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Item Type	Presentation
Authors	Vanchena, Lorie A.;Emler, Trina;Devlin, Frances A.;Vyatkina, Nina;Arsenault, Emily;Meyertholen, Andrea;Linden, Ari
Citation	Vanchena, Lorie A., Trina Emler, Frances A. Devlin, Nina Vyatkina, Emily Arsenault, Andrea Meyertholen, and Ari Linden. "Integrating Research Skills into the German Studies Curriculum." Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) Celebration of Teaching, Slawson Hall, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS. 10 May 2019. Poster presentation.
Download date	2024-08-15 07:10:58
Link to Item	https://hdl.handle.net/1808/29906

Integrating Research Skills into the German Studies Curriculum

Dr. Lorie Vanchena¹, Trina Emler², Fran Devlin³, Dr. Nina Vyatkina¹, Emily Arsenault⁴, Dr. Andrea Meyertholen¹, Dr. Ari Linden¹

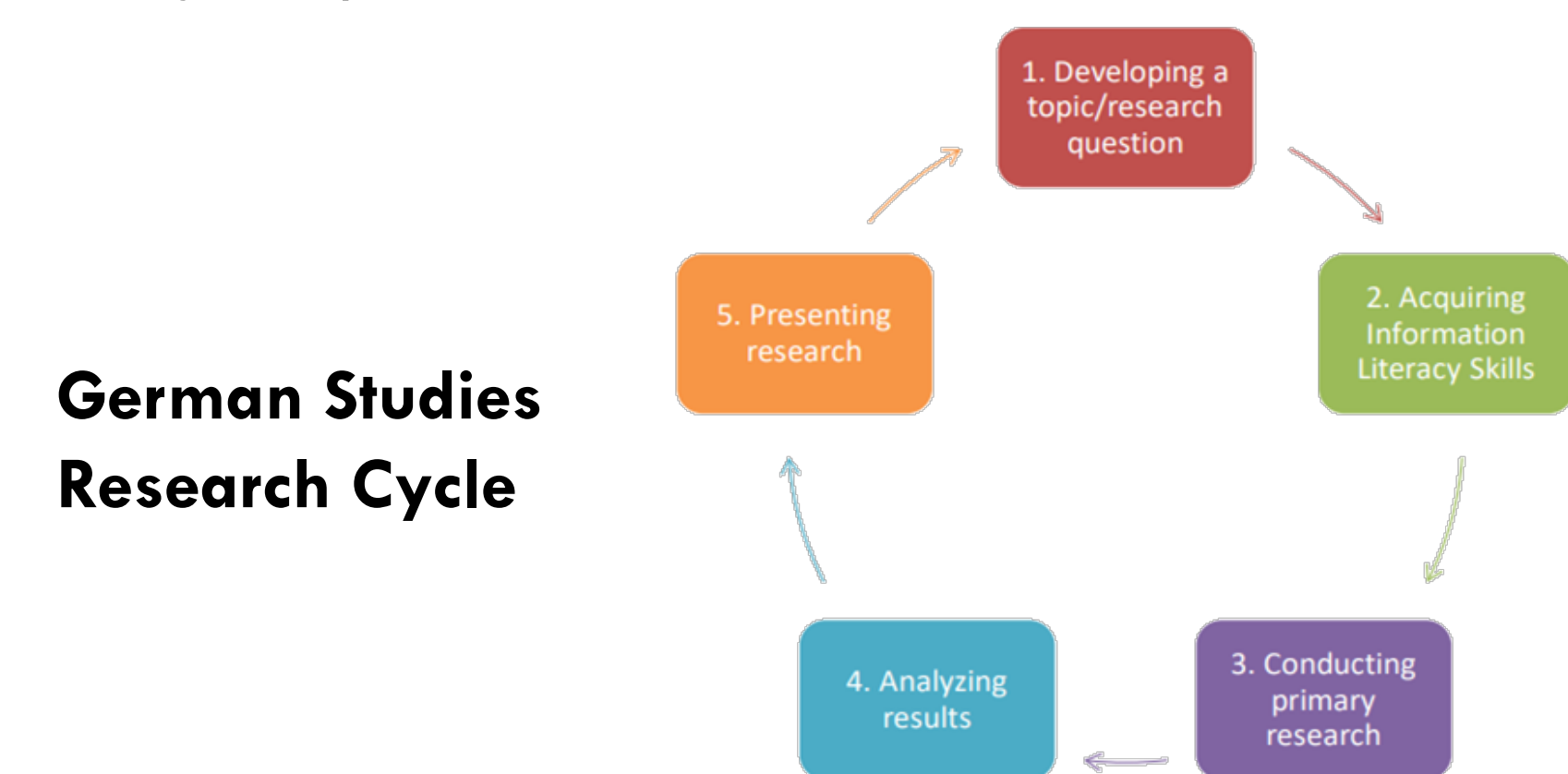
¹Department of German Studies, ²School of Education, ³KU Libraries, ⁴Center for Teaching Excellence

