

Student Comments on the Erasmus Academy German Course Summer, 2018

The instruction was extremely comprehensive despite the rapid pace, the homework assignments were well-constructed and upon their completion I almost always felt comfortable with material, even if it was new. Including both the Jannach 1980 and 5th editions was also very valuable for concepts that were more difficult, as there were more examples and sometimes different explanations to help clarify questions. Also, the in-class feedback and explanatory mp3 files made the class feel like an in-person language class rather than an individual online class.

I have never taken another online course, but prior to the course I expected that it would be difficult to stay motivated without a network of other students and personal attention from the instructor. However, the class system resolved both of those issues and it felt much like the experience of other in-person classes that I have taken.

I feel as though I have a solid amount of foundational knowledge to begin tackling reading in German on my own, and I think with review and vocabulary focus I am well on my way to being able to read (and hopefully learn to speak) the language, and for the purposes of my own research, which mainly deals with children's developing syntax in their language....On a more personal or sentimental note, I feel as though this course has shown me what I can achieve when I am highly motivated and choose to put a lot of my energy into something, and I definitely was surprised that I was able to learn so much in just a few weeks.

Ron was always prepared to go through all the exercises, effective at explaining difficult or confusing concepts, and provided clear corrections to students. He was extremely personable and kind throughout the course, and fostered a welcoming and friendly environment which was very welcome in such an intense course, making it enjoyable rather than stressful. I appreciated his effort to always provide extra practice to those who were able and interested, such as the conversational sessions and the additional lessons, and overall felt like I was in the hands of a very knowledgeable, trustworthy, and experienced instructor, more so than in any language class I have ever taken, even when the instructors were native speakers of the language.

The only thing I would say that might improve the course would be to perhaps work on managing the time of each lesson a little more tightly, so the exercises

are covered within the allotted time, and so there is always time for a detailed grammar presentation.

I did wish, though, that the guidelines for analyzing sentences were clearer. It was easy enough, and very helpful, to find verb, subject, dative, and direct object, however there were some sentences which seemed ambiguous or unclear, and I felt as though the page showing how to analyze was not comprehensive enough to account for the expectations on analyzing for the midterm.

D.P.

July 8, 2018

I was wondering if it would be possible to provide a brief grammar sheet for each week. Something that summarizes the rules or points out some key points/most common things to learn. e.g. "dass" indicates a subordinating conjunction. "man" is always the subject etc. There isn't a lot of time to take notes during the sessions as they move so quickly.

Mr. Ditmars' enormous enthusiasm, positive attitude and commitment shone through, as did his evident knowledge of the subject matter. He was a most encouraging teacher.

It seemed like all the materials are useful and something can be gained from them. I particularly liked listening to the MP3 file while reviewing the accompanying PDF's.

The online format worked for me as I didn't need to travel into a classroom. Something I couldn't have done as I was overseas at the time.

Maybe for some sessions (or perhaps the first week) provide a handout with all the sentences in German marked for analysis and parsed. This could be a useful learning and revision tool.

Sophia T.

July 9, 2018

[Strengths include] heavy and regular translation opportunities, real time feedback from the instructor on the translations during class time. • Having ample opportunity toward the end of the course to translate texts from authors such as Kafka!

[Improvements}: To have all of the class recordings available for any student to access. The classes were recorded, but it felt like an inefficient use of class time for each individual participant to request a copy of the class recording at the end of each class. • Providing an answer key to all of the compositional exercises (after

they have been done). The instructor started doing this, based on my feedback during one of the classes, toward the end of the course. I know he was extremely busy running two German classes simultaneously and very much appreciated his willingness to create answer keys for selected chapters. These will be a helpful resource to me in the future.

I believe I have learned how the German language works, how to read it, and even how to compose it. The course also provided the tools and resources for me to improve my ability to read German scholarly texts. I think the course has given me an increased appreciation for and motivation to learn the German language.

Stephen C.

July 7, 2018

I would recommend finding more time for Griesbach in class, since I found it to be most useful for making my way towards truly mastering the basics: specifically regarding generation rather than recognition, since recognition is what the Jannach texts are designed for. Since people after a few weeks noticed that they were not reviewing the assigned Griesbach in class, it seemed that most were not using the very helpful and fun text on their own time.

Joking aside, I have learned so much from this course. I have been most entertained by the fine line of similarity and difference between the English and German languages: like meeting a second cousin for the first time.

Experience, enthusiasm, compassion, availability... Ron somehow manages to exist in what seems to me to be some sort of sublime state. It's hard to imagine him angered or impatient or not deeply caring and enthusiastic about, I don't know how to name it accurately without sounding cheesy or pseudo-philosophical, the phenomenon of language and its necessary and often comic relationship with human life.

[The course] was certainly less draining than an intensive summer course taken in a classroom setting since I didn't have to wake up early every morning.

CJ

July 10, 2018

While the course moves quickly through the text, I found it quite advantageous since it encouraged me to stay on top of the assignments and prompted me to work daily, keeping the information ever present in my mind.

The mp3s for each chapter are highly beneficial. It allowed for same-day correction of the sentence exercises for the 1980 edition, helping a student easily see where mistakes in translation have occurred. (Also, I would like to mention

the music on the mp3s as well. I found the music thoughtful, enjoyable, and conducive to studying.)

The online, "real time" course is equal, in my opinion, to a class in which students are physically present in a classroom setting. However, this online environment ranks higher in ease of accessibility since time and money are not wasted travelling to and from a course location.

I am amazed that I have learned so much grammar in just 8 weeks.

Ron is very kind, calm, patient, and encouraging. No matter the level of the student, he seems to treat everyone with the same courtesy and respect. Even when a student does not know the answer, he does not make them feel inferior, but either gently corrects them or asks other classmates to help. I am personally grateful for the additional study sessions. Going more deliberately through the more difficult chapters was greatly appreciated. I was able to see exactly where my weaknesses are and where to focus my studies. This is a great strength of the instructor, demonstrating that he truly wants to help students better understand difficult concepts.

Terry C.

July 7, 2018