

## ARCHIVAL SUMMER SEMINAR IN GERMANY 2014

Seminar in Germany, June 22 - July 4, 2014. Convener: Mark R. Stoneman (GHI). Participants and their dissertation topics: Curran Egan (McMaster University), "Gender and Justice in Nazi Germany"; Peter Gengler (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), "Flight and Expulsion from the 'Lost German East': the Creation, Instrumentalization and Institutionalization of a Master Narrative, 1944-1975"; Sebastian Huebel (University of British Columbia), "Stolen Manhood? The Emasculation of German-Jewish Men in the Third Reich, 1933-1945"; Steve McClellan (University of Toronto), "The Optic of German Civil Society: Debates on Politics, Economics and Social Reform in the Verein für Sozialpolitik"; Katya Mouris (Catholic University of America), "From Reform to Reformation: Caritas Pirckheimer and the Convent of St. Klara, Nuremberg, late 1490s-1532"; Josh Sander (University of Tennessee, Knoxville), "The Greater Germanic Reich: Nazification and the Creation of a New Dutch Identity in the Occupied Netherlands"; Sari Siegel (University of Southern California), "Medicine Behind Barbed Wire: Jewish Prisoner-Physicians in Nazi Labor, Concentration, and Extermination Camps in the Greater German Reich, 1938-1945"; David Spreen (University of Michigan), "Forward in the Spirit of Ernst Thälmann: Weimar Communism and the West German Left"; Carolyn Taratko (Vanderbilt University), "Energy, State and Society in Nineteenth-Century Germany"; Holly Yanacek (University of Pittsburgh) "Emotional Communities in the History and Literature of Wilhelmine Germany at the Fin de Siècle."

In what is now a twenty-two-year-old tradition at the GHI, with a twenty-third year in preparation, ten young scholars traveled to Germany from Canada and the United States to begin a new stage in their doctoral programs — learning how to use German archives and read German sources. To some extent, the ten applicants accepted into this program reflect current historiographical trends in German history: four of their projects are firmly rooted in the National Socialist period; two are devoted to the period after World War II, but are framed to transcend the 1945 boundary, whether reaching back to the end of the war or to politics in the Weimar era; two projects deal with the nineteenth century (one of them in German Studies rather than history); another bridges the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; one project is situated near the beginning of the early modern period. This chronological distribution also evinces exceptions to broader trends in the academy. The post-World War II era was represented

less strongly than it seems to be at doctoral programs at the moment. Furthermore, there were no students focusing on the GDR or doing an explicitly German-German comparison along the lines of the first books by Uta Poiger and Frank Biess (an alumnus of the GHI archive seminar). On the other hand, having three dissertations that focused on or included the nineteenth century was perhaps a happy exception to the current disfavor in which the nineteenth century seems to find itself.

Of course, the temporal context of the proposals had nothing to do with the selection of the archive seminar participants. Besides the extensive criteria listed in the call for applications and the need for excellent German (the course is held in German), the selection hinged on the quality of project exposés, including, for example, the questions being asked, the historiography with which the project will be in conversation, and how this might work in Germany's archives, many of which now offer at least some useful information about their holdings online.

One might wonder why PhD students with such extensive qualifications and experience would need such a program. One major issue is the old German script, which only archivists, historians, and very old Germans can read. Even scholars working in the post-World War II era need to learn this script because sources relevant to them were often written by people who learned to write long before this period, and typewritten sources often still contain important handwritten comments. If students learn this handwriting after or just before their comprehensive exams, they are able to make far better use of their limited research time in Germany.

Of course, there are old schoolbooks with which historians can also prepare themselves. Nonetheless, reality frequently diverges from such norms. Thus, taking such a course is necessary because it provides insight into the scripts' various manifestations in real life across time. Our teacher was the archivist and historian Walter Rummel, who directs the Landesarchiv (state archive) in Speyer. This was his twentieth year in a twenty-two-year-old program. Besides teaching old German script with verve, Dr. Rummel helped participants to decode the scrawl added to the documents in the course of their bureaucratic processing. He also began an important conversation about how files come to be in his archives — or become damaged or destroyed instead.

