



**DEPARTMENT OF
GERMANIC LANGUAGES
AND LITERATURES**

**NEWSLETTER
SPRING 2020**



lsa.umich.edu/german



Department of

GERMANIC LANGUAGES & LITERATURES

Congratulations Class of 2020

CLASS OF 2020: you've done it and we are so proud of you. To celebrate your achievement and mark this moment, we put together a graduation video for you and your family. We hope you enjoy it.

We would love to hear from you! Send your comments or thoughts on the video and general well wishes for others to germandept@umich.edu and we'll post them on our website. You may also share with us via Facebook or Twitter. You have our very best wishes in your future endeavors!

<https://lsa.umich.edu/german/news-events/all-events/2020-graduation.html>

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



Dear friends,

More anxiously than ever, I hope that this newsletter finds you and your

families safe and healthy. I'm writing these lines from my home rather than my university office, not because I prefer the quiet of the former over the bustle of the latter, but because, like my colleagues, I have been unable to enter my office since the second week of March, when the university shut down most of its facilities. This is but one of the many ways in which the COVID-19 crisis has upended life at the department. Shortly after spring break, we had to switch practically overnight to remote teaching, which presented quite a few challenges. It's one thing to conduct a large lecture class online; it's quite another to do so with small seminars that depend heavily on student interaction and conversation. That is of course nowhere more true than in the foreign language classroom, where students are expected to engage in small group activities to practice their language skills. Under these circumstances, to switch to remote teaching meant thoroughly reorganizing syllabi and inventing entirely new exercises and activities, while also learning technologies that most of us had rarely, if ever, used before. Needless to say, this sudden change also placed a great burden on our students, many of whom had to return to their family homes where they were forced to conduct their German lessons from the basement or kitchen, or, in some cases, even found themselves devoid of a workable internet connection, cut off from both friends and class

interaction. Our study abroad students were particularly hard hit since they had to abort their academic year in Freiburg and abruptly return to the U.S., having completed only one of their planned two semesters in Germany (German universities follow a different academic calendar, with the second semester running from mid-April to mid-July).

I'm proud to report that thanks to the heroic effort of our teachers and staff we were able to bring the semester, despite everything, to a satisfactory end. None of our classes were cancelled, and nearly 100 of our majors and minors graduated on time. We even created a little graduation video for them: have a look, it turned out quite nicely (you can find the link to the video on our website).

Two of the articles in this newsletter discuss in more detail the impact of COVID-19 on our teaching (p. 7) and study-abroad program (p. 4-5). But there is much more to report. Domenic De Socio, who is currently completing his dissertation on queer and female visions of modernity, has also been working on building an archive of texts and films by historically marginalized groups for use in our German classes (p. 8). Kristin Dickinson and Kira Thurman both signed contracts for their first book monographs, which will be published in spring 2021 (you can read about Kira's work as a fellow at the famed Princeton Institute for Advanced Studies on p. 6). Helmut Puff, who directed the Eisenberg Institute for Historical Studies for the last two years, won a prestigious fellowship at the National Humanities Center (p. 6). And our Swedish and Dutch programs continue to grow and expand, bucking national trends (p.10, 11).

President Schlissel has recently declared that the University of Michigan will likely return to on-campus operations in the fall, albeit it in a "public health-informed" manner. To find out precisely what this means for a language department like ours, you will need to wait until the next newsletter.

Sincerely,

Andreas Gailus
germanchair@umich.edu

This newsletter went into copy-editing before the murder of George Floyd and the ensuing protests in support of Black Lives Matter. Since then, the department has met several times to discuss how we can support the work of anti-Black racism in the classroom and beyond. Among our actions for the fall are: an additional undergraduate course on race and ethnicity; workshops on anti-racist pedagogy; a bi-weekly colloquium on questions of race and colonialism in German, Dutch, and Scandinavian culture; increased efforts to bring German language instruction to high schools serving underrepresented minorities in Southeast Michigan. This is only the beginning. We can and will do more to do our part to combat racism of all kinds inside and outside academia. (See also our announcement in support of Black Lives Matter at: <https://lsa.umich.edu/german/news-events/all-news/search-news/black-lives-matter.html>.)

