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## Frank Donahue

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After receiving my B.A. in German from Iona College in 1970 I began graduate studies as a TA at Purdue University after a summer at Middlebury College and received the M.A. in German Literature in 1972. To improve my language skills and cultural awareness I next taught for a year at the Neusprachliches Gymnasium in Bad Zwischenahn, Niedersachsen. Despite a climate of declining enrollments and reductions in teaching positions in foreign languages at most American colleges in the mid 1970s I decided to continue graduate studies at the Pennsylvania State University where I again taught as a teaching assistant. With the consent of the faculty I specialized in applied linguistics and foreign language pedagogy, with special emphasis on the teaching of German, under the tutelage of Prof. Keith O. Anderson. My professional goal was to become the director of a large German language program and a TA supervisor and trainer. In 1976 I began my career in just such a position at The University of Texas at Austin.

The professional area of greatest interest to me is foreign language teaching and methodology. It is an inherently interdisciplinary field that draws primarily upon linguistics, education, sociology and psychology. While I believe there is no one best single method of language teaching, I do believe that every method known has a contribution to make to an ideal, enlightened, eclectic approach, an approach resilient enough to withstand the winds of change that sometimes blow violently through the profession, yet flexible enough to incorporate ideas that translate into success at the student level. The challenge for me is to examine and test theoretical concepts and incorporate change in a reasoned manner so that student achievement and proficiency can be advanced most efficiently. To that end we have designed a rather unique approach to teaching German that we have used successfully at UT for over ten years. Our goal, simply stated, is to turn out a student who is able to communicate precisely and with excellent accuracy, i.e., a student to whom we can point with pride.

Successful language programs require students who are motivated and disciplined and teachers who are well trained to help students succeed. The TA training program we employ is unique in this country. Those students who have not yet earned the M.A. in German are TAs, i.e., teaching apprentices, who learn to teach with an experienced teacher. After several semesters under the mentorship of

faculty members and senior graduate instructors, the TA is promoted to AI, assistant instructor. Assistant instructors teach independently under the supervision of the course coordinator. AIs can expect to teach as many as a dozen different courses in several language programs that we offer. Breadth of teaching experience is crucial for placing our graduate students in an ever increasingly competitive job market. Since most AIs eventually serve as a mentoring teacher, most graduate students at UT Austin gain valuable experience in teacher training that can be important when seeking appointment later as a faculty member. Graduate students at UT Austin may specialize in applied linguistics and pedagogy at UT Austin. To date, all students who have done so have succeeded in finding a tenure track position at institutions where TA training and language program coordination are taken seriously.

My main professional projects at the moment center on a revision of *Deutsch zusammen*, the textbook we use in our language program, and a study of communicative writing ability of lower division German students at UT Austin. The results of that study will be pooled with another study involving high school students being conducted by a Ph.D. candidate for his dissertation. The combined studies will tell us to what extent students become proficient in writing and to what extent high school students, achievement is comparable to that of college students. The results promise to be quite interesting.

When not involved in academic pursuits I try to reduce stress by taking a daily four-mile walk or pursuing one of my hands-on hobbies: fishing, target shooting, photography, railroading, or wooden ship building.

### Donhue's CV

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