The study of German at Bowdoin has a long tradition, which began in 1829 when Henry Wadsworth Longfellow became the first professor of modern languages at the College. The German department offers a flexible German studies curriculum, which honors Longfellow by embracing language study as a humanistic endeavor while intersecting a range of academic, interdisciplinary, and personal interests—for example, art and history, music and travel, politics and business, personal heritage, philosophy or world literature, study abroad, European pop culture, German film. Students are strongly encouraged to study one or two semesters in a German-speaking country in order to become literate in the language and culture, as well as to gain a better understanding of their own culture in a global context.

The German curriculum at Bowdoin is divided into three major areas: language and culture, literature and culture, and literature and culture in English translation. The elementary two-semester sequence emphasizes speaking, understanding, reading, and writing and introduces aspects of German history and culture; the intermediate level concentrates on reading, speaking, composition, and review of grammar with an intensified focus on German culture. The advanced courses focus on reading strategies, conversation, critical writing, and culture. Each year a native German teaching fellow assists in individual and group sessions with advanced students.

The study of German literature and culture begins with an introduction to German studies. Advanced courses are taught in German and address literature, musical theater, opera, film, and popular culture in historical, social, and political contexts from the 18th century to the present. Examples of special topics courses are: Colors: Signs of Ethnic Difference 1800/1900/2000; Vienna, 1890-1914; and Contested Discourse: German Popular Film and Culture since Unification.

Literature and culture courses taught in English are open to all students and address topics of broad interest to the campus. Examples include: The Literary Imagination and the Holocaust; Laugh and Cry: Post-World War II German Film; and Nazi Cinema. German department courses are occasionally cross-listed with film studies and other interdisciplinary programs.

The Major and Minor
The German major attracts students who begin their study of German at Bowdoin as well as those with prior preparation in the language. The program is adaptable to individual student backgrounds, styles, and pace of learning, and can be pursued as a single major or in combination with any other major or minor program at Bowdoin. Prospective majors work closely with the professors in the department who are well acquainted with students and assist them in designing a unique program tailored to their individual interests.

The German major consists of seven courses: at least six above German 204 (the final course of the intermediate language and culture sequence), and one may be chosen from the introductory German literature and culture courses in English translation. The major requirements can be partially fulfilled through courses from study-abroad programs. Majors

Facilities & Resources
The German department, located in Sills Hall, collaborated with other language departments to create a student library in a tradition-filled room in Sills, the Peucinian Room, which is also used for seminars, small classes, and departmental get-togethers. German students make good use of the Language Media Center, which houses a computer lab, a video-viewing room, and an extensive German film library. Language software and individual video viewing and editing equipment supplement students’ work with language and film. Live German radio and video news and other programming is available to students in the center and through computer hook-ups across campus. The Language Media Center’s German Web site provides links to reference works and dictionaries as well as to Web sites on German language, literature, film, and folklore.

A weekly German table, Stammtisch, meets in the dining hall throughout the academic year. The department has benefited from recent College-wide productions of Dürrenmatt’s The Visit and the cabaret staging of Kurt Well: From Berlin to Broadway. The German department regularly sponsors campus-wide events such as German studies lectures, readings by German authors, and visits by German filmmakers. These have include a reading by author Otto Emersleben during Berlin Week in 2004, and visits by filmmakers Frank Beyer, Wolfgang Kohlhaase, and Amie Siegel.
are encouraged to consider one of a number of study-abroad programs with different calendars and formats, and seniors may pursue honors projects and independent study.

The German minor consists of Elementary German II and four additional courses in the department, at least two of which must be taught in German.

Study Abroad

The German department encourages all German majors to study in Germany or Austria. Study in a German-speaking country is the best way for students to become literate in the language and culture as well as to gain a better understanding of their own.

The German major emphasizes both literature and culture, and it offers credit for courses in German studies (humanities and social science courses with a European/German focus taught in German). Double majors in German and the humanities or social sciences are able to integrate their interests and strengthen their focus in an international context.

Students have the opportunity to study at various programs matching their academic interests and level. The German department-approved programs are located in Munich, Freiburg, Berlin, Hamburg, Tübingen, Mainz, and Vienna.

Honors Program and Independent Study

Independent study provides advanced students with the opportunity to explore in depth an area of German literature or culture with a faculty advisor. Advanced German majors are encouraged to engage in yearly honors work in their senior year. Students are encouraged to use approaches that integrate their other academic interests with German literature and culture. The department offers one- and two-semester independent study projects that differ in length and scope. Honors projects are reviewed by all the members of the department’s faculty.

Teaching Assistants

Students play a crucial role in the department’s teaching. Seniors returning from study away are selected as teaching assistants for the first four semesters of German-language instruction and assist as tutors and graders. They work closely with faculty to develop teaching skills and contribute their ideas and experience to the program. Usually, at least one of our TAs began the study of German at Bowdoin.

Faculty

Helen L. Cafferty, William R. Kenan, Jr., Professor of German and the Humanities, A.B. (Bowling Green), A.M. (Syracuse), Ph.D. (Michigan), specializes in German drama and epic theater; gender and East German studies; eighteenth-century German literature, culture, and philosphy; Romantcism; manifestations of race, and ethnic and cultural differences in literature and film.

Steven R. Cerf, George Lincoln Skoffield, Jr., Professor of German, A.B. (Queens College), M.Ph., Ph.D. (Yale), specializes in turn-of-the-century Vienna, Thomas Mann, librettistic studies, German film, the Holocaust, and Faust.

Jill Suzanne Smith, assistant professor of German, B.A. (Amherst), M.A., Ph.D. (Indiana–Bloomington), specializes in nineteenth- and twentieth-century German literary and cultural studies, the Weimar Republic, gender & sexuality studies, and Jewish studies.

Bowdoin German majors continue to be extremely successful candidates for teaching and research grants to Germany and Austria. An average of three to four seniors and recent graduates have won Fulbrights every year—a total of 45 since 1993. German majors have also been recipients of Congress-Bundestag, Truman, and DAAD grants.

Graduates of the department have a variety of career choices after graduation. A few proceed to graduate study in German studies, German history, film studies, or comparative literature. Some choose to teach at the secondary-school level. The study of German also supports careers in a range of compatible fields. Recent German graduates have gone on to careers in government, law, medicine, international business, urban planning, and teaching English as a second language.

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For more information, visit: http://academic.bowdoin.edu/german/