BROWN

DEPARTMENT OF GERMAN STUDIES
BROWN UNIVERSITY GRADUATE HANDBOOK

(LAST REVISED: DEC 2026)

The Department of German Studies at Brown offers a Ph.D. program which both provides a coherent perspective on major developments in German literature, culture, and critical thought in the modern period (1517 to the present) and provides students with the opportunity to develop their own specialized interests in German Studies. The program requires a secondary field of study consisting of a coherent sequence of four courses outside the Department. With guidance from the Director of Graduate Studies, each student plans this sequence in a specialized area of interest. Some examples of possible specialized programs of study are Media Studies, History, Jewish Studies, Visual Arts, Philosophy, Music, or Theater. Drawing on the expertise of eminent scholars in these fields, who are teaching at Brown both in and beyond the German Studies Department, the program thus fosters a transdisciplinary approach in the field of German Studies.

The guiding principle of our curriculum is a conscious exploration of those topics and moments in the history of German culture and critical thought which define its uniqueness, exemplify broader issues in the humanities, or have resonated most strongly in other cultures. Fields which unify these goals – aesthetics and critical theory – are among our strengths.

The program is designed to prepare students for a diverse and ever-changing workplace, within academia and outside. To become first-rate scholars and researchers, students are trained to develop their writing skills and to deliver publishable work in their graduate career. To turn into mature and innovative teachers, they are exposed to a rigorous program of theoretical and practical approaches to teaching and understand the importance and nuances of advanced language skills. To enable them to become esteemed professionals, students will learn to perform research and to process information effectively and efficiently and to communicate highly complex subjects to a variety of audiences.

ADMISSION

Application Materials

For admission forms, please visit the Graduate School's website.

Applicants should submit a writing sample (in German or English) of approximately 20 pages. The GRE is not required, but international students will need to take the TOEFL exam. The letter of application should suggest research interests as well as possible fields of secondary study. Applicants should present evidence of advanced proficiency in German and a solid

background in German literature, culture, and critical thought.

Students whose primary department for graduate work at Brown is not German Studies may earn an M.A. in German Studies by completing 8 courses in the area of German Studies. These shall include at least 6 courses within the Department of German Studies and a maximum of 2 approved courses in a closely related field. None of these may overlap with coursework completed for the student's home department.

Students who obtain a B.A. in German Studies from Brown may integrate their undergraduate studies with work towards an M.A. as part of the 5th-year Masters program. Six additional courses beyond the B.A. are required. Please see the Dean of College's website for more information.

The Department does not accept outside applications for a terminal M.A. degree.

ADMISSIONS CRITERIA

The faculty of the Department of German Studies welcomes applications from prospective doctoral students who possess the demonstrated potential to acquire the scholarly expertise; linguistic mastery; and literary, cultural, and theoretical competence to thrive as scholars in the field of German Studies.

Before they can be considered for admission, applicants are expected to provide evidence of advanced proficiency in the German language and the ability to work with literary, cultural, and theoretical texts in the original German. (In cases where applicants seek to enter the program without an undergraduate or previous graduate degree in German Studies, the faculty will look for other evidence of advanced competence, such as relevant coursework in German.) Prospective students also will demonstrate, through documents such as writing samples and personal statements, their facility in English and their readiness and willingness, if English is not their first language, to carry out at least part of their research in the English language.

Selected candidates may be invited for Zoom interviews before receiving the offer of an on-campus visit that is funded, in part, by the Department.

When considering applicants for admission, the Department seeks to admit those students whose scholarly profile is an especially appropriate match with the intellectual orientation of the Department, while still being mindful of the desirability of scholarly diversity. The scholarly promise of an applicant to the graduate program in German Studies is measured by such elements as a well-crafted and cogently argued writing sample that is representative of the applicant’s current state of intellectual development; thoughtful and detailed letters of recommendation from former teachers and mentors; a carefully composed personal statement that showcases the applicant’s prose and manner of written exposition; as well as transcripts showing excellent performance in previous coursework. The Department is especially interested in receiving applications from potential graduate students whose analytical talents and dedication to scholarship are such that their future dissertations are likely to make an impact on the field of German Studies.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PH.D.

