FACULTY OF
MEDIEVAL AND MODERN
LANGUAGES

GERMAN

Final Honour School Handbook

INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS
STARTING THEIR FHS COURSE IN OCTOBER 2018
AND NORMALLY EXPECTING TO TAKE THE

FHS EXAMINATION IN TRINITY TERM 2021
This handbook gives subject-specific information for your FHS course in German. For general information about your studies and the faculty, please consult the Faculty’s Undergraduate Course Handbook (https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/site/humdiv:modlang).

COURSE GUIDE: THE FINAL HONOUR SCHOOL COURSE (second and final year)
Reading lists for many papers are available on the sub-faculty website. They can be accessed via the page for current students of German (http://www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk/german) and then following the links to Weblearn.

N.B. The German Sub-Faculty has agreed that, since 2005, the new system of German spelling and punctuation (according to the ‘Rechtschreibreform’) should constitute the teaching standard. Both old and new systems, however, will be accepted for examination purposes, provided that, in either case, the rules are applied with a reasonable degree of consistency.

GERMAN LANGUAGE
After the Preliminary Examination a variety of approaches are used in the language teaching offered to you. Language classes will usually be arranged by your college and there will be opportunities for improving the whole range of skills: reading, listening, writing, and speaking. In addition, there will also be centrally organized classes with Lektoren on offer which students can choose from, with a focus on conversation or writing skills on topics such as cinema, creative writing, history, politics and current affairs in Germany and Austria. Developing your skills in translation will also encourage you to write accurately and acquire a greater degree of Sprachgefühl, and there will be opportunities to develop oral and aural skills with native speakers. Communicative skills will be developed in preparation for the Essay and the Oral examination. Classes using authentic material frequently provide a basis for language exercises and for information on current affairs, politics and other aspects of modern society. Such classes prove especially useful for students who know little about the German-speaking countries and who need guidance for making the most of their year abroad; they also keep Final Year students up to date. Formal classes apart, undergraduates are urged to make use of the well-resourced Language Centre with abundant video and printed material and facilities for computer-assisted learning and self-taught courses.

OXFORD GERMAN NETWORK
The Oxford German Network is a cultural network designed to establish connections between staff and students in the Sub-faculty of German and institutions and people in Oxford and beyond who have an interest in German and the German-speaking countries. The website www.ogn.ox.ac.uk with our Twitter feed acts as a hub for information about events and activities, and offers a wide range of useful resources. Undergraduates can get involved on a regular or more ad hoc basis – if you are interested, send an email to ogn@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk. Please let us know about events or other information you think would be of interest.

LANGUAGE COURSES PROVIDED BY THE LANGUAGE INSTRUCTOR (FINAL YEAR)
These classes are available as a supplement to the language instruction arranged by college tutors.

Grammar and Style. The course is based on Hammer, and additional material in the form of worksheets will be provided. It is designed to offer systematic preparation for the Finals examinations to support prose and translation and essay-writing.
Listening Comprehension. This course is offered in Michaelmas and Hilary Term, and is designed to offer systematic preparation for the listening comprehension component of the oral examination.

Essay. The course covers methods of structuring material for an essay in German as well as questions of linguistic register and style. You will be expected to hand in written work, which will be marked and subsequently discussed in class.

For all grammar classes you will be expected to own copies of *Hammer’s German Grammar and Usage*, 6th edition, by Martin Durrell (London, 2016).

**PAPER I TRANSLATION INTO GERMAN AND ESSAY IN GERMAN**

The passage for translation *into* German will be from a text written after 1900 and in a narrative, reflective, or journalistic register. For the essay in German there will be up to twenty questions covering in a general way material from papers IV, V(i), V(ii), VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, and XI. As set out in the faculty descriptors for this exercise, essays will be assessed on both content and language. Normally these will be weighted in equal proportions, since expression and content mutually influence each other. However, examiners may decide to vary this weighting depending on the nature of the question attempted or on particular features of style. The essay should be between 700 and 1000 words in length, and written in an accessible style aimed at a well-informed general reader. Candidates are expected to show linguistic competence and a consistent use of register. Credit will be given for lively, creative presentation of the argument. This part of the paper is designed primarily to test linguistic skills and candidates are not expected to display the same level of knowledge in their answers as in tutorially taught papers. Overlap with material offered for other papers is permitted.

**PAPER II TRANSLATION FROM MODERN GERMAN**

The passages for translation *from* German are taken from texts written in the modern or contemporary period. Passages will be in contrasting styles or registers (e.g. narrative, descriptive, analytical, reflective or journalistic).

Candidates reading sole German also take:

**PAPER III TRANSLATION FROM PRE-MODERN GERMAN.**

There will be four passages, of which candidates must translate two. Two passages will be from the period 1150-1500 and two from the period 1500-1730. These translations complement the reading skills acquired in the pre-modern period papers. Translation classes on MHG and ENHG will be offered, usually in the final year of your course.

**Oral examination**

The format for the oral examination is as follows.
(i) Listening comprehension

The passage set is designed for listening rather than reading (e.g. a transcript of a recording), and lasts about 5 minutes when read out. In the examination, a native speaker will read out the passage. Candidates may take notes. At the end of the first reading, candidates are allowed to look at the question paper. After a pause of up to 5 minutes, the passage will be read again. Candidates may again take notes.
At the end of the second reading, candidates have a period of 25 minutes to write their answers to the questions on the paper. Questions and answers are in English. Questions on the paper refer to a single block of text and follow the order in which relevant material appears in the passage. Questions must be answered in complete sentences. The maximum mark for each question will be indicated in brackets.

(ii) Discourse and conversation

For the discourse, each candidate will be given a choice of three topics, of which one will normally be descriptive, one concern current affairs (e.g. EU matters, Landeskunde, politics, ethical debates), and one will be on literature, language, music, the arts or broadly intellectual or philosophical questions. Questions may invite cultural comparison, but will focus on German-speaking countries.

Candidates receive their topics 15 minutes before the examination, and have that time to prepare. They should be prepared to speak for approximately 5 minutes on the topic they have chosen. After the end of the discourse, there will be a further 5-7 minutes for conversation.

Credit will be given for accuracy, idiomatic register and fluency as well as structured presentation of argument. Native or near-native fluency in an informal register alone will not normally be sufficient to attract a top mark.

PAPER IV: LINGUISTIC STUDIES I: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GERMAN LANGUAGE FROM 1170 TO THE PRESENT

The history of the German language is a mirror of the literary, social, political and cultural history of the German-speaking countries. This paper covers the Middle High German (up to ca. 1450), the Early New High German (ca. 1450-1750) and Modern German periods. You are expected to familiarize yourself with the salient phonological and grammatical aspects of these different periods, but in your study of the linguistic history of German you are encouraged to make a more detailed study of individual themes and topics rather than to attempt to survey everything. Popular areas of study, in addition to basic historical grammar, are: loan words from the various European languages at different times, Middle High German ethical and abstract vocabulary, the language of the medieval German mystics, the language of Bible translation (focussing on Luther), the ‘Sprachgesellschaften’ in the seventeenth century, linguistic ‘Purism’ (from the seventeenth century to the present day), the language of National Socialism, the language of a divided Germany (1945-1989). It is also possible to study topics with a more theoretical character, e.g. problems of the periodisation of the German language, the conceptual differences between historical grammar and linguistic history, the emergence of standard norms, grammatical codification, and the questions that arise from interaction with other speech communities. These are just examples.

There are two prescribed texts (Werner der Gärtner, Helmbrecht, dating from ca. 1270, Reclam edn.; and Luther’s Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen - ed. K. Bischoff, pp. 6/7-28, l. 21/29, l. 22, and pp. 36-57). These should be studied individually for their intrinsic linguistic interest and should also be used as material for the study of the development of German phonology and grammar. The Taylor Institution Library holds versions of the set texts in electronic form.

This paper is studied in eight tutorials, which it is necessary to augment by attendance at lecture courses. These cover the set texts and also provide a survey of the most important topics. In the examination there is a compulsory linguistic commentary from the prescribed texts (with a choice of one of two passages). In addition you must attempt either one further commentary and an essay, or two essays chosen from a wide range covering the history of the language during the whole period as well as the historical grammar of German.

Introductory Reading

Damaris Nübling, Historische Sprachwissenschaft des Deutschen, 2nd edn. (Tübingen, 2008)
Peter von Polenz, Deutsche Sprachgeschichte: Vom Spätmittelalter bis zur Gegenwart, 2nd edn., 3 vols
PAPER V (i): LINGUISTIC STUDIES II: OLD HIGH GERMAN

The Old High German paper provides an opportunity to study the earliest recorded stages of the German language, from the period ca. 800-1100. The course is based on the study of prescribed texts, which have been chosen to demonstrate a range of different uses of the language, including examples of the heroic lay, secular and religious poetry, Bible translation and even a set of phrasebook-style ‘conversations’ (with forthright expressions for ‘give me my shield’ and ‘get lost’). At the centre of the work for this paper lies the acquisition of a basic reading knowledge of Old High German, but there is also considerable scope for acquiring a familiarity with the literary and cultural context in which written records in the vernacular have been preserved (especially the early German monasteries, such as Fulda and St. Gallen, and the Carolingian court). In addition to studying the set texts, students acquire a familiarity with the historical grammar of the earliest stages of German, with the principal differences between the Old High German dialects (as represented by the set texts), with the manuscript context of the individual surviving works, and with developments in vocabulary (including the question of loan words). They also come to an understanding of the place of Old High German within the history of the German language.

The prescribed texts, in the *Althochdeutsches Lesebuch*, comprise the following sections: V Gespräche VIII Isidor, cap. iii; XX Tatian, subsections 2, 4 and 7; XXIII Notker, subsections 1 and 13; XXVIII Hildebrandslied; XXIX Wessobrunner Gebet; XXX Muspilli; XXXII Otfrid, subsections 7 (*Missus est Gabrihel angelus*) and 21 (*De die judicii*); XXXVI Ludwigslied; XLIII Ezzos Gesang, Strasbourg version only.

The course is covered in eight tutorials, but much of the basic linguistic knowledge needs to be acquired from the lecture courses, which are repeated every year. It is also important to work systematically through the prescribed texts using the glossary in Braune’s *Althochdeutsches Lesebuch* and the Old High German grammars.

*Introductory Reading*


Wilhelm Braune, *Althochdeutsches Lesebuch*, 17th edn., revised by Karl Helm and Ernst A. Ebbinghaus (Tübingen, 1994)


PAPER V (ii): DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF GERMAN AS SPOKEN AND WRITTEN AT THE PRESENT DAY

The object of enquiry in linguistics is language. Language can be defined both as a mental state and as a social fact; that is, it exists in the mind of an individual speaker, enabling that speaker to produce and understand an infinite number of utterances, but it also exists in a community, displaying geographical and social variability. Knowledge of language emerges in early infancy, its path of development showing both similarities to and differences from second language acquisition later in life.

Paper V/ii is primarily concerned with the study of the system of linguistic knowledge that German speakers possess, but it also addresses German variation and first-language acquisition. For this paper, you will study the formation of German sounds, words and sentences, and will see that a native German speaker’s linguistic knowledge can be analysed as consisting of a set of discrete units and a
set of rules for combining them. You will also learn about the ways in which German can differ across the German speech territory and across different social groups, and will understand how language serves to communicate information about a speaker’s identity. Finally, you will encounter German child language and learn how it has informed theories of language acquisition as well as our models of linguistic competence.

The paper is taught in eight tutorials and accompanied by a compulsory two-term lecture course (‘Introduction to German Linguistics’), given in MT and HT. As the lecture course provides the foundation for the tutorial work, you will need to attend at least a term of lectures before embarking on the tutorials. Written work for tutorials will involve both essays and data-analysis problem sets. The paper is examined by means of a three-hour written examination, which, correspondingly, consists of essay-type and data analysis questions.

