

Spotlight on Faculty Research



In addition to their teaching responsibilities, the Faculty of the German Department stay on the cutting edge of research in the field of German Studies. Here is an overview of their recent and current work.

THOMAS PFAU
Alice Mary Baldwin Professor of English, Chair of the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures

Some of my current research for the past year or so has involved writing and lecturing on issues related to the publication of my third monograph ([Minding the Modern: Human Agency, Intellectual Traditions, and](#)

[Responsible Knowledge](#)), which appeared from the University of Notre Dame Press in 2013.

Since its publication, there have been several web forums on the book, most recently at Syndicate Theology, which also involved my writing formal responses. An offshoot of the book is a long essay on the concept of tradition (due out in the Edinburgh Critical History of Nineteenth-Century Theology next year).

I'll also be attending special seminar discussions on the book at the AAR (American Academy of Religion) next month and at the University of St. Thomas in Minneapolis next February. – Concurrently, I am

moving ahead with research for my next book project, which will explore the role of images and image-consciousness as a type of non-propositional knowledge in literature, philosophy, and theology.

So far, I've sketched some of the stakes of that project in two essays, one on the visual poetics of Gerard Manley Hopkins ("[Rehabilitating the Image](#)") and another one focused on the relationship between visibility, attention, and action ("[Varieties of non-propositional Knowledge](#)"). The latter is to be part of a collection of essays on the concepts of Judgment and Action that is currently under review. The same topic has also been at the heart of a graduate seminar ("[Theological Aesthetics of the Image](#)") that I taught in 2014 and will be offering once more in the Fall of 2016.

INGEBORG WALTHER
Associate Professor of the Practice

My work is motivated by a desire to bring together research in literary studies, second language acquisition, and pedagogy. Although these fields have been traditionally viewed as separate disciplines with differing foundational questions and methodologies, their interdisciplinary thrust has been converging on some central common issues: the construction and acquisition of language,



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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

I am writing just a few months into my first semester as department chair. This new academic year finds our department in a much strengthened position, as a result of the successful faculty searches from last Spring. That happy outcome was the fruit of a strong collaborative spirit both within the department and beyond; and I begin by extending words of thanks to many colleagues in Arts & Sciences. First, we are most grateful to Laura Lieber for all conscientious and effective stewardship during the transitional 2014-15 academic year, and for her wonderful support and assistance with the faculty recruitment process that has brought us Stefani Engelstein and Henry Pickford as new colleagues. That process also benefited greatly from the efforts of Bryan Gilliam (Music), Martin Eisner (Romance Languages), Kristine Stiles (Art & Art History), and Eric Downing (German-UNC).

Already Stefani Engelstein has tackled the complex and pivotal role of co-DGS, while also serving as co-director of the Dissertation Colloquium. Likewise, Henry Pickford has taken on the Works in Progress series, is

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knowledge, and culture; the nature of (national, cultural, ethnic, racial, gendered) identity formation; and the pedagogical project of cultural literacy.

My research explores recent conceptual models of language acquisition that view language development in terms of complex, nonlinear systems that emphasize the relationality of individual learners, social contexts, and cultural frameworks. These investigations have provided a framework for my curricular and pedagogical work, which is linked to questions of what it means to be literate or educated in a world which must deal with the multiple tensions created by rapidly expanding technologies, demographic change, and globalization. Most recently, I have renewed a long-held interest in the intersections of poetry and music, in particular the genre of German art songs (Lieder), as well as in modern German theater. I continue to explore ways in which these art forms can systematically teach the cultural narratives in a way that brings the past into productive relationship with the present, sensitizes students to the aesthetic and symbolic qualities of language, develops their interpretative and creative capacities, and deepens their intercultural understandings.

assisting with a faculty search in another department, and is actively involved in the Future of the Discipline initiative that will bring several literary studies faculty to Duke for a one-day conference on December 4th. Furthermore, I am most grateful to Kata Gellen for her skillful and dedicated administrative work as DUS, to Jakob Norberg as Academic Director of Duke in Berlin, and to Susanne Freytag as Director of the Berlin Summer Program.

