

# GRMN 4001 Trans(I)its

Fall 2022

MW 10:15 AM – 11:44 AM

Professor Javier Samper Vendrell [*he/him*]

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Office Hours: MW 2:00–3:00 PM and by appointment

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS:**

This course focuses on authors who have arrived at their German words via global, worldly itineraries. The course considers movements between languages, including those of the students themselves and encourages students to develop their own voice as authors via a series of critical and writing exercises. At the same time, students develop strategies to reflect on their own language learning. This course provides an important space for German-learners at Penn to draw on one another's experiences in the program and to build a sense of community. The course is required for all German majors in fall semester of their senior year.

## **REQUIRED TEXTS**

Karosh Taha, [\*Im Bauch der Königin\*](#) (Dumont, 2020) (250 S.)

Deniz Ohde, [\*Streulicht\*](#) (Suhrkamp, 2020) (284 S.)

Olivia Wenzel, [\*1000 Serpentinaen Angst\*](#) (S. Fischer Verlage, 2020). (352 S.)

Lena Gorelik, [\*Wer wir sind\*](#) (Rowohlt, 2021) (320 S.)

The books can be purchased online from [abebooks.com](http://abebooks.com) or [amazon.com](http://amazon.com). Check both sites for availability and best prices.

All texts will be on reserve at the Van Pelt Library.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT**

Active Participation	20%
Reading Journal	20%
Oral Presentation	10%
4 Essays	40%
Digital Storytelling	10%

### **Participation and Preparation**

Regular attendance and active preparation will help you do well in this course.

Attendance will be recorded. Please make sure to be in class on time. I will give you a warning if you have 2 or more unexcused absences. If your absence is excused for a religious holiday or an official activity, please let me know in advance. In case of serious emergencies, including health emergencies, we'll work together to find alternatives for completing the required work for this course.

Participation is more than just being there. It requires student engagement and active learning before class. Classroom behavior must reflect a spirit of generosity and respect. Classroom etiquette requires that we pay attention to people speaking and avoid side conversations, for example on cell phones, distracting or disrespectful gestures, and unrelated reading and writing.

### Homework

You will have daily homework, which, for the most part, entails reading. If you plan ahead, **you will have to read approx. 10 pages in German per day. Note that the amount of reading might change based on our specific needs.** You will receive questions to guide your reading, to prepare you for the class discussion, and to help you make connections between the texts. Your written responses will constitute the **reading journal**. You should complete the journal *before* each class period. You will be able to use your observations and thoughts when writing essays. I will check your journal twice.

### Presentation

You will be responsible for **an 8- to 10-minute oral presentation** (*Referat*) over the course of the semester. I will distribute a sign-up sheet early on in the semester.

Carefully prepared oral presentations will help you share knowledge with your peers with confidence and increase your comfort with conducting research in German. In consultation with the instructor, you will select a presentation topic related to the course. Oral expression is subject to revision like our written work. You will identify a peer and work with the oral presentation peer-editing worksheet. Your peer will give you feedback on your presentation. You will then take these comments into consideration, and then share your improved oral presentation with everybody in class. Your classmates and I will provide you with feedback on your presentation's content and written form.

### Essays

You will write **4 essays** on topics related to the texts we have discussed in the course. I will circulate essay prompts in advance. The essays will be written in German and will vary in length (2–4 double-spaced typed pages). As always, draft writing will help you avoid preventable mistakes and help you organize your work. Although this is not strictly a language course, part of your grade will be based on proper grammatical expression. However, I will evaluate your essays primarily based on coherence, clarity, and your understanding of the class materials. Some of the essays will be peer reviewed before you turn them in. The peer-editing rubric will make my expectations clear. You are responsible for citation according to the *MLA Handbook* or the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

### Digital Storytelling

You will create a low-tech digital story about your journey in German.

### Deadlines

All relevant due dates are listed in the syllabus. I expect that all papers will be turned in on time on or before the day they are due. **Each student is entitled to ONE 48-hour extension** during the semester. You do not need to provide a reason for the requested extension.

### Communication with the instructor

I encourage you to contact me if you have questions or if you would like to learn more about the themes covered in this course. You may contact me by email. If it is an urgent matter, it is important that you leave a realistic amount of time for me to respond. I may not be able to respond to your e-mail immediately, but I will try. If you send me an email the right before an assignment is due, you may not receive a response in time for it to be helpful for you.

I will hold a *Sprechstunde* twice a week (MW 2:00–3:00 PM). We can meet in person (when allowed) or online. I'd like to encourage you to make an appointment during these times, but you can always schedule an appointment at another time convenient for both of us.

### Gender Inclusivity in German

Nouns in German have a gender (masculine, feminine, or neuter) that often doesn't obey any apparent logic: why is a chair "he," a lamp "she," or a window "it"? Whereas linguists may offer different explanations for that, one thing is clear: we must learn the gender of nouns in order to speak German properly. The correct use of pronouns, possessive adjectives, adjective endings, or declensions depends on knowing the correct gender of a noun. The German language also assigns humans a gender and German is not special for having a rigid binary gender system. As a matter of fact, you will hear binary forms in most public discourse. Patriarchy, heterosexism, and gender normativity are reflected in our use of language and language instruction is one of the spaces in which such power structures are reinforced. This does not mean that such practices cannot be contested. Feminist, queer, intersex, and trans activists in Germany have been advocating for many years the use of gender-inclusive and non-binary language when addressing other people. Many German speakers are fighting for their right not to be erased by implicit sexist language (are all *Studenten* male?) or to be addressed to by their preferred gender pronoun. The use of gender inclusive language is becoming more common in German, for instance through the use of the *Binnen-I* form (as in *StudentInnen*). In addition, activists are advocating forms that challenge the gender binary even further, for instance with the *Gender-Gap* (*Student\_innen*), the *Gender-Sternchen* (*Student\*innen*), and the alternative ending *x* (*Studentxs*). At Penn, we strive to be respectful and inclusive. Whereas we still need to learn language in its normative form, I encourage you to be aware of the implications of such norms and to be attentive to your classmates' and instructors' preferred gender pronouns. There is no reason why we cannot join these activists' efforts in making language less oppressive for all. If you'd like to know more or continue this conversation, contact me.

### Accessibility Statement

I strive to create a fully inclusive classroom, thus I welcome individual students to approach me about distinctive learning needs. In particular, I encourage students with disabilities to have a conversation with me and disclose how our classroom or course activities could impact the disability and what accommodations would be essential to you. You should register with Disability Services, Weingarten Center (220 South 40th St., Suite 260).

### Academic Honesty

According to the Policies and Procedures Handbook of the University of Pennsylvania, using the ideas, data, or language of another without specific and proper acknowledgement constitutes plagiarism. If you are at all unsure about the appropriate form of acknowledgement in a particular situation, it is your responsibility, as stated in Penn's Code of Academic Integrity, <http://www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity/>, to consult with the instructor to clarify any ambiguities. Plagiarism in any assignment will result in a failing grade for that assignment, and may result in further disciplinary action, which may include receiving a failing grade for the course. The use of any translation programs and/or websites is also considered plagiarism.

### Take care of yourself

Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep, and taking time to relax. Taking care of yourself will actually help you achieve your academic goals more than spending too much time studying.

All of us benefit from support and guidance during times of struggle. There are many helpful resources available on and off campus. An important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Take the time to learn about all that's available and take advantage of it. Ask for support sooner rather than later – this always helps.

If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or difficult feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. Consider reaching out to a friend, faculty or family member you trust for assistance connecting to the support that can help.