Background and Motivation

We expected students in our capstone course to complete requirements for a content-rich course and also produce a research paper in German, but discovered that most students did not have the research skills to write such a paper.

After participating 2017-2018 in the Center for Undergraduate Research Faculty Working Group on Integrating Research into the Curriculum, we decided to scaffold research skills strategically into five required courses in the German Studies major:

- GERM 301: High Intermediate German I
- GERM 302: High Intermediate German II
- GERM 315: German Literature and the Modern Era
- GERM 401: Advanced German I
- GERM 580: Senior Capstone Course: Contemporary German-Speaking Europe



Transformation Process

- Started with learning outcomes in GERM 580 and used backward design to map specific research skills to five required courses
- Identified online resources for introducing these skills
- With assistance of Graduate Research Consultant and Faculty Librarian, developed teaching units using the online materials
- Faculty Librarian created Course Guide to serve as resource for instructors
- Integrated teaching units into course Blackboard sites as flipped content (with low-stakes quizzes)
- 2018-2019: GERM 315, 401, 580

Outcomes

We expect that learning and practicing research skills scaffolded throughout the curriculum will:

- help students develop more systematically the skills they need to complete a research paper in GERM 580
- raise the quality of students' work in each of the five courses
- provide students with transferrable skills that set them up for post-graduation success

Next Steps

- 2019-2020: incorporate teaching units into GERM 301 and GERM 302
- Continue developing materials and assessments for all courses
- Continue to assess student performance in these courses
- Incorporate assessment of this initiative as part of annual degree-level assessment

GERM 301 and 302: High Intermediate German I and II

Background: GERM 301 and 302 are the introductory courses to the German Studies major. These courses prepare students to read and discuss literary and non-literary texts in German.

Implementation:

- Exposure to basic research skills necessary for success in the German major, including the research cycle
- Scaffolded essay assignment
- Discussions
- Low-stakes quizzes

Reflections: This year, we have focused our efforts on implementing research skills in GERM 315, 401, and 580, but we plan to continue our redesign of GERM 301 and 302 throughout the next year.

