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# **German Studies Association Newsletter**

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**Volume XLV  
Number 1  
Spring 2020**

# German Studies Association

## Newsletter

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### Table of Contents

|                                                                                                   |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| <a href="#">Letter from the President</a>                                                         | 2  |
| <a href="#">Letter from the Executive Director</a>                                                | 5  |
| <a href="#">Please Vote! GSA Online Elections, 8 – 29 May 2020</a>                                | 7  |
| <a href="#">Officers</a>                                                                          | 7  |
| <a href="#">Board Positions</a>                                                                   | 9  |
| <a href="#">David E. Barclay: “In Good Times and Bad: What is German Studies Today?”</a>          | 14 |
| <a href="#">Quarterly Columns from the National Humanities Alliance:</a>                          | 23 |
| <a href="#">Scott Muir: “Study the Humanities: Articulating Career Pathways” (7 January 2020)</a> | 23 |
| <a href="#">Cecily Hill: “Introducing Our Impact Survey Toolkit” (21 April 2020)</a>              | 26 |

## Letter from the President

Dear colleagues, dear friends,

I imagine you have other things on your mind than the GSA these days, and in this sense my note is principally meant to convey best wishes for whatever you're confronting most urgently now – whether that is taking care of your family members' health as well as your own; juggling homeschooling with your regular research, teaching, and ongoing administrative duties; dealing with the added exhaustion from yet another Zoom meeting; supporting your students and trying to care for *their* well-being; or just staying focused, getting outside, and facing the uncertainty of next week, the coming months, and a future that was already too precarious for many even without the added pressures of a pandemic. However you're coping, I hope you're able to draw strength from a sense that whatever you're doing is important, even as we need to re-evaluate daily what matters most.

For some of us, it is helpful to preserve a modicum of routine, whether in our daily lives or in the rhythms that typically structure the academic year. In any case, this was what we heard from many of you in response to the GSA's decision to send out acceptance notices for seminars and panels that you had submitted at the beginning of the year, when there was no reason to assume that our 44<sup>th</sup> conference in DC could be any different from the other forty-three that had gone before. More on that below, but let me first acknowledge the work and dedication of this year's 16-member Program Committee, led by Joann Miyang Cho: working through your proposals, they recognized the thoughtfulness and planning that members – you – had already invested back in February. I think it's fair to say that the session line-up of our annual conferences outlines the shifting shape of German Studies over the years, and thanks to the Program Committee's perseverance even through the early stages of the current pandemic, those contours of our field will be legible in the program we still plan to publish in the coming weeks. Please join me in thanking all the committee members for their efforts.

That said, you will all be wondering what a GSA conference could possibly look like this coming Fall, if it were still to take place. And so are the members of the Executive Council, which has been meeting regularly to monitor ongoing developments, scientific projections, official policies, as well as decisions among other scholarly associations and in higher education more generally. While there is still considerable uncertainty and while we continue to carefully weigh a host of competing factors that will have to inform any final decision about the shape of things to come, let me spell out a few principles that are guiding our discussions and share our current time table.

First, we understand that uncertainty itself is a factor to consider: uncertainty about what the Fall will bring, what the return to campus might look like – whether in early September at North American Universities, or in mid-October at German institutions, for example. This is compounded by uncertainty about travel budgets (assuming travel is permitted in the first place); but also, and more consequentially, uncertainty about prospects of employment for contingent faculty as well as for candidates completing their PhDs this

summer. Though I hope they will take pride in their accomplishment, they now face job markets – whether academic or otherwise – that have just taken a turn from exceedingly difficult to even worse.

On the other end of the full career spectrum represented in the GSA are those members and colleagues at higher risk in this pandemic simply by virtue of their age. We are thus guided in our thinking, secondly, by concern for everyone's continued health and safety. In the admittedly and deliberately vague terms that have been used at my own university, we want to be sure to run a "public health informed" GSA this Fall, whatever that will eventually mean.

Third, please know that the Executive Council is carefully weighing its fiduciary responsibility as we consider our options for October. Our hotel contract carries a hefty cancellation fee, as well as penalties for unmet room, food, and beverage minimums; we will be discussing these issues with the hotel once their staff return from furlough. At the same time, any online versions or components of our conference would involve further, substantial and unbudgeted costs. While we will not allow financial considerations to override our members' health and best interests, we are mindful of the long-term implications our decisions now will have for the future of the GSA.

Fourth, and finally, we understand that amidst all this uncertainty, our membership deserves as much planning stability as we can provide. To this end, we have called a special meeting of the GSA Board (which typically only meets once a year on the eve of the conference) for **Monday, June 15**. At that point, having consulted with sister organizations and gathered further information based on their experiences with online conference platforms, the Executive Council will submit a proposal to the Board for a discussion and vote on whether and how we will meet in the Fall. We'll communicate that vote right away to the full membership. In the meantime, I invite you to write me ([president@thegsa.org](mailto:president@thegsa.org)) and/or our Executive Director David Barclay ([director@thegsa.org](mailto:director@thegsa.org)) with any concerns, questions, or suggestions you may have, and we'll be happy to make those part of the EC and Board conversations.

Let me close by returning to that modicum of normalcy I mentioned above – for just as the Program Committee has continued its work, so do the operations of the GSA churn on. And although that churn will seem particularly remote for many of you in the present moment, it does also offer opportunities to engage with the present and future of the GSA in meaningful ways. I hope you will seize these opportunities, about which you'll hear more in the days and weeks ahead. Please:

1. **Vote in the upcoming elections.** The nominating committee has put together a fantastic slate of candidates for various key positions, including the next president elect. Working with the Executive Council, I've been reminded almost daily of the importance of being able to work with such a dedicated and trusted team of fellow-officers, and I hope you will make your voice heard by voting for those who'll be representing you on the Council and the Executive Board. Voting will be open from May 8 through 29.

2. **Consider applying for the editorship of the *German Studies Review*.** Sabine Hake will be stepping down in August, 2021, after years of great, transformative service to the journal and the profession. We'll have occasion to thank her when her term officially concludes; meanwhile, over the course of this summer, a specially appointed search committee chaired by former GSA president Stephen Brockmann will conduct a search for Professor Hake's successor. Whether you'd be interested yourself, or want to give a nudge to a colleague whom you consider particularly qualified – this is an opportunity to help shape the future of scholarship and publishing in German Studies.
3. Lend your knowledge, experience, expertise by **serving on one of the GSA's many committees.** We were delighted to hear back from so many of you who expressed interest in response to a recent call for volunteers (if you didn't have a chance to do so, you can still have your name included for consideration by filling out [this form](#)). The nominating committee took these responses into account in creating the election slate. Over the coming months, Vice President Janet Ward will now be reaching out to members individually with requests for committee service: if you're able, do take her up on those requests – experience and many conversations with others tell me that you will find the involvement rewarding!
4. **Stay connected** by joining / following us on Social Media: [@theGSA](#) on Twitter; [German Studies Association](#) on Facebook. We'd love to hear from you there.
5. **Help out financially if you are able.** The Executive Council has been in conversation about ways in which we can support each other as we support the GSA. Mindful of those for whom the scholarly community, platforms, and networks in the GSA are particularly important but for whom the financial burdens of membership, travel, and registration are particularly daunting, we are looking to launch a new fundraising campaign on #GivingTuesdayNow, this coming May 5. Details to follow.

As ever, thank you for helping to make the GSA everything it is: a vibrant place for intellectual exchange, a strong voice for German Studies in all of its many, interdisciplinary dimensions, a supportive network of mentorships, friendships, and scholarship.

