





(Co)constructing critical pedagogies: Expanding on our department's approach to language teaching

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Abstract

In this report, we—the members of a curriculum working group (CWG) in Penn State's German department—describe our efforts to decenter our German language sequence by integrating critical pedagogies into our department's existing communicative language teaching (CLT) approach. We trace our process towards this goal, beginning with an exploration into and analysis of two critical pedagogies, namely Antiracist Pedagogy (ARP) and Social Justice Pedagogy (SJP). We ultimately adopt SJP because we find it to be a better fit for our purposes in German language instruction. We offer a framework to evaluate and didacticize existing as well as newly created course materials, guided by social justice (SJ) learning objectives. To illustrate our work, we describe the creation and implementation of an instructional unit in an intermediate German language course. Reflections from this course's instructor and student reactions concerning this unit's instruction—as well as SJP in the language classroom in general—make evident the importance of critical perspectives regarding curricular development in fostering equitable classrooms.

Keywords: *antiracist pedagogy, social justice pedagogy, curricular change, German language*

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Introduction

Language is situated at the intersection of societal, structural, and institutional inequalities and injustices (Ortaçtepe Hart & Martel, 2020). Thereby it is an ethical imperative to introduce criticality in language classrooms, creating frontiers to address and challenge societal inequities (Randolph & Johnson, 2017). Critical pedagogies, like antiracist pedagogy (ARP) and social justice pedagogy (SJP), are broadening conceptualizations of what language teaching can and should be (Osborn, 2016).

To attend to this imperative, we have formed a curriculum working group (CWG) within our university's German department. Meeting bi-weekly since Fall 2020, we seek to develop and (co)construct our knowledge of critical pedagogies, including ARP and SJP, within higher education, and to actively use such knowledge to effect equitable foreign language instruction. Although we originally focused on ARP, we

began to discuss, design, and ultimately implement SJP, with its wider scope a better fit for our purposes in German language instruction. This report traces the incorporation of social justice learning objectives into an intermediate German language course (GER3) and the broadening of long-standing curricula and materials to meet these new objectives. We first contextualize our work and describe the processes we undertook to familiarize ourselves with concepts, including *antiracism* and *social justice*, which guided the critical examination of our own curriculum. We then present our theoretical and practical approach to expanding a foreign language curriculum rooted in communicative language teaching (CLT; e.g., Richards & Rodgers, 2014) to include SJP. We illustrate our work by describing the development and implementation of one of six relevant modules brought into GER3 through in-person instruction in Fall 2021. Finally, we reflect on this first phase of implementation, sharing both instructor and student reactions.

This was and continues to be a process—a recursive cycle of planning, implementation, and reflection. By sharing our work, we hope to inspire educators to re-examine their practices from antiracist or social justice standpoints as well.

Context

We, the six members of our CWG, are at the intersection of various identities. Five of us are graduate students at Penn State in our third through sixth years of PhD programs in German Literature and Visual Studies (n=1) and German Linguistics and Language Science (n=4). We have been, and continue to be, the instructors of record for our department’s basic German language sequence, a three-semester progression from beginner to intermediate levels. This sequence is overseen by our language coordinator, who founded our CWG in June 2020 and is the sixth member included here. Five of us are White, one of us is Asian American, and two are immigrants. Some of us are queer, religious, and/or come from low-income families.

We live and work in the United States, thus our CWG arose within the interwoven contexts of social unrest after the murder of George Floyd, personal and socioeconomic uncertainty during a global pandemic, and the ubiquity of fake news and targeted mass media, all of which sparked social and emotional upheaval locally and globally. We came together to work toward a more inclusive and ethical German language curriculum at our predominantly White higher education institution ([Table 1](#)) (Penn State Undergraduate Admissions Statistics, n.d.; Penn State Planning, Assessment, and Institutional Research, n.d.). Although Penn State declares a commitment to fostering diversity and educational equity (Penn State Educational Equity, n.d.), its demographics correlate with the (lack of) ethnic and racial diversity among students and instructors in Penn State’s German language sequence.

Table 1

Self-Identification of Penn State Population by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Students ^a	Full-time Employees ^b
African American	5.63%	2.69%
Asian American	6.40%	
Asian		6.91%
Hispanic/Latino	7.65%	3.13%
Native American/Alaskan Native	0.13%	
American Indian/Alaska Native		0.27%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.11%	0.02%

White	64.95%	70.82%
Multiple Races	3.44%	
Two or More Races		1.07%
Unknown/Undeclared	2.28%	
Race/Ethnicity Unknown		7.86%
International	9.36%	7.28%

Note. Categories presented above are taken directly from the sources.

