Building Sustainability into the German Program: "Climate Stories" in Gen-Ed German and the Advanced Curriculum

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Abstract

This article reports on an initiative to enrich the German curriculum at all levels via "Climate Stories," a student-centered learning project that capitalizes on the encouraging strides being made in German-speaking countries to combat global climate change. Students identify a real-life "climate story" in the news in German that features a solution or important insight into an environmental issue. After digesting three articles, students create original artwork (visual art, collage, podcast, play) which they present to their peers. The project makes valuable cross-disciplinary connections to popular sustainability courses and is articulated vertically in the German curriculum, starting in general education and moving upward to each level within the German major. It also connects with an initiative in climate-focused pedagogy in the sustainability community that is active on campus and nationally. German students share their art and the "stories" behind the art, contributing insights and expertise from the German-speaking world to undergraduates who cannot access these stories themselves in German. In the general education curriculum, the project provides evidence of global learning. In the upper-level curriculum, projects are more complex, with oral and written components increasing in difficulty as students' proficiency grows.

At our public, comprehensive university, "Climate Stories" is a sustainability-focused project that begins as part of the general education curriculum in German, and is incorporated each year, spiraling upward with greater depth, into advanced-level study for the German minor and major. Its goals are simple but powerful: to connect students' German reading skills, self-selected authentic texts, and the transformative power of art to foster a deeper level of communication about important issues of sustainability and climate change from German-speaking countries, and to communicate these insights in class and across campus to an audience of peers.

Climate Stories also capitalizes on the specific vantage point of students who, because they can read German, can connect directly to German-speaking cultures to find insights from abroad that are not immediately accessible to a monolingual American audience. Each student individually identifies a "climate story" (via news articles, websites, texts, or film) in German that features a solution or important insight into an environmental issue. After fully digesting the material and synthesizing it in German, in writing (lower level) and in writing and speaking (upper levels), students create original artwork to express what they have learned. Ultimately, they present their art and convey the insights from the climate story from the target culture to their peers across campus. The artistic medium is varied – it may be visual art, a collage, poster, podcast, play – virtually anything students choose to best express themselves and demonstrate learning. The resulting artwork becomes a centerpiece for the presentation, a vehicle for each student's unique com-

munication about a sustainability topic in the German-speaking world. By incorporating art and telling the news as a story, Climate Stories as a project speaks to hearts as well as minds.

The work is connected to a cross-campus initiative that links several disciplines (art, theater, sustainable development, interdisciplinary studies). Originally inspired by the Climate Narrative Project, a national initiative for educators founded by Jeff Biggers (n.d.), it engages students in developing tangible, creative, and cross-disciplinary understandings about climate change (England et al., 2019). The project also supports broader institutional goals from the university's strategic plan, by creating a space for transformational learning, an overall stronger knowledge base on climate issues, and a better chance students will envision and work toward sustainable societal and climate change. While our campus uniquely fosters this work, the project could take place on any campus, since it requires only minimal collaboration among faculty. Even if the project were sponsored purely within a department of languages and cultures, today's social media outlets such as Instagram make it easy for students' work to reach a broader audience, both on campus and beyond.

While several German programs have added nature-, science-, or even environmentally-focused courses (see, for example, Michigan State University, Arizona State University, and Emory University, all of which are listed as AATG German University Centers of Excellence; AATG, n.d.), the Climate Stories project is shorter (4-5 weeks). The fact that it is vertically articulated lets students experience at various intervals how much more they can accomplish in German as they make their way to the upper levels. Finally, Climate Stories builds community between students of differing levels and shows the broader university community what the study of German is bringing to campus life.

Art-infused climate initiatives such as the Climate Stories project apply findings from recent communication research, which has identified multiple psychological defenses that impede the effectiveness of much climate change writing in America (Moser, 2016). By broadening climate communication to include storytelling and art, genres beyond the traditional scientific or political article, climate communicators promote more accessible, witness-based storytelling, focusing more attention on offering tangible solutions that are inspirational, personal, and real.