Be well,

Johannes v. Moltke  
President

## Letter from the Executive Director

Dear members and friends of the German Studies Association,

Given everything that has been happening, this edition of our spring newsletter will be much shorter than usual. We are all trying to come to terms with the seismic changes that have transformed our lives in the past two months. As Johannes von Moltke notes in his letter to you, the GSA is almost certainly not your main concern at the moment; nor should it be, as you adjust to radical and unsettling changes in your own lives, and as we all deal with the massive uncertainties that face us in the months and years to come. At the same time, though, all of us have committed our lives and careers to the humanities and the social sciences, and to the institutions that nurture them. The GSA is *your* association, and those of us involved in GSA operations, in the Executive Council, and on the Board are doing our very best to steer it through these turbulent waters. One of our most indefatigable navigators is our new Operations Director, Dr. Benita Blessing, to whom we owe a special debt of thanks. Benita has not only had to uncover the intricacies of our usual daily work – and running an academic society can be exceptionally complicated – but also has had to deal with the numerous unexpected problems that the pandemic has created. Her contributions have been exceptional and indispensable.

At this time of year we would ordinarily be finishing up the tentative program, receiving international travel grant applications, and negotiating with the conference hotel on banquet menus, menu pricing, audiovisual needs and costs, attending the spring meeting of the American Council of Learned Societies, meeting our partners at Johns Hopkins University Press, working on the details of Arts Night, talking to our partner organizations, and so many other matters that we've dealt with for years. Instead, contrary to all expectations and like so many of the rest of us, I've been involved with a seemingly endless succession of webinars and Zoom meetings, all of them dealing in one way or another with THE question: *Was tun?*

I have been meeting frequently, both individually and collectively, with my fellow executive directors of ACLS member societies. I have participated in webinars with our attorney and with his partners. We have been in regular touch with the conference hotel, though much of their key staff is furloughed until 15 May. I have closely followed the strategies of those associations that are scheduled to meet in the spring, and I'll "attend" the completely virtual meetings of the Latin American Studies Association and the Law and Society Association in May. Those ACLS societies that meet in the autumn have been in regular discussions as well. The legal, logistical, insurance, and financial complexities in this completely uncertain situation are immense. As Johannes has noted, the Executive Council is meeting on a regular basis; and we have scheduled an extraordinary Zoom meeting of our Board for 15 June: the first extraordinary meeting of the Board that I can remember.

We will of course always strive to do our very best for all our members, and it is our hope that the conference can take place in some form; but as we consider all possible options, we must emphasize that the health, safety, and security of each and every one of you must be

and will be our top priorities. We're all working in the dark, of course, but we'll do our absolute best to keep you up to date on all developments that might affect you and your planning.

All the institutions that have sustained humane learning for generations face unprecedented challenges. These include the academic societies that supplement and expand the work that takes place at individual institutions of higher learning and research. We have no idea when or if a post-pandemic sense of "normality" will return, or what "normality" might even look like. Our academic societies like the GSA will have to adjust accordingly, even as they strive to continue doing what they traditionally do best. I know that so many of us are financially strapped and facing very uncertain financial futures; but we do hope that you can consider helping the GSA at this time of need. On 5 May we shall participate in a special, nationwide "Giving Tuesday," when people across the country will be asked to contribute to their favorite charities and non-profit organizations like ours. Among our fundraising priorities will be assistance to our members who are contingent faculty or unemployed, or otherwise facing precarious financial futures.

As Johannes also notes, we strongly encourage as many of you as possible to participate in our forthcoming elections, scheduled to take place online between 8 May and 29 May. You will be voting for the next GSA Vice President (who after two years will become President), a new GSA Secretary, and four members of the GSA Board. This newsletter issue includes biographies of all the candidates. We'll send you instructions and links on how to vote.

On a personal note, this is my penultimate "letter" to you. After fifteen years as Executive Director, I'll be stepping down at the end of December. I'll be succeeded on 1 January by Dr. Margaret Menninger of Texas State University. Margaret will be an extraordinarily effective ED. She already has a lot of GSA experience as Program Director, Seminar Director, and current Secretary of the GSA. The Association will be in superb hands with Margaret at the helm.

I'm taking the liberty of including in this issue the text of a talk I gave at the January 2020 meeting of the American Historical Association. A review of the state of German Studies today, it was intended to be my swan song before leaving at the end of this year. Now, less than six months after I wrote it, it seems hopelessly out of date. But it might be of archival or antiquarian interest. Given the turbulent circumstances of the last few months, this issue will not include our annual list of dissertations in German Studies; next year's spring edition will include a two-year list. We are adding two recent columns from the National Humanities Alliance.

Please stay safe and please stay healthy.

Best regards,

David E. Barclay  
Executive Director

## **Please Vote: GSA Online Elections, 8 – 29 May 2020**

Elections for several very important GSA offices will take place online between **8 May and 29 May 2020**. The voting procedure will be quite simple, as in previous years. You will receive email instructions on how to vote, and they will also be included on the website.

You will be electing a new Vice President, who will take office on 1 January 2021 and serve for two years, at that point succeeding to the presidency for another two-year term; a new Secretary to succeed Dr. Margaret Menninger, who will become Executive Director on 1 January 2021; and four new members of the Board, whose three-year terms will also begin on 1 January 2021.

Biographies of all the candidates follow:

### **OFFICERS**

#### **Vice President**

**Sara F. Hall** (Ph.D., University of California, Berkeley, 2000) is Associate Professor of Germanic Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago, where she chairs the minor in Moving Image Arts. From 2017-2019 she served as Interim Director of UIC's School of Literatures, Cultural Studies and Linguistics, having previously served as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in the UIC Honors College and Director of the Office of Undergraduate Research in the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Affairs. She co-authored a Mellon-funded Engaged Humanities Initiative grant for undergraduates and has received support for her own research from the DAAD and the Berlin Program for Advanced German and European Studies. Her two dozen articles and essays on silent film, New German Cinema, contemporary television, gender and economics, and intermediality have appeared in academic anthologies and journals including *German Studies Review*, *German Quarterly*, *The Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, and *Modernism/Modernity*. Her recent article in the journal *Communication: The European Journal of Communication Research* won the 2019 Society for Cinema and Media Studies Central/South/East European Essay Prize. She serves on the editorial board of *Screen Bodies: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Experience, Perception, and Display* and as a peer reviewer for journals in film studies and German Studies as well as for major funding agencies. Since 2003, she has organized and/or participated in a dozen panels at the GSA annual conference on topics such as German film theory, early women filmmakers, and German film and the law. She co-chaired the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Germanistik and Cultural Studies section of the Program Committee from 2013-2015 and served a term on the GSA Executive Board from 2016-2019. Moreover, she served on the GSA Treasurer search committee in 2018 and chaired the Graduate Student Essay Prize selection committee in 2019.

**Derek Hillard** (Ph.D., Indiana University, 2001) is Professor and Head of the Department of Modern Languages at Kansas State University. His first monograph is *Poetry as Individuality: The Discourse of Observation in Paul Celan* (Bucknell UP, 2010). He was awarded a DAAD grant to carry out research at the Freie Universität Berlin in 2001 and a Marbacher Stipendium in 2010. Since his first GSA in 1999, he has participated in numerous GSA panels, round tables, and seminars. Interested in the intersection of literature, arts, history, and studies of emotions, he co-founded with colleagues in history an interdisciplinary GSA network, the Emotions Studies Network. Interactions with GSA colleagues led to a recent co-edited volume (with Heikki Lempa and Russell Spinney), *Feelings Materialized: Emotions, Bodies, and Things in Germany* (Berghahn, 2020), with contributions from scholars who had presented research at interdisciplinary Emotions Studies events. Such collaborations in emotions studies continue with a second project—likewise the result of recent GSA interdisciplinary seminars—to be co-edited with Erika Quinn and Holly Yanacek. In addition to research on Paul Celan and emotions studies, he has published on German modernists, such as Alfred Döblin and Ernst Jünger, and was awarded the DAAD/GSA Article Prize in 2007 for an essay on R. M. Rilke published in the *German Studies Review*.

