GHI News

GHI Welcomes New Director

On October 1, 2025, Ulrike von Hirschhausen assumed the directorship of the German Historical Institute Washington and its Pacific Office in Berkeley, succeeding Simone Lässig, who led the Institute since 2015. Hirschhausen brings a wide-ranging background in modern European and global history, nationalism, and empire studies. She studied history in Germany (Freiburg) and the United States, earning a master's degree from Stanford University. She completed her doctorate at the University of Tübingen and her *Habilitation* at the University of Göttingen. Since 2010, she has held the chair for modern European history at Rostock University. Most recently, in 2024/25, she was a fellow at Harvard University's Weatherhead Research Cluster on Global History. Her latest scholarship includes *Empires: Eine globale Geschichte 1780–1920* (co-authored with Jörn Leonhard), published in 2023 and longlisted for the 2024 Austrian Academic Book Award, as well as the forthcoming *Frozen Conflicts: Brennpunkte der Gegenwart zwischen Krieg und Frieden,* to be published in 2026. At the GHI Washington, she will establish the study of empires and their legacies as a new research focus, building on the Institute's strengths in migration, European history, and the history of the Americas.

2025 Fritz Stern Dissertation Prize

The 2025 Fritz Stern Dissertation Prize, which is awarded annually by the Friends of the German Historical Institute for the best dissertation in German history completed at a North American university, was awarded to Matthew Hershey for his dissertation "Inclination Toward Death: Suicide, Sacrifice, and State Collapse in First World War Germany," completed at the University of Michigan in 2024 under the supervision of Kathleen Canning and Geoff Eley.

The Stern Prize committee comprised Jennifer V. Evans (Carleton University), Carina L. Johnson (Pitzer College, chair),

and Molly J. Loberg (California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo). The committee's prize citation (*laudatio*) read as follows:

"Matthew Hershey's dissertation, 'Inclination Toward Death: Suicide, Sacrifice, and State Collapse in First World War Germany,' holds many surprises. A surface reading of the title and abstract suggests a familiar story of death and dying during the First World War. But what awaits the reader is actually something very different. Hershey offers a sweeping analysis of shifting sentiments around suicide during the Great War. The imperial government sought to set the terms of death, both through its battlefield decisions and by framing the language in which death was reported. And yet it could not fully control the meanings that everyday people gave to different kinds of death even in the midst of war. In Hershey's imaginative telling, suicide is something more than a lens into medical or psychological categories. Rather, when viewed critically, it opens up a spectrum of behaviors and self-understandings around what it means to live for and at the expense of the nation.

Hershey's biggest contribution is a bold and original engagement with what he calls "citizen inclination towards death." A form of self-destruction which changed and evolved over time, it sometimes served the Imperial state and at other times surpassed the state's ambition and efforts to control death's meaning for its own purposes. Suicide offers a lens into the bureaucratic management of bodies and sentiments during war. Yet, according to Hershey, the inclination towards death is also evidence of citizen agency in dark times. The affective ties between the front lines and home front, built through soldiers' letters and the agony of solitary death, became part of the emotional landscape of defeat, setting Germany on a course for the violent conflicts of revolution and the postwar settlement. Ultimately, citizens disentangled the death of a particular form of "the nation" from their own desire to live on. Suicide created distinct emotional regimes that help us understand loss as both a personal matter and a political one.

Hershey's is an original voice, and this dissertation reflects this originality through the deft ways in which the sources are read, pulled apart, and put back together. From beginning to end, Hershey seamlessly weaves in wide-ranging scholarship and brings compelling new insights to canonical historiography. Moving portraits of individuals from all levels of society populate the narrative and make the difficult subject matter accessible to a broader readership. This dissertation challenges the reader to think more capaciously about the meaning and implications of death and the spaces in between loss and unbecoming, on both a personal and state level. It is a masterful contribution to the literature, a pure pleasure to read. On behalf of the Committee, and the Friends of the German Historical Institute, congratulations to Dr. Hershey!"