The first section of this article positions Climate Stories within the framework for optimal student-centered learning by examining characteristics of today's Generation Z learners (those born between 1997-2012 – the young adults now in our college classes) and their interest in climate change. It connects this with research in motivation from the fields of psychology, world language pedagogy, and bilingual education, all of which offer evidence that student-centered, project-based instruction boosts engagement for deeper learning and greater levels of motivation for the often frustrating task of learning a language over several years.

The remaining sections operationalize these insights for the German curriculum, providing specific approaches to tasks and sequencing at three levels of instruction. The Climate Stories project begins in intermediate-level (4th semester) German and is revisited in upper-level courses once per year, with projects that expand with greater depth and complexity as students move upward through the minor or major.

Foundations and Benefits of Climate Stories

One key aspect in student-centered instruction is ensuring that topics in the curriculum reflect the interests and values of the students being served. In the broader U.S. population, recent research on the issue of climate change shows that people who believe in climate change outnumber climate change deniers by a ratio of 5 to 1. Two in three Americans (66%) view the

issue as personally important (Leiserowitz et al., 2021, p. 4). In the meantime, America's Generation Z students have aged into college classrooms. Research into the values of today's Gen Z students reveals they have a deep-seated commitment to personal engagement and an interest in effecting social change (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). Over 50% of the population aged 18-34 believes global warming will pose a serious threat during their own lifetimes (Reinhart, 2018). Three quarters of this group considers global warming and climate change to be greater threats to society than war, violence, or drugs (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). This makes a project focused on climate change particularly timely and relevant to today's undergraduates.

One highlight we can feature from our target cultures is the impressive commitment in German-speaking countries to mitigate climate change and collaborate across borders to do so. Government policies for climate neutrality, company-based initiatives for strong environmental stewardship, today's *Nachhaltigkeitsgesellschaft* – each of these is a compelling starting point for students to discover more positive, successful approaches to climate change than they may see in their home culture. Even smaller, locally-based initiatives, where a business or smaller community has found a solution to a pressing environmental concern, offer a success story in the face of climate threats that might otherwise appear intractable.

To contextualize the project described here, it is useful to share a few details on the program and the students we serve. Our fourth-semester, intermediate German serves a diverse student population. Many students enroll primarily to fulfill a language requirement for the Bachelor of Arts. We cannot assume our students automatically love German; their interests span a wide variety of fields. Climate Stories capitalizes on the differences among students' interests and allows them to share their disciplines with others. While students work on their projects independently, Climate Stories is a unifying framework where all students can find a meaningful connection. A business student might examine the sustainability of the Austrian skiing industry. A political science student might focus on the *Energiewende* or policies in response to the United Nation's 17 goals for sustainable development, many of which are connected to climate change. The communications major might look for insights from the public face of climate change on a government-sponsored website. English or film studies majors are drawn to creative works such as ecopoetry or climate documentaries produced in the target culture. Thus, Climate Stories also enacts one of the more elusive goals of world language instruction as outlined in the ACTFL *World-Readiness Standards* (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015): the connection of language study to other disciplines. Keeping the level and scope of the project manageable for all students and making connections to other disciplines ensures that the early semesters of German remain personally relevant to students. Finally, Climate Stories shows students tangible evidence of what they have gained through language study. Students are encouraged to be able to share insights from their chosen language and culture with others in their class and with even more people who do not know German.