## Secretary

**David Imhoof** (Ph.D., University of Texas, 2000) is Professor of History at Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania. An active GSA member since 1994, he helped found and has co-directed the Music and Sound Studies Network since 2013. He served in 2014-2015 on the Program Committee and, since 2017, on the Arts Night Committee. Imhoof was also one of the Editors of *H-German* from 2002 to 2007. His textbook *So, About Modern Europe: A Conversational History from the Enlightenment to the Present* is forthcoming from Bloomsbury Press in 2021. His monograph *Becoming a Nazi Town: Culture and Politics in Göttingen between the World Wars* appeared with University of Michigan Press in 2013. In 2016 he co-edited the collection *The Total Work of Art: Foundations, Articulations, Explorations* (Berghahn Books) and included an essay on musical film in Germany. Also in 2016 he co-edited a special issue of *Colloquia Germanica* on Sound Studies in modern Germany. More generally he has published on sports, film, and sharpshooting in interwar Germany and is currently working on a history of the recording industry in twentieth-century Germany. At Susquehanna University Imhoof teaches European, German, Holocaust, and cultural history. He helps direct Susquehanna's study away program, which is a requirement for all students, and teaches courses preparing students for these cross-cultural experiences and allowing them to reflect on what they learned. For ten years, as well, he has directed a three-week program for students to Austria each summer. He was Chair of History for nine years and currently serves as Faculty Athletic Director.

**Christine Rinne** (Ph.D., Indiana University, 2005) held positions at Dartmouth College and the University of Nevada, Reno before joining the faculty of University of South

Alabama in 2008. She is currently Associate Professor of German in the Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literature. In addition to teaching all levels of German, she directs the International Studies program and coordinates the Global Engagement Certificate. In 2018, she won a \$467,000 Undergraduate International Studies and Foreign Language Program grant from the US Department of Education. Dr. Rinne's research focuses on reproductive labor and material culture, and she has published articles on Sigmund Freud, post-colonial literature, and historical reality television. She is currently working on a manuscript that analyzes the content and format of newspapers published by German POWs held at camps in Alabama from 1943-46. In addition to presenting her research at numerous German Studies Association conferences, Dr. Rinne served on the 2016 and 2017 GSA program committees, helping organize the 20th/21st-century Germanistik panels and roundtables.

## BOARD POSITIONS

### Cultural Studies/Germanistik

**Ela Gezen** (Ph.D., University of Michigan, 2012) is Associate Professor of German at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Her research and teaching focus on twentieth-century German and Turkish literature and culture, with emphases on literatures of migration, theater, minority discourses, historical and theoretical accounts of transnationalism, and literary and cultural theory. She is the author of *Brecht, Turkish Theater, and Turkish-German Literature: Reception, Adaptation, and Innovation after 1960* (Camden House, 2018) and co-editor of two special issues, *Colloquia Germanica* ("Transnational Hi/Stories: Turkish-German Texts and Contexts," 2014) and the *Jahrbuch Türkisch-deutsche Studien* ("Turkish-German Studies: Past, Present, and Future," 2015). In addition, she has published articles on music, theater and literature, focusing on the intersection between aesthetics and politics in both Turkish and German contexts. These have appeared in *Gegenwartsliteratur: Ein germanistisches Jahrbuch*, the *German Studies Review*, *Comparative Drama*, *Literature Compass*, and *undercurrents: Forum für linke Literaturwissenschaft*, among other venues. Currently, she is working on her second book, *Cultures in Migration: Turkish Artistic Practices and Cultural-Political Interventions in West Berlin, 1970–1980*, is editing a special issue on Aras Ören (forthcoming with *Monatshefte*), and she is co-editor of *Minorities and Minority Discourses* (under review for Berghahn Books' Spektrum series), an edited volume based on the 2017 conference she co-organized with Jonathan Skolnik and Priscilla Layne. She has attended every GSA conference since her very first in 2008, and in addition to presenting papers, has collaborated with colleagues on organizing seminars (Turkish German Studies, (Post)Migrant Theater, Non-Citizenship and Artistic Practice), panel series (Literature and Refuge, Turkish-German Texts and Contexts, Minorities and Minority Discourse) and roundtables (Theorizing Refugees). Besides serving on the GSA's Program and Arts Night committees, she is on the editorial board of the *Brecht Yearbook*, and chapter vice president of the AATG MA chapter.

**Chunjie Zhang** (Ph.D., Duke, 2010) is Associate Professor of German at the University of California, Davis. She works on the long eighteenth century, global modernisms, Asian-German studies, contemporary refugee literature, and postcolonialism. Her scholarship and teaching endeavor to explore transcultural perspectives in German literature and culture. She is on the program committee for the American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies 2021. Her first book *Transculturality and German Discourse in the Age of European Colonialism* (Northwestern UP 2017) situates German literature and philosophy in the polycentric global eighteenth century and delineates the contour of a transcultural discourse. Moving beyond the question of empire or enlightenment, her book reads travel writing, literature, and philosophy to shift ground from predominantly critiquing Eurocentrism toward diligently detecting global connections and enhancing the visibility of non-European contributions in global modernity. Actively engaging in Asian German studies, Chunjie edited the scholarly forum on “Asian German Studies” with *German Quarterly* (93.1, Winter 2020). The contributors discuss the state of this emerging interdisciplinary field and reviews themes such as Chinese-German, Japanese-German, Indian-German, Vietnamese-German connections related to exile studies, Turkish-German studies, global German studies, and transpacific German studies. Chunjie also initiated and co-edits a new book series “Asia, Europe, and Global Connections” (Routledge). Her edited book *Composing Modernist Connections in China and Europe* (Routledge, 2019) stresses modernist connections beyond the bifurcation between East and West. She also co-edited the issue “Goethe, Worlds, and Literatures” (*Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies*, 2018) that shows the different constructions of Goethe as a classical writer for the concept of world literature in various historical and cultural contexts. Among her articles, she recently wrote about the refugee crisis as well as social distancing and the aesthetics of touch. Her recent research has been supported by the Humboldt Foundation, the DAAD, and the University of California.

## History

**Joanne Miyang Cho** (Ph.D., University of Chicago, 1993) is Professor of History at William Paterson University of New Jersey. She also taught at Hope College and Ewha Womans University in South Korea (Visiting Lecturer). Her experiences include departmental chair, graduate director, series co-editor for “Palgrave Series in Asian German Studies,” a Columbia University Seminar chair/co-chair, and overseas representative of Korean Historians of Germany. She has been involved in the GSA in the following capacities: the conference Program Director (2019, 2020), a member of the conference Program Committee (2016, 2017), and a co-coordinator for the Asian German Studies Network (2017-present). Since 2012, she has organized/co-organized nearly sixty panels and roundtables on Asian German topics. She has edited/co-edited *Transcultural Encounters between Germany and India* (2014), *Germany and China since 1800* (2014), *Transnational Encounters between Germany and Japan* (2016), *Gendered Encounters between Germany and Asia, 1800-2000* (2016), *Transnational Encounters between Germany and Korea* (2018), and *Germany and East Asia since 1900* (2018). She has published two

dozen book chapters and articles on Asian German relations and the politics of civilization and on a number of twentieth-century German intellectuals. She is currently working on two book projects: Karl Jaspers' global history of humankind and German-speaking Jewish refugees in Shanghai. Fellowships include the Fulbright Fellowship, Max Planck Institute for History, the Leibniz Institute for European History, and the DAAD.

