

## **25TH TRANSATLANTIC DOCTORAL SEMINAR NINETEENTH- AND TWENTIETH-CENTURY GERMAN HISTORY**

Seminar held at the GHI Washington and Georgetown University from May 29 — June 1, 2019; co-organized by the GHI and Georgetown University's BMW Center for German and European Studies. Conveners: Anna von der Goltz (Georgetown University) and Richard F. Wetzell (GHI). Faculty Mentors: Frank Biess (University of California, San Diego), Ann Goldberg (University of California, Riverside), Anne Kwaschik (University of Konstanz), Corinna Unger (European University Institute, Florence). Doctoral participants: Tobias Bruns (University of Marburg), Christiane Bub (University of Tübingen), Oliver Gaida (Humboldt University, Berlin), Kathryn Holihan (University of Michigan), Charlotte Johann (Cambridge University), Christopher Kirchberg (University of Bochum), Julie Keresztes (Boston University), Max Lazar (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), Alexander Finn Macartney (Georgetown University), Jan Rybak (European University Institute, Florence), Richard Spiegel (Princeton University), Rick Tazelaar (Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich), Peter Thompson (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign), Jasmin Söhner (University of Heidelberg), Emily Steinhauer (Queen Mary University of London), Clemens Villingner (Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung, Potsdam).

This year's Transatlantic Doctoral Seminar commenced with a short ceremony to mark the 25th anniversary of the successful format. GHI Director Simone Lässig looked back on a quarter century of mentoring European and American doctoral students in German history. As always, the seminar brought together doctoral students from North America and Europe, all of whom are working on dissertations in modern German history. The seminar was organized in eight panels, featuring two papers each, which opened with two comments by fellow students, followed by discussion of the pre-circulated papers.

The first panel featured two papers on the nineteenth century, one by Christiane Bub and the other by Charlotte Johann, as well as comments from Jan Rybak and Alexander Finn Macartney. Bub's paper used cases studies of delinquent aristocrats to discuss broader social and political changes in the first half of the century. The legal treatment of aristocrats who had violated the law and the public reaction to their cases, she argued, had much to reveal about shifting social hierarchies and processes of social differentiation in this

period. Johann's paper sought to offer a new interpretation of Prussian constitutional history in the first half of the nineteenth century. Focusing closely on Friedrich Carl von Savigny, the founder of the German Historical School of Law, the paper highlighted the role that "legal pluralism" played in the 1840s. Johann showed that the nature, origins, and epistemology of constitutional law were fundamentally contested in this period. Both papers therefore offered an image of Prussia that differed from older interpretations of the Prussian state as first and foremost authoritarian and emphasized that the process of Prussian state-building was far more multifaceted.

Oliver Gaida and Peter Thompson, the authors of the papers discussed on the second panel, took the seminar into the twentieth century. Gaida examined the ways in which authorities in the city of Berlin dealt with deviant youths between the early Weimar years and the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. He was able to show that certain assumptions about deviant youths as "work shy" or "asocial" — and the instruments to deal with them — changed remarkably little during a period defined by major political ruptures. Embedding the Nazis' exclusion of deviant youths from the *Volksgemeinschaft* (people's community) in a longer temporal context will allow Gaida to tease out what, if anything, was specific about the regime's treatment of this social group. Thompson's paper also relied on the concept of the people's community. He argued that the National Air Protection League's project of equipping citizens with gas masks in the interwar period served both to protect German citizens from aero-chemical attack and to create an ideological community of national air defense. The Weimar government's inability to provide a large enough quantity of gas masks, coupled with a major gas leak in Hamburg in 1928, Thompson contended, contributed to the Nazis' rise to power with assurances of future national gas protection. The discussion, facilitated by Emily Steinhauer and Christopher Kirchberg, focused on the utility of the *Volksgemeinschaft* in both papers and on the explanatory potential of an object like the gas mask. Did the gas mask really have agency? Did putting one on integrate Germans into the *Volksgemeinschaft*?

The final panel of the first day included two papers on knowledge, education, and public health, by Richard Spiegel and Kathryn Holihan. Spiegel re-examined the *Humanismus-Realismusstreit* in Saxony by looking at the introduction of psychology into institutions of higher learning. The Saxon debates about curricular reform and

standardization that began in the 1830s revolved around concerns about how best to enable students' refinement of mind, given a finite economy of attention. Teaching psychology provided an answer to this because it promised the key to the self-government of attention. Holihan focused on the exhibit *Der Mensch* at the 1911 International Hygiene Exhibition in Dresden to show how the body's exhibitionary dissection functioned as a form of mass hygiene instruction for a non-expert public. She analyzed the organizers' experimentations with pioneering display methods to elevate the body and to promote "rational" hygienic practices. In so doing, the paper challenged historiographical accounts that divorce the extra-political spaces of exhibitions and museums from the world of high politics. The comments, delivered by Rick Tazelaar and Julie Keresztes, and the ensuing discussion reflected on the related ways in which humans were conceived as governable beings in both papers.

