



GR 401 GERMAN LANGUAGE IN CONTEXT: EMERGING COMPETENT ABROAD I

IES Abroad Vienna

DESCRIPTION:

This course is designed for students who have reached the upper-intermediate level of German and are ready to deepen their linguistic competence and engage more critically with complex cultural, academic, and social topics. It supports students in developing the ability to use the language flexibly and effectively for a wide range of purposes - both spoken and written - while interacting with greater ease in varied and nuanced situations.

A key focus of the course is strengthening students' ability to express and defend their opinions orally with clarity and confidence. At the same time, they continue to advance their grammatical control, refine their stylistic range, and develop a more nuanced command of vocabulary and register. Their lexical repertoire expands significantly as they engage with a wide variety of language - from formal academic and professional discourse to colloquial, slang, and dialectal forms common in everyday Austrian life. This growing linguistic and cultural awareness enables them to communicate with greater fluency, precision, and adaptability across diverse contexts.

To support this development, students work with a range of authentic materials - such as opinion pieces, literary excerpts, podcasts, academic texts, and media content - and participate in sustained discussions, debates, and presentations. Writing assignments challenge them to produce clear, structured, and well-argued texts tailored to specific audiences and communicative goals.

The course also invites students to explore current and historical themes relevant to Austrian society and the wider German-speaking world, encouraging them to reflect critically on cultural perspectives and to articulate informed, nuanced opinions. Students are expected to draw on their personal and academic experiences abroad to support deeper intercultural understanding and linguistic precision.

By the end of the course, students will be able to follow extended speech and complex written texts, express themselves clearly and effectively on a wide range of topics, and demonstrate control of more advanced language forms and conventions. They will be able to adapt their language use to different social, cultural, and academic contexts with increasing confidence and fluency.

This course aligns with the B2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and supports students in achieving some of the outcomes described at the Emerging Competent Abroad level of the IES Abroad Language MAP, preparing them for advanced academic or professional use of German.

CREDITS: 4 credits

CONTACT HOURS: 60 hours

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: German

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INSTRUCTOR:

PREREQUISITES: Students entering this course have completed the Independent Abroad level of the IES Abroad MAP and have achieved CEFR B1 proficiency. They are typically expected to have completed at least four to five semesters of college-level German or the equivalent. These students can express themselves clearly and in detail on a variety of familiar topics, participate in extended conversations, and understand the main ideas of more complex spoken and written texts. They are ready to begin working toward greater fluency, accuracy, and flexibility in a wider range of communicative situations.

ADDITIONAL COST: € 30

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

This course uses a communicative, student-centered approach that emphasizes active engagement with the language and culture. Learning is facilitated through a variety of interactive and immersive methods, including:

- Integrated skill-building exercises in reading, writing, listening, and speaking
- Oral and written assignments, including short in-class presentations and creative writing tasks
- Collaborative classroom activities, such as role plays, dialogues, interviews, and games
- Course-related excursions that connect language learning to authentic cultural experiences, including visits to a Viennese coffee house, a local food market, or a guided museum tour

This blended approach allows students to apply language in real-world contexts, deepen their intercultural understanding, and develop communicative competence in a meaningful and enjoyable way.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

10 % Active Participation in Class
20 % Skill-Focused and Culturally Reflective Learning
10 % Homework
25 % Regular Quizzes & Tests
10 % Oral Exams (3 total)
25 % Written Exams (3 total)

Active Participation in Class

Participation is more than mere attendance; it means coming to class well-prepared, engaging actively in discussions, and supporting one another as collaborative members of our learning community. Students should listen attentively, ask and answer thoughtful questions, and offer constructive feedback to peers. They are encouraged to take initiative in pair and group work - sharing ideas, volunteering for tasks, and taking detailed notes. At the same time, each student is responsible for monitoring their own understanding and seeking additional assistance or tutoring whenever challenges arise. Throughout all activities, learners should strive to use German as much as possible, fostering both their own progress and a positive, encouraging classroom environment.

Skill-Focused and Culturally Reflective Learning

Students will engage in tasks designed to develop the IES MAP's five skill areas - Intercultural Communication, Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Creative assignments, such as journaling, field-based projects, analysis of authentic materials, and peer collaborations, are graded under this category; however, ongoing language learning progress also plays a central role. Assessment considers both the quality of each submission and the consistency with which new vocabulary, grammatical structures, and cultural insights are integrated across all work, thereby reflecting overall growth as language learners.