**Indravati Félicité** (Ph.D., University of Paris-Sorbonne, 2012) is Maîtresse de conférences in early modern European and German History at the University of Paris. In that position she has been a member of various academic committees in France. She has been the recipient of fellowships and grants from the DAAD and the German Historical Institute (Paris and Washington, D.C.). In 2016 she published the monograph *“Négocier pour exister”* in the series “Pariser Historische Studien” of the German Historical Institute Paris (De Gruyter-Oldenbourg). This book, also available in German (Böhlau, 2017), stresses the particular goals and practices of German diplomacy after 1648 in order to reevaluate the Holy Roman Empire beyond its traditional pessimistic depiction as a divided and, therefore, deficient state. She has published several articles in journals as well as chapters in collective volumes, mainly in France and Germany, and has been invited by various German institutions (universities, archives, historical associations) to present her research on the Empire as a global player from the bottom-up perspective of individual diplomats, small German states and networks. In her habilitation project she seeks to internationalize the history of the Holy Roman Empire by examining commercial relations, cross-cultural interactions, and the German involvement in contemporary debates on globalization and imperialism. She is currently editing a volume on diplomats (Classiques Garnier, 2020, manuscript under contract). She has regularly presented papers at the GSA for many years, and also has organized and commented panels, mostly on the topic of the international and diplomatic history of early modern and modern Germany. In 2019 she co-organized a GSA Roundtable on “The New Diplomatic History in the German Lands.”

## Politics, Economics, Society

**Robert Mark Spaulding** (Ph.D., Harvard University, 1989) is Professor of History at UNC Wilmington. He was a Visiting Professor at Peking University in 2004. Prof. Spaulding's research and teaching interests center on German, European, and global political economy, particularly trade, and international relations. He teaches regularly at all levels of the curriculum from HST 101 to graduate courses on Weimar and Nazi Germany. His book *Osthandel and Ostpolitik from Bismarck to Adenauer* (Berghahn, 1997) was a finalist for the AHA's prize as best book in European International History. He has just completed a short book for undergraduates, *The Global Medieval: Trade and Contact in Four Great Ports of the Afro-Eurasian World, 1000-1500* (Cognella, 2020). His essays on German, European, and global trade have appeared in numerous journals, including *Agricultural History*, *Central European History*, *Diplomatic History*, the *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, and in several important collections such as the *Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*. He has also published in *International Organization*, the leading journal of international relations. He organized the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary forum for Mack Walker's *German*

*Home Towns* that appeared in *Central European History* (September 2014). He was Guest Editor of the special thematic issue “New Research on Cities and Towns in Central Europe” for *German History* (September 2017). In 2006 and 2020 he was an invited participant at week-long seminars at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies (USHMM) in Washington, D.C. His research has been funded by the DAAD, the Council for European Studies, the Ford Foundation, and the American Philosophical Society. He has presented, moderated, and commented at many GSA panels since his first GSA presentation in 1993. Prof. Spaulding was a member of the GSA Program Committee in 2015 and 2016.

**Jonathan R. Zatlin** (Ph.D., University of California at Berkeley, 2000) is Associate Professor of History at Boston University, where he also served as Associate Director of Kilachand Honors College (2012-2016). His initial work explored the history of German communism, focusing on the social construction of value in East Germany to understand German unification. Out of that research emerged *The Currency of Socialism. Money and Political Culture in East Germany* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), *Selling Modernity: Advertising in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Duke University Press, 2007), co-edited with Jonathan Wiesen and Pamela Swett, and over two dozen book chapters and articles in journals such as *Central European History*, *German History*, *German Politics and Society*, *American Historical Review*, *Contemporary European History*, *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, and *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*. More recently, he has turned from the category of class to the problem of race in German history. He co-edited *Dispossession: Plundering German Jewry, 1933-1953* (University of Michigan Press, 2020) with Christoph Kreutmüller and is currently completing his second monograph, *German Fantasies of Jewish Wealth, 1790-1990* (University of Chicago Press, forthcoming). He was awarded the Fritz Stern Dissertation Prize in 2001, the Hans Rosenberg Article Prize in 2011, and the DAAD Prize for Distinguished Scholarship in German and European Studies in 2011. He has been the recipient of fellowships from the DAAD, the American Council of Learned Societies, the Mellon Foundation, and the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung. He has also been active in professional organizations related to German history, serving on the executive board of the Central European History Society (2013-2016), the editorial board of *Central European History* (2014-2017), and the academic advisory board of the Leo Baeck Institute-New York (2016-present). He has been a regular attendee at GSA meetings since grad school, and in 2019 served on the GSA Program Committee.

## Graduate Student Board Position

**James Blackwell** is a Ph.D. candidate in African History at Michigan State University. His dissertation explores the history of Igbo and Ibibio labor migration between southeastern Nigeria and British Southern Cameroon, formally German Kamerun, from 1900 to 1975. By beginning in German Kamerun, he engages not only with the partition of Cameroon between the British and French, but Germany’s reengagement with Cameroon following World War I. He was an editorial assistant for the *Journal of West African History*, from 2016-2017, and assisted in its international launch. He was awarded the TIAA Ruth Simms Hamilton Graduate Merit Fellowship in 2018, to complete dissertation fieldwork in

Nigeria. In addition to his dissertation, he is also an executive producer and historical consultant on a documentary that explores the African Diaspora. As a member of both the GSA and Black Studies Network, he has continued to center questions surrounding German imperialism and its relationship with the African Diaspora.

**Kevina King** is a PhD student in German and Scandinavian Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst where she earned her Master's with a focus on Black German history, Black German music, and the Black Diaspora. She is currently working on her dissertation, "Black German Resistance in the Twenty-First Century," which examines Black German radical thought and artistic expression via digital media, including music and podcasts. Her chapter "Black, PoC, and Migrant Lives Should Matter: Racial Profiling, Police Brutality and Whiteness in Germany," in the 2018 edited volume *Rethinking Black German Studies: Approaches, Interventions and Histories*, edited by Tiffany Florvil and Vanessa Plumly, focuses on racial profiling in Berlin since 2001 and local organizations fighting to mitigate the systemic consequences. She is the project and research assistant at the DEFA Film Library where she coordinates the upcoming DEFA Film Library Summer Film Institute *Authority and Alterity in East German Movies: Political Experiments, Rebel Youth and Civil Unrest*. At the 2019 GSA, she organized the film screening and the Q&A with DEFA film director and media artist Lutz Dammbeck during the Arts Night. This year will be her fourth year attending the GSA having taken part in GSA panels, seminars, and round tables hosted by the Black Diaspora Studies Network. Besides her engagement at the GSA, she also regularly takes part in panels at the Black German Heritage and Research Association (BGHRA) Conference, the Afroeuropean Network Conference, and at this year's Women in German Conference. Kevina is co-organizer of the guest-related panel featuring Black German filmmaker, Sheri Hagen. Kevina has been an invited guest speaker at the University of Nevada Las Vegas, Elms College, and recently presented "W. E. B. DuBois and His Time in Germany" at The W. E. B. DuBois Center at UMass Amherst.

*[As noted in my “Letter from the Executive Director” in this issue, I have taken the liberty of including this very lightly revised version of a talk I gave at the 134th Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association in New York in January 2020. It was part of a panel sponsored by the Central European History Society on “The Saliency of Central Europe: Questions and New Approaches.” Also as noted, I had intended it as a kind of swan song before I retire from my present position at the end of December 2020. The current pandemic, which few people foresaw in early January, has now made many of my arguments and observations out of date or irrelevant, though clearly Covid-19 has dramatically exacerbated many of the problems I discuss. DEB]*

## **In Good Times and Bad: What is German Studies Today?**

David E. Barclay

To answer the question of what German Studies is today, we first have to engage the issue of our relationships as Americans with the rest of the planet. Americans’ interest in the world outside the United States, such as it is, has long been crisis-driven, as the history of the National Defense Education Act of 1958 and Title VI of the Higher Education Act of 1965 – indeed, the entire history of the ups and downs of area studies in the United States – clearly attests. To many Americans, including policymakers outside the rather small foreign-policy establishment, the saliency of another part of the world really only becomes evident in times of crisis. And when the crisis seems to be over, programs die on the vine, and formerly “critical” languages become doomed to desuetude. Look what happened to Russian in the early 1990s. And to take us to the part of the world that we’re considering in this panel, is there very much about Central Europe that might seem peculiarly salient to non-academics, such as legislators who influence university spending, deans who shape faculty hiring lines, donors who endow chairs and programs, or people from the media who help to shape our views of the rest of the world?

