

2013 ARCHIVAL SUMMER SEMINAR IN GERMANY

Seminar in Germany, June 16–28, 2013. Conveners: Clelia Caruso (GHI) and Mark Stoneman (GHI). Participants and their dissertation topics: Alissa Belotti (Carnegie Mellon University), “Peace, Protest, and Purple Hair: Youth Cultures, the End of the Cold War and German Unification”; Erica Fagen (University of Massachusetts at Amherst), “Nazi and Holocaust Memory in New Media, 1983–2012”; Patrick Hege (Fordham University/Humboldt University of Berlin), “Dar es Salaam at the Center: Urban Planning, Race, and (Indo) German Imperialism”; James McSpadden (Harvard University), “‘Discarding our Party Blinders’: Cross-Party Political Friendship and the Twilight of Parliamentarism”; Jake Newsome (SUNY Buffalo), “Homosexuals after the Holocaust: Identity Politics and Social Activism in the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany, 1969–2000”; Derek Stauff (Indiana University, Bloomington), “Music and Politics in Saxony during the Thirty Years’ War”; Suzanne Swartz (Stony Brook University), “Jewish and Christian Children’s Interactions in Nazi-Occupied Warsaw”; Robert Terrell (University of California, San Diego), “Bavarian Consumption Culture and Regionalism in Postwar Germany”; Christine Whitehouse (Carleton University), “The Free Germany Movement: Jewish Exiles in Transnational Perspective”; Hamza Yilmaz (University of Chicago), “Economic History after the Golden Age: Transformation of Industrial Production in fin-de-siècle Germany, 1970–2000.”

Scholars doing historical research in German archives for the first time face two major hurdles. Although they learn how to interpret printed primary sources in graduate school, their training does not usually prepare them for documents written in scripts that today are indecipherable to anyone but experts and the very elderly. Furthermore, these scholars frequently know little about the bureaucratic processes in which these documents were produced and archived, although attending to such factors is essential for finding and interpreting historical sources. The GHI’s annual archival seminar helps ten advanced graduate students overcome both hurdles so that they can make the most of their limited research time in Germany.

While the preparatory organization of the seminar lay in the hands of Clelia Caruso, the archival tour was led by Mark Stoneman. This year’s group of ten North American students (nine modern historians and one early modern musicologist) visited Speyer, Koblenz, Cologne, and Munich. The main activity in Speyer was learning modern and

even early modern handwriting at the Landesarchiv (State Archive) with Walter Rummel. Having provided everyone with introductory materials before they arrived in Germany, Rummel led the group through a variety of interesting sources, looking not only at their handwriting and main contents, but also at the various other markings and initials that officials had added to them. Topics included war crimes from World War II, a severely wounded soldier in World War I, witchcraft, and the concerns of a widow who owned a tavern. Along the way, the participants learned something surprising: Handwriting from the early twentieth century can be harder to decipher than that of the nineteenth or earlier centuries because handwriting became highly individualized, with peculiar mixes of Latin and German scripts.

During its five-day stay in Speyer, the group also had an afternoon class with Noria Litaker (University of Pennsylvania). This doctoral student had participated in the archival seminar the year before and had then spent a year doing research in Bavarian archives. She shared her practical experiences about working with archives and the sources she found. There was also a class with Christiane Sibille (University of Basel and *Diplomatische Dokumente der Schweiz*), a digital historian who introduced the group to the breathtaking array of scholarly digital resources that have emerged in recent years. The archival seminar students also presented their research projects to each other and offered and received constructive feedback. Besides helping each student think about his or her project, this activity fostered the development of a network of young scholars who will be able to support each other during their research in Germany.

In addition to teaching old German handwriting, Rummel introduced the group to some of his archive's medieval treasures, gave a tour of the facility, and introduced the seminar's participants to the archive's history and functions. These activities marked the beginning of the archival seminar's introduction to Germany's archive system. The following Monday, participants journeyed to the Bundesarchiv (Federal Archive) in Koblenz, where they were greeted by Bundesarchiv President Michael Hollmann. After this warm welcome, Thekla Kleindienst explained the history and functioning of Germany's multi-sited federal archive, introduced the archive's holdings in Koblenz, and conducted a document workshop with materials relating to John F. Kennedy's famous Berlin visit. The group also had visited the amazing image archive at the Koblenz site.

On Tuesday morning, the group paid a sad but fascinating visit to the Restoration and Digitization Center of the Cologne Historical Archive. Here Ulrich Fischer described the archive's awful collapse in 2009 and the technical and organizational work being done to recover as much of the archive's damaged holdings as possible. This visit underlined the fragility, value, and scope of Cologne's holdings. It also encouraged participants to think about earlier disasters and how archivists might have dealt with those.

The remainder of the trip was spent in Munich, which offers a rich landscape of resources for historical research. On Wednesday, Markus Brantl explained the workings of the pioneering Munich Digitization Center at the Staatsbibliothek (State Library), which is making an enormous number of books from past centuries available online. Later, Klaus Lankheit led seminar participants through the holdings of the Institut für Zeitgeschichte (Institute of Contemporary History), using examples related to the specific topics of several students, and Michael Volk explained the institute's library.

On Thursday, Monika von Walter introduced the group to the Bavarian Hauptstaatsarchiv (State Archives), again using examples relevant to the students. During this visit, participants also learned how a topic like colonialism could have important holdings not just in Berlin but also in Munich because of Bavaria's special constitutional status in Imperial Germany. In the afternoon, the group learned about the history of the Deutsches Museum from Wilhelm Füßl, who introduced students to the growing holdings of the museum's technology and science archive.

On Friday morning the group toured the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site and learned about its history and the kinds of questions that German school groups ask during such visits. In the afternoon, Ulrich Unseld and Albert Knoll said more about the memorial site's educational mission and archival holdings.

The seminar participants ended the week with an evening of Bavarian food and drink at a local restaurant, "Zum Franziskaner." Afterwards, there was a face-off nearby between Wagner and Verdi puppets. The serendipitous multimedia show made for a nice conclusion to a demanding and profitable two weeks. The GHI wishes to thank all those institutions and individuals who helped a new crop of scholars prepare for their archival research in Germany.

Mark Stoneman (GHI)

