

## Myths and Mysteries in the German Graphic Novel

<b>Instructor:</b>	Prof. Dr. Robert Kelz
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<b>Office hours:</b>	T 2:30-3:30pm, R 7:00-8:00pm, and by appointment
<b>Class meetings:</b>	T, R 11:20am-12:24pm; Jones Hall 214
<b>Required materials:</b>	You must purchase at least one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isabel Kreitz, <i>Die Entdeckung der Currywurst</i> (2005)</li> <li>• Stefan Zweig, <i>Schachnovelle</i> (1941)</li> <li>• G. Sorel/L. Seksik, <i>Die letzten Tage von Stefan Zweig</i> (2012)</li> <li>• Reinhard Kleist, <i>Berliner Mythen</i> (2016)</li> <li>• Barbara Yelin/Tom v. Steinaecker, <i>Der Sommer Ihres Lebens</i> (2017)</li> <li>• Arne Jysch/Volker Kutscher, <i>Der nasse Fisch</i> (2017)</li> <li>• Nora Krug, <i>Heimat: Ein deutsches Familienalbum</i> (2018)</li> <li>• Mikael Ross, <i>Der Umfall</i> (2018)</li> </ul>
<b>Free tutoring:</b>	We have a native speaker of German, Elias Apel, who will offer free tutoring and conversation practice to all students of German on Mon (10:30-12:25), Wed (2:30-5:00), Thurs (1:15-3:00) in 235 Jones Hall.
<b>Kaffeestunde:</b>	Tuesday from 1:15-2:45 in Jones Hall 241. Join students and faculty/instructors for conversation in German and English.
<b>German club:</b>	Join the German Studies at the University of Memphis group on Facebook for lots of quirky posts on all things germanophone.

### Course Description

In this course you will get to know a familiar medium in a new way and different language. The broad, guiding questions of the course are deceptively simple: What is a graphic novel/comic? More specifically, are comics literature or a different variety of art form? Or both at once? How does one read a comic, and how does a comic create meaning? But not only the forms and structures of comics are of interest to us. The explosion of the graphic novel in the Germanophone art scene over the past decade or so is such that, unlike even just a few years ago, now we can explore the genre thematically. Therefore, this semester we will analyze myths and mysteries in the German graphic novel. One or both of these of these themes are present in all the materials we will read.

Sometimes, the myth or mystery will be obvious. Other times, we will have to scrutinize the work very closely to find out what myth is being exposed, or which mystery is under investigation. Similar to the film director Fritz Lang's deployment of the new technology of sound in his expressionist masterpiece, *M* (1931), the interplay of text and image creates new possibilities to guide, manipulate, and bewilder readers of the contemporary graphic novel. Image and text intersect to propel the myths and mysteries we will encounter about the Weimar Republic, old age, mental disabilities, Berliners, home, exile, and the origins of curried sausage. Our task is to examine these intersections, and in the process you will push and improve your German, increase your awareness of social issues and German history, and develop your ability to read comics more analytically, especially with regard to their role as social, historical, and autobiographical documents.

**Course Goals:** The purpose of all "German Conversation and Composition" courses is to help you learn to communicate more freely, accurately, and idiomatically in German. In this class, too, you should gain a more comprehensive grasp of key concepts in German grammar, as well as increase the range and nuance of your vocabulary. By emphasizing active expression, i.e. written and spoken German, you should learn to communicate in German more confidently and effectively. To that end, we will maximize opportunities for you to practice your German orally. We will occasionally discuss grammar concepts in English, but otherwise you must speak *exclusively* German. Certainly, it can be frustrating to speak slower, less eloquently, and with so much more work than you would in your native language, but the rewards are vast. Please also remember that in this class we are a community of language learners. We all know that German is not easy and we all will support and lean on each other throughout the semester. Cultivating and maintaining your German skills is a lifelong project, but also a life-changing one. Keep at it, the benefits are priceless.

**Semester projects:** In groups, all students will hold one presentation (length: 15mn + discussion). One option is either to create your own comic, in which you either compose your own original mini graphic novel, or present an alternative rendition of the comic of your choice. In addition to the rendition, your group will also append a roughly two-page explanation for what you did with your comic: why and how did you create this brief but powerful graphic novel. The second route is to read a graphic novel that is not on the syllabus and, focusing on artistic technique as well as thematic content, present it to the class. I have a long list of works for you to choose from, or you can also present a German graphic novel that you have found on your own.

Each presentation on an extant graphic novel will include a multi-media auxiliary, a vocabulary list, and a handout for all class members. In the case of mini graphic novels, you will share your work and discuss the creative process with the class. Together, you should practice your presentation ahead of time so you can coordinate sequence, fine-tune content, and – especially – polish your pronunciation and delivery. You can count on my help throughout the preparation of these projects. I am happy to assist you in researching and developing your topics. I will also provide you with feedback on grammar, vocabulary, and structure. We all want your presentations to be of the highest possible quality, and I promise to give you my full support in this endeavor.

