

The German-speaking World: A Virtual Exchange

Wege
aus der
Einsamkeit e.V.



NEW COMMUNITY PARTNER PILOT

This semester, the GRMN 3800 piloted working with a new community partner called Wege aus der Einsamkeit. In English, this means "Ways out of Loneliness." This German organization creates connections between German elders, or the "silver-haired" as they are affectionately called, to combat depression and loneliness. This organization connected with Northeastern to bring in a youthful perspective for their elders and simultaneously allow the students an opportunity for language improvement and connection through meaningful conversation.



S-L LEARNING OUTCOMES

The TA and professor chose cultural competency as a Service-Learning goal. The plan for reaching this objective was to create preparation activities that required research of Germany heritage and history. This was an open discussion was held in class to fully prepare students and give them confidence for their exchange

MEASURING OUTCOMES

In attempt to assess cultural competency, students were asked to reflect after each exchange. They were asked questions specific to the topic, language comprehension, and conversation takeaways. They were able to get to know the elders and their background well each week.



WHERE WE GO FROM HERE...



Dr. Fuchs and Dr Ward look forward to expanding on the S-L project in upcoming semesters with Wege aus der Einsamkeit. Meaningful conversation and new, long lasting friendships achieves a shared goal of breaking down intergenerational barriers. They will continue to evolve this virtual exchange through relevant and timely topics, further research into Gerontology, and reflection on identity with the students and elders.

Student Reflection

WHAT WERE YOUR "TAKEAWAYS" FROM THIS EXCHANGE?

"It gives me great happiness to see how the elderly are distracted and laugh together. Being able to participate in something that helps the elderly to distract themselves gives me pleasure." - Pablo

"Having conversations outside of the classroom with native German speakers has been very helpful, as it's allowed me to practice my speaking, listening, and comprehension skills." - Talia

WHAT WENT WELL WITH THIS EXCHANGE?

"The inter-generational communication between the students and German elders from a culture entirely different from my own. There were many learning opportunities for both me and the German elders, and I enjoyed hearing their stories and opinions on current topics" - Peyton

"I like doing the group format, because sometimes when I was doing zoom calls in previous S-L sessions, there was little to talk about, and I think having the group format allowed for a more dynamic conversation for everyone." -Kasra

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED?

"Enabling future participants in this course to engage in more 1-on-1 communication with the German partner. I feel as though this would allow for more meaningful communication to occur and create deeper connections. - Peyton

HOW DO YOU ENVISION THE FUTURE OF THIS PROJECT?

"Some kind of virtual pen-pal system would be beneficial to both students and German partners to form closer relationships." - Peyton

"I like how this project is being carried out, and I hope that more students will join this project in the future!" - Pablo