide relevant activities that are enjoyable for students and give them an opportunity to be creative. I never fail to be amazed at what my students can do!