Useful Reading:


Johnson, Sally & Natalie Braber, Exploring the German language, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)

For a general introduction to linguistics, see:

PAPERS VI, VII, VIII: PERIODS OF GERMAN LITERATURE AND CULTURE

There is no prescribed syllabus for these papers. In the examination you have to write three essays in three hours. There is a good range of questions, so that if you have read widely under the guidance of your tutors and lecturers you should be able to answer on those aspects of the literature of your chosen period which have interested you most. There is an agreed principle that candidates are not expected to ‘cover’ the whole range of the period chosen for study. You will prepare for the period paper in a series of tutorials on topics agreed with your tutor, and by attending, at all stages of your course, a large number of lectures that deal with different writers and issues relevant to the period. Tutors and lecturers will give detailed bibliographical guidance. The descriptions offered here are meant to help you make up your mind which periods to choose and to suggest some reading which will let you find your bearings in the period. Note that the papers have been designed with small overlaps, which allow you to bridge across periods if you so wish.

PAPER VI: BEGINNINGS OF WRITING TO 1550: TEXTS, CONTEXTS AND ISSUES

This paper explores the development of German literature from the earliest written sources in the eighth century to the firm establishment of print culture in the sixteenth century. A special focus is on a period of fifty years from 1170 to 1220 which saw the development of a sophisticated courtly literature in German that is a landmark of world literature. There are poems of travel and warfare such as the Alexander romances (Straßburger Alexander), the Eneide of Heinrich von Veldeke which combines the journeying and battles that led to the foundation of Rome with a love romance, Herzog Ernst’s adventures in the Orient combined with a story of intrigue and civil war at the German imperial court (Herzog Ernst), and the story of Charlemagne and Roland’s battles against the Saracen in Spain, recast under the influence of the Crusades (Rolandslied). The new genre of the Arthurian romance, imported from France, exploits an idealized presentation of love and of knighthood to discuss broader questions such as partnership in marriage, the identity of the individual in society, as
well as religious themes (Hartmann von Aue’s *Erec* and *Iwein*, Wolfram von Eschenbach’s *Parzival*). The Tristan romances of Eilhart von Oberg and Gottfried von Straßburg exploit the ethical and aesthetic potential of an adulterous, and ultimately tragic, love relationship played out against the tensions of the royal court. There are important religious poems such as Hartmann von Aue’s *Gregorius*, which discusses questions of sin and redemption in the context of a story of incest between mother and son. With the *Nibelungenlied*, from about 1200, narrative traditions that had been passed on by oral performers for hundreds of years are amalgamated into a great epic poem dominated by the conflicts of forceful characters who bring about the destruction of the whole world in which they live. This is also the period of the finest German love poetry, the ‘Minnesang’, which ranges from the sophisticated songs of courtly love through more openly erotic genres such as the woman’s lament and the parting of lovers at dawn, to the burlesque peasant world of Neidhart. The poets studied include Der von Kärenberg, Friedrich von Hausen, Reinmar, Heinrich von Morungen, Wolfram von Eschenbach, and Walther von der Vogelweide. Walther is also important for his political and didactic poetry.

Most students begin by making a study of this central period. After that they may go on to consolidate this work by further reading from the ’High Middle Ages’. Alternatively, they may choose to explore the earlier, Old High German period, where there are individual poems of great interest and importance, such as the *Hildebrandslied* - the only surviving heroic lay; the *Ludwigslied* - about a victory over the Vikings; and the *Evangelienbuch* of Otfrid von Weißenburg - the Old High German biblical epic. Another approach is to expand into the German literature of the later Middle Ages. Here it is possible to study the writings of the mystics (in particular Mechthild von Magdeburg, Meister Eckhart and Heinrich Seuse), the popular and frequently scurrilous short-story genre (‘Märendichtung’), the later heroic epics (*Kudrun*, *Eckenlied*, *Dietrichs Flucht*), the demanding peasant epic by Heinrich Wittenwiler in which a brawl at a village wedding leads to a world war of cosmic dimensions (*Der Ring*), and the poems of Oswald von Wolkenstein. Following on from here, it is possible to explore the transition from the Middle Ages to the early modern period by looking at continuity and change in genres such as songs and hymns, the development of drama, polemical literature in the context of Humanism and the Reformation, and the rise of prose narratives.

The best way into the subject is to attend a number of lectures in your second year, in which foundations are laid. It is usual to cover the course in eight tutorials, but there are also informal seminars in Hilary Term which can be used for revision or further exploration.

Introductory Reading

Walter Haug, *Vernacular Literary Theory in the Middle Ages: the German Tradition 800-1300 in its European context* (Cambridge, 1997)


A fuller reading list is available at

https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/site/:humdiv:modlang:german:fhs:medieval_ger

**PAPER VII: EARLY MODERN GERMAN CULTURE (1500-1800): TEXTS, CONTEXTS AND ISSUES**
This period takes in developments ranging from the Renaissance and the Reformation to the beginnings and the acme of the Enlightenment, and sees the creation of many art forms still flourishing today, for instance opera, ballet, and the novel, and reaches into the great period of classical German literature, which witnessed the Sturm und Drang, the growth of German philosophy, and the earlier work of Goethe and Schiller. There is no compulsion to cover the whole period, though you will be encouraged to see texts and authors in context and to study genres and themes across a chronological range. This paper will be taught in a series of interlinked lectures and seminars dealing with such topics as: Luther and his writings in the context of the Reformation; the growth of early print culture, drawing on the Taylorian’s rich holdings in 16th-century pamphlets; the development from Meistersang to the baroque hymn; baroque poetry and poetics; 17th-century satire; 17th-century tragedy; 18th-century poetics; and the literature of Pietism. This will allow you to contrast the carnival plays of Hans Sachs with sixteenth-century biblical drama; to examine the presentation of active heroines in such works as Rehuhn’s Judith, Grimmelshausen’s Courasche and Lessing’s Minna von Barnhelm; and to compare the presentation of power politics in the tragedies of Birck, Lohenstein and Schiller. You can read Grimmelshausen, one of the greatest novelists in the German language, whose brutally realistic tales set in the Thirty Years’ War are satirical masterpieces and at the same time profound religious and moral allegories. You can follow the rise of Protestant hymn-writing from Luther via Elisabeth Cruciger and Philipp Nicolai to Paul Gerhardt; and the evolution of the German lyric in a number of increasingly distinguished poets, e.g. Opitz, Gryphius, Fleming, Greiffenberg, Hofmannswaldau, Günther, Brockes, Klopstock, Goethe, and Hölderlin. You can follow the legacy of Pietism’s introspective religious practices in the prose of the late eighteenth century. You will also be able to read Lessing, Goethe and Schiller and make comparisons linking the erotic verse of Hofmannswaldau to Goethe’s Römische Elegien, or Lohenstein’s dramas with female protagonists (Cleopatra, Sophonisbe) to Goethe’s Iphigenie auf Tauris and Schiller’s Maria Stuart.

This paper will normally be taught in Hilary term of your second year, based on a set of eight core lectures/seminars and accompanying seminars/tutorials. Further lecture series, e.g. on Luther and the Reformation, will also be given regularly, and the latter part of the period will be covered by lectures pertaining also to Paper VIII. Tutorials in topics which overlap with Paper VIII will normally be taught by students’ college tutors, the others will be taught centrally.

Introductory Reading

Peter Burke, The European Renaissance, Centres and Peripheries (Oxford, 1998)
Dirk Niefanger, Barock (Stuttgart, 2012)
T.J. Reed, Light in Germany: Scenes from an Unknown Enlightenment (Chicago, 2015)

More material (which will be further added to) is available at https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/site:humdiv:modlang:german:fhs:early_modern

PAPER VIII: MODERN GERMAN LITERATURE (1770 TO THE PRESENT): TEXTS,
CONTEXTS AND ISSUES

The purpose of this paper is to allow you to study topics across the whole range of modern literature written in German. It runs from the latter part of the eighteenth century, which saw the emergence of classical drama, domestic realism, and hymnic poetry addressed to God and nature, down to the present day, in which writers are exploring the implications of German unification and the experiences of under-privileged groups (women, homosexuals, immigrants). During this period, modern German literature developed an enormous richness and diversity, influenced by (and sometimes influencing) a series of dramatic historical events: the French Revolution, Napoleon’s conquests, the post-1815 repression under Metternich, the 1848 revolutions, the founding of the German Empire in 1871, the decline of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the First World War and the establishment of German and Austrian republics, the Third Reich, war and genocide, the division of Germany into capitalist and communist states, the collapse of the Eastern bloc, and the united Germany’s new but problematic centrality in European affairs. It is important to see the literature of the period within this historical framework.

Within this period, you may, in consultation with your tutor, have tutorials on individual authors or on several texts grouped by genre or theme; different tutors approach this period in diverse ways. Subjects most often studied include Lessing and the Enlightenment, Goethe, Schiller, Kleist; the Romantic ‘Märchen’; the nineteenth-century ‘Novelle’; Büchner, Heine, Fontane, Hofmannsthal, Thomas Mann, Rilke, Kafka, Brecht; Naturalist drama; Expressionist poetry and drama; documentary drama of the post-war period; the literature of the GDR; such post-1945 writers as Böll, Grass, Frisch, Christa Wolf, Ingeborg Bachmann and W. G. Sebald. It is also possible to study film, and writing by emerging authors of the present day (as well as established contemporaries such as the recent Nobel Prize winners Elfriede Jelinek and Herta Müller). With each author you study, you should try to read enough texts to gain an overview of the individual oeuvre, but also to place each writer in the wider literary and historical context. There is no canon or list of prescribed authors, and you are encouraged to think in terms of topics. Through sampling a succession of writers, you should become aware of literature as a historical phenomenon in which there are both constants and changes. As the blank spaces on your map of the period get filled in, you should look out for essentials, be ready to make comparisons, and take an interest in larger developments - of form, style, ideas, choice of subjects etc. - beyond the individual work and individual writer. Reading for this paper should be going on throughout your course: you should be reading more works by writers on whom you have already worked, preparing writers on whom you intend to work (often with the help of lectures); and generally exploring the detail and layout of the period.

Teaching

There are core lectures on this paper providing an introduction to and overview of the 18th century (in Michaelmas), the 19th century (in Hilary) and the 20th-21st centuries (in Trinity). Many lecture series on individual authors or genres, given at all stages of the course, are also relevant to this paper. In addition, there are from time to time lecture series (and also lecture circuses in which each lecture is given by a different speaker) that look at continuities within the period as a whole, look in depth at a particular period (e.g. the post-1945 era), or explore the long-term development of a genre (e.g. drama, poetry, novel or ‘Novelle’). From time to time a lecture circus is given, stretching over two terms, on German literature in relation to history.

Core teaching for this paper is arranged by colleges. It may consist of tutorials, seminars, or a mixture of both.

Examination

Paper VIII contains about fifty questions, of which any three are to be answered in three hours. There are no restrictions on the questions you may answer: the division into five sections is merely to help you find your way through the exam paper. Topics covered by the questions should typically include: general thematic and other issues, genre, period, history, national literatures, film and the non-literary arts, philosophy, gender. The examiners consult tutors about the authors and topics taught for this paper.
before setting it. You may not use material in your answers that overlaps substantially with any prescribed author or Special Subject paper or Extended Essay you are offering.

**Introductory Reading**

Besides reading as many primary texts as possible in the vacation before starting this paper, you should also consult books that help to structure your developing knowledge of the period, e.g.:

- Rolf Grimminger (ed.), *Hansens Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur*, 5 vols (Munich, 1980-92)
- Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly (ed.), *The Cambridge History of German Literature* (Cambridge, 1996), chapters 5-9

The ‘Digitale Bibliothek’ ([www.digitale-bibliothek.de](http://www.digitale-bibliothek.de)) offers *Die deutsche Literatur von Luther bis Tucholsky. Die Großbibliothek*: a searchable DVD text database of most significant German texts from the early 16th century to the Weimar Republic, in reasonably good editions.