As always, the success of our undergraduate program crucially depends on the dedicated and constructive participation of our graduate teaching assistants in the language program, as well as in other curricular and extra-curricular projects that allow our small but vibrant academic community to have disproportionately wide and positive impact on Duke's undergraduate community. I look forward to seeing you at the various functions and meetings of the department and to doing everything in my power to advance the intellectual and pedagogical mission of our department and its various programs.

-- Thomas Pfau

LAURA LIEBER
Associate Professor of Religion and Germanic Languages and Literatures

I was lucky enough to receive two prestigious fellowships for this academic year: one from the National Humanities Center, where I am in residence as a fellow; and another from the American Council of Learned Societies. Thanks to these awards, I am able to spend the entire academic year on research leave, working on two interrelated projects. My primary project is a book called *Staging the Sacred: Orchestrating Holiness in Late Antiquity*. In *Staging the Sacred*, liturgical poems representing the major cultural centers of the Late Ancient world (ca. 4th-7th centuries CE) and the major religious traditions of the time (Christian, Jewish, and Samaritan) are examined through the lenses of rhetoric, performance theory, and theater studies.

Audience engagement provides a common frame of reference for these works, despite their significant differences in textual sources, attitudes towards Scripture, understandings of history, and other crucial cultural distinctions.

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CATCHING UP: EMMA WOELK



Emma Woelk graduated from the Carolina-Duke Graduate Program in German Studies in Spring 2015. Now she is an Assistant Professor of German at St. Edward's University in Texas.

DG: Could you tell us about your position as Assistant Professor of German at St. Edward's University? What are your teaching, research, and service responsibilities?

EW: Teaching is definitely my main responsibility at St. Edward's. I'll generally be teaching a 3-4 course load. This semester I'm teaching two sections of German I and one section of German III. Next semester I expect to teach two sections of German II, one section of German IV and an English-language seminar.

There is, however, also the expectation that I'll be active in university service and continue my research. Service is relatively light here in the first year. Usually all faculty members have undergraduate advisees who they meet with throughout the semester, but this isn't something that is expected of new faculty.

Right now I'm working to revamp our department website and helping to get a German Club up and running.

I also have a folder on my desktop for an article I'd like to write. With grading and planning and learning how to edit a website, however, I haven't been opening this folder very frequently. But it's on my to-do list!

DG: What has been the biggest surprise, as you transition from graduate school to your position at St. Edward's?

EW: I don't think I was surprised by any one thing in particular, except possibly my own preparedness to teach three courses, which I owe to Tin Wegel and the excellent models I had in graduate school.

DG: What has been the most rewarding part of your experience at St. Edward's so far?

EW: I like being part of the community at a smaller school and seeing students get excited about extracurricular activities, like starting a German club or a reading group. It's also exciting to have students sign up for a German minor (we don't have a major), because it means they're learning something, they're enjoying it and I'm not doing a terrible job.

DG: Do you have any advice for graduate students as they prepare to transition from graduate school to a faculty position?

EW: Do you mean for particular graduate students or as a group? Just kidding. I don't think I have enough distance to answer that. If I had more time in graduate school, I think I would ask to sit in on my favorite professors' undergraduate classes more.

GERMAN CAMPUS WEEKS 2015



In October and November, Duke German celebrated 25 years of German unity during the annual Triangle German Campus Weeks.

Sponsored by the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Washington, DC, the event was an exciting example of the on-going collaboration between the German departments at Duke University, UNC-Chapel Hill, and NC State.

Professors Corinna Kahnke, Priscilla Layne, and Michelle Eley of Duke, UNC, and NC State respectively, organized a series of films, lectures, and workshops to explore the experience of minority groups in unified Germany.

All of these events helped students think about how the unification of Germany affected a wide variety of people.

Highlights included a creative writing workshop with author Michael Götting, a reading from his debut novel *Contrapunctus*, and a video installation entitled "Becoming Afro-German" by producer and director Karina Griffith.