^a University-wide, 2018-19 academic year (Penn State Undergraduate Admissions Statistics, n.d.)

^b Main campus, including faculty, Fall 2021 (Penn State Planning, Assessment, and Institutional Research, n.d.)

The work we describe in this report takes place in the lower-level German language sequence at our university's largest campus. This sequence is part of a German Studies curriculum that has historically been divided into lower-level language courses and upper-level content courses (Swaffar, 2014). The lower-level division spans three courses (GER1, GER2, and GER3), which together comprise the language requirement for numerous undergraduate degrees. Penn State's German language sequence enrolls 200-300 students across multiple sections of each course every semester. Traditionally, all sections within this sequence are taught by graduate student instructors, who use a CLT approach (e.g., Mackey et al., 2012). The goal of CLT is to scaffold students' development of communicative competence (e.g., Celce-Murcia et al., 1995), defined as knowledge(s) an individual has to successfully participate in communicative activities with members of the target language community (Hall, 2001).

Theory and Practice

Our work is inspired by current initiatives in German Studies to adopt critical, ethical, and inclusive practices, from the program level (e.g., Peabody, 2021) to the international level (e.g., The Diversity, Decolonization, and the German Curriculum, n.d.). We endeavor to actively work against the canonical gatekeeping and perpetuation of stereotypes that still characterize many German curricula in the United States (Criser & Knott, 2019), recognizing that problematizing and reflecting is a first step to counteract marginalization, idolization, and foreignization in language education (Byram, 2009; Levine, 2014).

Conscious of this broader criticism directed at institutional structures that enable such exclusionary practices, we initially adopted Blakeney's (2005) account of ARP, a paradigm rooted in critical theory. According to Blakeney, ARP targets the revelation of societal structures, which have systematically contributed to the oppression of members of society based on identity markers, such as race and ethnicity. Blakeney noted that ARP makes visible the impact of identity on opportunity and social mobility through a focus on racial structures in society that facilitate inequalities. In aiming to counteract oppression through praxis, ARP challenges institutional racism and the Black/White binary; deconstructs racism and social contexts of race and power; and develops student (and instructor) awareness that we are all racialized (Kishimoto, 2018). In light of racial violence and systemic racial oppression, ARP resonated with our working group. We hoped to examine our curriculum by considering its complacency with Eurocentric structures (Kishimoto, 2018) that have perpetuated a narrowly defined field of German Studies (Schenker & Munro, 2016). For instance, we adopted a critical perspective to expose oppressive structures present in classroom materials, such as the erasure of linguistic variety present in minority voices through the use of standardized reported speech.

However, as we began curricular design for GER3,¹ we realized that a broader, social lens might allow us

to more fully explore and problematize conceptualizations of “Germanness” and “German” put forth in our courses. Social justice, a practice of redistribution and recognition (Fraser, 1997; Grant & Gibson, 2010), informs SJP, a growth-based approach that affirms diversity and intersectionality, encourages critical thinking about assumed knowledge, and challenges unequal power structures inside and outside the learning environment (Grant & Gibson, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Similar to ARP, SJP understands that education is not a neutral process and endeavors to interrogate and interrupt injustices in curricula (Kishimoto, 2018; Ndimande, 2010). Through SJP, we can critically explore race and ethnicity, as well as language variety, immigration status, socioeconomic status, educational level, and gender/sexuality—all important to our teaching and learning of German. In adopting a SJP lens for our curricular (re)design, we keep two goals in mind. First, we want to integrate CLT and SJP, expanding our departmental approach to include both. Second, while working toward that goal, we want to develop our own critical thinking skills as teachers, which are a fundamental prerequisite to developing these skills in our students.

To attend to these goals and implement SJP in GER3 from Fall 2021 onward, our group has adopted the three-stage unit-planning strategy encouraged by Glynn et al. (2018): identify desired results, determine acceptable evidence, and plan learning experiences. We therefore analyzed current GER3 learning objectives to identify what needed to be supplemented. We then worked through existing *Social Justice Standards* (Teaching Tolerance, 2016) to define a set of social justice objectives for GER3 (Table 2). Although originally developed for K-12 contexts, this instrument for curriculum development highlights four domains—identity, diversity, justice, and action—each anchored by five statements, such as, “Students will recognize their own responsibility to stand up to exclusion, prejudice and injustice” (Teaching Tolerance, 2016, A-17). This framework can be a tool to guide both unit and lesson planning and to encourage communication, connections, comparisons, cultural competence, and community participation (see Glynn et al., 2018). With these learning objectives in mind, we discussed how students might reach them through communicative activities, adhering to the department’s CLT approach.

