From the Third Reich, the two Germanies to Unification of the Federal Republic of Germany

Through film, literature, and first-person narrative accounts, students in GER 232: Intermediate German II examined key aspects of 20th-Century German history, with particular emphasis on Nazi Germany, the division of Germany into East and West Germany, and German reunification in 1990.

Major topics examined included:
- Examining means of protest against Nazi Germany’s repressive regime
- Learning first-hand from contemporary witnesses about life in East- and West-Germany
- Discovering different fates of dissidents in East Germany
- How the efforts of individual citizens ultimately brought about unification of these two countries

Integrated Critical Language Pedagogy

To assure the best fit of language learning with the cultural and historical topics of the course, I wrote the textbook for GER 232, available free of charge to students in iBook format. Content topics and linguistic functions are carefully integrated to enhance language acquisition while providing contexts for exercising critical thinking skills in the target language.

- Flipped classroom model of teaching and learning permits more time in class for in-depth discussion
- New linguistic structures learned in context of course content
- Continued language acquisition while studying cultural and political history of the target culture in the target language
  - Critical examination of social and cultural norms in distinctly different societies
  - Focus on the “hard questions” that encourage critical thinking

STEP 2.0: SFA Tablet-Enhanced Program

Thanks to CTL’s STEP 2.0 program, this semester GER 232 students were provided iPads for their academic work. Placing technology into students’ hands resulted in positive impacts on student learning and interaction.

- Study tools at students’ fingertips
- Multiple production modalities include more students in class discussion
- Shared written comments on central issues of the course encourage more critical thinking activity
- Students share documents and collaborate more
- Fosters more exploration and creativity in target language

Study in Germany

A study abroad trip to Germany over Spring Break was included as an optional course component. The excursion to Germany transcended the historical and cultural components of the course materials, as well as the classroom boundaries to bring students into direct contact with the locations and people whom they studied in the course.

The Virtual Museum Project

In groups of two or three, students research a course-related topic, create an interactive web site, and present to an audience from SFA and the community at a public event on the final Thursday evening of classes.

- Twenty-first-century presentation modality
- Presentation in a non-linear organization
- Meaningful project for a large audience
- Published in SFA ScholarWorks digital archive

Topics included:
- Germans’ resistance to the Nazi dictatorship and “Silent Heroes” – average citizens who risked their livelihoods and lives to rescue and shelter those faced with certain death
- So-called “degenerate art” – paintings, sculptures and films deemed “unworthy” by the Nazis
- Impact of Nazi laws on music and musicians
- Effects of political activism in former East Germany