German Campus Weeks concluded with a party on November 9, the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Students and faculty gathered to commemorate the unification of Germany and to celebrate another successful year of German Campus Weeks.



GREETINGS: GERMAN CLUB PRESIDENT DEVON DIPALMA '16

Devon Dipalma is a Neuroscience and Philosophy major and German minor from Rye, NY, just north of NYC. He is also the current President of the German Club at Duke. We sat down with Devon to talk about his experiences in the German department and plans for the club this year.

DG: Why did you initially decide to take German at Duke?

DD: I decided to take German because of the rich cultural history that the country and the language hold; much of our own language is derived from German, and there have been innumerable important German authors, scientists, and thinkers throughout history, all of which attracted me to the language. I also enjoy the sound of German (which seems to surprise people—but they obviously haven't appreciated German properly yet).

DG: Of the courses that you have taken in the German department, which one was your favorite and why?

DD: My favorite course was definitely 'Current Issues and Trends in Germany' with professor Kahnke in Berlin over one summer. Not only were we immersed in the culture that we were talking about and able to visit areas that we discussed in class, but it was also the

most challenging German course that I have taken. Many days we had to do impromptu presentations in class, or carried out long conversations. By constantly pushing me to speak and think in German, the class improved my German more than any other course I have taken.

DG: What is the best part of being German Club President?

DD: I have enjoyed being a part of German club over the past couple of years because it provides a safe environment for students of any level of German to come and practice speaking the language. As German Club President, I look to continue this tradition by encouraging people to participate in activities that promote speaking in German and to get people more interested in using their German outside the classroom.

DG: What kinds of activities is the German Club planning for the spring semester?

DD: We are, of course, continuing the tradition of Kaffeestunde and Kinoabend, but will also be trying to add additional cultural events throughout the semester.

DG: Describe your Duke in Berlin experience in three words.

DD: Rewarding (Being in Germany, even for the short time that I was there, helped me appreciate the language and the culture more than I could have ever imagined.)

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Memorable (Not only the city and the courses, but also the friends that I met through the program. Our group got to be especially close, even over the short period that we were there. We still try to all get together at least once a month), Fleeting (Doing just the summer session in Berlin wasn't enough. Even though I tried to explore the city as much as I could, there were so many things I never got to do. I would have also liked to see Berlin during different seasons.)

DG: What would you like to do after you graduate in the spring?

DD: I am looking to take a gap year/two after I graduate, before eventually entering medical school. As of yet, I am not sure what I will be doing, or where I will be (maybe Germany!) during the interim time.



Get Involved with the Fun! Become a German Club Leader

We are currently looking for motivated students interested in taking on leadership roles within the German Club.

Meet other students interested in German and be a part of planning the German cultural activities YOU want to attend!

Gain experience organizing events to expand your CV/resume.

Please email the German Club Advisors, Claire Scott (claire.scott@duke.edu) and Bethany Bowen-Wefuan (bethany.bowen@duke.edu) for more information.

ANNOUNCING: Undergraduate Senior Thesis Summer Research Grant

Travel to Germany during the summer and prepare to write your senior thesis!

We are pleased to announce a new grant program for juniors. With generous support from the Dean of Trinity College, three German majors will receive travel grants of up to \$3000 to conduct research in Germany for one month during the summer prior to the senior year. This research should be integrally connected to a senior honors thesis that will likely be completed during the spring term of the senior year, though an earlier timeline is also possible. Projects eligible for such funding support may be a continuation of ideas and projects developed during a study abroad semester in Berlin. Alternatively, they may involve pursuing a project formulated independently and concerned with some aspect of German culture, art, or society.

Application Process:

Students must have filled out the necessary paperwork for a senior thesis project (tentative research plan, advisor, etc.) by the time of application. The paperwork can be found here:

<http://trinity.duke.edu/sites/trinity.duke.edu/files/degree-requirements/German-Graduation%20with%20Distinction.pdf>

Students must submit a 2-page description of the research they intend to conduct and how it will contribute to their thesis.