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HIGHLIGHTS

Flattening the Curve in Freiburg

by Peter Mclsacc, Associate Professor



Marisa Rethman, helping place a "stumbling stone" in downtown Freiburg commemorating a member of the Veit family, all of whom were forced to leave their homes and flee Germany or perish in concentration camps.

In so many ways, the past thirteen months have been a time of the unexpected for my wife Ines, our two sons Lucas and Oliver, and me. None of us were thinking about heading to Freiburg in April 2019 when the email arrived announcing that Academic Year in Freiburg's (AYF) chosen Academic Director (AD) would not be able to serve in 2019-2020. But within a couple of hours, the whole family had decided to move to the "green city." Thanks to the quick action of everyone in the four-university consortium, the ink was drying on the AYF contract less than two weeks later. Though not everything was going to be simple—due to my wife's fall 2019 teaching, I would be mostly solo with my boys before winter break—the critical things were in place by mid-May.

Part of what made the transition surprisingly smooth was that we had lived in Germany before and my sons speak German, but most of it came from what makes AYF special: the people from the AYF consortium and Program Director Ulli Struve in Freiburg. With help from former ADs, we quickly found spots at one of the city's top *Gymnasien* and soccer try-

outs. Ulli Struve's impeccable organizing made the visa bureaucracy and logistics of moving a snap, and, together with last year's AD, Kerstin Barndt and the many AYF partners around the city, he helped flatten a pretty steep learning curve.

As expected, AYF proved to be an intense bonding experience with the students and the city. With a large cohort of 38 students—10 from U-M—, the months of September and October were busy, yet the excursions to France, Switzerland and the Black Forest, multiple orientation sessions, and an hour of personalized academic advising per student helped us get to know each other well. So students could get to know Freiburg, I worked hard to recruit Freiburg "experts" for local case studies for my AYF course on current issues in Germany and Freiburg. Freiburgers involved in Holocaust commemoration, environmental politics, decolonization, lack of affordable housing, and the refugee crisis responded to my requests with stunning generosity (some invited us to their homes, for personal tours of Freiburg, or for



The Freiburg Study Abroad group, pictured in Schniederlihof at the foot of the Schauinsland mountain, Oberried, Baden-Württemberg.

AYFers to help with things like placing “stumbling stones” to remember Holocaust victims) that created special connection to the city. When we returned from our January study trip to Berlin, the students exclaimed “it’s good to be home,” as if they had never lived anywhere else. We had settled in and were looking forward to the two months of time to travel and relax when the semester

ended in February, and then a whole another semester.

Then, in a year of the unexpected everywhere, the time came to flatten the other curve (COVID-19). While U-M leadership allowed my family and me to stay in Freiburg, our program onsite was canceled as of mid-March and the next weeks were spent helping students return to the U.S. as safely as possible. At the

same time, Ulli and I needed to develop a set of courses that would allow students to get a second semester of AYF credit. Working with consortium partners, we expanded our original two AYF courses to nine courses taught across the consortium, in online formats available to all AYFers. In the end, many University of Freiburg courses have also been available online, so that students have

had some choice, but nothing we have been able to do has been able to provide the immersive quality unique to study abroad. This loss has been heartbreaking, and yet I feel fortunate to have had the semester I did in residence with our AYFers and I hope to see many of them in Freiburg again one day.

FACULTY FOCUS



Andrei Markovits

Andrei Markovits, an Arthur F. Thurnau Professor and the Karl W. Deutsch Collegiate Professor of Comparative Politics and German, grew up in the 1950s in Timisoara, a cosmopolitan city in the Banat region of western Romania. Even though many members of his extended family had been killed in the Holocaust, his parents cherished German literature and music, which played an important role in Professor Markovits' upbringing. As a Hungarian-speaking Jewish boy in a Romanian city who loved to play soccer and learned German from a private tutor with a Nazi past, Professor Markovits' youth was filled with contradictions and wondrous characters. Read about it in this fascinating personal reflection he wrote for *Tablet Magazine*.