Researchers in Europe, whose students complete much longer sequences of language instruction in secondary school, have turned to project- and content-based learning as a way to build greater student resilience in language learning over time. Lorenzo (2014) pointed to the benefits of integrating content with language learning, arguing that Content and Language Integrated Learning (in the U.S. generally referred to as content-based learning) results in higher overall student motivation for current and continued learning. Both European and American professionals stress that engaging students meaningfully with authentic texts and tasks ensures that learning feels connected and relevant (ACTFL, n.d.). In the American college context, content-based language learning projects such as Climate Stories may serve as "motivational enhancers" (Lorenzo, 2014, p. 13) that advance an additional program priority: winning over gen-ed students to the further study of German. Dörnyei et al. (2014) discussed the synergy

between motivation and self-efficacy in language learning with their notion of the Directed Motivational Current, an "intense motivational drive which is capable of both stimulating and supporting long-term behavior" (p. 9) in learning the second language. In the U.S. language-learning context, Egbert (2003) focused on Flow Theory, which draws on an understanding of flow as a powerful motivator – that sense of being "in the zone" while working, achieving a state of heightened consciousness that is challenging, invigorating, and fun. When students experience flow, they engage with focused time on task and are able to work intently and productively, leading to optimal outcomes.

Along parallel lines in the field of psychology, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) suggests ways to bolster students' long-term engagement with more difficult learning, leading to greater learner resilience and autonomy. The needs theory of SDT understands students as growth-oriented individuals who can stay engaged and learn optimally when important psychological needs are met in the learning process (Deci & Ryan, 2000). These needs are threefold. Students need to experience competence with the subject matter, they need some autonomy and choices in learning, and finally, they need a sense of personal connection with the content and with other people within the learning environment (Masland, 2021).

As SDT relates to German teaching, language learning happens longest, most intensely, and probably best when students become actively engaged in seeking out target language resources and when they realize they can understand them, too. After developing students' ability to read in the target language in the first three semesters, integrating Climate Stories in fourth-semester German exposes students to online resources, news articles, and websites in German. The project also shows students they have accomplished something valuable with the language. Multiple learning goals are met; by reading, summarizing articles, and learning from other classmates about other Climate Stories, students build broader cultural and content knowledge, compare practices from abroad with ours in the U.S., and strengthen German skills in keeping with the ACTFL World-Readiness Standards. Also, by communicating what has been learned to others in class, each student has an opportunity to be an expert on a topic of their choice. The presentations, made more compelling by uniquely personalized art, build community.

As the project cycles into the advanced curriculum and the entire project switches to German, Climate Stories further expands students' content and linguistic skills, key vocabulary, and the ability to read, listen, write, and present work orally in German with confidence. Class activities become more complex, students' projects become deeper and even more rich as language skills advance. In sum, with Climate Stories, when students see they can be successful at tasks that are deeply meaningful to them (competence), when they have a sense of agency and self-directedness as they engage with the learning (autonomy), and when they feel connected to both the material and to others in the learning process (relatedness), students' engagement is higher and their long-term commitment to their learning is enhanced.

Finally, Climate Stories address a critical element we sometimes overlook in language programs: helping students become autonomous learners by "learning how to learn" in their discipline (Fink, 2015, pp. 56-57). For language majors who we hope will study abroad independently, becoming self-directed, and above all, more confident in reading and discussing authentic texts from the target culture is key. This is invaluable in further developing their German outside of class (and later in students' lives).

Discussion now turns to key steps instructors can follow to initiate and monitor progress on Climate Stories, offering specifics on the project at two instructional levels: in fourth-semester intermediate German and in advanced German courses.

Framework and Preparation for the Project

A common structure is used to launch the Climate Stories project, regardless of instructional level. The description of the project is provided in English as an addendum to the syllabus, with goals, sub-goals, and transparent due dates for weekly "milestone" assignments to be uploaded to the course learning management system (LMS) (see Appendix A). In advanced classes, the steps are discussed in German, with these same English anchors in the syllabus. This means that an instructor teaching Climate Stories at three different levels within the same semester can prepare the project for multiple levels simultaneously. Instructors need only to create one set of resources in the class LMS, which are easily updateable in future years. These include a short, manageable set of links to mainstream German news services, to the German version of the United Nation's sustainable development goals, and, for intermediate students, links to one or two websites with articles for children and youth. For advanced students, a few more online sites of accessible news magazines are added. The LMS houses these resources, introduces google.de as the preferred search engine, and shares basic key words in German and some links to *Klimakunst*. Finally, a few sample articles in English and German will launch the project.