Students must submit a detailed budget.

Applications will be due February 1 of the students' junior year.

They should be sent to the DUS in German, Kata Gellen (kata.gellen@duke.edu)

Applications will be considered by a selection committee of German Department faculty.

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By examining these poems through this variety of innovative lenses, I am able to contextualize these poems in the complex and dynamic world of Late Antiquity and bring Jewish, Christian, and Samaritan literature into the wider conversations surrounding cultural transformation at this pivotal time in the history of the West.

My second project, entitled *Songs from the Western Shore*, offers annotated translations and essays of a body of poetry written in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic (also dating from the 4th-7th centuries CE), accompanied by explanatory essays. This project will bring a beautiful but otherwise essentially inaccessible body of literature to a much wider audience in Religious and Classical Studies.

STEFANI ENGELSTEIN
Associate Research Professor in German

I am intrigued by methods and figures that circulate among literature, the life- and human-sciences, and proximate disciplines from the mid-eighteenth through early twentieth centuries, particularly in the Enlightenment and Romantic periods.

The book I am currently completing, *Sibling Action: The Genealogical Structure of Modernity*, provides a theory of the sibling across fields, as a boundary figure within epistemological systems. In the long nineteenth century, genealogy became a dominant methodology for organizing knowledge.

The nineteenth-century obsession with origins is well-known, but the genealogical method also transformed contemporary terms in evolving historical systems – whether languages, religions, races, nations, species, or subjects – into siblings of varying degrees. These familial terms both signaled and intensified the affect bound up with assigning and assuming identities as a members of collectives. In relational systems, the differentiation of one sibling from another creates the boundary of a term, while the proximity of the sibling – neither self nor entirely other – also challenges the integrity of such definitions.

While sibling action provides a basis for envisioning a nuanced, multiply mediated subjectivity, it also provokes the policing of categories. The book investigates the implications of this new relational paradigm in critical theory, political and economic theory, and classifications of human population diversity. In each case I also explore the interrogation of the system by an incestuous literary imaginary. My future work will continue to interweave close readings of literature with history of science to provide tools for

comprehending and critiquing patterns of thought in the contemporary world.

HENRY PICKFORD
Associate Research Professor in German

I'm settling into my new position at Duke and in the CDG program, and feel very fortunate to join such talented and genial colleagues and students.

I recently completed a monograph entitled *Thinking with Tolstoy and Wittgenstein: Expression, Emotion and Art*, which will appear soon with Northwestern University Press. In this interdisciplinary study incorporating close readings of literary texts and philosophical argumentation, I develop a theory of meaning and expression in art intended to counter the meaning skepticism most commonly associated with the theories of Jacques Derrida. I arrive at my theory by drawing on the writings of Wittgenstein to develop and modify the insights of Tolstoy's philosophy of art. I show how Tolstoy's encounter with Schopenhauer's thought on the one hand provided support for his ethical views but on the other hand presented a problem, exemplified in the case of music, for his aesthetic theory, a problem that Tolstoy did not successfully resolve. Wittgenstein's critical appreciation of Tolstoy's thinking, however, not only recovers its viability but also constructs a formidable position within contemporary debates concerning theories of emotion, ethics, and aesthetic expression.

My current project is a book entitled *Adorno: A Critical Life*, co-authored with Gordon Finlayson of Sussex University. In the book we highlight Adorno's theoretical writings and his tireless efforts as a public intellectual in post-war Germany. The book will be published by Reaktion Books, Ltd. and distributed by University of Chicago Press. As part of this ongoing project I'll be giving conference presentations this academic year in New York, London, Weimar, Amsterdam and San Francisco.

JAKOB NORBERG
Assistant Professor of German

I am working on a book manuscript entitled *The People's Property: Cultural Nationalism, Copyright, and the Brothers Grimm*. When Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm started gathering stories for what would become the most famous and widely disseminated folktale collection of all time, they quickly faced a straightforward question: who owns these tales?