COURSEWORK

A total of 13 courses are required. Among these shall be:

- LANG 2900 (Center for Language Studies) – "The Theory and Practice of Foreign Language Learning and Teaching"
- 4 courses in a second field of study, usually consisting of a sequence of courses in another Ph.D. program at Brown, such as Comparative Literature, History, Music, Theater Arts & Performance Studies, Philosophy, MCM, and History of Art & Architecture.

Students may, in consultation with the Director of Graduate Students, count up to 2 courses at the 1000-level towards fulfillment of the coursework requirements.

Graduate students entering the Ph.D. program at Brown with a prior M.A. in hand may petition to be allowed to take up to 2 of their 13 required course credits on an "Audit" basis.

Students are required to take 8 graduate seminars in the Department of German Studies, 2 per semester during the first 4 semesters.

At the beginning of each academic term, graduate students will meet with the Director of Graduate Studies in order to discuss their progress and to have their proposed coursework for the respective semester approved.

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT

Graduate students in the Department of German Studies must demonstrate proficiency in at least one language other than German and English that is germane to their research interests. Students demonstrate proficiency by taking a translation exam or its equivalent. The language requirement should be satisfied before the qualifying examination.

QUALIFYING EXAMINATION

The qualifying examination consists of two parts: 1) a general examination and 2) a specialized fields examination based on two reading lists prepared by the candidate.

The first part of the examination, the general exam, takes place at the end of the first semester in the student's third year. It is a 90-minute oral examination based on a standing departmental list of 30 items drawn from the tradition of German literary writing and critical thought. Students will add 3 more items of their choice. This standing list will be made available to the student by the Director of Graduate Studies upon entry into the program. The student will work with a committee of 3 faculty members (chosen by the student) to select the texts, and the departmental faculty as a whole will administer this portion of the examination.

The second part of the examination takes place at the end of the second semester of the student's third year. It is a 2-part written exam, each part based on a reading list compiled in consultation

with the student's chosen committee, including the dissertation advisor. One list will address the student's dissertation topic; the second list will represent another field of interest. The lists must reflect a theoretical engagement with their respective topics. Each list will be accompanied by a statement outlining the student's main ideas, theses and questions represented in the list. Based on these lists and statements, the committee will prepare a question in relation to the two areas the lists address. Students will receive the question for the first list on a Friday by noon; they will then have until 5:00 p.m. the following Monday to prepare and submit a written answer, which will normally be between 10 and 15 pages. The following Friday, the student will receive the question for the second list, again by noon; the student will then have once again until 5:00 p.m. the following Monday to prepare and submit a written answer, which will normally be between 10 and 15 pages.

By the first Friday after the second part of the written examination, a two-hour oral examination based on the written responses will be held.

Students will be assigned either "Pass with Honors," "Pass," or "Fail" for the qualifying examination.

Upon successful completion of the qualifying examination, graduate students are eligible to be awarded the M.A. in German Studies and advance to the dissertation proposal stage.

Should a candidate fail to pass the qualifying examination or a portion thereof, he or she will be allowed to take the examination (or the portion that was failed) one more time during the following semester. If a candidate is unsuccessful a second time, the candidate will not advance to the dissertation proposal, is not eligible to be awarded the M.A., and will be terminated.

DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

After successfully completing the qualifying examination, students shall, in consultation with their primary dissertation advisor, nominate two other dissertation readers. By the end of the first week of the fall semester in the fourth year of study, the student shall present a substantive written dissertation proposal.

The exact format of the proposal will be determined by the primary advisor, but it will generally be between 15 and 20 pages in length, and include a tentative chapter outline and preliminary bibliography. The proposal will be examined orally by the three members of the dissertation committee by the end of that semester. The committee will either approve the proposal or recommend revisions. Once the proposal is approved, the student will be advanced to Ph.D. candidacy.

Further information about University deadlines and time to completion are found in the University Graduate Studies Handbook. Requests to extend degree candidacy past the established deadlines are to be submitted to the Department for approval.

