

BUCERIUS SEMINAR 2005: AMERICAN HISTORY AND AMERICAN ARCHIVES

Conveners: Kathleen Conzen (University of Chicago), Andreas Etges (Free University of Berlin), Christof Mauch (GHI). Made possible by a grant from the ZEIT Foundation Gerd and Ebelin Bucerius.

The second annual Bucerius Seminar on American History and American Archives took place from September 5–17, 2005. Again, the GHI, the Department of History of the University of Chicago, and the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies of the Free University of Berlin joined forces to organize the summer archive course. Ten doctoral students—seven from different German universities and three from the University of Chicago—visited American archives and libraries in Chicago, Madison, Boston, and Washington, DC.

There were a few changes in the program from the year before, but the idea behind the Bucerius Seminar remained the same: to prepare Ph.D. students in American history for their prospective dissertation research trips. They learned how to contact archives, use finding aids, and identify important reference tools, and they became acquainted with a dozen American research facilities. They gained insight into how historical materials are acquired, stored, and made accessible to scholars. In addition, the group met a number of prominent scholars who discussed their research strategies with them.

The program started in Chicago, where Kathleen N. Conzen again welcomed the group as well as colleagues and graduate students from the University of Chicago to her house on Labor Day evening. The excellent staff of Chicago's Newberry Library organized the next day and a half of the seminar. Jim Grossman, Hjordis Halvorson, Martha Briggs, and a number of their colleagues laid the groundwork by giving a general introduction to the American archival system, major finding aids, and search strategies, as well as applying for scholarships. In addition, the group learned about the collections and the collection policy of the Newberry.

The visit to the Special Collections Research Center of the University of Chicago's Regenstein Library, where Daniel Meyer and his colleagues welcomed the group, was followed by two very long but highly praised sessions in the history department. Kathleen Conzen, her colleague Jim Sparrow, Jim Grossman of the Newberry Library, and Andreas Etges served as commentators to start a more detailed discussion of the participants' research topics.

The last day in Chicago began with an early visit to the archive of the Circuit Court of Cook County in downtown Chicago, where Philip J. Costello not only treated the group to some high-calorie “German” bakery goods but also showed that court records can be an excellent source for social history. The immigration record forms on the shelves around the table showed the past worries of the American government: People had to sign pledges that they were not anarchists (“a disbeliever in or opposed to organized government”) or polygamists. Before taking the bus to Madison, there was time to go on an architectural tour of Chicago by boat.

The next day, Michael Edmonds and Harry Miller welcomed the group to the Wisconsin Historical Society, which is impressive both as a building and as an institution. It is the largest library for American history, it functions as a state archive, it is the premier place to do research on Wisconsin, and it is also known for its collection of labor and social movement records (for example, the American Federation of Labor and the Students for a Democratic Society). But who would have guessed that you could also find the records of NBC and United Artists in Madison? Paul Boyer, the retired Merle Curti Professor at the University of Wisconsin, joined the group for lunch at the University Club. In his entertaining talk he looked back at the “history” of his different books, his “unsystematic” approaches, his failures and successes, and the problems and rewards of collaboration.

On Saturday, Jack Holzhueter, a former editor of the *Wisconsin Magazine of History* and arguably the expert on the history of Wisconsin, took the group on a historical and architectural tour of Madison and Dane County. We visited Frank Lloyd Wright’s Unitarian Church in Madison and the Freethinker’s Hall in Sauk City, and passed a number of dairy farms as well as Wright’s estate Taliesin on our way to watch an outdoor performance of *Macbeth* at the American Players Theater in Spring Green. The fact that the group traveled in an SUV stretch limo, normally used as a party vehicle, guaranteed an unusual ride as well as a number of surprised looks, for example when stopping at an old cemetery to take a look at the gravestone of freethinker Eduard Schroeter (which is crowned by a globe). Like the year before, the group left Madison on September 11, and again all of us, including the Americans, were picked for special screening at the airport.

The first day in Boston started with a visit of the Massachusetts Archives. Michael Comeau and Martha Clark discussed their institution’s history and impressive collections, and presented some of its true treasures. Among them are the Massachusetts copies of the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights as well as forged evidence from the famous Sacco and Vanzetti trial. In the early afternoon, the group was

welcomed at the Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America. Ellen M. Shea and her colleagues did a wonderful job, and had brought out relevant material for most of the participants. New in the program was Harvard's Baker Library, a short but on that day very hot walk away. Timothy Mahoney gave a tour of the library's historical collections, including the famous Kress Collection of Business and Economic Literature. Among the wide variety of archival material he presented were records of the R.G. Dun & Co. credit reports from the second half of the nineteenth century, which can be an invaluable source for economic and social historians.