Fourth-semester German students are initially steered toward shorter, online articles and picture-supported reports from German television news networks as well as publications geared at an inquisitive, younger reader of German. More advanced students can start with these resources, but quickly locate longer articles that are more challenging linguistically. Since the students themselves choose the articles they will read, more highly-proficient students can bypass these supports and launch directly into a web search using key words online.

As a valuable side benefit, pointing students toward online broadcast news sites introduces them to the often-overlooked fact that they can access German videos and news coverage 24/7 in today's digital world. Further, broadcast news channels have free online apps, so students who download these can have *Eilmeldungen* coming at them in German every day.

To scaffold the project for success, students need a clear understanding of the end products from the moment they start. Like the web resources in Appendix A, some key questions, once formulated, are fully recyclable for all three levels (see Table 1). The focus is first on the *what* and *why* of Climate Stories (Goals 1 and 2 in Table 1) and soon the *how* (Goals 3 and 4). Table 1 helps faculty launch a successful project by breaking it down into four key questions. At all levels, these questions appear in English in the syllabus and direct students to the LMS for further details and sample articles. In class, it takes only about 5-7 minutes to tell, then show, using a few examples, what is meant by "Climate Story" and "Climate Art."

Table 1

Initial Tips for Framing Climate Stories Project

Question	Goals
1. What IS a Climate Story?	Provide clarity on goal, focus, scope and purpose of project, and require a clear connection to a "story" situated in the German-speaking world by starting with concrete resources relevant to the students' U.S. context. • Provide 2-4 examples of articles in English from media that could serve as Climate Stories. Use recent articles from the last six months. These might involve climate change as evidenced by violent regional storms or fires, coastline erosion, or effects of increasing temperatures on local, natural habitats situated close to where students live and study. • Have students do a 3-minute in-class search to find even more U.S. articles that could serve as good stories. This shows them that "Climate Stories" are everywhere.
2. What are examples of Climate Art? (Links include sites in English and German)	Clarify the broad genres of "art" that students can create in the project. • Show (or link and have them visit) examples of climate-focused artwork available online (key words: sustainable art, ecofriendly art, ecopoetry, environmental documentaries, environmental short films; *Klimakunst*). • Include local artists if possible to enhance relevance to students initially.
3. How will the project connect with German-speaking countries?	Share the project's goal of drawing on students' abilities to do research in German to achieve a broader goal: sharing insights with each other and the broader campus community. Clarify that any Climate Story chosen for the project must be situated in a German-speaking country, using resources written or recorded in German and designed for a German-speaking audience. • Show 2-4 articles from German news in the last half year. Examples might show how climate change is affecting a tourist or agricultural region, how one city has committed early to a carbon-neutral footprint, or how a youth organization or *Bürgerinitiative* has launched a project for a greener, more sustainable city. • Have students do a 3-minute in-class search for further stories using a German search engine, resources, and key words assembled in the class LMS.

4. How will I identify "my" ideal Climate Story?	Scaffold students' initial research by assisting with key word searches, basic vocabulary, and some pointers on how to get started, with the help of the links and key words on the LMS.
	• Have students identify climate or sustainability issues that interest them and find other students with complementary interests (e.g., renewable energy, business connections with sustainability, sustainability and schooling, etc.)
	• After students brainstorm (in person or on Google Doc), help them identify key words in German that will lead to a successful search for more articles. As these are discussed, add them to the LMS that is pre-loaded with news sites and basic key words (Appendix A).

Note. Relevant for all instructional levels.