**PAPER IX: MEDIEVAL PRESCRIBED TEXTS**

The study of Middle High German texts provides an opportunity for you to broaden your experience of literature by tackling literary works that are separated by hundreds of years from the present, and which nonetheless deal with themes that are still recognisably the domain of literature today: love and revenge, personal identity and destiny, the individual and society, gender roles. The four set texts, each studied in two tutorials and the subject of an annually repeated lecture course (but with different lecturers) represent distinct literary genres (heroic epic, courtly romance, religious drama, love lyric), but they are chosen above all for their literary quality:

**Nibelungenlied.** Ca. 1200. The German heroic epic, based on the oral poetry of an earlier period, tells the story of Siegfried’s marriage to the Burgundian princess Kriemhild and his murder by Hagen, the vassal of her brothers, the Burgundian kings. In the second part of the work Kriemhild is married again, this time to Etzel, king of the Huns, and takes her revenge by bringing about the total destruction of the ‘Nibelungen’ (the name given to the Burgundians after the theft of Siegfried’s treasure, the ‘Nibelungen hoard’). (Prescribed passages: *Nibelungenlied*, ed. K. Bartsch et al. (Reclam 1997), avent. 1, 14-17, 23-30, 36-39.)

**Wolfram von Eschenbach: Parzival.** Ca. 1210. This work combines the theme of Arthurian romance with the story of the Grail. Parzival fails to put the question of compassion expected of him, when he meets the sick Grail King, thus failing to meet a condition necessary for the fulfilment of his destiny.
After years spent seeking the Grail and in love-service of Condwiramurs he miraculously achieves what had seemed impossible and is summoned to be Grail King. (Prescribed passages: Wolfram von Eschenbach, Parzival, books 3, 5 and 9.)

**Das Osterpiel von Muri; Das Innsbrucker Osterspiel.** The Easter plays are a form of elaboration, in dramatic form, of the events after Christ’s death, generally beginning with the watchmen at the grave, and including such scenes as the Harrowing of Hell, the devils’ claims on the sinful souls, the visit of the three Marys to the tomb, and encounters with Jesus after the resurrection. The fragmentary play from a manuscript found in Muri is the earliest example of an Easter play in German (northern Switzerland, ca. 1240-60). The second play, preserved in a manuscript at Innsbruck, is a complete text from Thuringia, dated 1391, which permits the study of the intrusion of social satire, burlesque and parody into the religious framework. (Recommended edition: electronic text available on WebLearn, [https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/site/humdiv/modlang/german/fhs:medieval_ger](https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/site/humdiv/modlang/german/fhs:medieval_ger)).

**Heinrich von Morungen: Lieder.** The dominant form of the medieval German lyric is the ‘Minnesang’, a form which centres around the themes of the male lover and his fruitless love-service of a lady. The songs of Heinrich von Morungen († ca. 1220) permit the study of this genre at the hands of one of the most masterly Middle High German poets, famous for his handling of imagery, his range of literary forms, and his bold handling of such themes as love beyond the grave and the lovers’ farewell at dawn. (Prescription: Heinrich von Morungen, Lieder, ed. H. Tervooren (Reclam 1986), with an invaluable commentary.)

**Introductory Reading**

- Ursula Schulze, *Das Nibelungenlied* (Stuttgart, 1997)

A fuller reading list is available at [https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/hierarchy/humdiv/modlang/german/fhs:medieval_ger](https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/hierarchy/humdiv/modlang/german/fhs:medieval_ger)

You have to learn to read these texts in the original language, using parallel editions as an aid. Certain portions of the texts are prescribed for translation and commentary in the examination. You are required to do a translation from one text, write a literary commentary on a passage from another, and then to write two literary essays. You are not allowed to write an essay on the text chosen for commentary, but you can write an essay on the text chosen for translation if you wish.

**PAPER X: MODERN PRESCRIBED AUTHORS**

This paper complements the broader sweep of the period papers by providing the opportunity to study in depth the work of two of the most important and challenging German writers from the early modern period to the present. You will read widely within the work of your two authors, set them in their intellectual and historical context, and study closely one (or two) central works that are prescribed for special study, with a view to detailed textual analysis.

**Teaching**

This paper is normally taught in four tutorials for each author, perhaps with three essays and one
commentary; practice varies, but you may well start them in your second year. It may be wise to do a substantial amount of the work on your chosen period first, in order to have a background against which to select two authors for more thorough study. Some of them require a knowledge of long works of fiction that should be read, or reread, during your year abroad. There are lectures on each of the authors in most years, and in the Hilary and Trinity Terms there are normally commentary classes to enable finalists to practise the skill of commenting in detail on passages from the set texts.

Examination

In the examination you will have three hours to answer three questions: one must be an essay on one of your authors, the other an essay on your other author, and the third must be a critical commentary on a passage set from the prescribed text by one of your authors. The examination paper will contain one commentary passage and six essay titles for each author. You are not permitted to write an essay on the text that you have selected for the commentary.

Reading lists are available at [https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/hierarchy/humdiv/modlang/german/fhs/modern_germa](https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/hierarchy/humdiv/modlang/german/fhs/modern_germa)

1. Luther (1483-1546)

Luther has made a mark on modern Europe greater than that of any other German. Such pamphlets as *An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation* present a fascinating combination of Renaissance ideas, nationalist rhetoric and intense personal piety. Why it was he who acted as a catalyst for the Reformation is an interesting question which bears on history, theology and literature. Luther’s social teaching, as expounded in his many writings on marriage, his translation of the Bible, which made its indelible mark on the modern German language, his ideas about secular authority, his theory of translation and his development of such forms as the hymn in German are some of the aspects which might be explored in this option. The set text is *Von der Freyheit einisz Christenmenschen*, Luther’s defence of his central theological idea – justification by faith. For authoritative editions of all Luther’s writings – including the set text – see: [http://luther.chadwyck.co.uk](http://luther.chadwyck.co.uk).

Introductory Reading

Euan Cameron, *The European Reformation* (Oxford, 1991)  
Lyndal Roper, *Martin Luther: Renegade and Prophet* (London, 2016)

2. Schiller (1759-1805)

Schiller is unsurpassed as a political dramatist. His explosive early play *Die Räuber* sets youthful rebellion against a familial, social, and ultimately cosmic background, while *Kabale und Liebe* treats a cross-class love-affair within the petty tyranny of a German court (clearly based on Schiller’s experience of absolutist Württemberg). *Don Carlos*, a massive play of political intrigue in which principle is pitted against friendship, marks the end of Schiller’s first dramatic period. After a ten-year interval he returned to the stage with the historical trilogy *Wallenstein*, set in the Thirty Years’ War and centring on the charismatic but inwardly undecided general who, by planning treachery, imposes a conflict of loyalties on his closest devotees. This trilogy is the text prescribed for special study. Schiller followed it with a series of historical tragedies that increasingly turn on guilt and redemption (*Maria Stuart, Die Jungfrau von Orleans*, and *Die Braut von Messina*) and explore the tension between politics
and myth-making, which is most apparent in *Wilhelm Tell*.
Besides reading all the plays, you should also read Schiller’s principal essays on tragedy (collected in the Reclam volume no. 2731 as Schiller, *Vom Pathetischen und Erhabenen*). Start with ‘Über das Erhabene’, the most essential, and work back. You should also read at least the last section of Schiller’s great work of literary criticism, *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, for its discussion of two character-types, the realist and the idealist, who also feature in his dramas.

**Introductory Reading**


**3. Hölderlin (1770-1843)**

Hölderlin is generally regarded as one of the most important poets of the German language. His poetry is a poetry of contradictions. Visions of wholeness stand side by side with moments of disappointment, and celebrations of ideal fulfilment give way to painful isolation. Hölderlin is often thought of as a Classical poet, and indeed, the most complete manifestation of the ideal was for him to be found in ancient Greece. Figures from Christianity, classical mythology, and his local Swabian landscape are blended together to make a uniquely compelling mythical and personal poetry. But he was also committed to his own time, which he saw as a time of darkness, and, like many of his contemporaries, he was inspired by hopes for change embodied in the French Revolution. Famously, he spent the last 36 years diagnosed as incurably insane in a tower-dwelling in Tübingen, where he continued to write poetry which he signed with strange names. You will be expected to know his poetry after 1797, from the ‘Diotima’ poems, written with his beloved Susette Gontard in mind, to the odes, great elegies and hymns. The set text is *Gedichte*, ed. Gerhard Kurz and Wolfgang Braungart, Reihe Reclam (ISBN 3 15 056267 8). In this edition, you must read the poetry written from 1798 to 1806. This set reading could usefully be supplemented with the most recent edition of Michael Hamburger’s dual-language anthology listed below. From there, you may follow your interests in one of the bigger Hölderlin editions. You should also read the epistolary novel *Hyperion* (available in Reclam, 559) the story of a young Greek and his pursuit of the ideal, and perhaps *Der Tod des Empedokles*, a tragedy which Hölderlin saw through three versions, but did not finish. (In the examination, writing a commentary on a poem does not preclude writing an essay on Hölderlin’s poetry.)

**Introductory Reading**

Howard Gaskill, *Hölderlin’s Hyperion* (Durham, 1984)

**4. Kleist (1777-1811)**

Kleist belongs by period, if not always by definition, to the Romantic generation, his work representing a bold challenge to that of Weimar Classicism despite his veneration for Goethe. His world is one of violent extremes and destabilization, of paradoxes and ambiguities, and it reflects something of the turmoil and confusion caused by the aftermath of the French Revolution and its impact on Germany. Kleist himself was a compulsive traveller and journeyed through post-revolutionary France on many occasions, drawn especially by the stimulus of Paris, which was at the time a cultural mecca, and by his fascination with the ambiguous figure of Napoleon (he tried twice to join Bonaparte’s army of invasion
of England!). Another well-documented strand in Kleist’s work is his inheritance of Kantian ideas, especially in the field of epistemology: Kleist drew from Kantian writings a firm conviction in the impossibility of interpreting accurately the phenomena we perceive in the external world through sense impressions. This explains the prevalence in his works of the themes of illusion and deception. Typically, Kleistian characters, whose psychological make-ups are marked by volatility and emotional instability, are brought face to face with crisis situations (e.g. earthquakes, rape, murder, war) which force out often destructive qualities which have been lying hidden beneath the surface (e.g. Michael Kohlhaas, Penthesilea). For all that, however, like the very greatest writers, Kleist’s works encompass the extremes of tragedy and comedy; Der zerbrochne Krug is one of the greatest comedies in the German language, if not the greatest, and Amphilthron, is a true tragicomedy in which the two elements complement one another convincingly. Prinz Friedrich von Homburg, the set text, depicts the conflict between duty to the state and individual will, and places an ambiguous, anti-heroic figure at the centre of the action. Whereas in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century it was Kleist’s dramas which were most acclaimed, nowadays critical attention has been principally focussed on the prose tales, which have been admired by many twentieth-century writers, including Kafka and Thomas Mann. Particularly remarkable features are his unique and distinctive style and syntax - lean, compressed and tightly structured - and the subtle ironic stance of his narration. You should endeavour to read a wide selection of the Erzählungen (e.g. Michael Kohlhaas, Das Erdbeben in Chili, Der Zweikampf, Die Verlobung in St. Domingo) but do not neglect the dramas; of these, in addition to the prescribed text, you should read Die Familie Schroffenstein, Der zerbrochne Krug, Penthesilea and Amphitryon.