Homework:

After each class, students will complete assigned exercises in the "Übungsbuch" (workbook), along with supplementary worksheets or digital practice on Moodle. Homework reinforces grammar and vocabulary introduced in class. Students are expected to correct their work independently; only areas of difficulty or misunderstanding will be reviewed in class.

Quizzes & Tests

To promote steady progress, students will take regular written quizzes to assess their grasp of grammar and vocabulary. These quizzes will be administered daily or weekly, focusing on vocabulary, grammar, and structures recently introduced in class. The goal is to encourage students to study new content regularly and in manageable portions.

Oral Exams

Students' speaking skills will be assessed through three oral exams during the semester: one after the Intensive Period, and two at the end of each main semester phase. Each exam involves a structured, real-life task such as a paired dialogue, guided role-play, or short personal presentation. Assessment will follow the ÖSD exam criteria: 1. Task Fulfillment and Communicative Effectiveness, 2. Vocabulary and Expression, 3. Intonation, Pronunciation, Fluency, and Intelligibility 4. Grammatical Accuracy .

Written Exams

Three comprehensive written exams will take place during the course: at the end of the Intensive Period, mid-semester, and at the end of the semester. Exams assess listening and reading comprehension, writing ability, and the ability to apply key grammar and vocabulary.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course, students will meet some of the outcomes of the Emerging Competent Abroad level and CEFR B2.

Intercultural Communication

- Students navigate complex social interactions and adjust their language accordingly.
- They critically engage with cultural issues and express nuanced viewpoints.

Listening

- Students understand extended speech, including abstract or technical content related to their studies or interests.
- They follow arguments and identify underlying attitudes and intentions.

Speaking



- Students communicate fluently and spontaneously on a wide range of topics.
- They present structured arguments, respond to counterpoints, and participate in debates.

Reading

- Students understand detailed, structured texts, including opinion pieces and academic content.
- They recognize tone, rhetorical devices, and implicit meaning.

Writing

- Students produce clear, well-organized texts in various styles and formats.
- They support opinions with evidence and adapt their writing to context and purpose.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

IES Abroad Vienna requires attendance at all class sessions. Attendance will be taken every class. Students must attend at least 60% of their class sessions to qualify for a passing grade, regardless of whether their absences have been excused or not. Attendance is required in-person unless otherwise noted in the syllabus. Excused absences due to the reasons outlined in the IES Abroad Vienna Attendance Policy can only be approved by the academic department. Unexcused absences may carry a penalty to the final grade and only excused absences entitle students to make up assignments, tests, quizzes, and exams. Students are highly encouraged to communicate absences as soon as possible to their professors. Please refer to the IES Abroad Vienna Attendance Policy for a more precise overview of all attendance policies at IES Abroad Vienna and of grade penalties.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

At IES Abroad Vienna, we hold ourselves to the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity. Any form of academic dishonesty undermines the principles of trust and fairness essential to a thriving learning community. As such, plagiarism and cheating are considered serious violations of our code of conduct, and students found engaging in such activities will face swift and severe consequences, ranging from a failing grade on an assignment, to an academic review and possible expulsion from the program.

USE OF AI:

The instructor will clarify if and how AI tools may be used, which may vary by assignment. In all cases, use of AI must be clearly acknowledged, and students remain fully responsible for the content they submit under their name.

CONTENT:

Week	Topics & Vocabulary	Content	Assignments and Readings (in addition to regular homework & entries in the individual dictionary)
INTENSIVE			
Week 1	Kennenlernen Wiener Mentalität	Functional: - Sich und andere vorstellen - Erste Eindrücke austauschen - Statistiken interpretieren und vergleichen Grammatical: - Komparation - Je ... desto... Culture: - Gemütlichkeit & Grant in Wien: Klischees hinterfragen & Erwartungen reflektieren - Demographische Zahlen zu Wien & Österreich in Beziehung setzen	Materials: - Satire: Wien in leiwanden Grafiken - Social Media: ORF ZIB auf Instagram Assignments: - Journal: First Impressions
Week 2	Alltagsroutinen , Wien in Zahlen & Kaffeehaus-kultur	Functional: - Kulinarische Tipps geben - Alltagsroutinen beschreiben - Ein Parallelgedicht schreiben Grammatical: - Starke Verben im Perfekt & Präteritum - Satzverbindungen und Verbpositionen in Haupt- und Nebensätzen - Infinitivsätze mit zu und um zu - Indefinitpronomen man Culture: - Arbeitsalltag: "Mahlzeit" und "Feierabend" - Die Bedeutung der Kaffeehauskultur für die Wiener Kunst, Gesellschaft und Lebensart in Gegenwart und Vergangenheit	Materials: - Brochure: Wien in Zahlen - Interview with a food journalist: kulinaric tipps for Vienna - Quotes of famous „Kaffeehausliteraten“ - Poem: Peter Altenberg - Kaffeehaus - Song: Die poetischen Verben - Arte Karambolage Reportage: "Feierabend" - Stefan Zweig - "Die Welt von gestern" (das Kaffeehaus als Bildungsstätte) Assignments: - Journal: Reflecting and Comparing demographic data about Vienna 1st & 2nd Quiz Field Trip: Coffee House