DISSERTATION DEFENSE

After the dissertation has been completed and accepted by all three members of the dissertation

committee, a dissertation defense takes place, consisting of a public presentation and discussion of the thesis. The date of the defense is selected in consultation with the dissertation committee. The defense will begin with an oral presentation by the candidate, offering a brief overview of the main theses and structure of the dissertation (usually 15-30 minutes). This presentation will be followed by a 60– to 90– minute discussion in which the candidate responds to questions posed by the committee, and, if present, other faculty. At the end of the defense, members of the committee consult and vote on whether to pass the dissertation. The Graduate School requires that the dissertation be accepted by all three readers before the doctoral degree can be awarded.

TEACHING

Students are required to teach for at least two years, though the norm will be higher.

Graduate student teaching is an important component of our doctoral program. As teaching assistants, graduate students work with the Language Program Director to teach beginning and intermediate German. Graduate students are required to take a seminar on language pedagogy and to participate in annual teaching workshops held before the start of the semester. As graduate students progress in their program, they will assist faculty in undergraduate courses in the German Studies Department. Advanced students may be offered the opportunity to work with professors to design their own upper-level courses or to teach such a course with a professor. Faculty mentoring of teaching assistants throughout their course of study is an integral part of our program. Students will be prepared to present a comprehensive teaching portfolio when they enter the job market.

In addition to the language-specific training administered by the German Studies Department, all graduate students are encouraged to participate in seminars and workshops offered by Brown's Center for Language Studies and the Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning. Each of these units offer pedagogy-focused Certificates that will be noted on your transcripts.

ADVISING

Upon entry into the program, a graduate student's main advisor is the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), who will guide the student with regard to such matters as the logistics of the program, seminar choices during the course-taking stage of the program, exam preparation, and professional development.

During the course-taking stage of the program, graduate students will complete a total of 13 courses. Before the beginning of each semester, students will meet with the DGS to discuss their progress and to have their proposed coursework for that term approved.

While preparing for the "general examination" portion of the qualifying examination, a graduate student will draw on a wide swath of departmental faculty (professors whose primary responsibility currently is teaching and research) for advice and guidance.

For the second part of the qualifying examination, which consists of two separate written exams, a graduate student will choose a three-person committee, including the dissertation advisor, who

will serve as chair of the committee, and two additional departmental faculty members whose primary responsibility currently is in teaching and research. The proposed members of this three-person qualifying examination committee must be discussed with, and approved by, the DGS, after which the student submits the following form.

At the dissertation stage, the main advising responsibility for a graduate student will lie with the dissertation advisor. In consultation with the dissertation advisor and the DGS, a student will nominate two other faculty readers who, together with the dissertation advisor, will form the dissertation committee. The final composition of the committee, as well as any changes to the committee, must be submitted to the DGS for approval, using the following form.

It is expected that dissertation advisors and readers will maintain regular contact with the dissertator, even during leaves and breaks; that they will respond in a timely manner to professional inquiries from the dissertator; and that they will offer comments and feedback on the dissertator's writing in a timely manner. It is the responsibility of dissertation advisors in particular to ensure that their advisees make appropriate progress through the program and to intervene when such progress does not occur. It is expected that dissertation advisers will read chapter drafts in a reasonable amount of time and offer critical feedback as needed.

The DGS remains in regular contact with graduate students and communicates with them about the logistics of the program as well as important deadlines. From time to time, the DGS may also pass along information about professional development opportunities to the students (such as pertinent conferences, calls for papers for special journal issues, or job opportunities). For advising and mentoring in the area of pedagogy, graduate students will also draw on the expertise of the departmental Language Program Director.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Students are expected to organize and participate in student-run colloquia. Graduate students and faculty from other departments working in the area of German Studies may be invited to participate in these. Students will also have the opportunity to present their own work and invite the occasional Brown or non-Brown speaker.

Unfailing attendance at all academic lectures by guest speakers, symposia, special seminars, conferences, etc. organized by the Department of German Studies is expected of all graduate students, regardless of their stage in the program. This opportunity for scholarly exchange is an integral part of their graduate education and an important element in the Department's intellectual culture.

Graduate students also play an integral part in our undergraduate program, not only as instructors at all levels but as advisors to the German Club, as secondary group leaders to spring break study tours to Germany, and as active participants in co-curricular activities.