You can find a link to his article on <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/timisoara>.



Helmut Puff

Starting in September 2020 through May 2021, **Helmut Puff** will be a fellow at the National Humanities Center in North Carolina (Archie K. Davis Fellowship; John E. Sawyer Fellowship). Puff is one of 33 fellows, out of 673 applications, representing humanistic scholarship. Each fellow will work on individual research projects and will have the opportunity to share ideas in seminars, lectures, and conferences at the Center. These leading scholars will be at the Center from universities and colleges in 15 U.S. states and the District of Columbia, as well as from Canada, China, Germany, and Uganda.



Kira Thurman

Kira Thurman spent the 2019-2020 academic year as a research fellow at the prestigious Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey. While in residence, she completed her first monograph, *Singing like Germans: Black Musicians in the Land of Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms*, which will be published by Cornell University Press in the 2021-2022 academic year. In the fall of 2019, her article, "Performing Schubert, Hearing Race: Debating Blackness, Whiteness, and German Identity in Interwar Central Europe" appeared in the flagship journal, the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*. Selected from over 40 submissions, the article won a coveted spot in the journal's first-ever special issue dedicated to race and ethnicity. Thurman also wrote an obituary for the opera singer Jessye Norman, which appeared in *Frieze Magazine*, and participated in an invited roundtable for the *American Historical Review* on black internationalism, which will appear in print in December 2020.

IN THE CLASSROOM

Transition to Online Instruction during the Pandemic

by Hartmut Rastalsky, Language Program Director

In the afternoon of Wednesday, March 11, the university announced the decision to move classes online for the remainder of the semester due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Classes were cancelled for that Thursday and Friday, and online instruction began on the following Monday. Converting our courses to an online format in four days, in the middle of the semester, was a daunting task. All the more so since most of us were novices in online instruction. A whirlwind of activity ensued, with much better results than many of us had thought possible.

Over this long weekend, we met virtually in varying configurations to try out tools such as Zoom, BlueJeans, Google Meet, and Canvas Conferences. All of us, Professors, Lecturers, Graduate Student Instructors, browsed and experimented with long lists of resources and tutorials for online instruction, compiled by the Language Resource Center, LSA Technology Services, and other units, and shared what we found with each other. When it became clear that most of us were planning to use Zoom, the department immediately purchased a Zoom license,

and within a few days, the university did so as well. LSA's Dean sent encouraging messages, helping to set realistic expectations for what we could achieve, and describing a flexible and compassionate grading policy for this semester. Technology Services organized daily workshops, still continuing now. As we began to teach online, we collected successes, failures, resources, and ideas in a shared Google doc, and continued to meet in various configurations to discuss how things were going and to support each other. The extraordinary level of support and collegiality within the department and the university as a whole made these exhausting first days and weeks extraordinarily productive.

This transition was uniquely challenging for us as teachers. It was also uniquely rewarding.



Photo by Chris Montgomery

In the end, we were able to create online versions of our courses in which students still learned the important material, still had extensive opportunities to interact with each other and with us, and still spoke and heard lots of German. In countless video meetings and emails, instructors did their best to help students dealing with everything from family tragedies, illness, and depression, to connectivity issues and time zone differences. Over time, we discovered some particularly effective aspects of the online format, such as students all writing at once in a class Google doc while the

instructor made corrections, or working together in more varied configurations in randomly assigned "breakout rooms." Students were flexible, patient, and helpful as their instructors adjusted to the online format. They were visibly grateful to be able to continue to interact with their classmates and instructors, and to retain this portion of their college routine amid the chaos and uncertainty in these difficult months.