Week 3	Wien vor den Weltkriegen	Functional: • einen literarischen Text verstehen • Karten und informative Texte über politische Geschichte verstehen • einer fiktionalen Geschichte verfassen und darin mit sprachlichen Mitteln Spannung aufbauen • Erfindungen und Fortschritte unseres Zeitalters reflektieren Grammatical: • Genusregeln Culture: • Wien während der Jahrhundertwende • Gesellschaftspolitische Aspekte der Vor- und Zwischenkriegszeiten in Österreich	Materials: - Video: Vienna around the turn of the turn of the century - Stefan Zweig - Die Welt von gestern“ (1st chapter) 3rd Quiz Oral Exam Final Written Exam
SEMESTER PART 1/2			
Week 1	Das Rote Wien	Functional: • Eine informative Reportage verstehen • Perspektivwechsel: Wohnsituation eines Gemeindebaubewohners beschreiben • Rezession: ehrliche Meinung verfassen • Exkursion: Eine Führung auf Deutsch verstehen Grammatical: • Lokale und Temporale Präpositionen mit Dativ & Akkusativ Culture: • Soziale Politik in Wien früher und heute: Demokratische Wahlen, Gemeindebauten und Freizeitangebote • Frühlingssemester: Fasching	Materials: - Brochure: Das Rote Wien in Zahlen - Reportage: exhibition on the “red vienna” Field Trip: guided museum tour
Week 2		Functional: • Bildbeschreibung: Kunstwerke und politische Plakate • Eine Museumsführung zu einem impressionistischen Werk von Schiele verstehen • Einen Filmrailer von einem Film über Schiele verstehen Grammatical: • Wechselpräpositionen mit Dativ • Indirekte Fragesätze Culture: • berühmte Gemälde in Wiener Museen entdecken • Secessionskünstler wie Schiele und Klimt • Kontroverse österreichische Künstler:innen	Materials: - guided tour video: Blickwechsel im Belvedere - famous paintings exhibited in Viennese museums Assignments: - presenting a painting - First Feedback 1st Quiz (Semester Part I)

Week 3		Functional: • Reaktionen & Komplimente formulieren • Argumente für und gegen kontroverse Kunstwerke / Künstler:innen formulieren Grammatical: • Verben mit Wechselpräpositionen mit Dativ und Akkusativ • Indirekte Fragesätze Culture: • Kontroverse österreichische Künstler:innen: Valie Export, Hermann Nitsch, Erwin Wurm	Materials: - newspaper articles from Austrian newspapers such as "Standard", "Kurier", "Krone" and "Presse" Assignments: - giving compliments for classmate's presentations 2nd Quiz (Semester Part I)
Week 4		Functional: • Interviews mit zeitgenössischen Künstler:innen verstehen • Eine Diskussion im Unterricht mit KI vorbereiten & vor der Klasse führen • Reflexion schreiben: Hilft KI beim studieren Grammatical: • Verben mit Wechselpräpositionen mit Dativ und Akkusativ • Präpositionaladverbien Culture: • Kontroverse österreichische Künstler:innen: Valie Export, Hermann Nitsch, Erwin Wurm -	Materials: - radio interviews with Valie Export and Erwin Wurm Assignments: - Journal: Reflexion on Use of AI for language learning 3rd Quiz (Semester Part I)
Week 5		Functional: • Alltagsgegenstände durch Redemitteln wie kostbare Kunstwerke beschreiben • Kontroverse Kunstwerke präsentieren und in Pro & Kontra - Positionen darüber diskutieren • Zeitungsartikel präsentieren und reflektieren Grammatical: • Review Culture: • Internationale kontroversen Kunstwerken reflektieren • Die Wiener U-Bahn-Zeitung "Heute" kennenlernen und kritisch reflektieren	Assignments: - Journal: Exchanging recommendations on German TV shows, films and other resources for German input in your freetime - bringing a current "Heute-Zeitung" to class Oral Exam: Perform a Discussion in pairs in front of class Written Midterm Exam