At first the answer might seem no. To cite the example of Germany, at the time of unification thirty years ago, Walter Russell Mead noted that, after the traumas of the previous eighty years, Germans yearned for nothing more than to become a giant Switzerland. As he memorably put it, after walking on the edge of the volcano, staring into the abyss, and seeing the face of the Devil himself, Germans wanted to watch TV. That assessment from three decades ago was more or less echoed in late 2019 by Timothy Garton Ash. Writing in *The Guardian*, Garton Ash observed: “If Germany is the heart of Europe, then it is currently the slow-beating heart of a well-fed businessman resting on his office couch after an ample lunch. For Europe’s sake, and for Germany’s own, that heart needs to be beat a little faster.”<sup>1</sup> So if Central Europe and especially Angela Merkel’s

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy Garton Ash, “Angela Merkel Must Go ‘for Germany’s Sake, and for Europe’s’,” *The Guardian*, 22 November 2019.

Germany are notable mainly for stolid reliability, why should Americans pay particular attention to them?

That question also seems to be reflected in conflicting American and German views of each other in recent years. For example, a Pew Foundation survey from 2019 came to the following conclusions:

In the U.S., seven-in-ten say that relations with Germany are good, a sentiment that has not changed much in the past year. Germans, on the other hand, are much more negative: 73% say that relations with the U.S. are bad, a 17-percentage-point increase since 2017.

Nearly three-quarters of Germans are also convinced that a foreign policy path independent from the U.S. is preferable to the two countries remaining as close as they have been in the past. But about two-thirds in the U.S. want to stay close to Germany and America's European allies. Similarly, while 41% of Germans say they want more cooperation with the U.S., fully seven-in-ten Americans want more cooperation with Germany. And Germans are about twice as likely as Americans to want more cooperation with Russia. All this is happening against a backdrop of previously released research showing a sharply negative turn in America's image among Germans.<sup>2</sup>

Now of course this sharp divergence may well reflect the reality of Trump and Trumpism. Whatever the case, the Germans were sufficiently worried about the growing Atlantic divide – and the decline of what Mead and others call “liberal Atlanticism” – that the Foreign Office, then under the leadership of Frank-Walter Steinmeier, decided to designate the period from October 2018 to October 2019 as a “Year of Germany” or *Deutschlandjahr* in the United States, under the slogan and hashtag #WunderbarTogether, and to be administered by the Goethe-Institut. According to the WunderbarTogether website, “Working with over 200 partners, we are showcasing our close bonds in over 1,000 events in all 50 states. We are painting a picture of everything German-American relations stand for, including science, the arts, culture, language, business, and sports. We want to create an exchange of ideas with all Americans, not only in New York, Washington D.C. and Los Angeles, but also in the heart of the country.”<sup>3</sup> The organizers say that, at the end of Deutschlandjahr, some 1.5 million Americans had attended more than two thousand events, with ten million participating online. According to a Reuters dispatch, “One highlight was a ‘WanderbUS’ that crisscrossed America, giving over 10,000 students in 60 U.S. cities virtual tours of Hamburg and Frankfurt. Elsewhere, Bauhaus-style trailers

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<sup>2</sup> Jacob Poushter and Alexandra Castillo, “Americans and Germans Disagree on the State of Bilateral Relations, but Largely Align on Key International Issues,” *Pew Research Center: Global Attitudes and Trends*, 4 March 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2019/03/04/americans-and-germans-disagree-on-the-state-of-bilateral-relations-but-largely-align-on-key-international-issues/>, accessed 13 December 2019.

<sup>3</sup> <https://wunderbartogether.org/leadership/about/>.

brought German beer and Oktoberfest spirit to the American heartland. There was a break-dance performance at the Lincoln Memorial that fused hip-hop and German composer Johann Sebastian Bach, and, this week, the erection of a replica of the Berlin Wall at Georgetown University for students to sign.”<sup>4</sup> The German Studies Association itself sponsored a Speakers’ Bureau in which GSA members addressed groups that otherwise might not have easy access to colleges and universities. We are planning to continue the Speakers’ Bureau on our own initiative after the official end of Deutschlandjahr.

It remains to be seen, of course, whether WunderbarTogether really has brought us together, though I do think that the very idea behind it suggests a problem that the Pew results reflect: a certain smugness about German-speaking Central Europe combined with a lack of attention and a lack of interest. (As I hope to show in my own current book project, and as Stephanie Eisenhuth has pointed out in her excellent book on the American *Schutzmacht* in West Berlin, American lack of interest in contemporary Germany is hardly new.) But if post-unification Germany was once regarded as a little boring and certainly reliable, that may all be changing. For one thing, both Germany and Austria are in the midst of vast demographic and cultural changes, as again we all know, though even we might be surprised by its extent. (And, as I’ll note below, the scholarly discussion of these matters is proceeding briskly and creatively.) For example, Herbert Brücker of the Federal Institute for Employment Research estimates that in Germany within twenty years thirty-five to forty percent of the population will have a *Migrationshintergrund*, and up to seventy percent in the country’s larger cities. In 2018 most of the immigration came from Romania, Syria, Croatia, Bulgaria, and Poland respectively; the Institute reckons that Germany will need 400,000 new immigrants annually before 2060 if the country is to avoid economic stagnation.<sup>5</sup> And there are some important signs of that stagnation already, suggested among other things by the continuing crises of the country’s automotive and banking sectors.

And then of course there are the tectonic shifts in the political landscapes of German-speaking Central Europe that I need not belabor here. In Austria we have seen the emergence of the Freedom Party and new challenges to the old *Proporzsystem* in that country, though I also rather suspect, without being an expert on Austrian politics, that Sebastian Kurz will be around for a long time despite the politically turbulent events of 2019. American scholars and journalists have of course been paying a great deal of attention to the rise of populist nationalism in Germany as well; but it seems to me that at least as significant as the rise of the AfD has been the meteoric rise in recent years of the Greens and the equally dramatic eclipse of the old *Volksparteien* and especially the SPD, which lately has been hovering around twelve or fourteen percent in the polls; in my view

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<sup>4</sup> <https://wunderbarttogether.org/in-the-news/the-new-york-times-americans-contemplate-berlin-walls-fall-u-s-german-ties-at-wunderbar-together/>, (10 November 2019).

<sup>5</sup> “Germany: In Twenty Years, One in Three People Will Have Migrant Roots,” *Deutsche Welle*, 4 November 2019, [https://www.dw.com/en/germany-in-20-years-1-in-3-people-will-have-migrant-roots/a-51101172?fbclid=IwAR1gCm-Z9rQh9dybJJs2\\_5wTt567b0y-MHuwrwtuhnG6vVBADvx9z0c7zgU](https://www.dw.com/en/germany-in-20-years-1-in-3-people-will-have-migrant-roots/a-51101172?fbclid=IwAR1gCm-Z9rQh9dybJJs2_5wTt567b0y-MHuwrwtuhnG6vVBADvx9z0c7zgU).

the recent selection of Saskia Esken and Norbert Walter-Borjans as new leaders from the party left will do little to change that downward spiral.