On its second and final day in Boston the group went to see the John F. Kennedy Library. Sharon Kelley, Stephen Plotkin, and James Roth talked about this institution's special history, collections, and processing of records. They also presented a real highlight: Kennedy's original note card with the handwritten "Ish bin ein Bearleener." Maura Porter expertly discussed declassification and entertained the group with a number of tape recordings showing both the relevance and problems of these types of records. Next, James Hill presented the rich textual and audiovisual collections of the Kennedy Library.

The first stop in Washington was the archive of the National Museum of American History. John Fleckner gave a brief overview of the Smithsonian Institution and its other collections before presenting the large holdings of his archive in business, engineering, communications, and advertising history. Next, David Allison, one of the curators of the "Price of Freedom" exhibition, gave the group a tour of the new and controversial exhibition. As one of its curators, he afterwards discussed the challenges of presenting American military history to the public.

In the late afternoon, Robert Dallek, author of the best-selling Kennedy biography and a foremost expert on the American presidency, once again came to the GHI to talk about doing research in Presidential Libraries. He described how he has tried to get "behind the facades" of the presidents he has studied, and made everyone curious about his current research on Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger. A reception at the GHI gave the group a chance to talk to Dallek in more detail and to get to know the GHI, its director, and some of its fellows.

Most of Thursday was spent at the Library of Congress. Following a brief tour of the building and a visit of the Folklife Center, Daun Van Ee gave a behind-the-scenes tour of the stacks of the Manuscripts Division, passing rows of Presidential Papers and presenting examples from the large collection. Sara Duke and her colleagues from the Prints and Photographs Division once again did a marvelous job pulling all sorts of material of interest to the visiting researchers. In addition, the group got an introduction to the library's ever-expanding website.

On the last day, the group took the shuttle bus from National Archives I in downtown Washington to National Archives II in College Park, Maryland. Bob Coren had organized a program that introduced the group to different divisions. A highlight was the tour of the Special Media Division, where Bob Richardson and Nick Natanson showed maps and photos, including the original patent of Thomas Edison's "incandescing electric lamp," some of the most famous photographs from the Civil War, and one of Eva Braun's photo albums. Some of their colleagues gave introductions to Textual and Electronic Records, Records of Congress and Congressional Committees, and the Nixon Presidential Materials.

A farewell dinner near Dupont Circle concluded the Bucerius Seminar and gave an exhausted but happy group the chance to discuss their particular highlights of the tour. The group and the organizer would like to thank the ZEIT Foundation and the GHI for their generous support, as well as all those institutions and individuals involved in making the second Bucerius Seminar successful.

Andreas Etges

Participants and Their Projects

THOMAS ADAMS (University of Chicago), "The Origins of the 'New' Working Class: Political Economy, Gender and Service Work in Postwar America"

SIMON DOING (University of Marburg), "High Technology Transfer between the United States and the German Democratic Republic (1955–1973): Transnational Relations During the Cold War"

REINHILD KREIS (University of Munich), "American Public Diplomacy and German Images of America: German-American Institutes and America-Houses During the 1960s and 1970s as a Period of Changing Values"

ALISON LEVKOVITZ (University of Chicago), "Marriage and Domesticity in the Middle of the Twentieth Century"

JONATHAN LEVY (University of Chicago), "The Ways of Providence: The Political Economy of the Future in Nineteenth-Century America"

GUDRUN LÖHRER (University of Cologne/University of East London), "Epidemics, Pandemics, and Plague: Governmentality and Health Education in Educational Films, 1927–1955"

SABINE MEYER (University of Mainz), "Irish, Germans, Anglo-Americans, and the Temperance Movement in St. Paul, Minnesota, 1848–1919"

CHRISTOPHER NEUMAIER (Technical University of Munich), "Rationality Constructs: Understanding the Diametrically Opposed Acceptance of Diesel Automobiles in Germany and the United States"

MARCO BASTIAN SCHROF (University of Munich), "'Mental Prairies': Perceptions of Space in the American West, 1860–1885"

JAN SURMANN (University of Hamburg), "Holocaust-Remembrance and Restitution: The U.S. History Policy at the End of the Twentieth Century"