Introductory Reading


5. Hoffmann (1776-1822)

E.T.A. Hoffmann is one of the greatest German Romantics, but his fiction also contains a healthy dose of realism which puts his Romantic aspirations in an ironic perspective without dismissing them. A master of the fantastic, he locates much of his fiction in everyday settings only to unsettle our expectations by introducing mysterious forces, Doppelgänger, and ghosts of the imagination. Whilst many of his shorter stories (Der Sandmann, Das öde Haus, Das Majorat) find their place in the realm of horror, they are also modern explorations of human psychology that pre-date the twentieth-century innovations of Freud. Hoffmann also wrote many humorous and poetic fairy-tales (Meister Floh, Klein Zaches genannt Zinnober, Prinzessin Brambilla), and explored the role of mythology as a gateway to the imagination, most famously in Der goldne Topf, a masterpiece of Romantic literature which Hoffmann described as ‘a fairy tale of modern times’. As a composer, Kapellmeister, and singing teacher, Hoffmann accorded a special status to music. His influential essay on Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony is widely admired by music critics, and his fiction inspired a nineteenth-century French opera. In the satirical novel Lebensansichten des Katers Murr, the composer Kreisler is a tortured musical genius whose tragic life story is juxtaposed with the autobiography of a pompous tomscat who has learned to write.

Central to Hoffmann’s work is the role of the artistic imagination in a world populated by pragmatists and philistines. The set text, Die Elixiere des Teufels, presents his aesthetic concerns in the framework of a Gothic thriller. The monk Medardus, a great orator, stands in for the Romantic artist as a divinely-inspired performer, but the potentially transcendent quality of his art is brought down to earth by vanity, sexual desire, and madness. Against a backdrop of popular horror tropes including a ghost, a Doppelgänger, a demonic woman, and a dramatic family curse, Hoffmann explores how the Romantic drive to sanctify art can compromise personal freedom.
6. **Heine (1797-1856)**

Heine stands out in German literature as a great humorous and ironic poet, a self-conscious Jew, a journalist of genius, and a radical political writer (though his politics are not easy to pin down). His vast body of poetry extends from the ironical late-Romantic love-poetry of the early *Buch der Lieder* via the biting political satire of his middle years to the bitterly humorous, searching, and mythopoetic poems written during the fatal illness that brought him back to a problematic belief in God. The texts prescribed for special study are the two verse-narratives of the 1840s, *Atta Troll: Ein Sommernachtstraum* and *Deutschland: Ein Wintermärchen*. In the first, the eponymous figure of the dancing bear who escapes from captivity gives rise to political satire but also enables the narrator to explore an imaginative world of myth, while in the latter, an actual journey that Heine made through Germany becomes the occasion for a satirical review of German society and politics and reflections on the poet’s share in revolution.


Heine’s extensive prose works include travel-sketches, popular accounts of German philosophy and Romantic literature, reports on life in Paris, memoirs, and much else, all highly readable and with a dense poetic texture. You might start with *Die Harzreise* and *Ideen. Das Buch Le Grand*, which begin the series of *Reisebilder* that first made Heine famous in the 1820s.

7. **Rilke (1875-1926)**

Rilke’s poetic career was spent in an attempt to find the unity which he felt modern humankind had lost; a unity that could embrace life and death, the visible and the invisible. His poetry laments the curse of consciousness, the banality and fragmentation of modern man who is shamed by the greater integrity of plants, animals and works of art. Yet paradoxically, Rilke also recognizes that the material world can be redeemed only by the uniquely human act of transforming the world into lasting artistic form. The supreme formal skill of his work can be seen as an attempt to combat forces of disintegration through art. The mixture of the metaphysical and the material is a hallmark of his work from the subjective mood and intangible musicality of *Das Stunden-Buch* (1905) to the final *Sonette an Orpheus* (1922).
Rilke is an intensely visual poet who was inspired by a series of encounters with visual artists: the ‘Jugendstil’ artists of a colony in Worpswede, his time spent working as a secretary to the sculptor Rodin, and a return to the most modern impulses in painting, most important of which was Cézanne. The prescribed text, which you should aim to know very well, is Neue Gedichte (both parts, 1907 and 1908). This two-part collection contains many of Rilke’s most famous individual poems. They can be read with his monograph on Rodin in mind and are characterized by plasticity and supreme craftsmanship. Themes of transience and the redeeming possibilities of art are also present. These are taken up once again in the Duineser Elegien, a cycle of ten poems written in two bursts of creativity over a decade apart. They form Rilke’s supreme lament for the disjunction of human life, but are also an attempt to endorse human experience in the face of the transcendental beyond, which is represented by terrible and supremely beautiful angels. Apart from these works you would be expected to read a number of uncollected poems and short prose works. There is also Rilke’s novel, Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge, a visionary and pathological account of the disintegration of an artist figure who has come to Paris, and who is haunted by the squalor of the modern city and by disturbing memories of childhood. This text, based on Rilke’s own experiences, is a key document of literary Modernism and charts the crisis of identity and language experienced by many artists in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Introductory Reading

Käte Hamburger, Rilke: Eine Einführung (Stuttgart, 1976)
Eudo C. Mason, Rilke (Edinburgh, 1963)

8. Thomas Mann (1875-1956)

Thomas Mann is among the central figures of modern German literature. His reputation as a heavyweight philosophical novelist (based partly on the faulty English translations of his works) has sometimes hindered readers from appreciating the irony and humour, the detailed realism, and the political implications of his fiction, and from realizing that he treats ideas both seriously and playfully. The text prescribed for special study is Buddenbrooks: Verfall einer Familie. In addition, you are expected to read a wide range of Mann’s short fiction (e.g. Der kleine Herr Friedemann, Gladius Dei, Beim Propheten, Tristan, Tonio Kröger, Der Tod in Venedig, Der Weg zum Friedhof, and the inter-war stories Unordnung und frühes Leid and Mario und der Zauberer) and, most importantly, at least one of the other major novels. Der Zauberberg, and Doktor Faustus are obvious choices, the last especially because it reworks an intensely German myth as a means of exploring the complex relations between art, the intellect, and the inhumanity of politics. Another possibility would be the unfinished Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull. Among Mann’s medium-length novels, Lotte in Weimar stands out for its portrayal of Goethe as the exasperating yet irresistible centre of Weimar life. With Mann’s political books and essays, including the problematic Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen of 1918, one can follow a responsible but uncommitted writer adjusting to the Weimar Republic, opposing Nazism, and reflecting on the Germans’ character and history.

Introductory Reading

Erich Heller, The Ironic German: A Study of Thomas Mann (London, 1958)
The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Mann, ed. Ritchie Robertson (Cambridge, 2002)
9. Kafka (1883-1924)

Kafka’s fiction, though indebted in many ways to such nineteenth-century writers as Kleist and Dostoevsky, has long been recognized as central to Modernism and is still a vital presence in contemporary literature. Besides the three novels, none of which Kafka considered complete (Der Verschollene, Der Proceß, Das Schloß), there are a number of Novellen published in his lifetime (Das Urteil, Die Verwandlung, In der Strafkolonie), collections of short fiction (Ein Landarzt and Ein Hungerkünstler), and a mass of teasingly enigmatic, often humorous short stories, parables and aphorisms which have been extracted from his notebooks.

Anyone studying Kafka should be familiar with the whole of his Sämtliche Erzählungen (available as Fischer paperback no. 1078) or at least with Ein Landarzt und andere Drucke zu Lebzeiten (Fischer paperback no. 12441). The text prescribed for special study is Der Proceß, in the version edited by Malcolm Pasley: this text is available as a Fischer paperback (either no. 11413 or no. 12443: both cost the same, but are differently paginated; the latter also contains a four-page account of Kafka’s life in tabular form). In addition, you should read the other two novels and at least sample Kafka’s diaries and letters.

Introductory Reading

Mark Anderson, Kafka’s Clothes: Ornament and Aestheticism in the Habsburg fin de siècle (Oxford, 1992)

10. Brecht (1898-1956)

Brecht is one of the major dramatists of the twentieth century, widely performed in theatres and taught in universities and schools in drama, cultural studies and so on, as well as in German literature courses. He was a prolific author in a variety of genres, and slippery in all of them. Tracing the development of his writing takes you from his anarchic Expressionist beginnings during and after the First World War, by way of his Marxist ‘conversion’ and the work of his antifascist exile years (largely in Scandinavia and the States), to the late works penned in the East Germany to which her returned after the Second World War. His uniroringly experimental writing raises questions about political literature and the uneasy relationships between theatre and audience, literature and society, culture and capitalism. Critical opinion in the early decades was often characterised by crude political polarisations, but Brecht has also attracted attention from a number of important writers, philosophers and critics, and there have been interesting attempts at revision from poststructuralist, femininst and post-Communist perspectives. In your study of his work you should cover a range of the major plays and have a knowledge of at least some of his poetry; beyond that you are free to place the emphasis on poetry, prose or theory, as you wish. The play about war and capitalism, Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder (originally 1939), is the text prescribed for special study. In addition you should read a cross-section of his dramatic works, from the bleakly lyrical early text Baal through to the famous later plays written in exile: Leben des Galilei, Der gute Mensch von Sezuan, Der kaukasiske Kreidekreis. Brecht is perhaps best known for his radical experimentation with theatrical convention. You should certainly look at his ‘Lehrstücke’ (e.g. Die Maßnahme) and familiarize yourself with the essays in which he sets out and develops his commentary on literary and theatrical practice. He is also one of the most significant German poets of the twentieth century: from the provocative early collection of religious parodies, celebrations of material existence and ballads of social deprivation: Bert Brechts Hauspostille, to the anti-fascist exile collection Svendborger Gedichte and the more spare and lyrical poetry of the late years, the Buckower Elegien. The standard German edition (with useful notes on genesis and reception) is the 30-vol. Große
kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe, but any Suhrkamp edition of the plays will do. One way into his large and varied output of poems is the volume Ausgewählte Gedichte ed. Siegfried Unseld and Walter Jens (Frankfurt, 1964). His theory may well be most easily accessed by way of the English versions (ed. Tom Kuhn, Marc Silberman and Steve Giles): Brecht on Art and Politics (London, 2003), Brecht on Theatre and Brecht on Performance (both 2015).

Introductory Reading

Walter Hinderer (ed.), Brechts Dramen: Neue Interpretationen (Stuttgart, 1984)
Klaus Detlef Müller, Bertolt Brecht: Epoche, Werk, Wirkung (München, 1985)
Jan Knopf, Brecht-Handbuch, 5 vols (Stuttgart 2001) – do not confuse with the earlier 2 vols with the same title


Günter Grass was one of Germany’s most important post-1945 authors writing under the heading, but against any straightforward possibility, of Vergangenheitsbewältigung. Awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1999, he remained, across the second half of the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, one of Germany’s most compelling storytellers and a prominent, and controversial, public figure. His first novel, Die Blechtrommel (1959), the text prescribed for special study, has been called the ‘defining novel of the 20th century’ and was adapted into a film by Volker Schlöndorff in 1979. Told by the ultimate unreliable narrator, Oskar Matzerath, a supreme manipulator of narrative perspective, with the mind of an adult but in the self-inductively growth-stunted guise of a three-year-old, it takes us through the Third Reich and into the past-avoidant 1950s of Germany’s economic miracle as they relate to Oskar’s own autobiography, in a mixture of the grotesque, the humorous, the fantastic, the blasphemous and the provocatively obscene. Together with the novella Katz und Maus (1961), and with Hundejahre (1963), it forms what has long been known as the Danzig Trilogy. More recently, this has been expanded to a quintet through the inclusion of örtlich betäubt (1969) and finally Im Krebsgang (2002), both of which address intergenerational conflict, with the latter famously stressing the importance of acknowledging German suffering experienced as well as inflicted during the war.

