

NEWSLETTER

German Program at Skidmore College



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WORDS OF WELCOME

A Year out of the Ordinary

"Es ist geschafft!"- The academic year 2020/21 was definitely not an ordinary year, with most German classes being online and no in-person events. It was also the year in which our new faculty member Professor Juliane Wuensch joined us. Notwithstanding all the new rules and constant vigilance to keep everyone safe, the professors of the German Program tried to find innovative ways to make classes fun and offer engaging events.

With such radical changes in our world and everyday life comes the unexpected opportunity to stop and reflect on where we are and where we want to go. We have made some exciting changes to our faculty, curriculum, teaching methods, and learning skills. The German program is thriving and we are looking forward to new challenges and in-person classes again. Read on to see what fun activities and courses happened and what great achievements students and faculty accomplished!

NEWS AND EVENTS

Skidmore Berlinale

Since the 71st Berlin International Film Festival did not take place as usual, we decided to stage our own Skidmore Berlinale for students enrolled in all levels of German. To create this common core curriculum, we chose ten diverse films that highlighted the theme of *Dazugehören–Belonging*, told great stories with memorable imagery, and represented important milestones in German cinema from 2016-2020. The opening ceremony featured Thomas Stuber’s 2018 film *In den Gängen* followed by a lively discussion. Students then had a week to watch *100 Dinge*, *Atlas*, *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, *Die defekte Katze*, *Gundermann*, *Styx*, *Tschick*, *Undine*, *Womit haben wir das verdient* and post a review. The closing award ceremony featured prizes including the Golden Bear for the Best Picture (*In den Gängen*) and the Silver Bear for the Most Popular Picture (*100 Dinge*) as well as a prize for the student who saw the most films and wrote the most reviews (Mason Shumaker). Taking advantage of the digital technology to stream movies, post reviews on Brightspace and connect with each other on Zoom, we debated and enjoyed the many stories that illustrate what it means today to belong to a family, a circle of friends, a religious community, or an ethnic, gender, and political group. These films highlight the German context and also the universal aspects of struggling to find one’s place and acceptance in the group and the drive to escape the confines of belonging and venture beyond the group.

Skidmore Exploremore

This year the German Exploremore offered an entertaining program on Zoom that included fun facts about Germany, a trivia game and information about the German major and minor, summer study abroad opportunities, and the ever-popular German Club.



NEWS AND EVENTS

Kaffeestunde

During the Fall and the Spring semester, students, teachers, and other German speakers met biweekly on Zoom for some chatter and exchange of news. Kaffeestunde is a great opportunity to speak German outside of the classroom and to talk to other people who are interested in the language and culture. Come join us again in the Fall semester, when Kaffeestunde hopefully will be in person and accompanied by sweets and coffee or tea again!

Join us for Kaffeestunde!

A FUN OPPORTUNITY TO PRACTICE YOUR GERMAN

WHEN?
EVERY OTHER TUESDAY
FROM 4-5PM

Sept 8th	Oct 20th
Sept 22nd	Nov 3rd
Oct 6th	Nov 17th

WHERE?
ZOOM LINK:
<https://skidmore.zoom.us/j/95213434631>




Seniors Hike

For Seniors Appreciation Week, the German Program organized a hike through Skidmore's North Woods. Majors Eleyna Scarbro and Julia Danischewski and Minor Colin Spadinger joined Professor O'Brien and Professor Wuensch (and her doggy Buttercup) on a beautiful day to celebrate the successful completion of their degrees. Minor Joe Robey was unfortunately not able to attend. All of our seniors have bright futures ahead of them and we wish them all the best!!

NEWS AND EVENTS

New Courses and Student Projects

In the academic year 2020/21, two advanced German courses focused on former East Germany, the German Democratic Republic (GDR). **WLG 376 Senior Seminar** in Fall 2020 focused on GDR Literature, and **WLG 263 Pop-Culture and Life** in Spring 2021 focused on the every-day life experience of diverse groups of people and GDR cultural artifacts.