In short, for better or worse, German-speaking Central Europe is again doomed to live in interesting times. These days it is anything but boring or predictable or stolid. Germany itself remains the world's fourth largest economy, and for that reason alone deserves our attention. And of the vigor of German, Austrian, and Swiss cultural life there can be no doubt. Fortunately, and finally we get to my point, in North America and in Central Europe the institutional structure of German Studies, however that term is defined, is well poised to take account of recent seismic shifts in Central Europe, and indeed is doing so already. For one thing, there is an unprecedented density of institutions and organizations devoted to the study of the German-speaking world in various ways and with various audiences. Just to cite a few examples: For Austria we have the Austrian Cultural Forum New York, and of course the Austrian Studies centers at the University of Minnesota, the University of New Orleans, and the University of Alberta, along with an array of foundations that support the study of Austria in this country. And of course there's the recently founded Austrian Studies Association. For Germany, of course, we have a considerable number of organizations, such as the Central European History Society, the DAAD, the German Historical Institute, the Goethe-Institut, the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, the German Marshall Fund, Young Medievalist Germanists in North America (YMACINA), the American Council on Germany, the American Association of Teachers of German, Women in German, the recently established 1014 Inc., and of course the German Studies Association, to mention just several. Are these not evidence of the relative health of German Studies, however defined? The GSA alone has increased its membership from almost exactly 1300 in 2005 to 2246 at the beginning of December 2019, and although membership has not increased significantly in the last few years, it has remained fairly steady. Its largest conferences were in Denver in 2013 and Portland in 2019, the latter with 1450 attendees, and the number of conference sessions has increased from 212 in 2006 to 330 in 2019.

From its very inception as the Western Association for German Studies (WAGS) in 1976, the GSA has embraced an explicitly inter- and multidisciplinary idea of German Studies, and this finally takes to a rather wordy definition of German Studies before we proceed quickly to a review of the state of German Studies today. Interestingly, the GSA has never revised its definition since 1999, though I believe strongly that it will need to do so soon. Let me quote from the 1999 guidelines at some length:

Because German Studies is interdisciplinary, work in the field involves the interaction of differing methodologies. Like other fields of investigation that are served by more than one academic approach (e.g. public health or foreign affairs), many topics in German Studies call for an approach from the perspective of diverse disciplines. For instance, the study of national identities, the Holocaust, urban culture, and gender roles requires grounding in more than one discipline. Faculty in different disciplines can advance interdisciplinary cooperation by learning the methodologies and understanding the standards of scholarship in other disciplines.

The attainment of proficiency in the German language is an integral part of German Studies at all levels. . . .

Without insisting upon specific methods appropriate to German Studies, the Guidelines are premised upon the assumption that German Studies is fundamentally an interdisciplinary approach and that scholarship undertaken from a German Studies perspective optimally employs the tools of more than one discipline. German Studies colleagues from fields other than culture studies can learn from an examination of the perspectives that inform the exciting new work in this area, while scholars in culture studies will augment the breadth and rigor of their investigations as they learn to employ the tools and approaches of other fields.

It should also be emphasized that the GSA has always included Austria and Switzerland in its purview, which has led to occasional disagreements about the organization's name, and how "German" Studies is defined in terms of the linguistic and cultural territories it is presumed or supposed to represent.

It is also important to point out that the concept of interdisciplinary German Studies is largely a North American or perhaps Anglophone idea. Nothing really comparable exists in Germany itself, for reasons that should be clear to anyone who has spent any time at German universities. For example, back in 2013 the GSA created headlines in Germany when one of our main speakers was denied entry to the US. The German press, including *Der Spiegel* and the *FAZ*, consistently described the GSA as a *Germanistenvereinigung*, which it most certainly is not. (In fact, about 40% of GSA members are GermanistInnen, about 40% are historians, and the remaining 20% come from all sorts of disciplines, from art history to anthropology to economics and political science.) And even in North America, "German Studies" generally tends to be regarded at many universities as a combination of Germanistik and cultural studies.

Moreover, the very concept of interdisciplinarity is not without critics, especially within the past eight or ten years. Several studies have questioned the notion that the so-called "traditional" disciplines have lost their salience. Notable among these writings is an extended reflection by Robert Post, dean of the Yale Law School, and by the Penn sociologist Jerry A. Jacobs in his book *In Defense of Disciplines*. In an essay that originally was presented as a paper at the American Council of Learned Societies, Post reminds us that, especially in the humanities, the disciplines have been remarkably resilient: "It is a genuine puzzle why the humanities cannot seem easily to transcend traditional disciplinary methods like the textual exegesis of literary criticism, the analytics of philosophy, the narratives of history, or the cultural hermeneutics of anthropology. Although 'the overblown and oversold status of the established disciplines in the field of human and social studies' has been attacked time and again, it has in fact proved surprisingly difficult to generate stable and enduring new disciplinary formations" – and, by extension, stable interdisciplinary structures.<sup>6</sup> Even now not-so-new fields like cultural studies, while

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<sup>6</sup> Robert C. Post, "Debating Disciplinarity," *Yale Law School Faculty Scholarship, Faculty Scholarship Series* (2009), 749-770 (here 757-58),

increasingly dominant in societies like ours, ultimately end up applying disciplinary modes and norms, according to Post: “In essence, humanities scholars focused on a new subject matter, but they borrowed existing methodological practices from other disciplines like anthropology. It thus remains a real question whether the emerging field of cultural studies is in fact a new discipline or instead is an amalgam of existing disciplines. A similar question bedevils other newly coined areas, like women’s studies or ethnic studies.”<sup>7</sup> He thus approvingly quotes Vincent Leitch – and I apologize for all these quotations – who notes in an essay called “Postmodern Interdisciplinarity” that, on the basis of “three decades of interdisciplinary work of various kinds – in a large humanities department, in a small honors great-books program, in a medium-sized graduate comparative literature program, in a small doctoral program in philosophy and literature, and in a small graduate concentration in theory and cultural studies,” that “interdisciplinary work supports or modifies but does not transform – that is, change – existing disciplines ....The origin and end of interdisciplines is the discipline.”<sup>8</sup> (Though it seems to me that, for example, film studies has to be regarded as an exception.) And this is why, though I represent an organization that embraces an interdisciplinary understanding of German Studies, I myself am here as an unapologetic historian, as is, I dare say, the former GSA President and current AHA President Mary Lindemann. So to my own mind, contemporary German Studies has to be regarded as both inter- and multidisciplinary.

Despite the skepticism I’ve just described, the two decades since the GSA guidelines were last revised have witnessed a signal shift in the questions and issues in German Studies; within the GSA itself we have seen a powerful revival of interdisciplinarity, as measured by our Interdisciplinary Networks, currently eighteen in all, and originally the brainchild of two historians, Mary Lindemann and David Sabeen. They include topics from “German Socialisms” to “Asian German Studies,” “Black Diaspora Studies,” “Digital Humanities Studies,” “Body Studies,” and “Emotion Studies.” All these topics suggest that German Studies as practiced in North America is extending its conceptual reach, among other things in response to calls for globalizing and “decolonizing” German Studies scholarship and German Studies curricula. These calls were recently articulated in an “Open Letter” to the American Association of Teachers of German signed by several hundred members of that organization. Among other things, it states:

The inherent value of defending the teaching of “foreign languages” in a so-called monolingualist United States is not sufficient justification for our representative organizations’ ambivalence and acquiescence toward ethnonationalism, settler colonialism, racist ideologies and uncritical reproduction of spaces and practices that create a hostile environment to marginalized people. Nor does the “foreign-language teaching setting” give justification for the patterns of cultural appropriation – of hip-hop, coffee culture, and klezmer, for instance – the likes of which have been shown to be unethical, as well as pedagogically unsound, in other

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[https://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1163&context=fss\\_papers](https://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1163&context=fss_papers).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 757.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 758 n. 42.

areas of US American education. Celebrating ethnonational identity with flag-and-castle-emblazoned promotional materials, with a little multikulti on the side, is too high an ethical price to pay for a boost in enrollments.