UNIVERSITY SUPPORT

Graduate Students are supported throughout the summer and are expected to report on their

summer accomplishments before the start of each academic year. Reports should be submitted to the DGS by September 1st using the following form.

More information about University funding can be found here.

RESOURCES

The Department regularly welcomes a Max Kade Distinguished Visiting Professor of German Studies who teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in the program. Recent visiting faculty include: Alexander García Düttmann (Berlin), Rembert Hüser (Frankfurt), Christine Ivanovic (Vienna), Edith Anna Kunz (St. Gallen), and Charles de Roche (Zurich), Felix Christen (Zurich), Sven Kramer (Lüneberg), Dirk Oschmann (Leipzig), Nils Plath (Erfurt), Juliane Prade-Weiss (Munich), Dieter Thomä (St Gallen), Daniel Weidner (Wittenberg), and Caroline Sauter (Frankfurt).

Annually, the Department offers the multi-day Brauer Lecture Series. Recent invited scholars include: David Ferrell Krell (Chicago), Alexander García Düttmann (Berlin), Judith Kasper (Frankfurt), and Sandro Zanetti (Zurich).

We expect our graduate students to participate in the Cogut Institute for the Humanities at Brown University. The Institute organizes events such as lecture series, symposia and conferences and also provides a number of fellowship opportunities to faculty and graduate students.

Students are also encouraged to become engaged in the activities of the Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning and the Center for Language Studies. We encourage students to build strong teaching portfolios by availing themselves of university and departmental resources.

Students are encouraged to apply for external funding from organizations such as the Fulbright U.S. Student Program or the DAAD.

The John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library is the primary teaching and research library for the humanities at Brown. It has an excellent collection in German Studies and related fields of interest. Various other specialized collections are located in the John Hay Library, the Orwig Music Library, and the Art Slide Library. Brown University participates in a collaboration with other research libraries in the New England area so that faculty and students have access to any material they might need.

RECENTLY OFFERED GRADUATE COURSES

IN GERMAN STUDIES

On Being With the Dead in Art, Literature, and Philosophy (Gerhard Richter)
This seminar will explore the idea that to be alive in an emphatic sense is to live not only with the living but also with the dead. This way of being challenges us continually to reinterpret our

relationship with the dead and to engage with them in a spectral dialogue. The dead demand to be treated responsibly in this exchange, even though—or precisely because—they are no longer among the living. But our ways of being with the dead always also pertain to ourselves and our future. After contemplating Heidegger's reflections on being with the dead in Being and Time, we will conduct a series of case studies drawn from art and critical thought, including Derrida's "Life-Death" seminar, Barthes' Mourning Diary, the prose and poetry of Kafka, Rilke, and Celan, Adorno's reflections on art "after Auschwitz," and other works.

Dream-Work; or, the Poetics of Thought (Kristina Mendicino)
In his seminar on the Formations of the Unconscious, Jacques Lacan remarks: "If there's anything that the Freudian experience tells us, it is that we are determined by laws in the very depths of ourselves, as we rightly or wrongly say, adopting an image —let's simply say, at the level of what lies within us beyond our conceptual grasp of ourselves, beyond the idea that we have of ourselves and draw upon." Those 'laws' align, before all else, with the functions of condensation and displacement that Freud elaborates in the Interpretation of Dreams, and that draw what Freud calls the 'Dream-Work' (Traumarbeit) into closest proximity with the work of poetry. Departing from Freud's Interpretation of Dreams, we will examine the poetics of thought through both psychoanalysis and literary analysis, with readings by writers such as Paul Celan, Sandor Ferenczi, Sigmund Freud.