During its forty-one year existence, the German Democratic Republic went through many significant changes, but one thing stayed the same. From the founding of the socialist state to its demise shortly after the peaceful revolution, the GDR was dedicated to creating a just, egalitarian system. It saw itself as a showcase of the socialist planned economy and a bulwark against the fascist legacy of capitalism. Despite its collapse thirty years ago, some are still enthusiastic about GDR utopianism as a model for the present, while an

equally persistent fascination with the ubiquitous Stasi surveillance apparatus serves as a warning against attempts to force political submission.

One routinely comes across a popular discourse in which two images of the GDR are circulating at the same time. It is portrayed either as a peaceful idyll, in which the loving state takes care of its people, or as a prison state that built a wall to lock up the people and monitor them with secret police and informants. What was the GDR really like?

NEWS AND EVENTS

New Courses and Student Projects



The advanced German special topics course **WLG 263** was all about the GDR during the Spring semester. Students explored what living and growing-up in East Germany really meant by looking at the experiences of a diverse group of contemporary witnesses. Their impressive creative projects are linked in this newsletter. All students did an incredible job and thoughtfully portrayed the multi-faceted aspects of everyday-life in the GDR.

Students in the **Senior Seminar** examined the dynamic relationship between Marxist-Leninist aesthetics, an official cultural policy, and actual literary production. We analyzed texts that depicted fascism and the ideology of war, the role of the worker, the conflict between the individual and society in creating a socialist personality, the changing image of women, the alienation of the young generation, and intellectual protest. Through close readings and attention to socio-historical contexts students developed a differentiated picture of the GDR that avoids nostalgic glorification and general demonization. Our main goal was to understand the role of literature in the GDR and to learn the lasting lessons that this literature can teach us.



NEWS AND EVENTS

WLG 263 Student Projects

- Lydia Coleman and Emma Stratman created a virtual exhibition of forbidden and censored art
(<https://skidmore.box.com/s/gjut9o6qbljz8264njmplv5iy0luxxzv>)
- Roman Toepler, Maria Budsey, and Leonie Aksyonov cooked typical East-German dishes (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pPliS1Fb9E0>)
- Colin Spadinger and Joe Robey performed a roleplay highlighting how the Stasi censored musicians
(<https://skidmore.box.com/s/sx1c93lfvdxrgurfovsh5o9qplzcnql>)
- Micah Day-O'Connell and Lizzie Bourdelais wrote two skits about the advantages and disadvantages of the East-German university system
(<https://skidmore.box.com/s/o7mggrn0kmg5l3p1pdxj49m02xwab7jz>)

The fourth-semester German course **WLG 206 Language and Culture** focused on learning about the three German speaking countries Germany, Austria, and Switzerland (the D-A-CH countries). Students explored cultural differences and commonalities, learned about dialects, traditions, food, and art, and ended the semester with the presentation of creative partner projects. David Feld and Samantha Allman filmed three short skits to highlight peculiar traditions in each of the countries; Tommy Myhill and Ruben Savelson wrote and performed a roleplay about German-Turkish food, and Alex Sinclair and Will Schoenhuber filmed their own cooking show!

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE: ENTDECKUNGSREISE D-A-CH



FACULTY NEWS

Visiting Assistant Professor Juliane Wuensch co-authored the article “Is a Schtoan a Stein? How and why to teach dialects in the German language classroom” which was published in the Fall issue of the online journal *German as a Foreign Language* (<http://www.gfl-journal.de/>). Over the summer, she will give two conference presentations, one addressing how to teach performatively about the European Union at the 27th International



Conference of Europeanists (Council for European Studies) and another one entitled “Bringing it all together ONLINE: Performance, Outreach, and Education- The model of the German Theater Project at Indiana University” at the 8th SCENARIO Symposium. She will also be working on a book proposal and a Teaching Guide for the DEFA Film Library about the GDR movie *Spur der Steine*. Professor Wuensch very much enjoyed her first year at Skidmore and is looking forward to teaching in the fall!