As seen in Table 1, it is critical that students understand what it meant by a Climate Story and Climate Art, (Goals 1 and 2) and also that the resources used must be situated in a German-speaking culture and have potential to provide insights to us in the U.S. (Goal 3). Since it can take time for students to locate resources, it is essential that students immediately start their bibliographic research and choose a topic that truly holds their interest (Goal 4). Thus it is important to devote the remainder of one introductory class session to identifying possible topics for the project and finding key words in German for successful web research.

Fourth-Semester Intermediate German

As implemented in our intermediate German program, the Climate Stories project is worked on largely outside of class, though situated at a point when students are studying environmental sustainability via regular textbook readings and activities. Within each intermediate section of 20-25, students research a climate- or sustainability-related topic in German by identifying three valuable online resources. Students summarize two of the three supporting articles in German (150 words each) in summaries due in two separate weeks and share their created artwork and "Climate Story" with classmates in English at the end of four weeks. The course textbook provides a base of linguistic and vocabulary support and a way to integrate weekly project check-ins.

Since this course serves a variety of students, not strictly German minors or majors, the German language-learning focus at this level needs a manageable goal: advancing students' research, reading, and writing skills. The in-class oral presentations are completed in English and serve a separate and equally important goal: delivering cultural content (i.e., helping students understand the practices and perspectives of people in the German-speaking world on the topics of sustainability and climate change). This division of language skills (reading/writing in German, oral presentation in English) is especially sensible in intermediate German, since students' oral proficiency significantly lags behind their ability to read and interpret texts in the target language. The resulting two "sustainability" class presentation days are a valuable use of class time; they expose students fairly seamlessly to 20-25 news stories from the target culture. Also, since each shorter, 5-7 minute student presentation centers on a piece of artwork the student creates, there is a visual, self-ex-

pressive dimension to each presentation that complements the information shared. Students also vote to select the most compelling four or five art samples that will advance to the campus-wide, juried event in years when a gallery exhibition is possible.

Once the project is introduced, modeled, and fully launched, students complete the work out of class over a period of four weeks, with weekly check-ins on Fridays and once weekly "milestone" uploads on Sunday evenings that document the research is actually happening (see Appendix B). When a student does not submit a weekly milestone, this alerts the instructor that some individual help is needed. Generally, this is only to locate resources that are reasonably accessible to the less strong or confident student. Since the student must identify three articles to support the research, but is only required to summarize two, students can also stretch to gain content knowledge from a longer, harder article without having to fully grasp every aspect. Writing the two 150-word article summaries in German, uploaded in separate weeks, is an aspirational, but manageable goal for students in fourth-semester classes. The project integrates reading and writing, and the resulting snapshot of proficiency documents these German skills at the exit point for intermediate German and the entry point of the minor or major.

Student success in handling challenging projects is linked to clear goal setting with tangible supports to scaffold the learning process (Locke, 1996). Once the goals of the project are clear, it is time to break things down into manageable steps. As students work week by week on the activities as homework (see Appendix B), in-class activities follow the textbook's environment chapter, with an occasional, very short in-class reading on sustainability or climate change. This integrates the project with regular, in-class activities and strengthens lexical competence. It also provides a chance to show students that key grammar concepts they have learned are appearing in the articles and to revisit anything students might still need to make part of their active grammar. Students also study vocabulary and revisit some key structures for writing summaries, which scaffolds the writing. Appendix B illustrates the steps students will follow, with some noted milestones. The 4-week description also specifies how finished Climate Stories art and presentations will be shared with others, within and outside of class.

Grading of Climate Story summaries is made easier with a simple rubric that encompasses key features of each 150-word summary: (1) length and formatting (bibliographic reference and URL), (2) grammatical complexity and accuracy, (3) range of climate vocabulary, and (4) genre features for summaries. The final project assesses the project more globally by considering (1) significance of the three articles in combination, (2) presentation of the learning and artwork (in English), (3) grammatical accuracy and complexity of revised summaries, (4) range of climate vocabulary in revised summaries, and (5) overall impact of the project/insights. Categories are scored holistically on a 4-point scale.

