This course examines the theme of the relations between words and music in German “Lieder” or “art songs” from the early nineteenth century into the twentieth century. Because the “singing” voice mediates between words and music in “song,” we will also have occasion to consider how we should think about “voice” in general. We will spend most of the term listening to really beautiful and interesting songs (i.e. poems set to music) and reading and discussing the poetic texts. Musical analysis will be minimal, nontechnical, and mostly impressionistic. (No musical background or talent is required or presupposed.)

Classical composers we will listen to include: Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, the Mendelssohns, Brahms, Wolf, Mahler, Webern. We will close with some post-war popular Liedermacher like Wolf Biermann and some more contemporary rock songs from Germany. To flesh out the picture, along the way we will also read a bit of fiction that focuses on music (Kleist and Hoffmann). The course will serve as a good introduction to the development of the aesthetic sensibility in Germany from Romanticism to Modernism. Discussions, reading, and writing assignments are all in German, with the exception of some general background reading in English. Review of selected grammatical points as necessary and useful.