GRADUATE STUDENT FOCUS

Developing a Springboard for Bringing Marginalized Identities into German Studies

By Domenic DeSocio, Graduate Student

Over the last year, I have worked with Assistant Professor Kristin Dickinson and my fellow graduate student, Özlem Karuc, to create the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Research and Teaching Database. Generously funded by Rackham Graduate School's Faculty and Student Ally Diversity Grants and housed in the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures, my colleagues and I founded this database to address a key roadblock in our efforts to make our course offerings, research agendas, and departmental environment more inclusive of the historically disadvantaged, namely, that many faculty, lecturers, and graduate students found it difficult and prohibitively time-consuming to seek out and engage with new (and

often hard-to-find) materials from diverse backgrounds. As such, our database aims to be an encyclopedic curated collection of primary materials from historically underrepresented groups based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexuality, class, and geography. Its scope extends across time, genre, and medium, incorporating everything from nineteenth-century feminist novels to twenty-first century films about queer Middle Eastern refugees.

The database is currently organized around five overarching themes: Women Authors, 1800 to Today; Queer German Literature, 1800 to Today; Female and Queer German Film; Female and Queer German Music & Visual Art; and Race, Ethnicity, and Migration in Germany. Over

the next year, we will include other categories, such as Jewish and working-class cultures. Each of these master lists will contain information about the source's creator, origin, and brief summaries of its content as well as searchable tags.

A primary focus is to ready these materials for incorporation into preexisting and new courses, especially our fourth-semester language course, German 232. Accordingly, our project strives to equip each individual source with a basic lesson plan that instructors may customize for their own courses. Additionally, we include key words and themes to frame the source and guide the lesson as well as broad questions to spark discussion.

To further our teaching mission, we are compiling thematic modules around major nodes of German Studies, such as the metropolis, media and technology, modernism, language, and 20th-century history. Each of these poses a series of questions to investigate anew these areas from the perspectives and voices of the underrepresented. Each module contains a syllabus and reading plan as well as sample lesson plans, discussion questions,

activities, and assignments. They are designed for instructors to adapt and teach as they see fit.

The database has been designed with an eye toward interactivity, ease of use, and dynamism. We highly encourage instructors to upload their own materials, lesson plans, tips, and suggestions. The goal is to develop this database over the next several years as faculty and students interact with its topics and materials, cultivating it to suit our evolving needs and aspirations.

A commitment to undergraduate education, this database will serve as a springboard to build our curricula and programs more inclusively of underrepresented identities and students in German Studies. For researchers, it will serve as a seed farm of understudied materials, fostering new lines of inquiry. Together, it aims to bring the marginalized into German Studies not as diversity tokens but as active partners in recasting our field.

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Congratulations!



Emily Gauld

Congratulations to **Emily Gauld** who will be Rackham Predoctoral Fellow for the 2020-21 academic year. The Rackham Predoctoral Fellowship is one of the most prestigious awards granted by the Rackham Graduate School. Awards are based on the strength and quality of dissertation abstracts, publications, presentations, and faculty recommendations.



Emma Thomas

Emma Thomas successfully defended her dissertation in August 2019, *Contested Labors: New Guinean Women and the German Colonial Indenture, 1884-1914*. Emma is in Australia at the moment but received a Post-Doc at the Berlin Program for Advanced German and European Studies for the AY 2020-21. Congratulations Emma! Apologies to Emma due to our oversight in not including her in the winter newsletter.

Naomi Vaughan

Naomi Vaughan successfully defended her well-researched dissertation, *The New Reich Chancellery in Representation. The Intermedial Architecture & Archive of Hitler's Space of Power*. Congratulations Naomi for being a winter 2020 term PhD graduate!



Numerous Awards for our Graduate Student Instructors

Katy Holihan has been selected by Rackham as a recipient of this year's Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award. This well-deserved award recognizes Katy's excellent teaching, as well as her many contributions to teaching and to the department outside of her own classroom. Only 20 awards were given to GSIs throughout the University of Michigan.



Özlem Karuc is the winner of this year's Frank Braun Prize for the outstanding Graduate Student Instructor in the German department. This award is well deserved for her wonderful work as a teacher, as an outstanding Graduate Student Mentor, and on behalf of inclusive language teaching and more diversity, equity, and inclusion.



