

Wie Ideen zur Sprache kommen:
Analyzing political and social discourse in contemporary Germany

GERM 470 WR, Spring 2012
TTh 10:00 – 11:15, ML 219
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Description

In this upper-level writing intensive course conducted in German, students will examine in-depth the language used by politicians, journalists, pundits, and other leading public figures to express beliefs and attitudes regarding current socio-political issues in German society. Specifically, the majority of the course will examine the discourse surrounding three contemporary topics: the ecological movement; immigration policy; and demographic change. To allow for a more focused and detailed analysis, students will investigate a recent event that highlights the predominant issues for each topic:

- *Atomausstieg*: The decision by the federal government in June 2011 to end its reliance on nuclear power by 2022;
- *50 Jahre Gastarbeiter*: The celebrations and discussions in fall 2011 surrounding the 50th anniversary of the first guest workers to arrive in Germany;
- *Elterngeld*: The decision in 2007 and renewed in 2011 to provide a release from work and financial support to parents during the first 14 months of their child's life.

Approach

Students will focus their attention on conducting functionally oriented discourse analysis in order to understand the political, social, and cultural context of contemporary Germany. Based on the expectation that students have had no experience conducting discourse analysis, the first two weeks of the semester will be spent introducing the basics of discourse analysis. No linguistics background is required to participate in the course, but students will be expected to have a solid grasp of German grammar and its terminology as well as an interest in understanding how language is used to express ideas. Additionally during this introductory phase, students will inform themselves about fundamental aspects of political and media landscape in contemporary Germany. Such foundational knowledge of Germany will be vital to understand the issues examined later in the semester. After this introduction, the course's focus shifts to the three featured events. Students will begin by gathering and examining background information on the selected topic and then perform fine-grained discourse analyses of primary texts that explore the topic. Initially, much of this work will be guided and supervised, but one of the objectives over the course of the semester is to develop students' ability to conduct such informational and analytical work independently. One substantive measure of students' autonomy as discourse analysts will be their completion of the final project that requires them to research and analyze

the discourse of another contemporary issue in German society. In addition to the initial guidance and supervision, students will be expected to collaborate on assignments and share their findings with the rest of the class. One central and recurring task that will require collaboration is the creation of semantic fields that feature relevant lexicogrammar for a specific topic. Because this course fulfills one of the Continuing Writing Requirements for the GERs, students will draw on their analyses of contemporary discourse to write their own opinions about each topic, thereby reflecting the emphasis in 400-level courses in the German Studies Department on discussing, analyzing, and arguing. Discourse analysis is seen as a particularly helpful approach at this advanced stage of language learning because it allows students to examine in detail how language functions at the word, sentence, and discourse level to make meaning.

Goals:

By the end of the semester students in this course will be able

- to conduct a functionally oriented analysis of contemporary German public discourse;
- to draw on their discourse analyses to reproduce German public discourse in writing;
- to identify the cultural significance of public commentaries;
- to discuss contemporary German politics;
- to conduct independent research on German-related issues;
- to contextualize contemporary socio-political issues in relation to their history and origins;
- to reflect about their own language use in different contexts.

Prerequisites:

Two German courses numbered 300 or higher or the equivalent, or permission of instructor

Texts:

A course packet of required materials, including theoretical and practical information on discourse analysis, articles from leading German periodicals, such as *Die Zeit*, *Der Spiegel*, and excerpts from political debates, speeches, and discussions. In addition, students should own a good reference grammar book (e.g., Rankin & Wells or Dreyer & Schmitt) and have a reliable German-English and German-German dictionary.

Assessment

1. Preparation and participation (25%). Completing homework thoroughly, regularly, and on time is extremely important. Learning a foreign language is long-term process, and cramming simply does not work. Homework will be graded according to the following criteria:
 - “√+” (95%): Homework handed in on time and indicating a very thorough effort, including a conscious attempt to use language features emphasized in class;
 - “√” (80%): Homework handed in on time and indicating a satisfactory effort;
 - “√-” (65%): Homework handed in on time but indicating an unsatisfactory effort.

Note: Homework that receives a check or check minus can be corrected, turned back in,

and, assuming the issues have been addressed, receive a mark of 90%. Late homework will be assessed a penalty of 20 % each class day. Because of this policy, any homework assignment that is turned in more than 5 class days after it is due will receive no credit.

Regular homework assignments could consist any of the following activities: (re)reading an assigned text, creating a semantic field, conducting a preliminary discourse analysis, gathering background information, completing a worksheet or grammar exercise, working with a classmate on an assignment, writing an essay, or preparing for an in-class speaking event.

