Syllabus

Course Description

GER 3234 (2678) Introduction to Reading German Text
Instructor: Dr. Franz Futterknecht

Office: 263B Dauer Hall

Email: franzo@ufl.edu   Office Phone Number: (352) 273-3781

Course Description:

This is a hybrid course. Students access reading materials in Canvas and meet face-to-face with the instructor.

Required Textbook : A Practice Grammar of German Dreyer-Schmitt, Die Neue Gelbe by Dreyer & Schmitt; Hueber Verlag (ISBN: 3-88532-722-8); Key (Lösungsschlüssel) may be purchased.

The primary goal of this course

The primary goal is for students to be able to read on the B1 to B2 level of the Common European Framework of References for Languages.

Upon completion of this course you should be aware of what causes misreadings (misunderstanding a text), what resources/tools are available to detect and correct misreadings, and how you can handle these tools in an efficient and competent way to become an independent intelligent reader.

We will use the online edition of dictionaries published by companies that specialize in their creation and publications. These dictionaries are based on linguistic principles and allow a systematic search for the meaning of words. Online dictionaries such as "dict.cc" or "dict.leo.org" provide a quite unorganized list of meanings. For reading problems that stem from the German syntax, we use the Dreyer-Schmitt practice grammar.

In addition, students will learn how the understanding of a German text depends on the cultural knowledge they have acquired prior of reading or during the reading process.

Students will also study how the application of theories will bring about different readings of the same text. We will also discuss if our 'default' world view is based on 'common sense' or embedded in theories. Students will become aware how the various interpretative approaches

in our literature, film, and culture courses originate from fundamental cultural or ideological differences.

The course consists of 6 modules

Module 1: Multiple Meanings and Misunderstandings of Words

The goal of this module is to teach students how to use dictionaries in a systematic and competent way. Whoever has used a dictionary did notice that words, especially verbs have multiple meanings, often so many that it takes several columns or even pages to list all the meanings of one verb. We will learn how languages can produce so many meanings out of one word and how to find the meaning that fits the text in an efficient and systematic way.

We will apply our skills of finding correct meanings by reading several text for young German readers.

Module 2: Long and Complex Sentences

 In this module, we will discuss strategies how to deal with the long and complexes sentences that German literary texts are famous for.

Module 3: Ambiguities in Texts

Even if you understand every word and sentence in a text it may remain unclear what the text means or talks about. There seem to be texts that reveal some aspects of the issues they address and conceal others. We will discuss in class different scholarly approaches to this kind of ambiguous stories. We also will discuss some of the theories that are used today by scholars to decode and understand the concealed meanings of texts.

Module 4: The Role of Cultural Knowledge

A decisive role in the understanding of texts is the knowledge the reader has about the biography of the author and about the time s/he lived as well as the historical time the plot of a story is located in.Often it is also useful to know about the history of the literary genre that the author uses. We will study the role of this kind of cultural knowledge by reading selected stories. We will also learn how to use the tools that are readily available on the Web and through other digital resources that provide today's readers with the cultural information s/he needs to avoid misreadings.

Module 5: Required Pre-Understandings for the Reading of Newspapers

Newspapers are written for readers that are familiar with the political, economic, social, and cultural systems in which they live. They only report what is 'new'. For foreign readers, the understanding of newspaper articles cause a special challenge; they are full of names of people

and organizations (often in form of acronyms) or refer to recent events that a new reader is unfamiliar with.

Technology Tools

The use of Google translate is not recommended. It is a short-cut that may well keep you from developing your skills as a reader. In fact, for specific assignments, the use of Google translate will be considered cheating.

Homework

Normally, instructions for homework is provided through the Assignment tool in Canvas. In this course, we will also experiment with the a new tool, embedded in Canvas, called 'Engage'. 'Engage' allows the instructor and students to annotate texts, as well as to ask and to answer questions in the text.

Since the different modules address a variety of issues in regard to an intelligent and improved understanding of texts, the forms of homework assignments are adjusted to the topics discussed in the modules.

 If you don't study the linguistic issues or read the text that are assigned for a specific day you won't be prepared to participate in the class discussion. Late homework is not accepted except for situations which count for an excused absence. After the due date, the assignments will no longer be accessible. Quizzes cannot be made up. You cannot make up missed homework. For missed homework students receive 0 points.

Attendance Policy

Students will be permitted 3 unexcused absences per semester. An excused absence is either one for which a medical certificate is provided or a certified University activity for which a written excuse from the University is provided. A medical certificate must clearly state that the student was unable to attend class on the date the class was missed. While there is no limit to the number of excused absences, the student is still responsible for making up missed work. For every unexcused absence (4th, 5th, 6th ...), students will lose 1% from their final grade. 3 late arrivals add up to one unexcused absence.

Final Grade

Homework	40%
Quizzes	20%
Midterm	20%
Final	20%

The midterm is an in-class quiz. It will be given after the second module. It covers the semantic and syntactic topics studied in the first and second module.

The Final is a take-home exam. It covers all the topics studied in this course. Its questions focus, however, on the issues of the modules 3 to 5. The Final Exam has to handed in no later than April 24th.

Exams can only be made up if there is a valid reason that you missed class (excused absence)

Grading Scale:

A 93-100; A- 90-92; B+ 87-80; B 83-86; B- 80-82; C+ 77-79; C 73-76; C- 70-72; D+ 67-69; D 63-66; D- 60-62;