Table 2

GER3 Learning Objectives (paraphrased for conciseness)

Communication and Culture (existing)	Social Justice (added)
<p>Students will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● consolidated knowledge and command of basic points of German grammar to carry out various communicative tasks ● broadened vocabulary for expressing themselves on relevant, everyday topics ● been introduced to relevant cultural topics in German-speaking countries ● consolidated and advanced skills in reading, listening, writing, and speaking ● had opportunity for interacting, practicing, and reviewing German ● developed into skilled and strategic language learners and users 	<p>Students will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● developed knowledge related to the diverse nature of German identity through various textual and visual media within various social, cultural, linguistic, and historical contexts ● developed critical thinking skills to both recognize/analyze author positionality, voice, and attitude in content and language, and to recognize unfairness at individual and institutional/systemic levels ● developed communicative skills to accurately and respectfully describe observations—indicative of (a) increasing awareness of non/dominant groups in German-speaking societies, (b) ability to adopt/understand excluded/marginalized perspectives, (c) knowledge of how power/privilege influence interpersonal, intergroup, and institutional relationships

- drawn connections between their developing awareness about the multifacetedness of Germaness and how it relates to their home cultures/society, to negotiate their own identities in multiple (intercultural) spaces, and make informed decisions about when/how to stand against bias/injustice at home and abroad

As we began to plan learning experiences, we discussed the importance of both teaching about social justice issues and teaching through SJP (Glynn et al., 2018). Social justice pedagogues do not just celebrate diversity and discuss social justice topics, they also critically examine the presence and absence of social justice in our world and nurture equitable learning spaces (Brunow & Newman, 2020; McDonald & Zeichner, 2008). Thus, as we turned to existing GER3 materials, we asked ourselves:

- How are materials portraying “Germaness”?
- How do materials engage with socially (un)just practices?
- Could materials be critically didacticized?
- Is there a topic that could be explored with additional texts?

To attend to these questions, we began to collaboratively design teaching materials to implement during Communication in Focus (CiF) days. These CiF days were created to incorporate new learning objectives into an already full course. We take a genre-based approach (e.g., Rose & Martin, 2012) for material design: (1) define a theme; (2) identify a suitable text type and choose a suitable text; (3) determine the lesson-level learning objectives; (4) didacticize the text using an established framework for the text type/genre; and (5) work with instructors to integrate materials into their teaching. We conceptualize this process as cyclical. At each stage we review the theme, learning objectives, text, and materials, and adjust as needed.

Integrating CLT and SJP

Each unit of the GER3 textbook *Stationen* (Augustyn & Euba, 2015) is contextualized within an urban region in the German-speaking world. The Munich unit, for instance, thematizes the experience of living in Munich from various perspectives, including an overview of its gastronomic culture (like Oktoberfest) and the German bottle collecting system. At the beginning of this unit, students are introduced to the wealth of the city, which is represented through its booming auto industry (e.g., the headquarters of BMW) and record-setting tourist numbers. Yet this unit also contains a reading comprehension text titled “A bottle collector in Munich tells all” (p. 46-47). The bottle collector, Peter L., is described as receiving welfare benefits. As a hobby, he supplements his income by collecting bottles for deposit money. These two characterizations of the same city seem to be at odds. To address this, we chose socioeconomic disparity as this unit’s CiF theme.

We then began the process of identifying a suitable text type and text. Concerning text type, we asked ourselves:

- In which communicative situation(s) and discourse communities might the selected topic occur (e.g., podcast, political campaign, artwork)?
- Are these texts publicly accessible?
- Are they suitable to serve as the basis for instruction at the GER3 level, keeping in mind the amount of scaffolding necessary for students to productively and critically engage in the target language and during the time available?

Concerning a specific text, we asked ourselves:

- What is the communicative goal of the text when considering its purpose, author, and audience?
- Does the communicative goal of the text support our SJP by allowing us to encourage students' critical examination of German socioeconomic structures?
- Does the text contain features (content/linguistic) that reinforce stereotypes, lending itself to deconstruction?

