

COURSE DESCRIPTION PAPER

BEGINNING GERMAN -- SCHOOL YEAR 2004-2005

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This class policy is presented to let students and parents know standards and grading system for Beginning German. I ask that you read this statement carefully, save it, and sign the separate acknowledgement sheet to be returned to me. Feel free to ask me to clarify any portion of this statement. My conference periods are from 7:40 - 8:26 and 11:36 - 12:52. I am also available before and after school.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students will be instructed in the 5 foreign language skill areas: listening, reading, speaking, writing and culture. I hope to instill an appreciation for German language and culture and a desire to continue in foreign language studies in high school and beyond. Special emphasis will be placed on communication and German will be spoken often in class.

MATERIALS

Students will be required to bring a notebook with plenty of paper and writing instruments to class every day. For most assignments and tests and quizzes I ask students to use either a Number 2 pencil or blue or black ink pen. Beginning students also need a cassette tape (may be a used one) by the end of November for use in their portfolios. Sometime in October students will receive a workbook. Students must bring the workbook to class every day. Students who lose their workbooks must replace them by buying a new one or copying the pages from another student's workbook. In order to maintain workable space, backpacks must be able to fit inside desks completely.

HOMEWORK

Much of the writing will be done in class, but students can expect some homework assignments, mostly from the workbook. When assigned, homework will be due at the beginning of class the following school day. Homework papers should have a proper heading for full credit: last name, date and period. Late assignments are **not** accepted but partial assignments are accepted for partial credit. Homework papers should be kept neat. A paper which has been wadded up or torn or has mustard stains on it is not acceptable. After all, I would not give such a paper to students. Such papers, if handed in on time, will be given credit provided the student turns in an acceptable re-write the next day.

TESTS & QUIZZES

Students can expect a quiz approximately every three days and a test about every six weeks. Tests and quizzes should have a proper heading for full credit: last name, date and period. If a student returns on a test/quiz day from an absence, the student and teacher will decide whether the student will take the test/quiz at that time or make it up later.

PARTICIPATION

Participation is an integral part of the class. Participation grades are based on answering questions, volunteering for oral activities, etc. A participation grade is assigned once every week. Average participation is counted as 75% and students may earn more through positive, active participation or may earn less through negative actions or simple inactivity.

ABSENCES

Students with excused absences must make up any missed assignments, tests, quizzes, and/or participation within 5 school days of their return. A list of class activities and assignments are posted near the door and updated daily. Any assignments may be handed in the regular homework bin. Tests, quizzes and participation may be made up before or after school in my room. No work is ever to be made up during class time.

GRADING SYSTEM

The grading scale is as follows:

90-100% = A

80-89% = B

70-79% = C

60-69% = D

Below 60% = F

The grade consists of four areas:

Tests = 25% of grade

Quizzes = 25% of grade

Writing assignments (in and out of class) = 25% of grade

Participation = 25% of grade

Students' grades will be posted every Monday. Students are welcome to come in for tutoring, homework help, test preparation or any other concern before or after school any day.

This class is highly participatory. Because of this, absences can really hurt a student's learning. Of course, if a student is sick, he/she should stay home and get well. There are other good reasons to miss class. But if possible, please don't pull students out of class for vacations or dental appointments, etc. I find that a student who misses a lot of class fares the same or even worse than an unmotivated student who attends regularly. Remember that anytime a student misses valuable class time—even to go to the bathroom—that student should make up the missed participation after school.

My classroom is an open classroom. I get visitors regularly who observe me as I teach. Parents are welcome to visit any time! Speaking of parent involvement, we always count on parent volunteers for events such as Oktoberfest and Fasching. I may also ask parents to video tape a lesson I teach so that I can review my teaching skills. I believe parent support has made this program strong. By the way, when calling for me, make sure you ask for Michael Miller, the German teacher. We have another teacher on campus with a similar name.

Students are encouraged to stay in the German program and grow with the language. Students who continue in German are offered a trip to Germany during Spring Break of their 8th grade year. The cost is around \$2000. More details will come around April.

A NOTE TO PARENTS

How did you learn your first language? For the first year or two you didn't say a word—you just listened and absorbed. Then you began to speak. Just single words at first, then several words together in a crude sentence. Your parents didn't mind that the sentences were imperfect, that the pronunciation was off, and that you sometimes needed to try two or three times before you were understood. They were simply delighted to hear you speak. They were pleased to talk with you, even at your simple level. Later on your sentences began to mature. Soon you went to school and learned to write this language you've been learning to speak. At first it was just the alphabet. Some of the letters you wrote backwards, but eventually you got to the point where you were able to spell your name. What a thrill that was! Your parents and teachers were delighted, especially to receive notes that said "I love you, mommy." Eventually your writing skills would catch up to your speaking skills and over the next twelve or more years, you refined your speaking and writing by learning the finer points of grammar.

It is exactly this experience that I hope to duplicate in miniature in my classroom. For the first month or so, students will concentrate on listening and responding. Then we will enter more into speaking and then writing. Grades will be based on how well the student communicates. I will be listening and reading with the mind of a German. If a German could understand the student, then the successful communication will get a passing grade. If a German could not understand the student, then there is miscommunication, not a passing grade. Grammar will be introduced slowly and intensify as the student matures in the language. It is, therefore, communication and not grammatical perfection that will guide my grading of papers.

With all this in mind, you can take several steps to facilitate your child's learning in this class. First of all, as much as possible, make attendance a priority. Try to avoid scheduling doctor appointments during class. Look at your child's schedule to make sure he/she is not called out during class or has to leave for some reason. If your child is absent, make sure he or she makes up all missed work including participation. Encourage exposure to the language. Movies. Music. Restaurants. Travel, if finances allow (by the way, I will be offering a trip to Germany for 8th grade German students. More details to come in the Spring). The school offers a German table during lunch and a foreign language club after school every other week. Take advantage of these! I have books from Germany that students can check out from me. Beginning 2nd quarter, students will be able to check out the German DVD player for a day, watch a German movie, fill out a worksheet and receive a homework pass which can be used any time during that semester. This is a truly enjoyable way to be exposed to the language. Some notes: These movies do not use simplified language. They use natural spoken German, which may be difficult for your children at this early stage of learning. I will require that a parent pick up the DVD player and sign out for it.

PARENT/STUDENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I have read and understand the course description paper for Mr. Miller's Beginning German class for school year 2004-2005.

Student signature

Date

Parent signature

Date

I know you have probably done this many times already, but I request that you fill out the following information so that I may be able to contact you during school hours:

Mailing address

Daytime phone number

Contact person

Alternate phone number (optional)

Contact person

E-mail address (optional)

Would you like me to put you on my
German e-mail newsletter list? y / n

Would you volunteer to prepare food for special German events? y / n

Are you available to volunteer to serve at special German events? y / n

(Note: Oktoberfest tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, October 6th and Fasching tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, February 8th)

Das Rad magazine. This is an optional subscription magazine made especially for beginning German students. Students will receive 6 issues during the school year beginning in October or November. If you would like this subscription for your child, please attach a check for \$8.00 made out to Cheyenne Mountain Jr. High School. (Note: this is completely optional and is not a fund raiser of any kind).

Vielen Dank!