Prose fiction relating to contemporary politics, or extending Grass’s concerns beyond Germany to the effects of global overpopulation and poverty, nuclear catastrophe or the environment, include Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke (1972), Kopfgeburten oder die Deutschen sterben aus (1980) and Die Rättin (1986). These are interspersed with Die Flunder (1977), an alternative history of the world through gender politics and cooking, told by a talking flounder, and Das Treffen in Telgte (1979), a novella debating the effectiveness of writing as a form of political intervention. Unkenrufe (1992) and Ein weites Feld (1995) examine the problems of reunification and a specifically German history. Constants in all of the above are a complex narrative style, play with temporal levels, and an interrogation of memory and historiography. These also return in Grass’s recent memoir trilogy, the first volume of which, Beim Häuten der Zwiebel (2006), controversially discloses his membership in the Waffen-SS, thus adding a further complex and complicating layer to his earlier fictional work.

Grass is also known as a challenging essayist and outspoken political commentator (and one-time campaigner for the SPD), and he has produced a number of dramas, poetry (from early surrealist texts to more explicitly political pieces), and a large body of etchings and drawings, some of which feature on the covers of his works. His last book, Vonne Endlichkait [About Finitude], on mortality and the aging body, is a collection of poems, short prose pieces and pencil drawings, published posthumously in 2015.

Introductory Reading
Katharina Hall, *Günter Grass’s ‘Danzig Quintet’: Explorations in the Memory and History of the Nazi Era from Die Blechtrommel to Im Krebsgang* (Oxford and Berne, 2007)

12. Christa Wolf (1929-2011)

Christa Wolf became known as one of the most distinguished writers of the former German Democratic Republic. Latterly, she was championed in the West by a body of feminist criticism, but alongside her commitment to record an explicitly feminine experience of contemporary reality runs a larger humanist and socialist vision. Her works also document a progressive disillusionment with the proclaimed socialist utopia. Metaphors of illness become dominant to chart the marginalisation and stultification of the individual in a contemporary socialist society. Early texts like the famous story of ‘star-crossed lovers’ and the Berlin Wall, *Der geteilte Himmel*, can be set against the background of the young socialist state, Cold-War politics and the prescriptions of socialist realism. *Nachdenken über Christa T.* (1969) is a far more oblique and challenging text about the assertion and disintegration of personal identity. Later texts turn away from specifically socialist themes to embrace the threat of ecological destruction, dark visions of nuclear menace and intense concern with gender politics as well as an obsessive review of Wolf’s own possibilities as a writer, and those of literature itself. You will be expected to read widely among her later texts including the controversial *Kindheitsmuster* which attempts to come to terms with the fascist past; *Kein Ort. Nirgends* which records a fictional meeting of the Romantic writers Kleist and Karoline von Günderrode; *Störfall*, written in the wake of the nuclear meltdown at Chernobyl; and the key text *Kassandra*. This novel (along with the Frankfurt lectures *Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung: Kassandra* of which it was originally the final one) is the text prescribed for special study. It offers a revision of the myth of the fall of Troy from the perspective of the prophetess Kassandra herself and the women who have been written out of successive versions of history, whilst also providing a bleak insight into the ideological stalemate of the 1980s. Almost all of Wolf’s work draws more or less explicitly on autobiographical sources, and challenges conventional genre categories (she also published a large body of essays and correspondence). Reading her work after the fall of the Berlin Wall raises new and difficult questions about the role of the writer in the GDR, censorship, and the nature of morality and political commitment. Wolf’s 1990 text *Was bleibt*, which documents her treatment at the hands of the secret police, initiated a large-scale literary debate in the newly united Germany about political engagement and aesthetics. This was taken up again in 1991 after it was revealed that Wolf herself was, for a short time, involved with the ‘Staatssicherheitsdienst’.

*Introductory Reading*

Angela Drescher (ed.), *Dokumentation zu Christa Wolf: ‘Nachdenken über Christa T.’* (Hamburg, 1991)
Sonja Hilzinger, *Christa Wolf* (Stuttgart, 1986)

13. Thomas Bernhard (1931-89)

Thomas Bernhard is a central voice in Austria’s post-war literary landscape. His scathing critiques of Austria and its political and cultural institutions provoked a number of literary scandals during his lifetime and led to his reputation as a ‘Nestbeschmutzer’. However, Bernhard is just as renowned today for his comedy, humanity and for a psychological acuity that has drawn comparison with writers such as Kafka and Dostoevsky. His narrative style, unmistakable and inimitable, is distinguished by
monologues that often digress into tirades on subjects ranging from Adalbert Stifter to Viennese toilets, as well as a musical prose that continues to challenge his translators. His unique writings have influenced authors both within the German-speaking world (Elfriede Jelinek, W. G. Sebald) and beyond (Tim Parks, Imre Kertész, Javier Marías and Roberto Bolaño).

Bernhard began as a poet, but his literary breakthrough came with his debut novel *Frost* (1963), in which the narrator, a young medical student, is asked to observe a painter increasingly deranged and isolated in what he perceives to be a bleak and brutal Austrian Alpine landscape. Bernhard’s prose works of the 1960s and early 1970s, such as *Verstörung* (1967) or *Das Kalkwerk* (1970), frequently return to themes of madness and isolation, rural Austrian landscapes and family relationships in post-war Austria. His early dramatic works, such as *Ein Fest für Boris* (1970), *Der Ignorant und der Wahnsinnige* (1972) and *Die Macht der Gewohnheit* (1974), are often compared with the theatre of the absurd. From 1975-82, Bernhard published a five-volume autobiography covering the social stigmatisation of his childhood years, following his birth in a Dutch home for single mothers, his adolescence in Salzburg under Catholic and Nazi state institutions, and his early battles with tuberculosis.

The 1980s would see Bernhard’s major literary scandals, and at the same time what is probably his most accomplished work. *Wittgensteins Neffe* (1982) is a tender reflection on Bernhard’s friendship with Paul Wittgenstein, nephew of the philosopher, and *Der Untergerichter* (1983) focuses on the pianist Glenn Gould, drawing on Bernhard’s own time studying at the Mozarteum in Salzburg. Copies of his novel *Holzfällen* (1984) were temporarily seized in Austria following a libel lawsuit filed by his former friend Gerhard Lampersberg, who saw himself featured in the novel’s tragicomic caricature of Viennese artistic circles. His final play *Heldenplatz* (1988) caused nationwide uproar in alleging the persistence of National Socialism and anti-Semitism in Austria fifty years after the *Anschluss*. His last published novel *Auslöschung* (1986), an extensive confrontation with Austria’s historical legacy through the inheritance of a family estate, is widely considered his *opus magnum*. Its preoccupation with inheritance, Austrian history, the intellectual life, and the ‘art of exaggeration’ draws together many of the themes of Bernhard’s work. The text prescribed for special study is *Alte Meister* (1985), in which the monologue of a music philosopher in Vienna’s Kunsthistorisches Museum mixes comic rant with poignant reflection on personal loss and the uses we make of art.

**Introductory Reading**

Manfred Mittermayer, *Thomas Bernhard: Eine Biografie* (Frankfurt am Main, 2015)

14. Elfriede Jelinek (1946-)

Elfriede Jelinek is a contemporary Austrian author who won the Nobel prize in 2004. She is a controversial writer: a feminist, one-time Marxist, both reviled and celebrated in her home country, who sometimes cultivates shock as part of her political aesthetic. She has a substantial oeuvre in all genres: from her early poetry *Lisas Schatten* (1967) to her experiments with satirical prose, like *Wir sind lockwög el baby!* (1970) or Michael: *Ein Jugendbuch für die Infantilgesellschaft* (1972), books which satirize popular culture and its duplicitous presentation of ‘the good life’. She became well known with her novels *Die Liebhaberinnen* (1975) (a short satirical text and a good way into her work), *Die Ausgesperrten* (1980) and the autobiographically based *Die Klavierspielerin* (1983), which was made into an acclaimed film by Michael Haneke in 2001. *Die Klavierspielerin* is the text prescribed for special study. These novels each present a pitiless world where a regime of violence and submission keeps human beings, especially women, in check. She demonstrates how the entertainment industry’s clichés seep into people’s consciousness and paralyse opposition to class injustices and gender oppression. Her disturbing satire of pornography, *Lust* (1989), offers a hard-hitting presentation of sexual violence
against women as the template for our culture. This line is maintained, seemingly in a lighter tone, in *Gier: Ein Unterhaltungsroman* (2000), a study in the cold-blooded practice of male power. In her drama she has also developed from fairly traditional models (like *Was geschah nachdem Nora ihren Mann verlassen hatte* which picks up the story of Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* where Ibsen leaves off), to much more radical pieces that do without roles in a traditional sense but present voices that allow various levels of the psyche and history to be heard simultaneously, e. g. *Totenauberg, Raststätte, Wolken. Heim, Ein Sportstück, In den Alpen, Das Werk*. Her most recent published works for drama, the so-called ’princess dramas’ (*Der Tod und das Mädchen 1–V*, 2003 and *Bambiland; Babel*, 2005), are variations on one of the writer’s basic themes, the inability of women fully to come to life in a world where they are painted over with stereotypical images. Jelinek has long been an outspoken critic of Austria: depicting it as a realm of death in her massive phantasmagorical novel, *Die Kinder der Toten* (1995). In this her writing builds on a lengthy Austrian tradition of linguistically sophisticated social criticism, with precursors such as Johann Nepomuk Nestroy, Karl Kraus, Özön von Horváth, Elias Canetti, Thomas Bernhard and the Wiener Group.

**Introductory Reading**

See also the *Text & Kritik* volume on Jelinek, ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold (1993).

**15. Herta Müller (1953-)**

Herta Müller belongs, like Franz Kafka and Paul Celan, to a German-language literary tradition from beyond the borders of the modern German-speaking nations. Her origins in the Banat Swabian community of southern Romanian give her work its dominant thematic focus – the violence and suffering inflicted by the Romanian Communist dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu during the 1970s and 1980s – as well as a distinctive, sparse yet lyrical prose style which exploits the peculiarities of her idiolect and the space between her two languages to unsettling effect. Müller left Romania for Germany in 1987 after struggling to avoid being coerced into acting as an informant for the Romanian secret police, and has regularly spoken out in the German media against oppressive regimes around the world. However, her work has a broader focus than her fame as a witness to political violence, engaging with questions of linguistic representation, exile and memory. She was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2009.

The text prescribed for special study is *Herztier* (1994), an ostensibly autofictional account of the terrors of Ceaușescu’s Romania and the consequences for a generation of young poets and writers.

Other works which address political suffering include *Der Fuchs war schon damals der Jäger* (1992) and *Atemschaukel* (2009), which draws on the biography of the poet Oscar Pastior to tell the story of a young man who is deported to a Soviet gulag. Texts which date from around the period of her move to Germany include *Reisende auf einem Bein* (1989), in which an emigré protagonist contends with the unfamiliarity of life in a German city, and *Der Mensch ist ein großer Fasan auf der Welt* (1986), the story of a man living in Banat Swabia who applies for permission to leave. Müller’s earliest prose, such as *Niederungen* (1982/1984) and *Drückender Tango* (1984), deals with the experience of childhood in a Banat Swabian village, another oppressive cultural context which informs her work. Although she does not consider herself a visual artist, Müller’s poem-like word-collages made from words and letters cut from newspapers have been published in multiple volumes, the latest being *Vater telefoniert mit den Fliegen* (2012). The oblique relationship between these surrealistic collage texts and her longer prose pieces reflects her understanding of authorship and the nature of language as at once both precise and abstract, potent and problematic. Indeed, Müller is also a prolific essayist who discusses these issues directly and comments on language, ethics, memory and exile in essays published in numerous collected volumes since the early 1990s – most recently, *Immer derselbe Schnee und immer*
derselbe Onkel (2011).

