

Mehrsprachiges Deutschland

"Multilingual Germany"

Course Description

According to recent estimates of the *Statistisches Bundesamt*, about 90% of the households in Germany speak primarily German. At first glance, this statistic seems to align with the characterization of Germany as “conceptually and institutionally monolingual” (Adler & Beyer, 2018). However, this statistic does not provide information about how many people speak one or more languages in addition to German at home, nor does it capture the fact that the vast majority of people who pass through the German educational system receive years of instruction in at least one, and often two, foreign languages (the most popular being English, French, and Spanish). In terms of language policy, there are 7 officially recognized and protected minority languages in Germany (including *Friesisch*, *Sorbisch*, and *Romanes*) and Germany, as part of the European Union, endorses plurilingualism as a fundamental principle. However, there are several federal laws that stipulate German as the language of public administration and the court system, even though the status of German is not enshrined in the constitution (*Grundgesetz*). Furthermore, in debates surrounding immigration, language has become a proxy for integration, with acquiring “sufficient” German language proficiency being a requirement for certain types of residency permits or naturalization.

The contradictory perspectives described above lead to the central questions of this course: What does it mean to be multilingual at the individual as well as the societal level? And how do the impacts of multilingualism on society, on literature, and on the language itself play out in the German context? As we will see, the question of multilingualism is inextricably interwoven with questions of heritage, identity, belonging, and cultural expression. Therefore, our exploration of multilingualism in the German context will cover a range of topics, including but not limited to: research from the field of Second Language Acquisition on language learning and maintenance; language education policy; the politics of immigration, integration, and multiculturalism; language change—for example, the development of *Kiezdeutsch* and the use of *Anglizismen* in contemporary German; and phenomena of multilingual language use—such as code-switching—in both daily life as well as literary and cinematic texts. This course will focus primarily on the Federal Republic of Germany, though we will briefly consider the situation in Switzerland and Austria as well.

Our materials in this course will include literary fiction, poetry, comic books, memoir, essays, governmental publications, news media, social media, film, and popular music. Amongst others, we will read/watch works by Emine Sevgi Özdamar, Yoko Tawada, Wladimir Kaminer, Herta Müller,

Feridun Zaimoğlu, May Ayim, Olga Grjasnowa, Birgit Weyhe, Jakob Arjouni, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Fatih Akin, and Züli Aladağ.

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- provide definitions for the terms “multilingual” and “multilingualism”;
- understand and describe the multifaceted nature of multilingualism, in particular in the German context;
- analyze the representation of multilinguals/multilingualism in nonfiction, literary, and cinematic texts;
- clearly and effectively communicate observations, opinions, and interpretations in both written and spoken German.

Required Materials

Most readings and materials will be made available on the LMS course page or through the university library, but students are required to purchase the following novel:

- *Mutterzunge*. Emine Sevgi Özdamar. 1998. [exact ISBN would also be provided]

Additionally, the following two books, while NOT required to purchase, are excellent resources if you are interested in this topic, and we will read several excerpts from them:

- *Die Macht der Mehrsprachigkeit: Über Herkunft und Vielfalt*. Olga Grjasnowa. Dudenverlag, 2021.
- *Transit Deutschland: Debatten zu Nation und Migration*. Edited by Deniz Göktürk, David Gramling, Anton Kaes, and Andreas Langenohl. Konstanz University Press, 2011.