And in what seems like a rebuke to some of the ideas behind Deutschlandjahr, the document continues:

Flags, Oktoberfest, “rent-a-German”, and other trappings of Heimat-nationalism – innocuous seeming, or even cheerful, to many white teachers at first glance – reinforce a history of racism, enslavement, and colonial settlement, while also erasing the true historical diversity of the lives that make up the subject of German Studies.<sup>9</sup>

There is no question that this document, and others like it, will shape the present and future of German Studies, however defined, in myriad ways. In the meantime, when we look at recent scholarship in German Studies, we again find significant shifts. What I suppose one might call the “transnational turn” is clearly reflected in a number of the papers being presented at this conference. A quick perusal of the bulletins of the German Historical Institute underscores this trend. When one breaks down the annual GSA conference by field, one can observe some significant shifts in scholarly emphasis over the past decade and a half. One of the most notable is the steady decline of nineteenth-century topics, a phenomenon that David Blackbourn discussed a few years ago in his important talk called “Honey, I Shrunk German History.”<sup>10</sup> Pre-1800 topics are a bit more complicated. After many years of neglect, those topics were resuscitated about a decade ago, thanks largely to the initial interventions of Mary Lindemann and David Sabeau. Traditional topics in political history have of course been increasingly relegated to the margins. Since 1991, I am told, there have hardly been any GSA papers at all with the name “Bismarck” in the title. Conversely, the GSA has witnessed a dramatic increase in the newish category that we call “diachronic and interdisciplinary” as well as topics related to gender and sexuality. There has been a surge in post-1945 topics, though not so much, interestingly and in my view alarmingly, in contemporary Central European politics. (That is true across the board, I think, and not just in the GSA. A lot of it has to do with developments in the larger field of political science.) More generally, it seems to me that, with the notable and important exception of AICGS, scholars of German Studies have been behind the eight ball when it comes to understanding and dissecting the persistence and resurgence of nationalism, including but not limited to its toxic and repellent forms.

Defined narrowly or broadly, German Studies at present certainly seems to project an image of intellectual dynamism and vigorous debate. The numbers of American scholars who spend significant time in German-speaking Central Europe has got to be significantly larger, proportionally speaking, than the approximately nine thousand Americans who

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<sup>9</sup> Open Letter to the AATG: A Ten-Point Program of the Diversity, Decolonization, and the German Curriculum (DDGC) Collective (2019).

<sup>10</sup> David Blackbourn, “Honey, I Shrunk German History,” *German Studies Association Newsletter* 38, no. 2 (Winter 2013-14): 44-53.

studied at German universities between 1871 and 1914. For reasons that are rather obvious, scholars of my own mentor's generation – I studied with the late Gordon A. Craig, who was born in 1913 – simply didn't have the opportunities to return regularly to Germany or Austria that post-1990 scholars have enjoyed. The landscape of German Studies has also been shifting in other important ways. The émigré scholars who so decisively shaped the study of Central Europe after 1933 have gone, and the children who emigrated with their parents, mainly in the 1930s, are themselves disappearing from the scene. Their places are being taken by the native-born North Americans who do get to travel regularly to Central Europe: Unless, of course, they are contingent faculty, which leads me from the good times to the bad times.

More than six years have passed since Catherine Epstein published her important *Central European History* article on hiring trends in the study of European history; in it she described German historians as being at the "back of the pack."<sup>11</sup> But I do think the general trend is fairly clear. Let me get personal for a second. When I retired from teaching three years ago, my own institution immediately got rid of German history. We are encountering this reality around the country. Indeed, one very distinguished historian is so alarmed about the disappearance of German history jobs through retirement that he has spoken to me about the possibility of fundraising to endow such positions permanently. And then of course there are the data. The 2018 AHA report on the history major in general continues to describe catastrophic declines in numbers and percentages, cumulatively even worse than the decline that reached its nadir in the mid-1980s (though this argument can be disputed).<sup>12</sup> To be sure, enrollments did stabilize in 2018-19, but the overall numbers remain a source of concern.<sup>13</sup> These gloomy figures are confirmed elsewhere, such as in the *Humanities Indicators* that are published every year.<sup>14</sup> And of course we find similarly worrying figures coming from the MLA. Although total German enrollments remained somewhat steady in almost half of university-level German programs between 2013 and 2016, German on the whole dropped by 7.1 percent in those three years, while eighty-six

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<sup>11</sup> Catherine Epstein, "German Historians at the Back of the Pack: Hiring Practices in Modern European History, 1945-2010," *Central European History* 46 (2013): 599-639.

<sup>12</sup> Benjamin M. Schmidt, "The History BA since the Great Recession: The 2018 AHA Majors Report," 26 November 2018, *Perspectives on History*, <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/december-2018/the-history-ba-since-the-great-recession-the-2018-aha-majors-report>.

<sup>13</sup> Julia Brookins and Emily Swafford, "History Enrollments Hold Steady as Department Efforts Intensify: Results of the 2019 AHA Enrollment Survey," 15 January 2020, *Perspectives on History*, <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/january-2020/history-enrollments-hold-steady-as-department-efforts-intensify-results-of-the-2019-aha-enrollment-survey>.

<sup>14</sup> Though Heidi Tworek suggested in an *Atlantic* article six years ago that the recent drop in humanities enrollments reflects a growing tendency by women to major in non-humanities subjects: Heidi Tworek, "The Real Reason the Humanities Are 'in Crisis,'" *The Atlantic*, 18 December 2013, <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2013/12/the-real-reason-the-humanities-are-in-crisis/282441/>.

German language programs fell by the wayside during that same period.<sup>15</sup> Plus we all know the familiar horror stories, from the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point to the University of Montana and on and on.

None of you will be surprised by any of this, of course, but it does leave me wondering where our *Nachwuchs* will come from. Referring specifically to history departments, the AHA report notes: “Ultimately, whether through majors or course enrollments, the long-term state of the discipline will rest on how it adapts to a cohort of students – and their parents – who are much less receptive to arguments for the liberal arts than previous generations have been.” The same could certainly be said for German Studies in general. On top of it all, there is considerable uncertainty about other aspects of the rapidly shifting terrain of academia. What about the future of academic publishing in the age of Plan S and “Read and Publish”? How will these changes affect tenure and promotion, especially considering the continued attachment of promotion committees to paper products? (Many of you will know in particular about the recent initiatives of Cambridge University Press with regard to “Read and Publish.”) And what about the future of academic conferences themselves in an age of disappearing travel budgets and climate crisis?

In taking account of all this uncertainty, I have no way of predicting the future of German Studies. The institutions are there and ready to hand; but what about the people who will work in those institutions? At the very point when German-speaking Europe is changing in dramatic and extraordinarily important ways, we should all be concerned, and we should all be thinking creatively about our collective intellectual and institutional futures as scholars of that part of the world.

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<sup>15</sup> Dennis Looney and Natalia Lupin, *Enrollments in Languages Other Than English in United States Institutions of Higher Education, Summer 2016 and Fall 2016: Final Report*, Modern Language Association of America, Web edition June 2019, 3.

## Quarterly Columns from the National Humanities Alliance

*[The GSA has been an active member of the National Humanities Alliance for a number of years. The NHA does extraordinary and very fruitful work in support of the National Endowment for the Humanities, Title VI, Fulbright-Hays, and the National Archives and Records Administration. It is now providing regular update articles intended for the NHA's member societies. Here are the two latest, from January and April of this year.]*

### Study the Humanities: Articulating Career Pathways

Scott Muir, *Study the Humanities* project director

7 January 2020

Commentators have offered a variety of explanations for the [widely observed decline](#) in humanities majors and enrollments. Evidence suggests the primary cause is a [dramatic reordering of student priorities](#) away from existential educational aims toward pragmatic financial goals, beginning around 1970 and accelerating after the financial crisis of 2008.