Advanced Courses for Minors and Majors

When the Climate Stories project is spiraled upward into third- and fourth-year German, the activities become increasingly rich and deep: The project actually *becomes* the curriculum. Because of the difficulty level of German discussion activities, Climate Stories provides content for a full-blown unit that easily spans four to five weeks of instruction. After the initial framing of the project as described earlier, all work in class takes place in German, beginning with instructor-assigned articles and soon using some of the students' own articles. The text types and homework can include longer videos and films on climate change from popular broadcasts, building other dimensions of German proficiency. This scaffolds students' learning substantially and provides multiple activities to build oral skills, read more complicated texts, and view and

discuss broadcasts with class support. The speaking, reading, viewing, reflecting, writing process is iterative, and all skills are integrated. Also, students periodically bring their more challenging reading quandaries from Climate Story article segments to class, where they attack them in pairs or small groups in order to understand confounding portions more fully.

Connecting this work requires some simple lexical scaffolding: a dynamic list of key vocabulary terms in German, organized by general categories of climate change and sustainability, and added to by students' entries onto a class Google Doc. The instructor starts this list to model the requirements (genders and plurals provided for nouns, complete verb forms required for irregular verbs, idiomatic verb phrases must include the required preposition and case, etc.), but students contribute key words regularly (with instructor review). Having students learn the practice of expanding and refining vocabulary models what is needed later to advance their German when studying abroad. The practice also helps every student more readily understand classmates' shorter and longer presentations.

Table 2 identifies diverse activities that provide regular practice in reading, writing, speaking, and vocabulary development, organized from less to more challenging, for advanced-level classes doing Climate Stories.

These activities connect multiple language skills; the resulting sessions are integrated and dynamic. For programs that favor a stronger focus on literary genres over informational reading/writing, non-fiction Climate Stories texts might be complemented by juxtaposing the project with readings from today's *Ökoliteratur*, or even canonical texts from the Romantic period that explore the relationships between natural places and the humans that inhabit them.

Once students have researched their own climate story, they make a formal, oral presentation of their climate art in German and present the insights that inspired it from their research. Although challenging, this is supported linguistically because students have also been building vocabulary and synthesizing insights orally and in writing along the way.

As students advance to fourth-year German, the activity types from Table 2 can be repeated and expanded. Returning Climate Stories participants open the unit by presenting their art from the previous year and reflecting on what they learned. Return participants must focus on an entirely new Climate Story from a separate area of inquiry to ensure they still benefit and grow. The number and length of required articles for Climate Story research increase and the analytical paper is longer. The instructor can require a documentary film as one resource. As a final, culminating project, the fourth-year students can plan and record a short video in German that displays the artwork and contains a formal lecture based on slides, prepared *after* the in-class presentation and once classmates' and the instructor's feedback has been shared. This integrates multiple accomplishments and is therefore an excellent addition to a student's final portfolio.

Since typically some freshmen place into the advanced curriculum and others study abroad as juniors or seniors, Climate Stories is generally repeated only once for a particular student, at the 4th and 6th semesters, the 4th and 8th semesters, and only occasionally two times at the advanced level (6th and 8th semesters).

Scoring on final papers follows rubrics for analytical writing for our program. These value three broader dimensions: content complexity and depth, discourse quality, and impact. These are scored on a 10-point scale that remains the same across the minors' and majors' course of study, which allows students to see their growth over time. Points range from Emerging/Developing (1-2), Evident/Established (3-4), Consistent/Accomplished (5-6), Nuanced Low or High (7-8), to Excellent/Superior (9-10). Scoring for the complete Climate Stories project including the oral presentation with the art follows the categories outlined for intermediate-level projects described earlier, except that the language of presentation is now German.