2025 Franz Steiner Prize

On May 10, 2025, GHI Washington Deputy Director Axel Jansen together with Johannes Klemm of the Steiner Verlag awarded the biennial Franz Steiner Prize in Transatlantic History at the Annual Conference of the Historians of the German Association for American Studies (GAAS) in Tutzing. The Steiner Prize is awarded by the GHI Washington and the Steiner Verlag for an outstanding work in transatlantic and North American history.

This year's winner was Nadine Klopfer (LMU München) for her manuscript "Trade and Taste: French Things and the Making of the American Nation, 1780s–1820s." At a time when the U.S. once again is distancing itself from Europe politically, it is perhaps of particular interest to explore the old continent's relevance to the evolution of American nationhood. Klopfer's work provides a new and exciting angle for approaching transatlantic cultural relations. Informed by anthropologists' and art historians' longstanding interests in cultural objects, she deftly posits that we have failed to grasp how the elites in early American culture found succinct ways to begin to define national cultural coordinates. In doing so, urban middle-class and upper-class Americans

responded to the desire to not be British, on the one hand, and to set standards of cultural refinement and elite integration, on the other.

Klopfer describes her book as a "cultural history of French things in the post-revolutionary United States." She tells the stories "of gold watches, mahogany chairs, and silverware, of Sèvres porcelain vases and Empire couches, of fans, snuff boxes, and ribbons." By focusing on the networks that made these objects available to but also cherished among American elites, including presidents such as George Washington and James Monroe, she draws a rich picture of transatlantic exchanges. While she emphasizes her contribution to the historiography of the Early Republic, which has long focused on contemporary discourses about the American nation, the implications of her study will inspire researchers well beyond this particular subfield.

The prize committee consisted of colleagues from Europe and from North America, all of whom were immensely impressed by Klopfer's achievement. Committee members touted, in particular, her deft construction of the manuscript, her meticulous research, and her elegant explication of the early-nineteenth-century American fascination with artefacts either from France or at least regarded as "French." They appreciated not only Klopfer's demonstration of how elite Americans began constructing a more refined national culture, but also of how French things served as foils against which they sought a sense of national identity based upon ideals of straightforwardness and transparency. By the 1820s, this enthusiasm for French things had become part of a broad project of national cultural definition. The committee highlighted how the manuscript, by focusing on objects, their networks, and their social significance, opens exciting new perspectives on a seemingly well-researched period.

The GHI is proud to note that Klopfer's research was supported by a GHI postdoctoral fellowship. The manuscript will soon be published in the Steiner Verlag book series *Transatlantic Historical Studies*, and will be available in Open Access Gold.

GHI Publications

Studies in German History (Berghahn Books)

Christina Brauner, Renate Dürr, Philip Hahn, Anne Sophie Overkamp, Simon Siemianowski, eds. *Encountering the Global in Early Modern Germany: Microhistories of Mobility, Materiality, and Belonging*.

Staff Changes

Emma Clarke joined the GHI Pacific Office as Events and Administrative Assistant in April 2025. She holds an MA in European History, Politics, and Society from Columbia University.

Alexa Lässig, who joined the GHI in December 2015 as Social Media Coordinator, left the institute in June 2025 in order to continue her career in Germany.

Simone Lässig completed her term as GHI director at the end of September 2025 and returned to her position as Professor of Modern and Contemporary History at TU Braunschweig.

Bénédicte Pillot-Bechtold, who joined the GHI in February 2022 as Administrative Assistant and Receptionist, left the institute in June 2025 in order to return to her position at the University of Bonn.

Ray Savord, who joined the GHI Pacific Office as Events and Administrative Assistant in April 2021, left the GHI in March 2025.

Christine Winkler joined the GHI as Administrative Coordinator and Receptionist in June 2025. Before joining the GHI, she worked for many years as International Assignment Coordinator for professional services firms in Germany.

