

## 27th Transatlantic Doctoral Seminar in German History: Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century German History

Seminar held at the GHI and at Georgetown University, June 14–17, 2022. Co-organized by the German Historical Institute Washington (GHI) and the BMW Center for German and European Studies, Georgetown University. Conveners: Anna von der Goltz (Georgetown University), Richard F. Wetzell (GHI). Faculty mentors: Martin Geyer (Ludwig Maximilians-University of Munich), Karrin Hanshew (Michigan State University), Hedwig Richter (Bundeswehr University Munich), Paul Steege (Villanova University). Participants: Pauli Aro (European University Institute in Florence); Malte Beeker (Humboldt University of Berlin); Verena Bunkus (University of Erfurt); Arnab Dutta (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen); Marlene Friedrich (University of Bochum); Rory Hanna (University of Sheffield); Clemens Huemerlehner (University of Freiburg); Axel-Wolfgang Kahl (University of Potsdam); Elena Kiesel (University of Erfurt); David Korsuize (University of Cologne); Carolin Liebisch-Gümüş (GHI Washington); Lea Münch (Université de Strasbourg); Colton Ochsner (University of Missouri); Talitta Reitz (Ludwig Maximilians-University of Munich); Yanara Schmacks (City University of New York); Paul Schacher (University of Leipzig); Ben van Zee (University of Chicago).

The 27th Transatlantic Doctoral Seminar in German History was held in person at the GHI and at Georgetown University from June 14 – June 17, 2022. This year it included doctoral students from universities in the United States, Germany, the UK, the Netherlands, France, and Italy.

The seminar's first panel, chaired by Richard Wetzell, commenced with comments by Axel-Wolfgang Kahl and Lea Münch. The papers submitted by Paul Schacher and Ben van Zee both dealt with German history in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century. Schacher's dissertation examined the manifold ways in which the concept of "order" structured ways of organizing social life in the Kaiserreich—from policing to family and socialist politics. Van Zee's work compared German and Polish "emigrant colonialism" from the 1880s to the 1940s — a type of emigration, he argued, that was intimately linked to ideas and practices of colonial expansion, including in the period after 1918. The chapter he presented focused on German immigrants in Brazil who helped to expand the realm of what was considered "colonial space." The discussion focused on questions of German peculiarity and the nuances of writing the social history of the Kaiserreich.

The second panel, which was chaired by Anna von der Goltz and whose papers were introduced by Paul Schacher and Pauli Aro, dealt with the history of universities, student activism, and historical research in the first two decades of the Federal Republic. Rory Hanna's paper looked at West German student protests against Nazi filmmaker Veit Harlan in the early 1950s. These protests, Hanna argued, were carried by students from across the political spectrum who advanced a powerful critique of continuities between the Third Reich and the new West German state. The paper challenged former activists' assertions of an essential distinction between their "rational" activism and the emotional spontaneity of "1968." Marlene Friedrich shared a chapter from her larger dissertation project on the career of prominent postwar historian Hans Mommsen. The chapter honed in on Mommsen's years at the Institute of Contemporary History in Munich in the early 1960s to shed light on his academic socialization and to tease out how his engagement with the history of National Socialism took shape. The lively discussion centered

on how to deal with (generational) narratives advanced by the protagonists of contemporary history, the importance of gender and masculinity in shaping discourses and behaviors, and the role of emotions in the democratization of Germany after 1945.

The papers of the third panel, which was chaired by Carolin Liebisch Gümüs, were introduced by Elena Kiesel and Colton Ochsner. Arnab Dutta and Pauli Aro approached the history of German nationalism from two unusual and fresh perspectives. Dutta's paper, an extract from his broader dissertation on the transnational reception of the ideas of Germandom in British Bengal, analyzed *Kultur* as a key category in German-Bengali entanglements in the interwar years. He showed how certain racial and ethno-linguistic parameters attached to an essentially German debate around *Kultur*-versus-civilization redefined Bengali political understandings of caste, nation and culture. Aro's paper offered a reinterpretation of the so-called *Landsmannschaften* that are more commonly associated with expellee politics in the years after 1945. Shifting the focus away from expellee claims in the postwar decades, Aro focused on the welfare activism of interwar *Landsmannschaften* in Vienna. Banat Swabian activists in the Austrian capital exemplified nationalist hopes to create increased compatriot consciousness and solidify the community on the inside. The discussion revolved around the project of "provincializing" European history and the intricacies of the nationalist project in the interwar period.