On the one hand, the brothers lived and worked at a time when individual authors demanded recognition as owners of their literary products and German principalities began to introduce legislation that secured authors' right to control and receive compensation for

the fruits of their creative labor. Literature was being propertized.

On the other hand, the brothers Grimm were pioneering cultural nationalists committed to the notion of the creative capacity of the German people, or the Volk.

According to them, the folk tales could not be attributed to a single author but emanated from a collective and embodied its way of life. The brothers were therefore compelled to reconcile their groundbreaking cultural-nationalist retrieval of folk tales with the emerging image of authors as the indisputable owners of literary creations. They had to craft a notion of the people's property. The book will make a contribution to research on the Grimms and their legal and political reflections, but I also want to provide a new perspective on the formation of a German national literature and the complicated emergence of author's rights.

KATA GELLEN
Assistant Professor of German

I am currently completing a manuscript that examines the role of disruptive sounds in the works of the great German-language modernist writer, Franz Kafka. *Kafka and Noise: The Discovery of Cinematic Sound in Literary Modernism* shows that these acoustic obstacles serve to structure narrative at the same time as they reveal radical changes in how we hear and represent sounds in modernity.

In making this argument, the book looks at how modern media (modernist prose, silent film, early sound film) inform and reflect one another. Kafka's world is full of noise: the squeak in Gregor Samsa's voice, the whistling song of Josefine the mouse singer, the noise in the burrow, and so on. These indeterminate and difficult sounds reveal Kafka's fascination with a set of problems related to sound in modernity: the evocation of sound through silent gesture, the addition of the voice to previously silent media, the separation of sound from its source, and the problem of uncaused sounds.

It is known that Kafka loved the movies (silent ones during his time), however no one as yet has thought to consider that these cinematic experiences taught Kafka something about the nature of hearing and sound. And yet, not only does early film's silent dramatization of sound parallel Kafka's literary experimentation, but ideas about sound from later periods of film history also help explain Kafka's presentation of sound in his literary works. Film and film theory have extraordinary explanatory potential when it comes to understanding sound in Kafka's writing. To study Kafka and noise is to study the cross-illuminations between media in modernity.

Faculty Publications and Presentations in 2015

2015 was a productive year for the members our faculty. Below is a sampling of their publications and conference presentations.

Publications

Engelstein, Stefani. "Coining a Discipline: Lessing, Reimarus, and a Science of Religion." Article. Fact and Fiction: Literature and Science in the European Context. Ed. Christine Lehleiter. Forthcoming with University of Toronto Press, 2015. 221-246.

Engelstein, Stefani. "Ismene on Horseback and Other Subjects." Single-authored piece within: Book Discussion: Bonnie Honig's *Antigone, Interrupted*. Ed. Keri Walsh. *Philosophy Today*. 59.3 (2015): 562-565.

Engelstein, Stefani. "On Respect and Meaning." Reply to Cynthia L. Hallen's "Critical Response to Stefani Engelstein's 'Allure of Wholeness': Traditional Marriage and the Beauty of Holiness." *Critical Inquiry*. 41.2 (2015): 451-457.

Gellen, Kata. "Kafka, Pro und Contra: Günther Anders's Holocaust Book." Forthcoming in *Kafka and the Universal*. Ed. Arthur Cools and Vivian Liska. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015.

Gellen, Kata. "Ein spanischer Dichter in deutscher Sprache: Monolanguage and mame-loshn in Canetti, Kafka, and Derrida." *Sprache, Erkenntnis und Bedeutung – Deutsch in der jüdischen Wissenskultur*. Ed. Arndt Engelhardt and Susanne Zepp. Leipzig: Leipzig UP (Simon Dubnow Series), 2015. 297-321.

Gellen, Kata. "Indexing Identity: Fritz Lang's M." *Modernism/Modernity* 22.3 (2015): 425-48.

Lieber, Laura. "Theater of the Holy: Jewish Piyyut, Christian Hymnography, and the Rhetoric of the Late Ancient Stage," *Harvard Theological Review* 108.4 (Winter 2015): 327-355.