Identification: On the Mark(s) of the Same in Literature, Philosophy, and Psychoanalysis (Kristina Mendicino)
How does identification occur? What structures its occurrence? What difference(s) does it make whether identity is conceived as an ontological fundament (Schelling), elaborated as a synthetic function (Benjamin), or traced back to a singular, 'unary' trait (Lacan)? While these questions would not even be legible if it were not for the ideal identity of the letters, lexemes, and syntactic forms that compose them, they also suggest that nothing about the formation or effect of such ideality is self-evident. In this course, we will engage with literary, philosophical, and psychoanalytic negotiations of identity, with readings by writers such as Nicolas Abraham, Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Sigmund Freud, Martin Heidegger, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Friedrich Hölderlin, Edmund Husserl, Heinrich von Kleist, Jacques Lacan, and F.W.J. Schelling.
The Darkness of the Lived Moment (Gerhard Richter)
What is a moment? What will a moment have meant? Is a moment completely over as long as I can still conjure it in memory? The more one thinks about the moment, the more inscrutable it appears. Seemingly the most basic of experiences, the moment remains nevertheless shrouded in darkness, as already Plato, in the late dialogue Parmenides, worried. Our seminar will examine the "darkness of the lived moment," as Ernst Bloch, the great political philosopher of hope, named it. What appears in the immediacy of our experience, is actually far removed from our understanding, but it does open onto an unforeclosed futurity. We will contemplate this darkness of the lived moment in a constellation of works drawn from literature and the arts; and in relation to theoretical texts by such thinkers as Bloch, Hegel, Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger, and Blanchot.

Witnessing Totalitarianism: Fascism, Communism, and their Aftermath in German-language Literatures (Kristina Mendicino)

The memory of National Socialism has been as mainstay of post-1990 German politics and culture. However, at least with the end of the Cold War, national German memory culture has also been challenged by non-national perspectives, especially by the necessity to commemorate the entanglement of National Socialism with Communist totalitarianisms and to situate German memory culture within a Central and Eastern European context. To engage with this tension, we will read theoretical texts that continue to inform current memory debates (Arendt, Mitscherlich), recent social sciences approaches to transgenerational transmissions of psycho-social sequelae of perpetration and complicity (Welzer & al., Mihai, Gobodo-Madikizela), and literary texts that have brought transgenerational transmissions into the focus of public attention (Bernhard, Sebald), in order then to focus on contemporary German-language texts that negotiate the difficulties of commemorating totalitarianisms.

Dichter—Troubadour—Poet : Gedicht—Tropus—Poem (Thomas Schestag)
What is called poem, poet and poetry, in English today, is called differently, in different languages at different times. The semantics of German Dichter, Gedicht and Dichtung differ considerably from their Greek equivalents – poieîn, poíema, poietés –. A third case, indicaged by the names trobador, trouvère and troubadour, opens yet another field: of invention, discovery, and unexpected turns. This seminar will explore all three manifestations of poietic, dichterische or inventive explanations with what is called language in both their incompatibilities and similarities. Texts to be read and discussed will include Emily Dickinson, Ezra Pound and George Oppen; Martin Heidegger, Paul Celan, Emil Staiger, Eduard Mörike; Sappho, Plato, Aristotle, Jesper Svenbro; Cicero, Quintilian, Jacques Roubaud, Jean de La Fontaine, Guillaume IX d'Aquitaine, Daniel Arnaut, and Jaufre Rudel.

Under Analysis: On the History of Truth and the Subject of Science (Kristina Mendicino)
The resonances between the oeuvres of Martin Heidegger and Jacques Lacan far exceed such passages as the one from "The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason Since Freud" where Lacan explicitly alludes to his French translation of Heidegger's essay "Logos (Heraclitus, Fragment 50)." In this seminar, participants will probe the various ways in which Heidegger's meditations on the historical essence of truth and the metaphysical framework of modern science intersect with Lacan's analytic formulations concerning the fictional structure of truth and the subject of science. Special attention will be given to their respective conjugations of being, logic, and language, as well as the literary writings that inflect their approaches to placing truth, subjectivity, and science in question.

Crises of Verse: George, Hofmannsthal, Rilke, Trakl (Kristina Mendicino)
"No word in the poem (I mean here every 'and' or 'the') is identical with the similarly-sounding word of common usage," writes Rainer Maria Rilke in a letter from 1922. Instead, the poetic "constellation" that it enters "changes it through to the kernel of its nature," yielding a "transformation" that Rilke will call both "glorious" and "unheard-of." With these words, Rilke does not merely set poetry apart; he also suggests that poetry deepens and responds to the Sprachkrise that would become acutely pronounced in Hofmannsthal's "Letter to Lord Chandos," a text which traces a suspension of the rhetoric of judgment concerning everything from affairs of state to everyday encounters. Through readings of Rilke and his contemporaries,

we will probe the critical difference their poetry makes for the understanding of language and explore the "unheard-of" implications of their radically non-identical idioms.