GHI Fellowships and Internships

Doctoral and Postdoctoral Fellowships

The GHI awards short-term fellowships to European and North American doctoral students as well as postdoctoral scholars to pursue research projects that draw upon primary sources located in the United States. We are particularly interested in research projects that fi t into the following fields:

German and European history, the history of German-American relations, the role of Germany and the USA in international relations, and American history (European doctoral and postdoctoral scholars only).

The proposed research projects should make use of historical methods and engage with the relevant historiography. We especially invite applications from doctoral students and postdoctoral scholars who currently have no funding from their home institutions. The fellowships are usually granted for periods of one to five months.

The GHI also offers a number of other long-term doctoral and postdoctoral fellowships with more specific profiles to strengthen key research interests at the institute, including: the history of knowledge, the history of race and ethnicity, the history of religion and religiosity, the history of family and kinship, the history of migration, and North American history. In addition to these opportunities, the GHI also offers the following fellowships: The Binational Tandem Research Program for "The History of Knowledge" and "Global and Trans-regional History," and the Gerda Henkel Postdoctoral Fellowship for Digital History.

For further information about these programs and current application deadlines, please check our website at www.ghi-dc.org/fellowships.

GHI Internships

The GHI Internship Program gives German and American students of history, political science, and library studies an opportunity to gain experience at a scholarly research institute. Interns assist individual research projects, work for the library, take part in the preparation and hosting of conferences, and help with our publications. They receive a small stipend. The program is very flexible in the sense that the GHI tries to accommodate the interns' interests, abilities, and goals. A two-month minimum stay is required; a three-month stay is preferred. There is a rolling review of applications. For further information, please check our website at www.ghi-dc.org/internships.

Fellowship Recipients, 2025-26

Long-term Visiting Fellowships

Max Gaida (University of Cologne)
From Red Light to Rainbow: The Politics of Sex and Space in Philadelphia's Urban Crises

Sara Halpern (St. Olaf College)
Stateless by Design: Jewish Denationalization and Imperial Politics in Europe and Beyond

Laurelin Middelkoop (EUI Florence)
Unions before the Union: Perpetual Peace Plans before the American Founding

Douwe Schipper (Johns Hopkins University)
Mass Transit, Regional Governance, and the Politics of Knowledge in 1960s-1970s American Transportation Planning

Didi Tal (Columbia University)
Papers and Trails: The Holocaust and U.S. Immigration Control

Gerda Henkel Fellow for Digital History

Ronny Grundig (University of Greifswald)
The History of Neighborhoods in Germany in the 20th Century

Short-term Doctoral Research Fellowships

John Balz (University of Wisconsin-Madison)
Slavery's Church: German Pietism, Empire, and Race in the Danish West Indies

Randall Chaves Zamora (Freie Universität Berlin)
Das intellektuelle Imperium: Die Ford Foundation, Sozialwissenschaften und der kulturelle Kalte Krieg in Zentralamerika (1948–1979)

Linus Lanfermann-Baumann (University of Graz)
Armed for Peace? Solidarity with Central America, Anti-nuclear Activism, and the Question of Violence during the Global Second Cold War

Barbara Mercier (Technische Universität Berlin)
Learning about the Atmosphere: Numerical and Material Modeling from the 1920s to the 1960s

Argyrios Sakorafas (University of Düsseldorf)
Within and beyond the Mediterranean: The History of Travel on Transatlantic Steamships ca. 1900-1940, and the Case of Migration from Southern Europe

Simon Schulz (University of Heidelberg)
Red Weather: Soviet Atmospheric Science between International Cold War and Regional Expertise

Lauranne Wolfe (Boston University)
Bodies That Belong: Disability and Displacement in the Postwar World

Short-term Postdoctoral Research Fellowships

Christiane Hoth de Olano (University of Bern)
From Source to Sea: An Environmental History of River Pollution and Accountability in the Caribbean Basin (1970s to 2010s)