Lieber, Laura. "From the Margins: A Response to 'Schoeps on Schoeps,'" in *NEXUS: Essays in German Jewish Studies* 2 (2015): 33-36.

Lieber, Laura. "Telling a Liturgical Tale: Storytelling in Early Jewish Liturgical Poetry," *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 66 (2015): 211-232.

Norberg, Jakob. "Political Concepts." Blackwell Encyclopedia of Political Thought. Ed. Michael Gibbons. Forthcoming, 2015.

Norberg, Jakob. "Late Socialism as a Narrative Problem: Christoph Hein and the Limits of the Novella." *German Studies Review* 38.1 (2015): 63–82.

Pickford, Henry. "Intertextuality as Critique in Khlebnikov: Towards a Reading of 'Змей поезда'". Invited book chapter for *Festschrift for Barry Scherr*, eds. John Kopper and Michael Wachtel, Forthcoming, Slavica, 2015.

Pfau, Thomas. "'Botched Execution' or Historical Inevitability: Conceptual Dilemmas in The Unintended Reformation" (essay commissioned for the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 2015)

Pfau, Thomas. "Romantic Bildung as Ethical and Aesthetic Strategy" (essay commissioned for *A Companion to Early German Romantic Philosophy*, ed. Elizabeth Millán and Judith Norman (Amsterdam: Brill, 2015))

Walther, Ingeborg. "Goethe, Romanticism, and the German Lied: Developing Historical and Transcultural Literacies in the Undergraduate Curriculum." *Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German*, 48.1 (2015): 1-24.

Conference Presentations

Engelstein, Stefani. "Mann's Wagner Reflections: Depth Perception and Anti-Semitism." Division of 19th Century Literature. Modern Languages Association Convention (MLA). Austin. Jan. 7-9, 2016.

Gellen, Kata. "Musil's Moods." GSA Annual Convention. Washington, DC (October 1-4, 2015).

Gellen, Kata. "Günther Anders's Critique of Franz Kafka's Jewish Problem." *The Genre of Criticism. About Jewish and Other Diagnosticians of the Times: Conference of the Association for European-Jewish Literature Studies (EJLS)*. Hebrew University of Jerusalem (May 31-June 2, 2015).

Gellen, Kata. "Soma Morgenstern's Yiddish Kafka." *Yiddish Cultures in Past and Present Scholarship: Histories, Ideologies, Methodologies*. Hebrew University of Jerusalem (May 27-28, 2015).

Gellen, Kata. "Karl Emil Franzos's *Der Pojaz*: The Birth of German-Jewish Modernism in Eastern Galicia." Fourth Biennial German Jewish Studies Workshop at Duke University. Durham, NC (February 15-17, 2015).

Lieber, Laura. "Songs of the Song of Songs: Response to the JPS Commentary on Shir ha-Shirim," Annual SBL/AAR conference (Atlanta), November 21-24, 2015

Lieber, Laura. "Written in the Stars: Issues of Authorial Multivocality Hymn," European Association of Biblical Studies annual conference (Cordoba, Spain), July 12-15, 2015

Lieber, Laura. "Insufficient Suffering? An Exploration of Maternal-Filial Discourse in Performance," Brown University Symposium on Sacred Song in the Late Antique and Byzantine East: Comparative Explorations (Providence, RI), May 4-6, 2015

Norberg, Jakob. "Anti-Capitalist Affect: Georg Lukács on Hate." Invited lecture. The Center for Theoretical Inquiry, Indiana University Bloomington. November 2015.

Norberg, Jakob. "Editing the People: Nation, Genius, and Copyright after Herder." GSA Convention. Washington DC. October 2015.

Pickford, Henry. Organizer and Presenter: "Der aufrechte Gang im windschiefen Kapitalismus: Sozialkritik und Ethik in der marxistischen Tradition," Kolleg Friedrich Nietzsche, Weimar, January 2016.

Op-Eds

Pfau, Thomas. "Refugee Crisis puts European Union at Crossroad" (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, 13 Sept. 2015; also in *Raleigh News and Observer*, 10 Sept. 2015)

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