For this specific CiF day, we decided on a journalistic text from Deutschlandfunk Kultur, a culture-oriented German radio station. It was published online as a podcast with a written transcript (Köppchen, 2020). The text consists of interviews with bottle collectors and other people making a living on the street, paired with commentary from social workers. We deemed this text type suitable because it connects personal discourse (voices of the bottle collectors) to public discourse (social workers commenting on the issue of poverty) in a way that is appropriate for students' language proficiency.

The chosen text connects bottle collecting to poverty and frames the activity as an economic shadow activity that people rely on to survive. Importantly, the text presents bottle collectors as societal outcasts, and simultaneously allowing bottle collectors to position themselves in society and share perceptions of their imposed, structural marginalization. The text frames bottle collecting as a social, political, and economic issue, and problematizes the emotional struggles that bottle collectors experience as they try to establish themselves as a social group separate from beggars or newspaper sellers, thereby highlighting different levels of stigmatization of poverty—an account incongruous with the portrayal of Peter L.'s hobby activity.

Based on the content and information structure of the chosen text, we defined the following CiF day learning objectives (translated and paraphrased for conciseness):

- Students should recognize differences between the presentation and discussion of bottle collectors in both texts and should question these differences critically. This includes:
 - recognizing that the portrayal of bottle collectors in the textbook text (target audience: American learners of German) differs drastically from their portrayal in authentic public discourse in Germany.
- Students should be encouraged to recognize the roles afforded to the voices of interviewees, within the aim of the text, to create an authentic portrayal of bottle collectors and their perception in society. This includes noting:
 - the relevance of understanding individuals' backgrounds, decisions, and dreams to formulate opinions;
 - the importance of including the voices of those affected and discussed (often passive or absent in the textbook); and
 - the multifacetedness of perspectives by attending to individual and collective experiences, thus providing insight and encouraging empathy (and potentially solidarity).

We then began didacticizing the written transcript. Following Swaffar et al.'s (1991) procedural model for integrative reading, we focused on different stages to guide students' reading behavior, progressing from a macro view (of the context and communicative goals of the text) to a micro view (of constructed textual meaning and implications). In [Figure 1](#), we present an overview of this didacticization.²

Figure 1

Didacticization Provided to Instructors

Homework for preparation:

After working with the Peter L. text, students complete homework in preparation for the CiF day. They watch a video blog and answer questions about their understanding of the blog's use of the term "lebenswert" (trans: livable) and their knowledge of the identities and motivations of bottle collectors.

Class session:

Class begins with a discussion of the homework to help students realize that their hypotheses about bottle collectors are based on limited and possibly biased information, and that it is critical to hear from the bottle collectors themselves. Work with the Deutschlandfunk Kultur text commences by introducing the text source, author, and other publication details to contextualize the content and bring questions of authorship and audience to the forefront. Students then read the first paragraph and complete activities focused on the structure and language of the text, in order to scrutinize the implied perceptions of poverty. Afterwards, students are assigned to groups. Each group reads the portrait of a different bottle collector, prepares answers to questions about their assigned figure, and presents their answers to the class so that other students can complete an information-gap activity. This should prompt them to compare their newly acquired knowledge to their initial impressions of bottle collectors. Finally, students read the section of the text with the commentary from social workers, leading to a discussion of the broader societal dimension of bottle collecting. The lesson then segues into a critical discussion of intercultural comparisons between the United States and Germany, as well as students' opinions on how to address homelessness, poverty, and exclusion from society. The lesson concludes with a short, written reflection about what students learned in the lesson, incorporating chapter-specific phrases and expressions (see companion site; Matangos, 2022).

When the materials were ready, the language coordinator worked with GER3 instructors to integrate these materials into their teaching, using them as a basis for crafting lessons that worked for them and their students.

Implementation and Reflection

The first author, Anna, was an instructor of GER3 in Fall 2021, and her firsthand account of the implementation and impact of our CWG's materials further illustrates our work. Her reflections are informed by a daily journal and course materials, as well as various spoken and written artifacts generated by her students as part of regular course work.

Anna adopted an autoethnographic approach, explicating and analyzing her personal and contextualized experiences (Liu et al., in press) through reflexivity (Adams et al., 2017). This approach aligns with SJP because it humanizes research, recognizing that social research has a humanist agenda and that life is lived through complexities (Adams et al., 2017). Thus, valuing personal experience and insider knowledge through autoethnography becomes a productive form of critical research. Anna deductively analyzed all data and aligned moments in the narrative to existing SJP themes, namely moments of open-mindedness, instances of criticality and reflectivity, and evidence of knowledge construction (Cochran-Smith, 2010; Grant & Agosto, 2008; Kincheloe, 2005; North, 2006). Data were also approached latently, as Anna was necessarily subjective in locating more underlying meanings.