Versions of Emptiness (Thomas Schestag)
This collaborative humanities seminar will address the question of what we understand by "emptiness." Conversely, we will ask what we mean by "fullness," and how that is conceived of as the opposite of emptiness. Beginning with Lucretius' notion of the void, ending with the free jazz of Ornette Coleman, the seminar will examine a series of philosophical and artistic versions of emptiness (and fullness) as they have played out from ancient/classical to modern/contemporary times. Further examples will include the poetry of Paul Celan, novels by Marguerite Duras, a miniature by Gentile Bellini, and the paintings of Mark Rothko. The constant backdrop to our discussions will be how the passivity or potentiality of blankness is, or is not, transformed into activity or actuality (as well as the ethical and political consequences of that transformation).

Postcatastrophic Narratives: Memory and Postmemory in German Literature after 1945 (Daniel Weidner)
German culture after 1945 is determined by a changing relation toward its past: the horrors of National Socialism. This past was repressed, then gradually recognized, until it emerged as an essential part of German identity & politics in the 1980s. Literature played a role as a counter-memory of what had been officially forgotten, adopting a radically modern aesthetics to engage with Adorno's dictum that writing poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. Literature attempts to represent the unrepresentable, developing a different poetics of memory and postmemory, in part with a political dimension that finds echoes in today's postcolonial debates. After an introduction to the historical context & clarification of key concepts such as trauma, postmemory, & the politics of memory, we will discuss seminal texts by Paul Celan, W. G. Sebald, Alexander Kluge, Wolfgang Koeppen, Peter Weiss, Heiner Müller, Uwe Johnson & others.

Literature and Philosophy: Case Studies of a Vexed Relationship (Gerhard Richter)
Literature and philosophy, as formations of rhetoric and logic, have an ancient and enduring relationship that is vexed by the conceptual interpretability of literary language. Without conceptual interpretation, no literary text could ever be said to possess any meaning. But if the philosophical interpretation of a text were to succeed fully in its translation of aesthetic form into conceptual content, the act of philosophical interpretation would render the literary artwork superfluous, its supposed contents having been shown not to need its singular aesthetic form. This seminar will investigate how transformative practices of reading might engage with this irreducible tension by turning to a constellation of exemplary theoretical readings of literature: Heidegger on Hölderlin and Rilke; Benjamin on Brecht and Proust; Adorno on Goethe and Beckett; Blanchot on Kafka; Derrida on Shakespeare and Celan. Diverse graduate fields welcome. In English.

… Reading — Lesen … (Thomas Schestag)
The meaning of reading oscillates between advice (Rat) and guess (Raten), as if not only every

text to be read were considered a riddle, but the question of reading as well. This seminar will deal with the riddle of reading in more than one language. It unfolds around seven scenes: an episode in St. Augustine's Confessions; the Praying Mantis in Fabre, Blanchot, and Celan; a conflict of interpretation between Staiger and Heidegger (around a poem by Mörike); reading in Rousseau's Essay On the Origin of Languages (interpreted by Derrida, de Man, and Frey); two versions of reading in La Fontaine and Hebel; the encapsulation of Poe's Man of the Crowd into a poem by Baudelaire; and reading as rumination in Nietzsche and Rosenfeld.

Thinking Unrest: German Idealism and the Traces of History (Kristina Mendicino)
Before the turbulence of our moment, "unrest" arguably emerged as the major premise for Hegel, Hölderlin, and Schelling. For all the systematic tendencies that their writings may display, it is from longing that Schelling would deduce the "ages of the world"; anxiety marks Hölderlin's more philosophical writings on "becoming in decline" as well as his poetic production; and "unrest" not only describes the initial appearance of life in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, but also does not cease to affect it, even when restless transitions from emergence to perishing seem to be held in conceptual grasp. In this course, we will read Hegel, Hölderlin, and Schelling, attending to the ways in which their more pronounced aims to grasp the tensions between mind and world are persistently motivated, accompanied, and ultimately unsettled by a commitment to reading the troubling traces of history.