**Readings:** You will be assigned readings in German for nearly every class. Read entire sentences and paragraphs at a time, not word for word. Let context, key words, cognates and, especially in this course, images guide your understanding. By drawing from the images to fill in the textual gaps, you can glean a general idea without constantly consulting a dictionary. Assignments will be of a

length that permits multiple readings, so you can look up new words and clear up confusion by perusing the materials more than once. Of course, you will encounter passages that surpass your competency. This can be frustrating, but grappling with authentic German texts will further your adaptation to this language. Just like English, reading will expand your vocabulary and improve your writing in German, too.

**Essays:** Lengths will begin at 150 words and increase incrementally over the semester. Each essay should be ***double-spaced***. I will mark errors in your first draft but will make very few corrections. The final incarnation is due at least five days after the return of the first draft, and the grade for the final draft holds sway. *It is a very bad idea to overuse online translators for these papers.*

**Homework:** You will complete exercises from the *Handbuch* (Rankin/Wells – ask me about copies of the book) and other materials. Homework will be evaluated on a "check plus," "check," or "check minus" basis. Homework synthesizing punctilious punctuality and staggering linguistic genius to climax in a rousing crescendo of the Germanic sublime (or just done completely and punctually) will receive a "check plus." Work submitted on time with a satisfactory effort will earn a "check." An assignment laced by laxity, or tainted by tardiness will receive a "check minus."

**Tests and Grammar:** Tests will include grammar, vocabulary, and readings. The grammar component of this course should mostly comprise a review and extension of concepts you have already learned. We will work with the *Handbuch zur deutschen Grammatik* (Rankin/Wells), as well as supplements from other sources. There will be a thorough review before each test.

**Attendance and Participation:** Nothing plays a greater role in your development as a learner of German than attendance and participation. Therefore, both are key components in your grade. You are permitted ***three*** excused absences. If you miss class more often, your grade will plummet. If you are absent due to illness or another valid reason, please let me know before class that day. Participation is relevant contributions as statements or questions in group or whole-class activities.

**Grading:**

Homework (workbook, handouts)	15%
Compositions	20%
Class participation	20%
Tests	25%
Project	20%

**Grading scale:**

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	F
93+	90-92	87-89	83-86	80-82	77-79	73-76	70-72	67-69	61-66	61-

## SEMESTERPLAN

### **Woche 1** (27. – 29. August)

Vorstellen, Syllabus, Einführung, Trivia

Grammatik: das Präteritum

Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (1993)

Reinhard Kleist, *Berliner Mythen* (2016)

### **Woche 2** (3. – 5. September)

Grammatik: das Präteritum

*Berliner Mythen*

### **Woche 3** (10. – 12. September)

Grammatik: Da- und Wo-Komposita

Arne Jysch/Volker Kutscher, *Der nasse Fisch* (2017)

### **Woche 4** (17. – 19. September)

Grammatik: Nachholung

*Der nasse Fisch*

Tom Tyker, Achim von Borries, Henk Handloegten, *Babylon Berlin* (2017)

### **Woche 5** (24. – 26. September)

Wiederholung auf die erste Prüfung

Prüfung #1

### **Woche 6** (1. – 3. Oktober)

Aufsatz #1

Grammatik: Konjunktiv II

Nora Krug, *Heimat: Ein deutsches Familienalbum* (2018)

### **Woche 7** (8. – 10. Oktober)

Grammatik: Konjunktiv II

*Heimat*

### **Woche 8** (17. Oktober)

Grammatik: Adjektivendungen

*Heimat*

### **Woche 9** (22. – 24. Oktober)

Wiederholung auf die zweite Prüfung

Prüfung #2

**Woche 10** (29. – 31. Oktober)

Aufsatz #2

Grammatik: Verben mit bestimmten Präpositionen

Barbara Yelin/Tom v. Steinaecker, *Der Sommer Ihres Lebens* (2017)

**Woche 11** (5. – 7. November)

Grammatik: Genitiv

*Der Sommer Ihres Lebens*

**Woche 12** (12. – 14. November)

Grammatik: Passiv

Stefan Zweig *Schachnovelle* (1941)

Guillaume Sorel/Laurent Seksik, *Die letzten Tage von Stefan Zweig* (2012)

**Woche 13** (19. – 21. November)

Wiederholung auf die dritte Prüfung

Prüfung #3

*Die letzten Tage von Stefan Zweig*

**Woche 14** (26. November)

Aufsatz #3

**Film:** Maria Schader, *Vor der Morgenröte – Stefan Zweig in Amerika* (2016)

Mikael Ross, *Der Unfall* (2018)

**Woche 15** (3. Dezember)

Arbeit an den Semesterprojekten

*Der Unfall* (2018)

**Semesterprojekte und Aufsatz #4: 12. Dezember, 8.00-10.00 Uhr**