SEMESTER PART 2/2

Week 6	Satire und Lyrik	Functional: • einen Begriff definieren • Alltagssprache & formelle Sprache unterscheiden • ein Parallelgedicht verfassen Grammatical: • Relativsätze mit Präpositionen & Relativpronomen • Infinitivsätze und dass-Sätze • Passiv im Präsens Cultural: • Jugendsprache: Wahl zum Jugendwort des Jahres	Materials: - Heute-Zeitung: Wahl zum Jugendwort des Jahres - Ernst Jandl: Bibliothek Assignments: - "Parallel poem"
Week 7	Slang: Dialekt, Denglich und Kurzdeutsch	Functional: • ein Gedicht rezitieren • einen wissenschaftlichen Vortrag analysieren Grammatical: • Partizip I und II als Adjektiv • Passiv in der Vergangenheit • Hilfsverben: werden, sein und haben Cultural: • Deutschsprachige Comedians	Materials: - Satire: Phil Laude - Wenn Denglich zur Sucht wird - Science Slam: Diana Marossek - Kurzdeutsch Assignments: - Journal: observations in public transport 1st Quiz (Semester Part II)
Week 8	Vorträge halten: Mimik, Gestik & Betonung	Functional: • Tips Vorträge zu halten umsetzen (Mimik, Gestik, Betonung) • eine Präsentation mit rhetorischen Fragen über einen deutschsprachigen Song vorbereiten und halten Grammatical: • zweiteilige Konnektoren • Präfixverben: „identische“ trennbare / untrennbare Verben (umfahren, unterstellen, durchschauen) Cultural: • die Sprache in der Stadt beobachten und kreativ präsentieren	Materials: - Video: Yvonne de Barke - Wohin mit den Händen beim Vortrag - Excursion: Museum Assignments: - Forum: Video Group Project - Journal 2nd Quiz (Semester Part II)

Week 9	Mehrsprachigkeit in der EU	Functional: - gegenteilige Meinungen und Erfahrungen in einer Talkshow diskutieren und dabei Nachfragen stellen und höflich unterbrechen - Schlagzeilen & Karikaturen im Kontext von Flucht und Migration einordnen Grammatical: - Vorgangspassiv und Zustandspassiv - Dativpassiv mit bekommen/kriegen Cultural: - den Begriffs „Volk“ in verschiedenen Kontexten einordnen - Wertschätzung und Förderung von Mehrsprachigkeit in der EU - Migration nach Österreich: Vielvölkerstaat, Gastarbeiter:innen, aktuelle Migrationsbewegungen und deren gesellschaftliche Rezeption in Österreich - Wahlrecht und Representation	Materials: - Narrative: Der Turmbau zu Babel - Webpage of the European Union: Mehrsprachigkeit in der EU Assignments: - Journal - Last “Straßenwörterbuch” (individual dictionary): Most and Least Favorite Austrian Expressions 3rd Quiz (Semester Part II)
Week 10	Abschluss-reflexion	Functional: - die eigene Mehrsprachigkeit reflektieren und wertschätzen - Herbstsemester: Nikolaus und Krampus Grammatical: - Festigen, Wiederholen, Automatisieren Cultural: - Herbstsemester: Nikolaus und Krampus	Excursion Oral Exam Presentation Written Final Exam
Week 11			Final Exam

COURSE-RELATED TRIPS:

During the semester, there will be two or three excursions to explore different aspects of Vienna. Students will be placed in authentic situations such as ordering pastries at a local bakery, choosing ice cream at a street stand, ordering Sachertorte and coffee at a traditional Viennese coffee house, or selecting produce and conversing with vendors at the Naschmarkt. Alternatively, they may join a German-language guided museum tour or attend a German-language performance, complementing class material and providing further insight into Vienna’s rich artistic and cultural heritage.

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Grammatik Aktiv B2 - C1
- Additional handouts and materials provided by the instructor