The second day began with papers by Tobias Bruns and Julie Keresztes and comments from Christiane Bub and Max Lazar. Bruns examined discourses about security in Imperial Germany and argued that various forms of mobility (both physical and social) were increasingly perceived as threats after 1878. Measures to curtail mobility — by limiting free trade or confining prostitutes to brothels, for instance — were implemented to guarantee security, Bruns argued. Keresztes's paper dealt with photography in the Third Reich, specifically with the dispossession of Jewish photographers and camera retailers during the early years of Nazi rule. Using businesses in Berlin and Hamburg as case studies, the paper demonstrated how Nazi officials reshaped the photographic industry along "racial" lines in order to transfer ownership of photography businesses and supplies from Jewish men and women to "true" members of the German *Volk*. The participants in the discussion urged both authors to spell out even more clearly how their topics changed conventional scholarly understandings of Imperial and Nazi Germany. The debate also revolved around the relationship between discourses and reality, that is, the nexus between social fears about security and the objective security situation in the Kaiserreich, and around the potential of writing a history of the Third Reich that engaged seriously with photographs as visual sources and photography as a social practice.

Friday's second panel featured papers by Alexander Finn Macartney and Christopher Kirchberg that both dealt with the 1960s and 1970s, as well as comments by Jasmin Söhner and Clemens Villinger. Kirchberg

analyzed the introduction of a computer-based information system in the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution in the late 1960s. His main argument was that this reform was the result of internal administrative developments and technological change and should not be misunderstood as a direct response to the protest movements of these years. The reform, Kirchberg contended, was a prehistory of “big data,” not a history of reactions to 1968. Macartney’s paper was one of the few explicitly comparative and transnational contributions at this year’s seminar. Macartney looked at linkages between anti-imperialist groups in West Germany and Japan around 1968 and, through concrete examples of encounters between activists from both states, showed that they were keenly interested in each other’s politics. The Japanese influence on the Global, and West German, 1960s deserved a more prominent place in the historiography, he contended. The discussion homed in on questions of impact and source materials — what difference did transnational ties between West Germans and Japanese ultimately make? And how can one write a history of a secret agency that highlights the role of the people who ran it?

After enjoying a free afternoon on Friday, the participants reconvened on Saturday morning. The first panel of the day included two papers, by Jan Rybak and Max Lazar, that dealt with early-twentieth-century Jewish history in Germany and beyond. Rybak examined the German conquest of much of East-Central Europe from 1915 onward and showed that German Zionists came to the East with a civilizing mission to “rescue” and “nationalize” the Jewish people of the region. The main focus of these efforts were children (often orphans), for whom German Zionists built a national education and welfare infrastructure. Lazar wrote about Jewish integration in Frankfurt am Main between 1914 and 1938. After demonstrating that much of the local literature positively depicted Frankfurt as a Jewish space, Lazar argued that such depictions both reflected and reinforced the integration of the city’s Jewish population. The lively discussion, led by comments from Kathryn Holihan and Oliver Gaida, revolved around issues of comparison and historiographical revisionism. How distinct was the German Zionist mission in the East and how did it compare to other “civilizing” missions? The participants invited Lazar to clarify his definition of “integration” and how it related to the Nazi regime’s antisemitism and politics of exclusion from 1933 onward.

The next panel, with papers by Rick Tazelaar and Jasmin Söhner, continued the focus on the history of the Third Reich and its legacies.

Tazelaar analyzed the leading personnel of the Bavarian State Chancellery after 1945 to show that their experiences during the late Weimar years directly shaped how they organized this crucial state institution. Safeguarding the Bavarian state, he argued, was their paramount concern. His dissertation as a whole tries to provide a more nuanced understanding of the Nazi ties of those who ran West Germany's administration in the early years of the Federal Republic: *Belastung*, he contended, could mean many different things. Söhner took a fresh look at the Central Office of the Länder Judicial Authorities for the Investigation of National Socialist Crimes in Ludwigsburg by focusing on its cooperation with Soviet authorities in bringing Nazi perpetrators to justice. One major goal of her work was offering a more nuanced portrayal of Erwin Schüle, the Central Office's first head, who is often viewed critically because of his own membership in the Nazi party and SA. The discussion, aided by comments from Peter Thompson and Tobias Bruns, again centered on historiographical issues. What role did West German anti-communism play in shaping German-Soviet legal cooperation? And, given the many existing studies of how various German ministries and businesses dealt with the legacies of Nazism, what new insights might we gain by looking at state ministries?

The final panel of the seminar, featuring papers by Emily Steinhauer and Clemens Villinger and comments by Charlotte Johann and Richard Spiegel, looked at practices of consumption and some of its fiercest German critics. Steinhauer focused on two protagonists of the Frankfurt School, Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, who both returned to Germany from exile in the United States after 1945. She contended that these *réémigrés* represented an interesting case study of how a group of intellectuals collaborated with the American occupation whilst simultaneously attacking capitalism and the commodification of culture in their writings, which built heavily on Franz Kafka's ideas about alienation. Drawing on a secondary analysis of oral history interviews, Villinger examined the eating practices of East German workers after 1989 to offer a more nuanced reading of how consumption shaped perceptions of socialism and capitalism after the *Wende*. While a lack of access to basic consumer items was a key feature of life in East Germany in the 1980s, many interviewees began to look back quite nostalgically at these years as a result of the economic and social uncertainty that marked their lives in the early 1990s.

During the concluding discussion the conveners observed that some topics and approaches that seemed to dominate the field until a few years ago were less prominent or even notably absent at this year's TDS: few of the papers were comparative, transnational or global in scope; none dealt explicitly with German colonialism overseas. The history of emotions did also not feature as prominently as it had done a few years prior. Instead, histories of knowledge seemed to be on the rise, as were dissertations with a focus on technology and security issues.

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