Introductory reading

Herta Müller, ed. by Brigid Haines and Lyn Marven (Oxford: OUP, 2013)
Dichtung und Diktatur. Die Schriftstellerin Herta Müller, ed. by Helgard Mahrdt and Sissel Lægreid (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2013)
Herta Müller: Politics and Aesthetics, ed. by Bettina Brandt and Valentina Glajar (University of Nebraska Press, 2013)
Herta Müller, ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold (Munich: text + kritik, 1993)

16. Christian Petzold (1960- )

Christian Petzold is one of the major filmmakers currently working in Germany. His work continues the dialogue with American film that has been a major feature of German cinema since the time of the Weimar Republic — for instance Jerichow (2008) responds to The Postman Always Rings Twice (1946), and Phoenix (2014) to Hitchcock’s Vertigo (1958). At the same time, he is in creative conversation with his own contemporaries in Germany, as is particularly clear in the Dreileben trilogy (2011) to which Petzold contributed a film alongside Dominik Graf (b. 1957) and Christoph Hochhäusler (b. 1972). He works for television, for instance Toter Mann (2000) or Wölfe (2016), as well as making films for cinema release. He is associated with the group of filmmakers whom critics have grouped together as the Berlin School (which also includes Thomas Arslan and Angela Schanelec — cf. Marco Abel’s monograph), but Petzold’s films often have a more narrative drive than those of other filmmakers associated with the School. Moreover, his collaboration with Graf and Hochhäusler suggests an interest in working with genre conventions also visible in his work for television. The films up to Jerichow (2008) often portray a bleak, post-reunification Germany, shaped by the anonymizing forces of globalization. Subsequent work has chosen historical subjects, the GDR of the 1980s in Barbara (2012), and Germany in the late 1940s in Phoenix (2014). In settings taken from Germany’s past, Petzold’s characters find more scope for action than seems to be available in the impersonal landscapes of contemporary Germany, as if Petzold returns to history to unearth the sources of a fragile individual agency that seem less easy to discern when he traces the shadow the past casts on the present in films such as Die innere Sicherheit (2001), which reflects on the legacy of the Baader-Meinhof group. Much existing secondary literature approaches Petzold as an art-house director. At the same time, his interest in the conventions of plot, character and genre show him to be engaging with a range of cinematic devices over and beyond a narrowly conceived counter-cinema. The film prescribed for special study is Jerichow (2008), but candidates to should aim to watch widely across both cinema and TV productions.

Introductory Reading

Marco Abel, The Counter-cinema of the Berlin School (Camden House, 2013)

PAPER XI: GOETHE

Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749-1832) not only holds a central position in German literature, comparable to those of Shakespeare in English and Dante in Italian literature, but wrote in an astonishing variety of genres. As a novelist, he took Europe by storm with the impassioned letter-novel Die Leiden des jungen Werthers (1774), produced the key Bildungsroman in Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre (1795-96), and wrote a novel of manners with tragic depths in Die Wahlverwandtschaften (1809). Besides Parts One and Two of Faust, a cosmic drama that spanned his entire creative life, his
plays include the vivid early historical drama Götz von Berlichingen (1773), the proto-feminist enactment of classical humanism Iphigenie auf Tauris (1787), and the portrayal of an emotionally fragile poet among calculating courtiers in Torquato Tasso (1790). Not least, he produced a vast body of lyric poetry, bearing a complex relationship to his own emotional life, and including the frank eroticism of the Römische Elegien (1795) and the attempt in the West-östlicher Divan (1819) to bridge the gulf between European and Islamic culture. The paper makes it possible to gain an overview of Goethe’s literary work, and, for those who wish, to explore his autobiographical and travel writings, or to examine his problematic reactions to the French Revolution, his controversial scientific researches, or his attempt with Schiller to establish a German classicism.

Introductory Reading

Barker Fairley, A Study of Goethe (Oxford, 1947)
T. J. Reed, Goethe, Past Masters (Oxford, 1984)

PAPER XII: SPECIAL SUBJECTS - GERMAN

There is a long list of papers available across the whole Faculty. The list below gives those that are particularly the responsibility of the German sub-faculty. Examination is either by a portfolio of 2 essays (Method B2), totalling 6-8,000 words, or by a dissertation of 6-8,000 words (Method B1); or, in the case of Advanced Translation, by a portfolio of three different exercises (Method B2 + C1). They are normally all taught in Hilary Term of your final year.

You should note that not all of these papers are available every year; you should consult with your tutor to ascertain which of them will be available in the year you take Finals. A definitive list of the Special Subjects available in your final year will be distributed in the Trinity Term before the final year.

Old Norse

Old Norse is the language of medieval Iceland, whose settlers produced a rich and varied literature in the centuries following its settlement in 870AD. Medieval Icelandic literature (Old Norse) was written down from the twelfth century onwards, but includes, in its extensive corpus of poetry and prose, material from earlier periods which had been transmitted orally from pre-Christian times. A good place to start looking at the language and some Old Norse literature is Ranke and Hofmann’s Altnordisches Elementarbuch (4th edn., Berlin, 1979), in which all the major Old Norse literary genres are represented. Extracts from Egils saga and Gísla saga also contain skaldic verse, a poetic genre celebrated for its crypticism and uniquely intricate metre. There are also extracts from Snorri Sturluson’s compendious history Heimskringla, and from Gylfaginning, his account of Old Norse mythology, including Ragnarök, the doom of the gods. Eddic poetry is represented by a selection from the heroic lays, and the probably pre-Christian wisdom poem Hávamál. E.V Gordon’s Introduction to Old Norse (rev. Taylor, Oxford, 1956) is another useful handbook for beginners.

Students wishing to explore the links between Old Norse and medieval German might start with the Old Norse Völsunga saga (ed. R.G. Finch, London, 1965, in parallel translation), a prose version of Germanic heroic legends about Sigurðr the Dragon-Slayer, Brynhildr, and Attila the Hun, and based on poems from the Edda. But those taking the paper are free to choose any topic in Old Norse literature and/or language for their submitted essays.

The paper is taught through eight tutorials, and there are university classes in Old Norse every Michalemas term. Examination is by portfolio of two essays. Written work must show knowledge of the texts in the original language.
**Introductory Reading**

Jónas Kristjánsson, *Eddas and Sagas* (Reykjavik, 1988)
Margaret Clunies Ross, ed., *Old Icelandic Literature and Society* (Cambridge, 2000)

**Old High German with either Gothic or Old English or Old Saxon or Old Frisian**

The paper builds on a knowledge of Old High German and provides the opportunity to compare that language with another Germanic dialect from the East or West Germanic group as represented by specimens drawn from their most important texts: for Gothic, the Gospel according to St Mark, chapters 1-9; for Old Saxon, the *Heliand* lines 4029-5038; for Old English, *Beowulf*, lines 1-1049; for Old Frisian, texts I-IX, XII-XIV, XVI, XVII from the *Introduction to Old Frisian*, and ‘The Seventeen Statutes’ and ‘The Twenty Four Landlaws’ (Buma, pp.93-107). The basis for Old High German (if you have not offered this language as a separate paper, Paper V(i)) is taken to be that of the OHG Tatian translation.

**Introductory Reading**

Frans van Coessem/Herbert L. Kufner, *Toward a Grammar of Proto-Germanic* (Tübingen, 1972)
Orin W. Robinson, *Old English and its Closest Relatives* (Stanford, 1992)

Examination is by a portfolio of two essays. Areas to focus on might include theoretical issues of the nature of protolanguages, the genetic relationship of the dialects as it emerges from the earliest evidence, either within ‘Ingvaenic’/West Germanic or between West and East Germanic, general philological problems of interpreting the earliest sources, the issue of cultural and linguistics contacts between different Germanic tribes, and the detailed linguistic comparison of their phonologically and morphologically equivalent forms.

**Walther von der Vogelweide and the origins of the German love lyric**

The Middle High German love lyric in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is monophonic song, reflecting the practice of court performances in which typically the performer would also be the composer of both words and melody. It represents a particular and remarkable development within the European tradition of erotic poetry in which, characteristically, ritual wooing gestures are acted out in
song, articulated in the context of the triangle of the lover-minstrel, the beloved and the audience-society. This Special Subject allows you to make a special study of the German ‘Minnesang’ of the most celebrated of the German poets, Walther von der Vogelweide (ca.1190 - 1230) and to study how his work relates to that of the earliest poets of the ‘Minnesang’, such as Der von Kürenberg and Dietmar von Aist, published in the collection ‘Des Minnesangs Frühling’.

Introductory Reading


Examination is by a portfolio of two essays.

**Gottfried’s Tristan and Medieval German Court Society**

This special subject allows you to make a detailed study of the famous love romance and look at it in the context of contemporary views of court society.

The Tristan romance (composed ca. 1210) is a tale devoted to the problems of a passionate and illicit love relationship within a closed court society. The hero comes to the court of Cornwall and conducts a successful wooing expedition to win the hand of Princess Isolde of Ireland for his uncle King Marke, but on the return journey, together with Isolde, he falls victim to a love potion. The rest of the story, which was intended to finish with the death of Tristan and Isolde, is devoted to the lovers’ intrigues at court. Aspects to concentrate on when beginning the study of this text are Gottfried’s conception of true love (developed in the prologue) and the depiction of the opposition between court society and the lovers.

Introductory Reading


Examination is by a portfolio of two essays.

**Mechthild von Magdeburg and women’s writing in German 1150-1300**

Mechthild von Magdeburg (writing ca. 1250-1282) is the author of *Das fließende Licht der Gottheit*, a collection of ecstatic revelations in German in which spiritual experience is verbalised and given literary form as dialogues, visions, auditions, allegories, prophecies and pieces of narrative. The metaphorical language of love, which also plays an important part in the ‘Minnesang’ and in a number of earlier German religious texts, is used here to depict religious experience, in particular for the expression of the mystical union of the soul with God, her bridegroom. This paper provides an opportunity to study the work of one of the first women writers in European literature, and to look at her work and her understanding of (female) authorship in the context of a selection of earlier German writings by and for women.

It is recommended that, for an initial reading of her work, special attention should be paid to the following sections: I,1-7; 1,14-22; 1,38-44; II,1-6; III, 9; IV,2; IV, 12-14; V,4; VI,31. Copies of this material, taken from the edition by G. Morel (1869), are available (and can be photocopied) in the Modern Languages Faculty Library.
Examination is by a portfolio of two essays.

Women Writers of the Early Modern Period

This special subject examines writing by women from the Reformation to the early 18th century. In this special subject you will first of all examine the circumstances under which early modern women wrote and published, e.g., social circumstances, education, mentors, networks, genre prescriptions. You can then choose from a wide range of authors and topics, e.g. Women and the Reformation: Caritas Pirckheimer and Argula von Grumbach; Religious poetry: Anna Ovена Hoyers and Catharina Regina von Greiffenberg; love and friendship poetry: Sibylle Schwarz; women and court literature: Sophie Elisabeth von Braunschweig-Lüneburg and Aurora von Königsmark; poetry of grief and consolation: Margaretha Susanna von Kuntsch; autobiography: Eleonore Petersen and Glik Bas Judah Leib.

Literature and Medicine, 1780-1880

The relationship between literature and medicine is an important source of aesthetic developments in the modern era, helping to shape literary movements as diverse as the Empfindsamkeit and Poetic Realism, Romanticism and Naturalism and helping to link writers like Goethe, Novalis, Büchner, and Fontane. There is no formal prescription and the course will allow you to examine a range of genres and writers including poetry and prose, scientific texts, and encyclopaedic literature, focusing on particular authors, periods or on historical developments across the period as a whole. Some possible topics for discussion are: how literature deals mimaeticaly with medical matters (death, concepts of illness and wellness, therapy); theories of imagination and feeling around 1800; narrating illness; literature as medicine; depictions of medical practitioners; literature and drugs.