Professor Mary-Beth O'Brien published an article, “Constructing Masculinities in Iris Gusner’s *Die Taube auf dem Dach*,” in *Panoptikum* Nr. 23 (2020). Her chapter, “The Tender and Transgressive Beast Within: Escape Narratives in Films by Krebitz, Stuber, and Speckenbach,” is forthcoming in *The Tender Gaze: Compassionate Encounters on the German Screen, Stage, and Page* (Camden House, 2021). This summer she is preparing for



a sabbatical year in Los Osos, California, where she will be writing *Unrealized Futures: Redefining the Margins of DEFA Cinema*. This new book explores East German films that transgress norms, break taboos, and reevaluate what is acceptable socially, politically, and aesthetically. Her book aims to demonstrate that the very notion of a dominant and marginal discourse shifts constantly during the forty-year period of DEFA cinema.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Congratulations

NEW DELTA PHI ALPHA MEMBERS



Deutsche Ehrenverbindung



Elizabeth Gimba



Lizzie Bourdelais



Emma Eisner



Leonie Aksyonov



Colin Spadinger

ACHIEVEMENTS

Leonie Aksyonov, Class of 2022, has been awarded a DAAD Scholarship to study at the University of Leipzig, Germany, over the summer. "While I am sad I will be unable to go to Germany, I am excited to spend a month really focusing on my German. I am really excited to meet others who come from all around the U. S. and the world."



Alum Derrick McAllister, Class of 2020, German and IA double major, French minor has been awarded the prestigious Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship. Funded by the U.S. Department of State and administered by Howard University, the Pickering Fellowship supports graduate studies in International Affairs and prepares outstanding young people for Foreign Service careers in the U.S. Department of State. After completing his COVID-delayed Fulbright Teaching Assistantship in Schleswig-Holstein, Germany in 2021-22, Derrick is headed to Georgetown University where he will complete a master's degree in the German and European Studies program (MAGES) at the Walsh School of Foreign Service. Derrick: "I'm very much looking forward to a rewarding career in public service where I can utilize my language skills and work in countries all over the world in order to fulfill the U.S. diplomatic mission."



ACHIEVEMENTS



Eleyna Scarbro, Class of 2021, a German major with minors in Religion and Studio Art, is the 2021 recipient of the German Consulate Award in German. She is an outstanding student of German and a member of the German National Honor Society, Delta Phi Alpha, who enriched the German program as a driller, tutor, research assistant, and co-president of the German Club. Her meticulously researched, eloquent senior honor thesis, “Pretty Faces, Distressed Damsels, and Women Warriors” examines the contradictions of female figures in New German Cinema, who reflect feminist agency yet continue to function as mere metaphors, which ultimately denies women autonomy.

She has been awarded a 2021-22 Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship at the Bundeshandelsakademie und Bundeshandelschule in Wiener Neustadt, Lower Austria. Eleyna’s adventurous spirit, inquisitive mind, artistic creativity, and social engagement will guide her to a bright future.

Julia Danischewski, Class of 2021, a German and Chemistry double major with a minor in Physics, is the 2021 recipient The Charlotte W. Fahey Prize in Chemistry. She is an excellent student of German and a member of the German National Honor Society, Delta Phi Alpha, who enriched the German program as a driller, tutor, and co-president of the German club. Her senior thesis, “Spindles and Stories: The Forgotten Voices of 19th-Century German Female Authors,” argues that the history of fairy tales written by women needs to be told and their stories need to be recovered from obscurity, because a reformulation of the canon reveals strong and autonomous female figures, who write their own histories. Julia will embark on an exciting new path in the fall, since she has received a scholarship for the Chemistry Ph.D. program at Rensselaer Polytechnic institute, the oldest technological research university in the United States. Julia’s brilliance and positive attitude will bring her a successful and promising future.