GERM 315: German Literature and the Modern Era

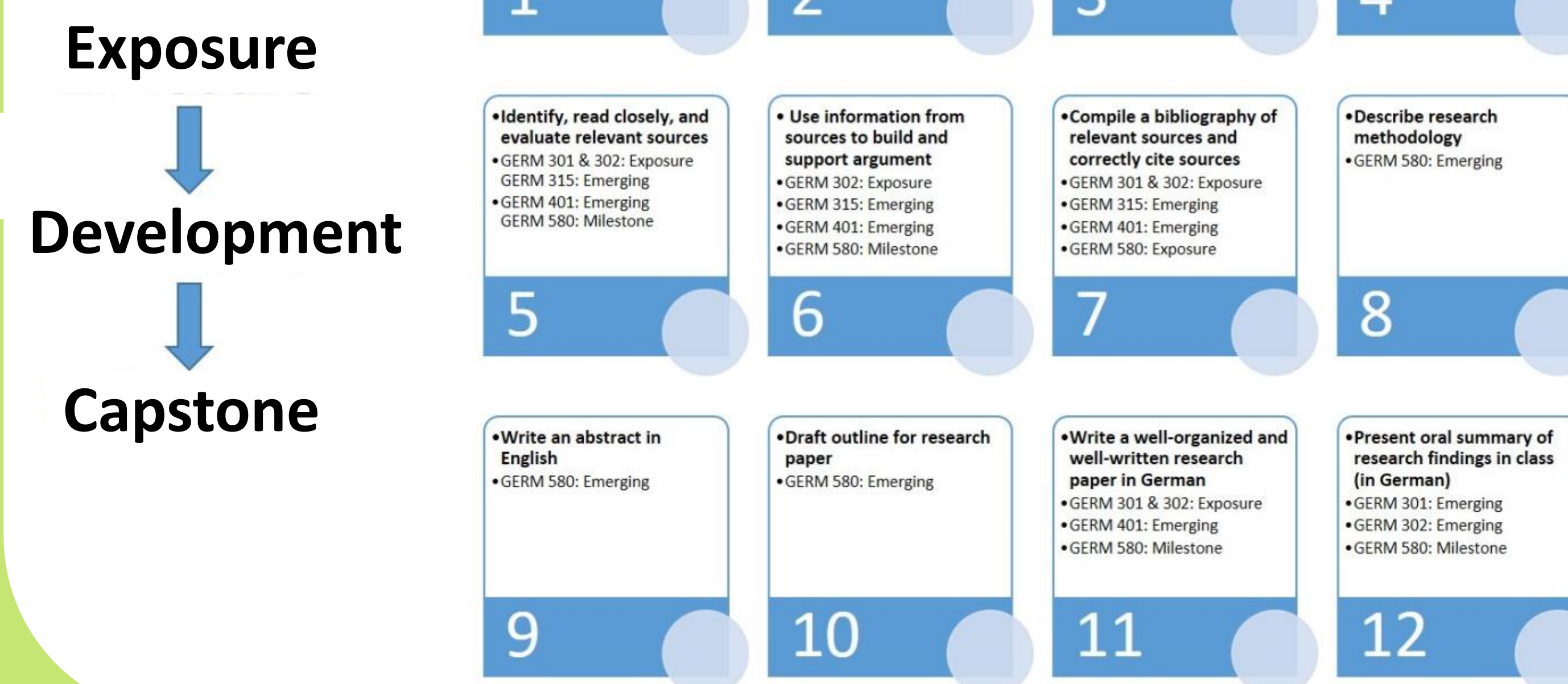
Background: GERM 315 is an upper-level German literature course. GERM 315 is taught in English, which makes it a great opportunity to introduce and practice research skills that will be necessary for success in GERM 580.

Implementation:

- One longer research paper instead of three shorter papers
- Early feedback on each aspect of paper
- Flipped content (videos, readings)
- Low-stakes quizzes
- Peer review (topic, thesis, outline)

Reflections: Only one student has made the transition from the redesigned GERM 315 to GERM 580, so it could be 1-2 more years before we have a true sense of how these transformations might be reflected in GERM 580.

Sequence of Research Skills in German Studies



Background: GERM 580 focuses on the synthesis of the history, culture, and politics of German-speaking Europe today through independent research. GERM 580 is a required course for all German majors in their senior year.

Implementation:

- Presentations (oral or poster) at KU Undergraduate Research Symposium
- Flipped content (in English)
- Low-stakes quizzes
- About one half of the course learning goals directly involve the demonstration of research skills
- Peer editing & workshops

Reflections: Integrating a research skills framework helps to structure this inherently interdisciplinary course, where content is largely based on the diverse interests of students. We will continue to monitor student progress in research skills over the coming years to see how transformations in earlier courses in the sequence might be reflected in GERM 580 performance.

Background: In GERM 401, students expand and refine their skills in German speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Students who successfully complete GERM 401 may then enroll in all other 400 and 500 level GERM courses.

Reflections:

- Students made the most progress with identifying and choosing appropriate information sources, citing information sources, formulating research questions, and organizing written work, with most students progressing from "exposure" to "development" level.
- When research skills start being introduced in GERM 301 and 302, GERM 401 modules will be revisited to ensure a progression. We expect that repeating some of the topics (on a new, developing, level) will prove beneficial.

GERM 580: Senior Capstone Course

GERM 401: Advanced German I