Examination is by a portfolio of two essays.
Weimar Classicism 1794-1805

Essentially the creation of two men, Goethe and Schiller, Weimar Classicism was a literary programme, announced in periodicals such as Goethe’s Propyläen and Schiller’s Horen, but also implicitly a political one, embodying a considered response to the French Revolution and the crisis in European society which it represented. The Revolution and its consequences are addressed directly in works such as Goethe’s epic poem Hermann und Dorothea and Schiller’s treatise Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen, indirectly or symbolically in Goethe’s novel Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre and plays such as Wallenstein, Maria Stuart and Die natürliche Tochter. Important works of lyric poetry were also published by the two men during the years of their close collaboration from 1794 until Schiller’s death. The works to be studied thus cover a wide range of genre and include some of the major canonical texts of German literature.

Introductory Reading

W. H. Bruford, Culture and Society in Classical Weimar (Cambridge, 1962)
D. Borchmeyer, Weimarer Klassik (Königstein, 1980)

Examination is by a portfolio of two essays.

The ‘Bildungsroman’

The ‘Bildungsroman’, i.e. the novel centring on the development of its protagonist from youth to adulthood, has been widely considered the characteristically German form of the novel, thanks largely to the cultural prestige of its chief exemplar, Goethe’s Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre. This tradition can, however, be followed back to C. M. Wieland’s witty philosophical novel Agathon (1766-7), set in ancient Greece, and K. P. Moritz’s searching psychological and autobiographical novel Anton Reiser (1785-90); and it runs forward through Romanticism (Novalis’s Heinrich von Ofterdingen is a reply to Goethe, whose Meister was insufficiently poetic to please the Romantics) to Adalbert Stifter’s large-scale idyll Der Nachsommer (1857) and the great Swiss novel by Gottfried Keller, Der grüne Heinrich (1854-5; revised version, 1879-80). The form has been modified, adapted or parodied by 20th-century writers such as Thomas Mann, Hesse and Grass.

Introductory Reading

Michael Beddow, The Fiction of Humanity: Studies in the Bildungsroman from Wieland to Thomas Mann (Cambridge, 1982)

Examination is by a portfolio of two essays.

19th Century German drama
The purpose of this subject is to explore the range of German drama from the classical dramas of the late Schiller (Wallenstein onwards) to the Naturalism of Hauptmann and Anzengruber. An important topic is the flourishing of tragic drama in Germany at a time when this genre barely existed in other European literatures – in the work, for example, of Kleist, Büchner, Grillparzer and Hebbel. There is also, however, a large body of comic drama in the nineteenth century, notably the Viennese comedies of Raimund and especially Nestroy. And for anyone attracted by the relations between music and German literature, the tragic music-dramas of Wagner based on Germanic myth (and the account of tragedy they helped to inspire in Nietzsche, Die Geburt der Tragödie) are indispensable.

You will be asked to submit two essays on a theme illustrated by the works or two or more dramatists. Possible themes include: the influence of Shakespeare; historical / political drama; comedy as affirmation or subversion; the dramatic presentation of women; myth and drama; social conflict in drama; Realism and Naturalism; tragic guilt in drama; drama in performance: the nineteenth-century theatre.

Introductory Reading

F.J. Lamport, German Classical Drama: Theatre, Humanity and Nation 1750 - 1870 (Cambridge, 1990)
Edward McInnes, Das deutsche Drama des 19. Jahrhunderts, Grundlagen der Germanistik (Berlin, 1983)
Eda Sagarra, Tradition and Revolution: German Literature and Society 1830-1890 (London, 1971)

Examination is by a portfolio of two essays.

Nietzsche and his Impact

Though largely ignored during his lifetime, Nietzsche was soon recognised as the philosopher of modernity. More radically, honestly and intelligently than anyone else, he explored the consequences that must follow if traditional religious belief and moral constraints are jettisoned to make way for a view of the universe based on scientific knowledge and the individual will. Although his ideas about how to fill the resulting moral vacuum have not (fortunately) won general acceptance, nevertheless, he is one of the most interesting - and entertaining - of philosophers and ‘cultural critics’. He is also among the most brilliant of German stylists.

When Nietzsche began to be widely read in the 1890s, his ideas were found stimulating and liberating in the most varied quarters. There were Nietzscheans on the radical right and the revolutionary left, in the women’s movement and among Zionists. He was read avidly, but also critically, by writers as varied as Thomas Mann, Kafka, Rilke, Gottfried Benn and Hermann Hesse. Outside Germany, he was read with enthusiasm by Yeats, Lawrence, Stevens, Gide and many others.

Students will be expected to know the following books by Nietzsche in particular detail: Die Geburt der Tragödie (1872) and Zur Genealogie der Moral (1887), and to have read more widely in Nietzsche’s works. They will also study his reception, looking closely at a text or texts by one or more subsequent writers in relation to Nietzsche.

Introductory Reading

Steven E. Aschheim, The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany, 1890 - 1990 (Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1992)
Patrick Bridgwater, Nietzsche in Anglosaxony (Leicester, 1972)

Examination is by a portfolio of two essays.
The poetry of Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Stefan George and Rainer Maria Rilke

This paper examines the rebirth of German poetry in the 1890s with particular reference to three of the key poets of the fin de siècle. Although the emphases in each writer are different, and although each develops differently into the 1920s, they are united in their cultivation of a highly wrought poetry which drew on traditional forms. Against the background of cultural pessimism stemming from Nietzsche, and inspired by French Symbolism, especially Baudelaire, they saw art as crucial to the negotiation of modernity. Sceptical of the language of the everyday, they concentrated on the formal perfection of their work and on the powers of language to penetrate to the inner truth of reality. In his early work Rilke was the most subjective of the three. Hofmannsthal’s poetry and lyrical drama are characterized by a lament for the fleeting passage of life and a longing to know the secret correspondences of the universe. George, who influenced both of the other poets, employs exotic and sensual imagery in his early verse, but then brings Symbolist techniques to poetry of nature and love. Both Rilke and Hofmannsthal suffered a period of profound creative crisis. In Hofmannsthal’s case this prevented him from writing any further poetry, but found expression in his famous ‘Ein Brief’ (1902) which has become one of the most significant documents of the crisis of literary Modernism. Rilke’s later work establishes the idea of the poet as an essential harmoniser of the contradictions in human life, especially that between life and death, as he seeks an ever more exact articulation of what it is to be in the world. George’s later work expresses his concerns about the materialism of the new century and the horrors of the first world war, and entertains visions of future cultural renewal enriched by the legacy of the ancient classical world.

A selection from each poet is set for special study. You should choose two authors and get to know the prescribed texts in detail. They are:

Hofmannsthal: all the lyric poems in Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Gedichte. Dramen I (1891-1898), ed. Bernd Schoeller with Rudolf Hirsch [= volume 1 of the Gesammelte Werke in 10 Einzelbänden] (Frankfurt am Main, 1979 or later reprints)

George: Hymnen, Pilgerfahrten, Algabal; Das Jahr der Seele; Der Teppich des Lebens und die Lieder von Traum und Tod mit einem Vorspiel; the sections ‘Zeitgedichte’, ‘Gestalten’, ‘Gezeiten’ and ‘Maximin’ from Der siebente Ring; Das neue Reich (omitting the section ‘Sprüche’)

Rilke: Das Stunden-Buch; Neue Gedichte (both parts); Requiem für eine Freundin; Requiem für Wolf Graf von Kalkreuth; Duineser Elegien; Die Sonette an Orpheus

Introductory Reading:
Michael Hamburger, Hugo von Hofmannsthal: Three Essays (Princeton, 1972)

Examination is by a portfolio of two essays.

Modernist Prose Fiction 1898-1933

German prose fiction written during the modernist period raises complex issues of narrative technique, epistemology, psychology, gender, and cultural criticism. If you take this paper, you will be expected to work on a range of the following texts from the period 1898-1934: Gottfried Benn, Gehirne (five short Novellen); Alfred Döblin, Die Ermordung einer Butterblume; Hermann Hesse, Der Steppenwolf; Demian; Georg Heym, Der Dieb and Der Irre; Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Ein Brief and Andreas oder die Vereinigten; Robert Musil, Die Verwirrungen des Zöglinges Törleß; Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften; Rainer Maria Rilke, Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge; Arthur Schnitzler, Leutnant Gustl, Fräulein Else; Stefan Zweig, Buchmendel; Lou Andreas-Salomé, Fenitschka and Eine Ausschweifung; Veza Canetti, Die gelbe Straße.

Introductory Reading

Frank Trommler, Roman und Wirklichkeit (Stuttgart, 1965)
David H. Miles, Hofmannsthal’s Andreas: Memory and Self (Princeton, 1972)
Examination is by a portfolio of two essays.

**Cinema in a Cultural Context: German Film 1930 to 1970**

The first German talkie was made in 1929. By 1970, Fassbinder had already made four feature films. You will study the period in German cinema between the coming of sound and the arrival of New German Cinema. Topics will include propaganda and entertainment films in the Third Reich, the realism of the Rubble Films of the late 1940s, the different strategies for remembering and coming to terms with the past in the popular films of the 1950s, and the commercial successes of the 1960s: the Karl May Westerns and Edgar Wallace detective films. The period includes the political ruptures of 1933, 1945, 1968, and the aesthetic ‘new beginning’ of the Oberhausen manifesto in 1962. But the focus of the course will be the continuities that can be observed in film style, narrative techniques and in the way film is used as a medium for reflecting on everyday problems during the period. You don’t need to have studied film before to take this option. You can start familiarizing yourself with the vocabulary of film studies by reading David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson’s *Film Art: An Introduction*, currently in its 8th edition. Otherwise, the best thing to do is to start watching films. You can work by director (e.g. Käutner, Harlan, Sierck), but it is often more productive to watch films with the same star (e.g. Heinz Rühman, Hans Albers, Ilse Werner, Zarah Leander), or from the same year, to get a clearer sense of continuities in style and approach.

**Introductory Reading**


Examination is by a dissertation (B1).

**Literature in the GDR**

The course will focus on the role of literature in the years of the German Democratic Republic from 1949 to 1989. Issues will include: the beginnings of the GDR and political function of literature during the *Aufbau* period; the historical background; politics and theories of literature; convergence theories; literature and censorship. Close study of texts will form the basis for discussion of special features of GDR literature and the question of what makes a national literature. In the 1970s and 1980s women’s writing gained prominence, as did the topic of ecology. The course will also consider responses to the ‘Wende’ 1989 and attempts in literature and film to remember and recreate the GDR in retrospect.

**Introductory reading**


Karen Leeder (ed.), *From Stasiland to Ostalgie: The GDR – Twenty Years After*, a special issue of *Oxford German Studies*, 38.3 (November 2009)
Examination is by a portfolio of two essays.

**German poetry since 1945**

You will be expected to have a general knowledge of the field, and a detailed knowledge of works written by some of the key figures.

In this paper you will trace the paths of poetry ‘after Auschwitz’ through the political commitment and the formal experimentation of the 1960s, the turn to a new subjective awareness in the 1970s and the poetry of apocalypse and experiment in the 1980s and 1990s through to new voices of the new century. The paper is structured around the key figures in the post-war scene. By focussing on individual writers you can trace and compare the forms of political poetry in East and West, the development of a specifically female voice, or examine the development of a new poetic language and the battle against silence. In addition to a broad overview of the period, you should get to know a handful of texts by your three chosen poets well. You could usefully make a start by looking at Siegbert Prawer’s critical anthology *Seventeen Modern German Poets* (Oxford 1971) or Michael Hamburger’s bilingual anthologies *German Poetry 1910-1975* (Manchester 1976) and the equivalent *East German Poetry* (Manchester 1972) to get a sense of the period and the poets.