Table 2

Advanced-Level Activity Types for Climate Stories, 6th-8th Semester

Skills	Activity Types
Speaking	• Discuss individual interests, brainstorm key words; identify classmates with similar interests. • Find, compile (Google Slides), and number examples of climate art (*Ecokunst*). • Select and describe 3 favorite art pieces of *Ecokunst* and what you like about each. • Present one of the *17 Nachhaltigkeitsziele der Vereinten Nationen* related to climate change.
Speaking + Writing	• Discuss the reasons why climate art might complement nonfiction work on climate change. What does art offer us that informational texts do not? Synthesize this in writing. • Create (in small groups) a brief questionnaire on personal habits or knowledge of sustainability topics or climate change for other German students; launch this and report on results.

Reading or Listening + Speaking	• Read and present (daily) smaller portions of assigned article selected by instructor, for example:
	  ○ Summarize sub-sections from a longer article on climate change.
	  ○ Report on a 10-minute segment of a broadcast or film.
	  ○ Listen to a speech or podcast by the German Chancellor and report on key elements.
	• Read and annotate articles, bring hard-to-understand sections to class for group close reading.
	• Describe the advantages and disadvantages of various sustainable energy sources, sustainable lifestyle tips, etc. treated in articles.
	• Compare practices suggested in an article or broadcast with practices typical in America.
	• Formally present Climate Story artwork and the issue behind the art in German in class. Use only slides with pictures (no text). Give a "live" oral presentation with the help of visuals.
	• Plan, then record, a slide show of your Climate Story art after your live class presentation. Ready this for people who don't understand German by providing English subtitles.

Reading + Writing	• Write a reflection of some "wisdom" we could learn from one's Climate Story in the American context. Are there ways to overcome possible impediments to these new ideas? • Justify in writing the way the Climate Story contributes a solution or moves the cause forward, adding to an increased understanding of the topic.
Ongoing Lexical Development	• Regularly add limited, but key vocabulary to a curated list, organized thematically, ensuring entries are complete with all elements needed for later use in writing.

Sharing Climate Stories Within and Beyond the Classroom

Once a year, advanced students are invited to present in *German Climate Stories Night*, where they share their art and Climate Stories in German with the current year's intermediate students. This gives fourth-semester students some tangible encouragement to stay with German beyond their basic general education requirement because it shows them how their German will progress if they continue for another year or two.

At the end of Climate Stories, all students are also invited to submit artwork to the campus Climate Stories Collaborative, an exhibit shared with the broader campus community. Before the emergence of COVID-19, there were two formats: a fun, live exhibition for which submissions are unlimited and all artists are present to talk about their projects, and a smaller, juried gallery exhibit with limited entries. With recent social distancing restrictions, the Campus Climate Collaborative shifted venues to its Instagram site. Participating instructors on our campus request a weeklong Instagram takeover, where all students' Climate Stories are featured. Students provide a digital picture or recording of the art and some basic information for posting: their name and Instagram handle, the course, faculty member and department (plus Instagram handle), and the information on the Climate Story that inspired the art.

Now that most modern language programs have a departmental Instagram account, even a small-scale sharing of Climate Stories within the language department and perhaps between German classes is relatively easy and still reaches a large audience. A work-study student can design a single, simple background, then insert individual art pieces and the descriptions students have entered into a class Google Doc, then release two or three posts each day for a week. Thus, while the idea of broadly sharing students' work on social media may at first glance seem time-consuming for the instructor, it is actually fairly simple and can be easily automated and delegated.

In sum, the Climate Stories project increases students' confidence reading authentic texts, builds language proficiency, and provides students of German with a deeper understanding of climate change and sustainability in German-speaking countries. Though a smaller curricular project, "Climate Stories" has big benefits. The preparation is kept manageable for the instructor with several modular, easily-updated resources, a regular cycle of due dates for key deliverables, and, ideally, connections with a few colleagues in other departments (or even with other colleagues in one's own department). Hosting a live display in a public space gives climate change and sustainability greater visibility and provides a chance for students to share their stories directly with others who care about climate change. And with the help of Instagram, students' Climate Stories can reach an even broader audience. Finally, the chance to spiral the Climate Stories up to the highest levels of the German program builds coherence and student engagement across the curriculum. Advanced students get a sense of how their German proficiency has improved over time, and intermediate students considering a minor or major in German can look ahead to the gains they will experience if they continue. When students engage deeply with their Climate Stories, when they have an individual, creative contribution to make, and a venue to convey what they have learned to others across campus, students *and* German programs win.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix A
Resources to Support Online Research for LMS

The following set of links can be included in the LMS and easily updated.