Anna's Reflection

Open-Mindedness

Some parts of implementing SJP came naturally to me, like adopting methods that were growth-based, critical of assumed knowledge, and socially conscious of multiple ways of perceiving and affirming students' diverse backgrounds (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). From day one, I emphasized how important it was for me to hear about students' experiences and expectations, and how valuable these insights were for our entire class. Students shared stories of anger and fear, joy and surprise, emotional attachment, and societal detachment. The challenge was to not shortchange these stories as isolated vignettes, but to mobilize them as platforms for critical thinking and learning about Germanness through the German language.

When we began the Munich unit, I asked my students to postulate what happens in Munich. We, unsurprisingly, devolved into a discussion of stereotypes, upon which I reoriented students to the origins and impact of these stereotypes. Knowing that our CWG had prepared materials centered on socioeconomic inequalities fomented by the bottle collecting system, I spent the next week preparing my students with vocabulary, grammar, and content knowledge to adequately express themselves in this domain. For example, we worked through articulating our opinion on the average income of those in Munich and discussing the implications of living in a rich city. Course material seemed to suggest that Munich was rife with beer, pretzels, BMWs, and happy people, but my students wondered if there was more than met the eye. We also talked about our own recycling habits and our wishes for a cleaner campus.

Criticality and Reflexivity

We worked systematically through the textbook excerpt about Peter L. and then I asked students to critically assess the contexts that might have prompted him to become a bottle collector. One student wanted to know if the rich purposefully trashed their recyclables so that the poor could profit, another wondered whether Peter L. knew his story had been published and disseminated. After students voiced their own interpretation of the text, one expressed a bitter remark concerning the worth of our textbook. This comment stuck with me, as it foregrounded his new understanding that textbooks are often uncritically consumed, even if inherently problematic. It also exposed an avenue to counteract hegemonic norms through critical evaluation and decentering through considering the purpose and the power of texts when exploring positionality, target audience, and knowledge construction (Brunow & Newman, 2020).

Finally, for our CiF day, we branched out from the textbook and learned from other beggars and bottle collectors in Germany. As emphasized in the literature on SJP, I used our CWG's didactization to craft a lesson aligning my own needs and realities as a teacher with those of my students (Kubanyiova, 2020). In our lesson, we first reviewed key vocabulary and concepts, and then returned to the Peter L. text, creating word maps around two central questions: What does one think when one reads this text? Why is this text (un)helpful for social justice efforts? This scaffolded our next discussion on competing understandings of Munich. Students drew from previous material concerning wealth, as well as their readings of the socioeconomic problems felt by Peter L. One student unapologetically asked what they were supposed to be learning. Others chimed in: environmentalism, poverty, welfare, stereotypes. Moving on from this confusion was challenging; ultimately, I asked students if they were alright with ambiguity and ready to explore more.

Knowledge Construction

I then introduced the CiF text and highlighted key similarities and differences between it and the Peter L. text, drawing on our CWG's interpretations of source, audience, and format and noting the complexity underlying these interpretations. For instance, the Peter L. text was an excerpt from an online newspaper article from 2011, and the CiF text was also edited for length. Students worked in small groups to discuss the CiF text and complete an information-gap activity. When sharing their notes, opinions, and related personal experiences, students surprised me. They wanted to know why both texts sounded like dating profiles: Peter L. was described as single and muscular, and Klaus (in the CiF text) avoided smoking and

drinking and kept his place orderly. My students wished these articles had demonstrated humanity rather than marketability. Several students worried that other readers might not encounter the bottle collectors as critically as we had. There were societal structures in place undergirding these people's livelihoods through bottle collecting, my students told me.

My efforts to nurture students toward evaluating text purpose and positionality, respectfully observing and drawing connections to their own lives, had been successful. Their hands were "dirty" (Enns-Kanenen, 2016, p. 557) from sifting through various assumed and co-constructed knowledges, ultimately recognizing an unfairness on the individual level (i.e., selling someone's story) and injustice at the institutional level (i.e., our complacency within systems of oppression). Finally, we revisited our stereotypical conceptions of Germany's socioeconomic strength and equality, problematizing discrepancies between assumptions and realities.