**Introductory Reading**


Karen Leeder (ed.), ‘Schaltstelle’: *Neue deutsche Lyrik im Dialog*, a special issue of *German Monitor* 69 (2007)

Examination by portfolio of two essays one of which may be a substantial commentary.

**Narrative Identities in the German Novel since 1945**

This course will give you an opportunity to study the post-war German novel in depth, focussing on the constitution of the narrator and the ways in which issues of identity (individual, gender, cultural, national) are constructed and expressed in narrative. Participants are advised to read all six core novels before the start of the course, so that discussion can draw on a common body of literature. While titles will be varied to suit special interests, the following novels may constitute the key texts: Max Frisch, *Stiller* (1954); Günter Grass, *Die Blechtrommel* (1959); Ingeborg Bachmann, *Malina* (1971); Christa Wolf, *Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung* and *Kassandra* (1983); Herta Müller, *Reisende auf einem Bein* (1989); W.G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* (2001). Participants will be encouraged to draw on other novels they have read and will be free to write on these in their essays. For each seminar, participants will also be asked to read a short theoretical text, so that the seminars will cumulatively build up an appreciation of current issues in the field of narrative.

Participants will be asked to give one or two seminar presentations, and to write three essays, which may incorporate material presented orally and which will be marked. The deadlines for these essays will normally be at the end of weeks 2, 4 and 6. On the basis of these essays, participants will then prepare a portfolio of two essays for submission to the Examination Schools in Week 9.

**Introductory Reading**

Sean Burke (ed.), *Authorship from Plato to the Postmodern: A Reader* (Edinburgh, 1995)


Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics* (London 1985)

Examination is by a portfolio of two essays.

**Post-1945 Women’s Writing in German**

The period since the end of the Second World War has seen great changes in the social status of women and significant developments in women writers’ understanding and deployment of their own gendered position as authors. This Special Subject provides an opportunity to study a varied range of works by women writers from across the period, addressing such themes as: gender and identity, gender and the family, the impact on women’s writing of the women’s movement, gender as a platform for the critique of cultural norms, women writers’ appropriation of myth, writing by women of non-German backgrounds. Key texts include: Marlen Haushofer, *Die Wand* (1963), Ingeborg Bachmann, *Malina* (1971), Christa Wolf, *Kassandra* and *Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung: Kassandra* (1983), Emine Sevgi Özdamar, *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserai* (1992).

**Introductory Reading**

Chris Weedon (ed.), *Post-War Women's Writing in German. Feminist Critical Approaches* (Providence, RI, and Oxford, 1997)
Brigid Haines and Margaret Littler, *Contemporary Women’s Writing in German: Changing the Subject* (Oxford, 2004)

Examination is by a portfolio of two essays.

**German-Jewish Literature since 1945**

What does it mean in the second half of the twentieth and in the twenty-first century to live and write as someone who is, in any sense of the definition, Jewish but at the same time German(-speaking)? How do German-language Jews write about their experience of the Holocaust: of living through it, of surviving it in exile, or of inheriting it as traumatic (non-)memory in later generations? And how does their ‘unspeakable’ subject matter shape the forms and narrative strategies of their writing? How do German-Jewish authors view and portray non-Jewish Germans or Austrians and the ‘negative symbiosis’ (Dan Diner) or ‘Nicht-voneinander-loskommen-Können’ (Barbara Honigmann) or ‘new togetherness’ (Rafael Seligmann) of their relations with them? How have things changed since the 1990s in the wake of German reunification, the collapse of the former Soviet Union, and the Waldheim affair in Austria? Where does Israel fit into the equation? This paper offers scope for exploring these and a range of related considerations in the first and/or later post-1945 generations of German-Jewish literature.


While the predominant genres in this category are narrative prose fiction and autofiction, or *poetry, candidates are free also to draw on works of autobiography, drama or film.
Examination is by a portfolio of two essays.

**Introductory Reading**


Reiter, Andrea, *Contemporary Jewish Writing: Austria after Waldheim* (New York: Routledge, 2013)

**German Drama after 1960**

Candidates will study some of the principal dramatic texts and writings on the theatre by a selection of the following: Peter Weiss, Peter Handke, Thomas Bernhard, Heiner Müller, Elfriede Jelinek, and others. There will also be opportunities to write about the practice and politics of the theatre. Some background in the study of modern drama will be useful to students wishing to attempt this Paper XII (i.e. at least a little knowledge of some of: Naturalism, Expressionism, Brecht, Beckett, the Absurd, and so on).

**Introductory Reading**


Examination is by a portfolio of two essays.

**Advanced German Translation: Theory and Practice**

This is a practically oriented course that will give students the opportunity to develop their translation skills at an advanced level and reflect on the translation process. The course will be taught in seminars in which approaches to translation will be discussed on the basis of suggested reading and practical assignments. The subject area or areas forming the focus of the course will be a matter for prior discussion with the tutor teaching the course in the relevant year. The course will be examined by a portfolio consisting of (1) a translation of a text (or excerpt of a text) of 2500-3000 words selected by the student (40% of mark); (2) an introduction of 2000-2500 words to the translation (30% of mark); (3) a comparative analysis, 2000-2500 words in length, of two translations of the same source text which will be provided as a common exercise for all participating students by the special subject tutor (30% of mark). The introduction will serve to justify the approach taken and comment on problem areas, constraints and chosen strategies, with specific reference to the text chosen for translation. The text selected for translation will normally be in German, for translation into English; however, students of native-speaker competence in German may opt to translate from English into German. Each piece of work will have a bibliography. The stated word limits are exclusive of footnotes and bibliography.

The maximum number of participants in this course will be 8, on a first-come-first-served basis. Students should apply by e-mail to Katrin.Kohl@jesus.ox.ac.uk AND Charlie.Louth@queens.ox.ac.uk. Applications will be accepted from Monday, 1st week in the Trinity Term of the students’ second year until the course is full, and at the latest on Monday, 1st week in the Michaelmas Term of the students’ final year.

**Bibliography:**

Examination is by a portfolio (translation, introduction and comparative analysis = B2 + C1).

**Literature and Culture of the Berlin Republic**

This special subject will suit undergraduates interested in contemporary literature and culture. There will be up to 6 hours of teaching covering a range of topics (many of them taken over from the present Contemporary Literature paper) to be taught in seminars or tutorial groups depending on the numbers. The choices will remain fairly stable with new things being added on a rolling basis. The aim is to look at key works of literature and film within the context of broader issues of cultural and political debate (e.g. the debates around the memorialisation of the Holocaust). In all cases the topics will work with multiple genres including film/photography etc. Students will also have the opportunity to do one piece of work on a subject entirely of their own choosing.

Sample Topics: The *Wende*; ‘Neue Lesbarkeit’; German Pop Literature; the Familienroman; Second-wave *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*; Memorialisation and the Holocaust; Legacy of the GDR; the new Gothic; Autobiography and its fictions; Old-age writing; Poetry and the body; Feminist writing; Transnational Writing; Notions of Authorship; the Berlin School of filmmakers.

**Introductory Reading**

Silke Arnold de Simine, *Memory Traces: 1989 And the Question of German Cultural Identity* (Frankfurt, 2005)
Stephen Brockmann, *Literature and German Reunification* (Cambridge, 1999)
Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany since Unification: from Colonization to Nostalgia* (Oxford, 2005)
Carol-Anne Constabile-Heming, Rachel J. Halveson, Kristie A. Foell (eds.) *Textual Responses to German Unification* (Berlin, New York, 2001)
Bill Niven, ed., *Germans as Victims* (New York, 2006)
Stuart Taberner (ed.), *German Literature in the Age of Globalisation* (Birmingham, 2004),
Stuart Taberner, *German Literature of the 1990s and Beyond: Normalisation and the Berlin Republic* (New York, 2005)

Examination will be by portfolio of two essays.

Other topics of broader interest that are not language-specific:

**Literary Theory**
What is literature? What is an author? What is reading, and where does meaning come from? This paper examines how literary theorists have answered these questions over the past century. The paper also allows you to concentrate on two further topics. You might focus on specific questions or themes (e.g. What is performativity?; Theoretical Readings of Poe’s Purloined Letter), on particular theorists (e.g. Roland Barthes) or on critical approaches, such as Psychoanalysis, Structuralism and Narratology, Feminism and Gender Studies, Marxism and History, Deconstruction, Post-Colonial Studies.

Teaching

You will typically be taught in a series of 5 tutorials in Hilary term. There will normally also be lectures related to various aspects of modern literary theory in Michaelmas and Hilary terms.

Introductory Reading

David Lodge (ed.), Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader, 2nd ed. (London, 2000)
Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory: An Introduction (Oxford, 1996)

Examination is by a dissertation (B1).

European Cinema

This paper gives you the opportunity to study major directors and periods of European cinema. The course introduces the basic concepts of film form and presents each film within its historical context.

Please note that it is only possible to take this paper in the final year. The course runs over two terms, Michaelmas and Hilary. ALL LECTURES AND SEMINARS ARE COMPULSORY. (You are also encouraged to attend the screenings since it is better to watch films on a big screen, but if there is a clash between screening times and other lectures you still have the possibility of borrowing the film in question and watching it on your own.)

1. Course Content

The format of the course is as follows. In Michaelmas there are 8 lectures and 8 screenings. In Hilary there are 5 lectures and screenings accompanied by seminars. For the seminars the group will be divided into two and each student is obliged to give a presentation on one of the films that are screened that term. Normally the students give these presentations in pairs. In Michaelmas term, the course outlines some of the main currents in European film history from 1920 to the 1970s presenting the main concepts of film form and introducing each of the chosen films in its historical context. The focus of the lectures and seminars in Hilary term is European cinema from the 1970s until now, often covering countries not discussed in the first term. Students are welcome to write on directors and topics that lie outside of the languages they study. The course is taught by a group of lecturers. Normally each of the seminars in Hilary term is chaired by one person.

2. Exam Essay

Friday of week 5 in Hilary term, a list of exam questions are made public at the Examination Schools. You have four weeks to write a 6000-8000 word essay on one of the questions. The questions are broad and can be answered with reference to a number of different directors, periods and national cinemas. The questions correspond to the theoretical and historical topics that have been covered in the lectures. It is allowed to compare films from different countries and periods. It is allowed to write about films from language areas other than the ones you study. You can quote in the main European languages but it is helpful to translate quotes from Russian. You can also quote dialogue from subtitles since you are
not required to know the original language of the film in order to write on it. A minimum of ‘technical’ vocabulary, describing different kinds of shot for instance, is helpful, but the exam is not a test in how many technical words you know. If in doubt you can be guided by the requirements of your argument. You can write about rare or very recent films but should then compare them to films that are more closely related to the topics covered in the course. The films screened are merely examples of periods and types of filmmaking and there are few restrictions on which films you may choose to write about, except that all the films should be European, which in this particular context means continental Europe including Russia.

3. **Examination:** Method of Assessment C1

**Select Bibliography**

André Bazin: *What is cinema*, Berkeley 1967-1971  
Peter E Bondanella: *A history of Italian cinema*, New York, 2009  
David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson: *Film Art: an Introduction*, Boston, 2004  

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When drawing up this handbook we have tried to be as accurate and clear as possible. The texts prescribed for study for individual papers are now listed in this handbook.

The Examination Conventions, detailing the structure of each examination paper, including rubrics, are also available as a separate document at:  
[https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/site/humdiv/modlang/german:fhs](https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/site/humdiv/modlang/german:fhs)

The revised edition of the University’s Examination Decrees and Regulations lists the examination papers and their permitted combination for your degree course. (For further details, refer to the handbook and the examining conventions.) See:  

Courses and regulations are constantly under review, so always check also with your college tutor to confirm what is written here and in the Examination Conventions.

In addition, do not hesitate to ask for clarification about the course from any member of the Sub-Faculty who is lecturing to you or tutoring you; we will always do our best to help.

Revised TT2018