Nietzsche's Poetics (Felix Christen)
Should Nietzsche's theory of the lyric be understood in both the objective and subjective genitive? In what way and to what extent can the textual genesis of his poems be read as a radically open-ended thought process and engagement with the linguistic and epistemic premises of writing? In the seminar we will first investigate a selection of Nietzsche's early writings on Greek poetry, his genealogy of tragedy, and his analysis of the origin of art, and then turn to a careful study of individual poetic texts. We will address questions of doubling, the "mechanics" of art, friendship and interpretation, skepticism, metaphor, hospitality, and self-analysis in their historical context, and also consider Nietzsche's legacy for current debates on philology, philosophy, and the humanities.

Living On: Theories of Survival (Gerhard Richter)
Sometimes one unexpectedly lives on. Lyotard once wrote that "survival implies that an entity that is or should be dead is still alive." The idea of survival emerges with special force after traumatic events: global pandemics, genocidal wars, the death of a loved one, personal crises. Yet what if survival were not something added on to life but rather constituted it? Our seminar will test the hypothesis that surviving is the most intense and powerful form of living possible. Readings will be drawn from literature, philosophy, psychoanalysis, and critical theory, including Kafka, Benjamin, Freud, Canetti, Derrida, Lyotard, and Agamben. We will also examine Lear's philosophical case study of radical vulnerability as it emerges in the aftermath of the Crow Nation facing eradication of their way of life, Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation. Diverse graduate fields welcome.

This is Us in Language: On Mother Tongue, Fatherland, and I (Nils Plath)

"'We' is the battle cry of people who take a single slice of the world and insist that it is the whole world." (Kristof Schreuf) To show how literature and critical reflections on language can be taken as counter-articulations to authoritative claims wherever one speaks in the name of us/we, this class focuses on various texts, spanning from the 19th century to the present, in which we read about the use of one mother tongue (German), the representation of some fatherland (as a reference or projection plane for identities), and articulations of the I and the collective.

Police, Strike, Justice: Revisiting Walter Benjamin's "Critique of Violence" (Gerhard Richter)
"Toward a Critique of Violence" (1921) is one of the young Benjamin's most enigmatic, provocative, and enduring achievements. On the occasion of its 100th anniversary, this seminar will revisit the text, paying particular attention to its intricate arguments concerning the relations among violence, law, the police, justice, religion, the death penalty, critique, and the philosophy of history. Inquiring into the conceptual and political work that Benjamin's text performs in its own historical time as well as in ours, we will examine interpretations of it by Marcuse, Derrida, Agamben, Hamacher, Gasché, and others. In English. Graduate students from diverse fields welcome.

IN RELATED DEPARTMENTS

Speed: Fast and Slow in Literature and Philosophy (Susan Bernstein, Peter Szendy)
Our time is running out of time:" this is a feeling that lingers on since the advent of a modernity that allows for less and less lingering. It reaches its apex with the Anthropocene understood as maximal contrast between the deep time of geology and the short temporality of human history. Our collaborative seminar will trace the genealogy of accelerationism to futurism and nihilism, while also approaching boredom as a philosophical question. It will offer readings (slow and fast) of classics of literature that stage the (fast or slow) passing of time (Goethe's Second Faust, Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse).

The Sublime (Marc Redfield, Zachary Sng)
The notion of the sublime has inspired powerful writing from the classical era to our own. In this collaborative humanities seminar we'll work through some famous writing on the sublime (Longinus, Burke, Kant, and various 20th-century philosophers and critics) and engage the sublime tradition in literature and painting (the Bible to Milton to Jorie Graham; Caspar David Friedrich to the Hudson River School to Barnett Newman), and possibly music, cinema, or other media. We will think about the sublime in relation to race and gender; capitalism, globalization, and modern technics; the animal, the anthropocene, and the post-human.