Dianne Violeta Mausfeld (University of Bielefeld)
Portuguese Migrant Networks in California: Contact Spaces, Knowledge Flows, and Identity Formation (19th and 20th Century)

Sari Siegel (Cedars-Sinai Medical Center)
Healing after the Holocaust: Jewish DP-Physicians and the Provision of Medical Care to Fellow Survivors in Germany, 1945-1950

Horner Library Fellows

Jennifer A. Merriman (College of William & Mary)
Circulating Print, Knowledge, and Power in the German Atlantic, 1670-1870

RESEARCH SEMINAR AND COLLOQUIUM, SPRING 2025

February 20	**Colloquium** **Claas Oberstadt (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin)** Between the Lines: Accounting, Insurance, and Resistance in the Transatlantic Slave Trade **Jasmin Goll (University of Bern)** "The World's Telephone Concert." Music by Telephone Wires as an 'Audible Infrastructure,' 1870-1930
March 27	**Colloquium** **Alexander Obermüller (University of Erfurt)** Piecing Together Emergency Medical Care: Philadelphia's Early Ambulance Service **Stefan Pulte (University of Bochum)** Security in Transatlantic Discourse: The Munich Security Conference and the Making of the Strategic Community
April 9	**Research Seminar** **Nina Mackert (University of Leipzig)** "Lifestyle Diseases," Race, and Responsibility in the 20th Century U.S.
May 4	**Washington-Area German History Seminar** **Angela Zimmerman (George Washington University)** Clausewitz's Communists (Chapter 4 from the book manuscript "'If we fight': Conjure, Communism, and the Revolution against Slavery in the American Civil War")

May 21	**Research Seminar** **Joshua Teplitsky (University of Pennsylvania)** Contagion, Crisis, Coexistence? Epidemics and Jewish Life in Early Modern Europe
June 23	**Research Seminar** **Valeska Huber (University of Vienna)** Language Barriers: Global Communication and its Limits

Calendar of Events, 2025–2026

2025

July 7-10 — **Historicizing the Refugee Experience, 17th–21st Centuries**
Fifth Annual International Seminar in Historical Refugee Studies in Berkeley, CA. Organized by University of Tübingen (UT), the German Historical Institute in Washington (GHI) and the American Historical Association (AHA)

September 4 — **The Legacy of World War II in American Society and Politics**
Panel Discussion at the GHI
Speakers: Katherine Benton-Cohen (Georgetown University), Thomas A. Guglielmo (George Washington University), Jeremi Suri (University of Texas at Austin); Moderator: Axel Jansen (GHI Washington)

September 10-12 — **Universities and the Public Good: Research, Education, and Democracy since 1945**
Workshop and Young Scholars Forum at Herrenhausen Palace, Hanover, Germany
Conveners: Charles Dorn (Bowdoin College, Maine), Axel Jansen (GHI Washington), Charlotte Lerg (LMU München), Till van Rahden (Université de Montréal), and Richard F. Wetzell (GHI Washington)

September 10	**Können Universitäten die Demokratie retten?** Panel Discussion at Herrenhausen Palace, Hannover Panelists: Julika Griem (Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut Essen), Ian McNeely (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), Shalini Randeria (Central European University, Vienna), and Till van Rahden (Université de Montréal); Moderator: Johannes Völz (Goethe-Universität Frankfurt); Welcome: Axel Jansen (GHI Washington)
September 16	**Church Bells and the Toll of Culture in Postwar Germany** Lecture at IES, UC Berkeley Speaker: Alice Goff (University of Chicago)
September 25-28	**Beyond Refuge: Legacies of Forced Migration and Transit in Post-1945 History** Roundtable at the 49th annual conference of the German Studies Association, Arlington, VA Conveners: Swen Steinberg (GHI Washington / Queen's University) and Rebekka Grossmann (Leiden University)
September 26	**German History in Documents and Images 2.0: Editing a Primary Source Collection for the Digital Age** Roundtable at at the 49th annual conference of the German Studies Association, Arlington, VA Speakers: Simone Lässig (GHI Washington), Pamela Swett (McMaster University), Jonathan Wiesen (University of Alabama at Birmingham), and James Retallack (University of Toronto); moderator: Insa Kummer (GHI Washington)

