



German Comprehensive Exam

The comprehensive exam is an alternative option to the thesis for German majors who are also majoring in another subject. Students opting for the comprehensive exam option must write a thesis in another department or program. Students who elect to take the exam must enroll in an additional German course at the 200 or 300 level instead of signing up for GER 457 or GER 448 (Thesis). This additional course fulfills the last of the 9 credits in German studies needed to complete the German major.

The purpose of the written comprehensive examination is to assess the students’:

- familiarity with the diverse cultural and historical contexts of the German-speaking world;
- ability to recognize distinctive viewpoints available only through the German language;
- understanding of genre, historical periods, diverse voices and traditions, and various discourses of memory;
- awareness and application of a variety of discourse patterns and strategies in the German language.

The comprehensive exam is based on a reading list that students assemble in close consultation with their advisor. The comprehensive exam usually takes place at the end of the Winter semester when the students’ coursework in the major program is nearing completion. The exam is held in the Department of German and Russian Studies and is supervised by a member of the faculty.

Reading List

The reading list consists of two distinct sets of primary literary and film works in German. Each set should contain no fewer than nine titles and should cover a thematic area of German-language literature and film. Thematic areas can be based on courses students took in their major program on campus, as well as abroad.

Examples of thematic areas:

- a specific genre of German literature and film (e.g. novel, autobiography, drama, etc.);
- a selected key artistic period in the cultural history of the German-speaking countries (e.g. Expressionism, Naturalism, Realism, etc.);

- a motif, a theme, or a social, political, or historical factor connecting specific works of literature and film (e.g. minority writing in the German speaking countries, work and gender in the GDR, etc.);
- a turning point in the history of the German-speaking countries and its political or cultural legacy (e.g. Austrian fascism, the First World War, the Third Reich and the Nazi legacy, etc.).

Each set of works on the reading list should include at least five book-length works. The reading list may include translations, scholarly monographs, literary interpretations, film or book reviews, or other critical studies (secondary literature), as approved by the advisor. Each set of works should be accompanied by a short abstract articulating the coherence and purpose of the set.

Before preparing the reading list, students should consult with their advisor to discuss the thematic areas they have chosen and receive further critical and bibliographical guidance. Students are strongly encouraged to select authors and works discussed in their German courses, and review all class notes, exams, term papers, and presentations before making a selection of the works. The reading list must be approved by the advisor.

Exam Questions

For each of the two thematic areas, students prepare three essay questions and submit them to the advisor for feedback and approval. Each essay question should address at least three works in the selected thematic area. All works in a thematic area need to be addressed in the three questions. Each question should be specific and constitute an arguable statement: a reasoned opinion that will be supported by textual evidence in the course of the essay. Essay questions should not duplicate questions answered in any papers for any of their courses. In formulating essay questions, students should also think about the methodology or methodologies they intend to apply to their analyses.

Exam Format

Students write two essays on two different dates selected in consultation with the advisor. Typically, the two writing sessions take place during weeks 8-10 of the Winter semester. On the day of each written exam, the advisor selects one essay topic from the three questions proposed by the student.

The student has three hours to write the essay. The exam is written on a computer, with access to the Internet. Students should send their essays via e-mail as Microsoft Word documents to their

advisor (and CC the exam to the Department Chair) no later than three hours from the start of the exam. The essay submission is final; no further revisions can be submitted after the end of the exam.

German-German dictionaries (i.e. *Das Synonymwörterbuch*) in printed version will be available during the exam. Students can bring notes, books on their reading list, and any other printed materials, as outlined below.

Items permitted during the exam:

- Primary-literature texts (only works on the reading list);
- A German-English dictionary (printed or electronic version, for example <http://www.leo.org/>);
- Hand-written notes, pen or pencil.

Using online translation tools, such as Google Translate or Microsoft Translator, is not allowed.

Each essay should be 4-5 pages in length (1,000 – 1,250 words). The essay should be word processed in 12-point Times New Roman font, double spaced, with no single spacing anywhere and no extra spacing anywhere. There should not be extra spaces between paragraphs, the essay should have a one-inch margin on the top, bottom, left, and right. The title should be centered and should appear under the heading information on the first page and above the first line of the essay. The title should be in the same font as the rest of your essay, with no quotation marks, no underlining, no italics, and no bold (except for quotations and the titles of works to which the essay refers).

Students are encouraged to prepare in advance and save on their computers outlines for the three essays for each thematic area. Each outline may contain the structure of the essay and the student's argument. In addition, students can use their prepared electronic notes on the texts and the authors, an annotated bibliography, selected quotes from the primary literature, and selected quotes from secondary literature with references. During the exam, students are allowed to use software for managing bibliographies, notes, citations and references (i.e. Endnote, RefWorks, or Zotero). For more information on how to use annotated bibliographies, cite sources, and avoid plagiarism, see <http://libguides.bates.edu/Citation>.

Because the exam is primarily a way of showing how students engage with literary and film texts, references to secondary literature are not necessary, nor do they automatically enhance the essays. If students want to include secondary references, they should do so sparingly. They should make sure they show how they understand the words and thoughts of other scholars and how the opinions of others fit into the argument.

Students should appropriately identify the words or thoughts of others, whether they reproduce them verbatim or paraphrase. Complete references (in MLA or Chicago style) are necessary for all texts cited. A list of Works Cited (*Bibliographie*) in an appropriate reference style is required at the end of the essay.

Academic Integrity

This exam is governed by The Bates College Statement on Academic Integrity. It is very important that students familiarize themselves with the Statement, which they can find here: <http://www.bates.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct/academic-integrity-policy/>. Failure to observe the Bates College Academic Integrity Policy and the guidelines above will automatically result in failing the exam and may delay the students' ability to graduate. Any violations of the college policy or of the exam guidelines will be referred to the Dean of Students.

Evaluation of the Exam

The essays are evaluated on the degree of the students' demonstrated knowledge of the thematic area, on the focus, development, and strength of the arguments, on the use of the primary works and demonstrated connections between them, on formal structure and composition, and on the meaningful use of secondary literature, if applicable. The essays should demonstrate the language skills appropriate for an advanced level of competence on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) scale or C-1 level on the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR). Students receive a pass/fail grade for each essay. At the discretion of the advisor, and with the approval of the Department Chair, students who fail one written exam may be allowed to graduate if their other written exam and coursework so merit. Failing both exams means failure to complete the major program in German.

Disabilities and Accommodations

If students have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations during the exam, they should make arrangements to meet and discuss their needs with their advisor as soon as possible.

Comprehensive Exam Timeline

Action	Deadline
Students declare their intention to take the Comprehensive Exam and notify their advisor	The last day of classes of the semester preceding the one in which students intend to take the exam
Students submit the reading list with abstracts for the two thematic areas to their advisor	The first day of classes of the semester
The advisor approves the reading list	The end of the 2nd week of classes
Students check if they have the required number of courses to graduate and enroll in their 9th German course, if necessary	The last day of the Add/Drop period
Students submit the essay questions to their advisor	The end of the 6th week of classes
<p>The advisor meets with students and approves the essay questions</p> <p>The advisor and students select dates for the two written exams</p>	The end of the 7th week of classes
Students write the exams	Between the 8th and 10th week of classes