Electronic resources
- Direct link to google.de

Intermediate German (4th semester):

Media links:
- *Das Erste*, ARD
- *Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen*, ZDF
- *Deutsche Welle*

Online text-based resources:
- 17 *Nachhaltigkeitsziele der Vereinten Nationen* (graphicly supported)
- *WDR Kinder* (target audience: children and youth)
- *Dein Spiegel* (youth-directed version of Der Spiegel)

Upper-level advanced German (6th-8th semester), add:
- *ARD Mediathek* (documentaries and feature-length films)
- *Focus Online*
- *Zeit Online*

Basic key words for searches (add to these as students choose topics)
- *Klima*
- *Klimawandel*
- *Nachhaltigkeit*
- *Erneuerbare Energie (Windkraft, Wasserkraft, Sonnenenergie)*
- *Recycling, Wiederverwertung*

Climate-inspired art
- Local artists' climate-inspired art, if available
- German Pinterest boards with *Klimakunst*

Recent sample articles to exemplify Climate "Stories"
- 3-4 articles from American news sources with regional connections to students
- 3-4 representative articles from German-speaking context (*see* also Table 1, Question 3)

Appendix B
Weekly Milestones for Climate Stories

This sample of weekly milestones is for 4th semester, intermediate German.

Week 1: Identify the general topic you will research and the vocabulary you need for a successful key word search in German, with help from your instructor. By Friday, be ready to summarize in a few simple sentences in German what your story is about. By Sunday at 11:59 pm, upload the full bibliographic references for your three articles on your chosen Climate Story. Include the complete URL for each article.

Week 2: Evaluate carefully if you like your topic and chosen articles enough to really enjoy working with them for three more weeks. If so, begin carefully re-reading one of the three articles. Identify the key words and concepts in German, which will help you begin writing. By Friday, be ready to talk briefly (in German) about the art you're thinking of making to share this story with others. By Sunday at 11:59 pm, upload your first, double-spaced, 150-word summary (in German) of one of your articles, complete with a title, bibliographic reference and URL. If you're stuck, write your first summary on your simplest, easiest article. *Note*: 150 words in German is approximately .6 pages, typed and double-spaced. Please check your work carefully. Consider asking a classmate to read it through for clarity, too.

Week 3: Start working on your climate art. Begin reading your second article for your next required article summary. By Friday, be ready to talk briefly (in German) about the focus of your second article summary. By Sunday at 11:59 pm, upload the second 150-word summary (in German). As always, include the full bibliographic reference and the URL.

Week 4: Continue working on your art so you can complete it by the end of the upcoming weekend. Review instructor feedback on your article summaries to see how you can improve them. By Friday, be ready to share one insight to improve your writing within a small group in class. By Sunday at 11:59 pm, upload two pictures of your climate art: one of the project alone, and a second picture showing you and the project, and bring the completed art to class. If yours is not visual art, talk to me about the pictures or method needed to share your artwork.

Final Culmination after Week 4: After sharing your climate art and story with others (in English), the class will choose 4-5 projects to send to the juried gallery exhibition at the end of the term. With your permission, your art will also be featured in a weeklong Instagram takeover for the campus Climate Stories Collaborative. We will also share this with students of other languages on our department's own Instagram.

Note: If you are staying with German for a minor or major, **keep your climate art**! You are invited next year to present it in German at *German Climate Stories Night.*