The challenging mental journey into German paleography began with Sütterlin (the last iteration of old German handwriting), then moved

quickly to Kurrent (*Kurrentschrift* or *Alte Deutsche Schrift*), where we spent the most time. There were also examples of highly individualized handwriting from the early twentieth century, as well as a taste of sixteenth-century script. Surprisingly, the latter was easier to read than the former in some ways because the officials who produced it wrote more consistently and neatly, albeit with different spelling, expressions, and grammar than we know from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Of course, the one early modernist in the group received additional examples of the latter. The group spent mornings with paleography, and it met on two afternoons to present and discuss each other's dissertation projects. Thursday evening, our last in the town, was spent at a beer garden on the Rhine with our instructor.

The group left Speyer on Friday afternoon and spent the weekend in Cologne. From there, the second portion of our trip — focusing on research institutions in Germany — began in earnest. During the course of the week we visited the Federal Archive (Bundesarchiv) in Koblenz, the Restoration and Digitization Center of the Cologne Historical Archive, the Munich City Archive (Stadtarchiv München), the Munich Digitization Center (MDZ), and the Main Bavarian State Archive in Munich (Hauptstaatsarchiv). One weakness of this year's program was the absence of non-governmental archives, although some students were able to visit the Institute for Contemporary History (IfZ) and the Dachau Concentration Camp on their own in Munich. In line with the ongoing question of how materials came to be in specific archives, students learned about privacy law and about the two principals of archival organization: topic and jurisdiction.

All of the people we worked with were hospitable and helpful. Students were able to gain a better appreciation for how files came to be in these specific archives and how to look for files in them. At the same time, some grew impatient with the interesting tours of the stacks because they really wanted to get their hands on the sources. Of course, knowing how things work behind the scenes can help the scholar understand better how the whole system works in terms of its path dependencies and (im)practicalities, but scholars embarking on a dissertation will not always appreciate this perspective sufficiently until they are much deeper into their research. Be that as it may, we were all especially grateful to Monika von Walter in the Bavarian Hauptstaatsarchiv because she had read everyone's project expose ahead of time and had pulled possibly relevant source material from the stacks for each student to examine. She gave the students plenty

of time to look at this material before we toured a couple select destinations of her archive. Having documents in hand is the kind of thing that gets any researcher excited, but especially the researcher embarking on a history dissertation.

In Munich, the group also attended a seminar given by two people close to finishing their own Ph.D's. Noria Litaker, an alumna of the GHI's 2012 seminar, offered great practical information about registering to work in archives, taking into account the country's very diverse landscape, and human interactions with archivists. She was able to tell the North American students things they needed to know that a German archivist or even a North American professor would be unable to. In addition, Christiane Sibille, who has long been active with the digital side of studying history, acquainted us with the ever-growing number of digital resources in German-speaking Europe for academic research.

This year's seminar had one unusual feature: the World Cup was playing on television screens at outdoor cafés, in beer gardens, and on public squares. It was impossible to ignore the enthusiastic crowds during the Germany games, especially since our own group contained some big Germany fans. Fortunately, there were no schedule conflicts with our seminar events, although the reservation for our final dinner at a Munich restaurant, Hofer der Stadtwirt, had to be moved up an hour to accommodate that day's Germany game.

Whether they loved, hated, or were indifferent to soccer, the Ph.D. students got to know each other pretty well during these two weeks, both personally and professionally. They formed networks that will be there for them in Germany when their research begins in earnest, and many of these connections will last much longer than that. In fact, I have already been able to see manifestations of these relationships on social media. This is important because scholarship depends not only on individuals' research and writing, but also communication, cooperation, and discussion.

Mark R. Stoneman (GHI)