Herein lies the greatest opportunity for reversing the decline, for the problem is with students' perceptions more than reality. It's not that the humanities don't prepare students for career success; humanities majors' career outcomes are in fact quite strong. But in the absence of clear pathways to a sustainable career, students and parents whose confidence has been shaken by the Great Recession and rising student debt fill the void with their fears. To restore confidence in the humanities, we must replace a cloudy picture of uncertain outcomes with a brighter vision of expansive possibilities. But how?

At the National Humanities Alliance (NHA), we have gained a unique perspective on this challenge and the opportunity it presents. Over the past two years, we've assessed the field of undergraduate humanities recruitment efforts, including a recent survey of more than 390 faculty and administrators at nearly 300 institutions. We've collected a wide variety of promising strategies for recruiting students with the goal of sharing these strategies to benefit the whole community. Many involve clarifying career pathways for humanities majors, ranging from efforts aimed at persuading prospective students to those that help graduating majors successfully navigate the job market.

For prospective students and their parents, many faculty and administrators have reported that presenting the national employment data featured in our [Study the Humanities](#) toolkit helps confront widespread misconceptions concerning career prospects. Additionally, data and success stories drawn from one's own institution provide a more concrete and accessible picture of the possibilities. For example, at Brandeis University, the School of Arts and Sciences has partnered with the Hiatt Career Center to present outcome data by major, which Dean Dorothy Hodgson reports "shows the tremendous placement success – and overcomes parental and student anxieties." At Lebanon Valley College, the English

Department researched their graduates' career outcomes and created a [brief video](#) that presents the actual job titles of alumni to prospective students and their parents.

Once on campus, general education courses provide crucial opportunities to demonstrate the practical value of humanities skills to broad populations of students. At the University of Missouri, the College of Arts and Sciences appointed a Career Readiness Faculty Fellow to help faculty across the college incorporate modules explaining how the liberal arts equip students for long-term career success into their gen ed courses. [And at the University of Minnesota](#), the College of Liberal Arts developed a pedagogical tool to help students identify the skills developed through their assignments and translate them to non-academic settings. Importantly, they also implemented incentives to encourage faculty to incorporate the tool in their courses, as well as identify transferable skills on their syllabi. As a result, more than 10,000 students completed the translation assignment last semester.

Other initiatives help ensure humanities majors preparing to graduate are equipped to transition to the workforce. For example, the English Department at West Chester University created a poster series and annual event entitled "What can you do with an English major?" to help students explore a variety of career pathways. Furthermore, the department created an internship course and a series of six workshops that help majors translate academic accomplishments for job application materials. At Hendrix College, [John Sanders redesigned the Religious Studies Department's capstone course](#) to help students articulate transferable skills gained through previous courses and capstone projects. Meanwhile, students work with career center staff to hone their resumes and interview skills.

Finally, humanities faculty and administrators are developing new ways to engage alumni and employers to identify opportunities for their students and increase demand for their skills. For the past decade, Duke University has hosted an annual weekend of programming that brings together arts and humanities majors interested in working in a wide variety of media-related fields with alumni who have found success there. And at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, the Humanities Network and Consortium has partnered with career center staff to bring employers and recruiters to campus for regular events that highlight the professional advantages provided by the humanities.

Together, these initiatives present models for identifying transferable humanities skills and illuminating career pathways, helping to correct misconceptions and provide a clearer, more accurate picture of humanities majors' career prospects. Of course, there are many other benefits to studying the humanities and strategies for highlighting them. Several campuses are experimenting with [cohort programs](#) to help students forge deep connections. Others are developing or revising courses to demonstrate how the humanities can help address a wide variety of contemporary challenges.

In the coming year, we will be working to ensure the lessons learned on individual campuses benefit the whole humanities community. To better understand which recruitment strategies are most effective, we have developed survey instruments to

measure their impact on students' perceptions and behaviors. We are partnering with directors of compelling initiatives to implement customized surveys. And we will distribute resources that provide an overview of various strategies faculty and administrators across the country are employing and highlight particularly promising models. We invite you to partner with us in these efforts by sharing your strategies via [our survey](#).

## Introducing Our Impact Survey Toolkit

Cecily Hill, *NEH for All* project director

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As of this writing, colleges and universities around the nation have closed their doors; most have shifted to online learning. In-person public programs are on pause, indefinitely. For the majority of us, large components of our work have come to a screeching halt, while we have had to abruptly shift to scores of new personal and professional challenges.

At the National Humanities Alliance, we are continuing our work to document the impact of the humanities in a variety of contexts, but with a particular eye toward how humanities organizations and institutions are serving their communities and constituencies during this challenging time. We are also using this time to support humanities faculty, practitioners, and organizations as they plan for the future.

With this in mind, we are launching a new resource for humanities faculty, practitioners, and organizations. Our new toolkit, [\*Documenting the Impact of Your Humanities Program\*](#), is aimed at helping the humanities community collect data about the impact of programs such as professional development seminars, public humanities projects, and programs for students that prepare them for college and help them imagine humanities careers. By collecting this data, you can better make the case for the impact of your work and the resources to support it.

With funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, since 2018 our *NEH for All* initiative has been helping National Endowment for the Humanities grantees document their impact through surveys of participants in their programs. In partnership with project directors, we've designed and implemented pre- and post-program surveys that take into account the programs' immediate goals and their broader social impacts, including impacts on trust, empathy, community connection, and appreciation for and pride in local culture and heritage. Our goal has been to help these partners collect information that makes the case for their work to a range of stakeholders, including funders, organizational leadership, and policymakers. The surveys are designed to be broadly useful for humanities faculty and practitioners in highlighting and evaluating their programs.

The toolkit includes:

- An introduction to impact-driven surveys;
- Information about why to survey, how to construct a survey, and how to administer a survey; and
- Advice for interpreting and using your data.

Many programs that we have surveyed to date took place on college campuses, and the toolkit also includes a suite of editable surveys that can be used in programs run by faculty. These include:

- Pre- and post-program surveys for a humanities summer bridge program offered to first-generation college students. Among other measures, this survey includes questions about college preparedness, interest in internships with humanities organizations, and understanding of and interest in the humanities.
- Pre- and post-program surveys for two faculty professional development seminars, one focused on an oral history program and the other on integrating local culture and authors into humanities classrooms. The surveys focus on access to resources, the benefits of building interdisciplinary communities of practice, and gains in content knowledge and capacities appropriate to the curricula.
- Pre- and post-program surveys for humanities courses designed specifically for veterans, aimed at helping them reflect on their experiences through humanities texts. These surveys assess how these courses respond to some of veterans' specific needs, such as help dealing with social isolation and building community. They also assess how humanities resources (art, film, literature, etc.) promote self-reflection and understanding.

Additionally, sample survey questions, grouped according to impact, are designed to help you build strong surveys that document your program's strengths. In addition to using these questions as they are presented, you can adapt many of them for pre- and post-program surveys, making your evaluations even stronger. These questions have been tested—we've used them across many programs and found them successful.

These surveys have provided us with compelling insights into how humanities programs – from professional development seminars to reading and discussion programs – have an impact on higher education institutions, their faculty and students, and the communities they serve. They have also provided our partners and us with robust quantitative and qualitative data that speaks to the humanities' broad-ranging impacts and can be used to engage policymakers, funders, leadership, and the public.

During this crisis, we know that humanities courses and programs are continuing to offer crucial opportunities for people to learn, reflect, and engage in dialogue. And we know that they will provide still more significant opportunities for reflection and connection in the months and years to come. As you plan for the future, we hope that you find this toolkit useful. And we want to hear from you! If you have questions or need advice, please contact Emily McDonald at [emcdonald@nhalliance.org](mailto:emcdonald@nhalliance.org).