Attendance, preparation, *and* participation are essential to your progress. You will be allowed a maximum of 2 absences for routine doctor visits and travel for non-emergencies, etc., during the semester without penalty. Beginning with the 3rd absence, a penalty of -1% will be levied on the earned final grade for each class missed. The best policy to adopt is to **keep your instructor informed** if you miss any classes or assignments. Extended illnesses and family emergencies will be treated as exceptions, and absences for these purposes will be excused. Be prepared to show proof of the need for the absences, however, if your instructor asks for it. Varsity athletes can get excused with coaches' notification of announced absences but must, of course, do the required work.

2. Writing assignments (35%). At the end of each of the three units you will complete a multiple-draft writing assignment on a topic relevant to the unit.
3. Oral performance (15%). Periodically throughout the semester there will be formally assessed speaking events based on the material covered in class.
4. Final project (25%). Beginning around mid-term, students will select a contemporary issue in Germany, gather primary texts on the topic, conduct an analysis of the discourse, write a significant report of the analysis, and then present the findings in a formal presentation during the final exam period on Tuesday, May 8, from 8:30 to 11:00.

Academic Honor:

All courses in the Department of German Studies strictly adhere to the Emory College Honor and Conduct Code. The general rule to remember is that any work that you turn in to your instructor or tutor should be your own. Asking an advanced learner of German or a native speaker to proofread your work before turning it in is not permitted. If you want help with an assignment before turning it in, set up an appointment with your instructor.

SEMESTERÜBERBLICK

19. Januar: Einführung
24. Januar: politische Parteien; Medienlandschaft; Einführung in die Diskursanalyse
26. Januar Besprechung der Diskursanalyse
31. Januar: Besprechung der Diskursanalyse; Einführung in Thema 1

Themenbereich 1: Atomausstieg

2. Februar Hintergrund der ökologischen Bewegung, des Atomausstiegs und der Energieversorgung in Deutschland
7. Februar Atomgesetz: „Jetzt müssen die Deutschen noch mehr Energie sparen,“ *Bild*, 06.06.2011
9. Februar Atomgesetz: „Kabinett beschließt Atomausstieg bis 2022,“ *Die Zeit*, 06.06.2011
14. Februar Regierungserklärung des Atomausstiegs im Bundestag, 09.06.2011
16. Februar Reaktionen auf die Regierungserklärung im Bundestag, 09.06.2011
21. Februar Reaktionen auf die Regierungserklärung im Bundestag, 09.06.2011
23. Februar: Gegenargumente: „Die Brennelementesteuer kann nicht bleiben,“ *Handelsblatt*, 08.06.2011
„Vattenfall-Klage gegen den Atomausstieg ist ein Skandal,“ *Naturfreunde Deutschlands*, 04.11.2011
28. Februar: Talk Show zum Thema Atomausstieg; Einführung in Thema 2; Schreibaufgabe 1 fällig

Themenbereich 2: Integrationspolitik

1. März: Hintergrund der Immigration und Integration in Deutschland
6. März: Video Podcast der Bundeskanzlerin
8. März: Bundestagsreden: 50 Jahre Anwerbeabkommen

Frühlingsferien

20. März: Bundestagsreden: 50 Jahre Anwerbeabkommen; Thema für die Semesterarbeit wählen
22. März: Staatsbesuch aus der Türkei: „Wir fühlen uns im Stich gelassen“ (Bild Zeitung)

27. März: Muslim-Studie: „Innenminister warnt radikale Muslime“ (Bild Zeitung)
„Die Muslim-Studie? Völlig missverstanden“ (Der Spiegel)
29. März: Muslim-Studie: „Her mit den Papieren“
3. April: Talk Show zum Thema Integration; Schreibaufgabe 2 fällig

Themenbereich 3: Demographischer Wandel

5. April: Hintergrund zum Thema Familienpolitik, Demografie und Elterngeld
10. April: Fazit Elterngeld: Elterngeldgesetz und dessen Wirkung
12. April: Betreuungsgeld: Rede von Bundesministerin Schröder lesen; „Bis zu 150 Euro oder lieber ein Krippenplatz?“
17. April: Bundestagsdebatte: Bundestagsreden von Dörner (B90/Grüne), Geis (CDU/CSU), Marks (SPD) und Gruß (FDP)
19. April: Bundestagsdebatte: Bundestagsreden von Golze (Linke), Tauber (CDU/CSU), Rix (SPD) und Laurischk (FDP)
26. April: Talk Show zum Thema Elterngeld; Schreibaufgabe 3 fällig
1. Mai abschließende Diskussion