The first panel of the Thursday, which took place at Georgetown University in a conference room overlooking the Potomac River and was chaired by Hedwig Richter, was introduced by Clemens Huemerlehner and Yanara Schnacks. The papers by Talitta Reitz and Colton Ochsner were both interdisciplinary and each dealt with the modernity of the

late Kaiserreich and interwar Weimar Republic. Reitz's larger study in the environmental humanities compared the emerging cycling cultures in Portland, Oregon, and Munich from the second half of the nineteenth to the first half of the twentieth century. Research in the social sciences suggests that cycling cultures matter more than infrastructure for getting people to use bikes — a major present-day environmental policy goal in many cities. However, cycling cultures do not emerge overnight; they have a history — a subject that Reitz tackles in her dissertation with a clear eye toward informing present-day debates and practices. Ochsner's paper took participants on a deep dive into Weimar-era Expressionist films. He argued that Expressionist cinema — including famous films such as Fritz Lang's *Das Testament des Dr Marbuse* — followed a hitherto overlooked "occult blueprint" that shaped its visual language and narrative structure. The discussion focused on the promises and perils of doing interdisciplinary work, the relationship between films and their audiences, and the social history of early bicycle use in the United States and Germany.

Thursday's second panel, chaired by Paul Steege and expertly introduced and contextualized by Marlene Friedrich and Rory Hanna, turned the participants' focus to the lives of Nazi victims and perpetrators. Lea Münch, a trained physician and historian, studied thousands of psychiatric patient files from Straßburg in the early 1940s to write a history of Nazi medicine "from below." Her dissertation, from which she introduced a chapter that focused on the story of one particular individual, examines the broader experiential history of psychiatric patients under Nazi rule. Malte Beeker's paper also zoomed in on one specific case to examine the history of Nazi perpetrators and what often amounted to their rehabilitation after 1945. The chapter under discussion examined the 1960s' legal proceedings against one Rudolf Jänisch, who had been a key official in the Reich Security Main Office. Beeker shed light on why Jänisch was merely

treated as a “technical aide” and not prosecuted as the key player in the administration of the Holocaust that he was. The lively discussion centered around the multidirectional linkages between legal proceedings and trajectories of historical research as well as the relationship between individual cases and broader social histories.

Friday’s first panel, on which Talitta Reitz and Malte Beeker served as commentators and which Anna von der Goltz chaired, took participants back into the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Verena Bunkus examined the power of maps not just to *reflect* spatial realities but to *create* new allegiances and perceptions. Zooming in on one particularly important and popular map by Paul Langhans that depicted the province of Posen and Western Prussia, she showed how ethnographic knowledge was made, developed, and visualized between the 1890s and the end of the First World War. David Korsuize’s essay examined the diplomatic activities of Grand Duke Ernst Ludwig of Hesse-Darmstadt during the Wilhelmine Period. He argued that, despite the public prominence and personal regiment of Wilhelm II, members of the German nobility continued to play a vital role in German diplomatic culture after 1870/1. The commentators urged both paper writers — and indeed TDS participants on the whole — to be even bolder and clearer about advancing their arguments and historiographical contributions.

The seminar’s penultimate panel, introduced by Ben van Zee and Verena Bunkus and chaired by Karrin Hanshew, focused on German-German history in the 1970s and 1980s. Elena Kiesel examined the phenomenon of “voluntarism” under the conditions of a dictatorship. Her paper took a close look at the East German *Neuerer* movement, which was modelled on the Soviet Stakhanovites. The movement was revived under Erich Honecker in an attempt to create new enthusiasm for the construction of socialism and to forge the new socialist person. Her research demonstrated, however, that

the movement could not escape the internal contradictions of the regime. Yanara Schmacks's work traced the changing conceptions of maternalism and motherhood in the West German women's movement of the 1970s and 1980s. From the mid-1970s onward, motherhood became sensualized, eroticized, and increasingly sexualized. After the Chernobyl catastrophe in 1986, a growing ecofeminist strand of the movement also began to reimagine and essentialize motherhood as tightly bound to nature and "life." The discussion revolved around the trajectories of this reinvented maternalism, "black-green" convergence from the 1980s onward, the agency of ordinary people under socialism, and the new comparative histories of dictatorship and democracy.

The papers of the seminar's final panel, with comments by Arnab Dutta and David Korsuize and chaired by Martin Geyer, dealt with economic, political, and social transformation in German history after 1945 and 1989/90. Clemens Huemerlehner charted the rise of oil as an energy resource in the Federal Republic. Prior to the 1940s, coal dominated the German energy sector and the shift toward oil was by no means predetermined. The Marshall Plan and its administrators played a key role in facilitating this shift, Huemerlehner showed. Axel-Wolfgang Kahl examined the transformation of East German academia after 1990, with a focus on the disciplines of law, economics, and the social sciences. Kahl compared the experiences of the universities in Leipzig and Potsdam to understand why East German academics were subjected to what essentially amounted to a West German takeover — despite notable administrative and procedural differences between the two places. During the final discussion, which wrapped up the three-day seminar, participants reflected on the joys of meeting and engaging in person after years of very limited possibilities for such encounters.

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