The idea of world literature was a German invention, a concept proposed by none other than Johann Wolfgang von Goethe to describe literature of universal importance for all of humanity. While our appreciation of world literature has grown to include non-Western literature, German literature remains an important component in this canon.

This English-language literature seminar introduces newcomers to some of the highlights of modern German literature beginning with the eighteenth-century playwright Lessing and ending with Nobel Prize winner Günter Grass. In addition to short lectures intended to situate individual texts within their historical contexts, class meetings will also give students ample opportunity to analyze texts in detail.