September 29-30	**Food, Migration, and Belonging in 20th Century European History** Conference at German Historical Institute | Pacific Office at UC Berkeley Conveners: Maren Möhring (University of Leipzig), Isabel Richter (GHI Washington Pacific Office at UC Berkeley)
October 6	**The Complex Legacies of Nazism: Current Perspectives on the History and Memory of National Socialism** Lecture at UC Berkeley Speaker: Michael Wildt (Humboldt University, Berlin), Moderators: Mia Fuller (Institute of European Studies at UC Berkeley) and Isabel Richter (German Historical Institute Washington | Pacific Office Berkeley)
October 9-10	**The Campus and Beyond: Higher Education and Social Inequalities in Europe and North America, 1850s-2000s** International Conference at the German Historical Institute Washington Conveners: Raphael Rössel (GHI Washington), Elizabeth Tandy Shermer (Loyola University Chicago), and Stefanie Coché (Gießen University)
2026	
March 6-7	**Eighth West Coast Germanists' Workshop: German History at the Crossroads? New Narratives, Perspectives and Approaches** Workshop at University of Colorado Boulder Conveners: David Ciarlo (University of Colorado Boulder), Thomas Pegelow Kaplan (University of Colorado Boulder), Isabel Richter (GHI Washington | Pacific Office, Berkeley) Raphael Rössel (GHI Washington)

March 18-19	**Listening to the Past: Digital Approaches to the History of Sound and Language** Workshop at the German Historical Institute Washington Conveners: Hans C. Boas (University of Texas, Austin) and Atiba Pertilla (GHI Washington)
April 23-24	**Rebuild or Retreat? Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Climate Migration and Mobility in the Global North** Conference at GHI Washington Conveners: Jana Dunz-Keck (GHI Washington), Sarah Beringer (GHI Washington), Simon Richter (University of Pennsylvania), Andreas Hübner (Kiel University), Max Gruenig (POCACITO Network and Georgetown University, BMW Center for German and European Studies), and Brendan O'Donnell (POCACITO Network and Heinrich Böll Foundation)
May 28-29	**Imperial Legacies? (Dis)continuities and Comparisons between Colonialism and Nazi Rule** International Conference at the German Historical Institute Washington Conveners: Ulrike von Hirschhausen (GHI Washington) and Robert Gerwarth (University College Dublin)
September 17-18	**The Moralization of Science** Conference at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna Conveners: Daniel Brewing, Moritz Fischer, Elke Seefried (RWTH Aachen), Alexander Bogner (Austrian Academy of Sciences), Axel Jansen (GHI Washington)

GHI Library

The GHI library concentrates on German history and transatlantic relations, with emphasis on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In addition to providing essential literature for scholarly research, the library fulfills an important cultural mission: no other library in the United States offers a similarly condensed inventory of modern German history. The library offers access to about 50,000 books, DVDs, CD-ROMs, microfiches, and 220 print journals. In addition, we offer access to about 500 e-books and 100 online journals.

The collection includes books on American history written by German authors as well as historical literature of the institute's past research foci: global history, religious studies, exile and migration studies, environmental history, and economic history. The collection includes only print materials, mostly secondary literature; there are no archival holdings.

The GHI library offers free access to scholars as well as the general public; appointments or reader cards are not necessary. The library does not lend materials but visitors may consult material from the entire collection in our beautiful reading room, which also offers access to a variety of databases for journal articles, historical newspapers, genealogical research, and bibliographical research.

For the library catalog or a list of our databases, please visit www.ghi-dc.org/library. Or send an email to library@ghi-dc.org for any further questions.

The **library hours** are Monday to Thursday from 9 am to 5 pm, Fridays from 9 am to 4 pm, and by appointment.