Further Learning

To end this reflection, I draw from students' remarks taken from the Munich quiz and course evaluations. On the quiz, students highlighted the discrepancy between classist public perceptions of bottle collectors and their positive environmental impact, demonstrating critical reflectivity. One student described the bottle deposit system as an interesting solution to cleaning up the streets and pondered the feasibility of such a system here at home, displaying transcultural open-mindedness. At the end of the semester, students completed anonymous course evaluations. Asked to describe aspects of the course that helped them learn, students noted the inclusion of relevant and real-world material. One student felt course content had been crafted specifically to attend to students' experiences and interests; another noted the importance of an open invitation to share and question. They were appreciative of the opportunity to construct knowledge.

Reflecting on both our CWG's efforts and my students' work, there are myriad thoughts and conclusions. Students recognized, appreciated, and reciprocated efforts to examine real topics, take risks, and share ideas. Importantly, these CiF days were not one-and-done lessons. The topics, conversations, and materials that fed into and spilled out of CiF days became a holistic SJP framework for my GER3 course. There was an open agreement between students and myself that controversial, challenging, and contingent topics were part of everyday life, and thus they would be part of our everyday learning and teaching, too.

Challenges Faced

Our CWG attempts to grapple with the *wicked problems* of higher education (Bass, 2020), as higher education itself is embedded in an ecosystem of problematic social and economic forces. We see ourselves as simultaneously occupying powerful roles as teachers, learners, and researchers (Bass, 1999) through which we task ourselves with "reimagining education [...] so that it plays a meaningful role in creating a more just society" (Bass, 2020, p. 10). In particular, we ask how we might foster equity within the confines of higher education and global contexts of injustice. We started by asking how foreign language curricula are developed and by whom, as well as whose needs and interests are considered or suppressed. We felt that the traditional developmental process for curriculum building was already indicative of hierarchical oppressive structures within educational settings (e.g., Jackson, 2005). By collaboratively developing new learning objectives, problematizing established material, and creating new material for instructors to build upon in their classrooms across traditional institutional hierarchies, we began enacting the roles we might play in curricular change.

These efforts persist through various challenges both within our department and across foreign language teaching in general. First, both faculty and graduate students in our department maintain different pedagogies and approaches to language instruction, leading to differing priorities when revising curricula. Second, German classes are split between in-person and fully online instruction, which impacts instructor flexibility vis-à-vis course content and student interaction. Beyond this, lower-level German courses currently rely on textbooks for pacing and content. These courses are the department's largest source of undergraduate enrollment, yet senior faculty want to begin programmatic change in upper-level

courses. Overall, these institution-specific challenges complicate and slow curricular change. There are also broad challenges endemic to enacting SJP in the foreign language classroom, further complicated by their context- and individual-dependent nature. We still ask ourselves:

- How might we avoid tokenization when diversifying and decolonizing our curricula and syllabi?
- How might we offer every student a voice but restrict hate speech and misinformation?
- How might we eschew the banking conception of education (Freire, 2006), avoiding simply filling our students with SJ information (see Wesely et al., 2016)?

Exploring possible solutions to these questions underwrites our CWG's understanding of curricular change as a continual process.

Conclusion

As we integrate SJP into standing CLT practices and materials, we recognize the intertwined roles that our CWG, GER3 instructors, and GER3 students played in realizing SJP objectives and fostering an equitable classroom. We also recognize that our CWG's work is only in the initial stages. Although departmental and institutional structures are long-standing and complicit in the perpetuation of a simplified conception of Germanness in the classroom, we actively create and maintain an environment that challenges established institutional hierarchies and productively works towards a more equitable foreign language classroom. We continue to learn about and foster curricular change and hope to inspire other educators across a variety of institutional contexts to do the same.

Notes

1. The focus on GER3 was determined by additional institutional constraints and considerations, such as the need to align the approach and content of Penn State's University Park campus language sequence courses with their online equivalent at Penn State's virtual campus (i.e., Penn State World Campus).
2. The Munich CiF day was the second of six throughout the semester. The others attended to the following social justice themes: (1) the structure of biographies, encouraging students to think critically about included and excluded content; (3) gender-balancing and gender-inclusive language in university settings both home and abroad; (4) media production, manipulation, and consumption—especially concerning (the lack of) authorship from and content about marginalized groups; (5) affordable housing and homelessness; and (6) socialization and integration of immigrants through a lens of song and rap. All themes were rooted in the unit city's culture and integrated key grammar and vocabulary; instructors were encouraged to teach about social justice through SJP.

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