SCANDINAVIAN STUDIES

Scandinavian Program Updates

by Johanna Eriksson, Director of Scandinavian Studies

In January, three third-year Swedish language students went to Uppsala University for a study abroad experience, excited to spend the semester in Sweden. Emily Wogaman, Kareen (Kari) Seres, and Daniel Frechette experienced Swedish winter, but after the coronavirus outbreak, abruptly had to return to Michigan before spring arrived. They are now completing their Uppsala coursework remotely. I am thrilled to share with you that both Daniel and Kari are planning to return to Sweden for graduate school as soon as they can.

Kari Seres graduated from the University of Michigan with a major in environmental studies and a minor in Scandinavian studies this spring. While at Uppsala University, she was a member of Västgöta

Nation, a student-run club. New club members are introduced at the 'Reccegask', a formal academic dinner. According to Kari, "All the new VG members gathered at the nation and then marched to the University building in single file fashion and met all the other nations who arrived in the same fashion. After honoring the work of previous nation leaders and listening to speeches and choirs sing, we returned to our nations for a pre-drink, followed by a formal dinner, and the after party! One could easily assume that the after-party is the wildest part, but that is far from the truth. The dinner portion is catalyzed by a starting toast and of course a song to follow, and the evening is sprinkled with choir performances and speeches, and somehow just when you begin digesting your three-

course meal, you find yourself and everyone else standing on chairs screaming songs in Swedish."

Right before the COVID-19 pandemic, the second-year Swedish language class was lucky to make it to Sweden for the annual study trip. Fourteen students participated, and all of us returned in good health. Everyone in this group enjoyed hiking, and were able to go to the Kullaberg nature reserve, a beautiful rocky peninsula with steep cliffs and beech trees. The hikers went to pebble beaches and coves, through pastures and woods, and accidentally through marshes.

Another special experience in Helsingborg was winter bathing in one of the three ocean bath houses with traditions dating back to the 1860s. After heating up in the sauna, everyone dared to jump into the very chilly water of Öresund, not just once, but at least three times. Everyone agreed that winter bathing is a fantastic way to cure jet lag, as you feel simultaneously very invigorated and calm after the bath.

Because of COVID-19, Pro-Civitas had to reschedule their annual visit to Ann Arbor for the following academic year.



Second year Swedish in Lund.
photo credit Cali Kinstner.

In one way or other, our collaboration will continue for the 17th year!

Sonali Prasad and Thomas Brooks, co-presidents of the Scandinavian Club 2019-20, kept the club active throughout the academic year with weekly fika, movie nights, ice skating at Yost, and parties. Sonali is currently applying to medical school, and Thomas is applying to teach English in Korea.

Finally, many thanks to SWEA-Michigan and the Highfield Foundation for generously supporting our students on study abroad, SWEA MAME for the support of the Spring break study trip, and to the Swedish Institute for the general support of our program.



Go blue by Rådhuset Helsingborg: front row: Erik Pedersen, Ezra Beehan, Jack Pennington, Eric Silver, Parker Clement, Audrey Lang, Sonali Prasad, Johanna Eriksson, Erin Andrews, Rachel Kushner, Malin Andersson, back row: Cam Cain, Asa Huffaker, Cali Kinstner and Jonathan Lelo

**Department of Germanic Languages
and Literatures**

812 East Washington Street
3110 Modern Languages Building
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1275
(734) 764-8018 • www.lsa.umich.edu/german

Cover Images

Top Left: Plassenburg Castle, Kulmbach, Germany (Rawpixel)
Bottom Left: Man walking through the alps, Germany (Unsplash)
Right: Freiberg, Germany photo by Sangga Rima Roman
Selia (Unsplash)

Chair: Andreas Gailus
Asst. Editor: Jennifer Lucas
Layout: Laura Koroncey

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Jordan B. Acker
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We stand together.

**BLACK
LIVES
MATTER**

The Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures unequivocally condemns the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade, and countless other Black victims at the hand of police and white supremacist violence. We unanimously avow that **BLACK LIVES MATTER**. For the full statement, please see our website, lsa.umich.edu/german.