Dear Friends of German Studies,

Instead of pointing to the past year’s academic highlights, such as our faculty’s scholarship going public or the achievements of our students—which you will, among other topics, find presented on the following pages—I would like to share with you some of our departmental discussions toward addressing core questions that we face as the faculty of a small undergraduate foreign language department.

Over a decade ago, the German Studies Department began, guided by the expertise of Prof. Hiram Maxim, a concerted and collaborative effort to redesign the undergraduate curriculum so as to match the process of learning a foreign language with the intellectual scope and depth of the German-speaking cultures. Beginning students of German engage with intellectual content at the earliest phases of their language study, while those who major and minor at the advanced level continue to study increasingly intricate grammatical and lexical features as the texts under study demand. The overhaul of our curriculum garnered national attention and awards and helped secure our students’ prospective career options within and beyond academic pursuits—but it did not deflect the pressure faced throughout the humanities to justify why a student should learn a foreign language, and why German specifically. In a notably monolingual country, students, parents, colleagues, and administrators continue to question the value of investing the time and resources that it takes to learn additional languages well.

And while we in the department can quickly rattle off a number of very pragmatic reasons in answering this worthwhile question, we paused at our semi-annual retreat last year to discuss and reflect once again on a) what it is that distinguishes our educational value, and b) why higher education and thereby society at large should invest in having young women and men learn another culture via the arduous process of language acquisition. The urgency of these questions mounts along with the cost of higher education, which in turn results in an increased pressure to find employment that will justify the expense (in money and time) of a liberal arts education. In short, the very concept of a liberal arts education faces a further crisis with respect to its own legitimacy.

Candidly entertaining these foundational questions, our faculty articulated an understanding of its work within this larger context that might surprise many of our constituents for its boldness and unapologetic answers. A deep mastery of a foreign language and its culture, including but not limited to the German and Yiddish we teach, offers two distinctive rewards: travel and immediacy. An experience of travel is an important facet of German Studies because it takes the student to new physical, intellectual and temporal spaces, where the familiar is rendered unfamiliar and where different cultural norms beckon to be negotiated. These experiences of travel are marked by a sense of immediacy: that is, by the direct and unmediated encounter with new and unfamiliar cultural artifacts, texts, and spaces. In other words, studying German is not a merely cognitive but experiential and in fact very personal way of learning. This ‘immediate’ engagement with cultural history is epitomized by the cultural encounters enabled in our Vienna summer program, but it is also a facet of the everyday classroom experience when students come face to face with texts from German-speaking cultures.

With this conceptual framework in mind, all of us in the department will continue striving to facilitate our students’ very personal journeys within and adjacent to German-speaking cultures. Their hard-won sense of immediacy within those cultures stands to enrich their personal and professional lives in ways beyond what we can anticipate.

Peter Höyng
Chair and Professor
Peter Höyng

This past year, Peter Höyng presented his research on the novel, ‘The Blue Stain’, at several conferences. Höyng’s work focuses on the novel’s narrative strategies and its historical context. The novel, originally in German: Das blaue Mal. Der Ruman eines Ausgestoßenen, a rediscovered novel of migration history, was written in 1935 and published posthumously. Höyng argues that the novel’s own contradictions help to bring into sharper focus a greater self-reflection as an approach towards a dialogue about racial matters. Ultimately, Höyng strives to search for the ways in which the text’s narrative forms of racism while not abusing his own privileged position vis-à-vis others.

Marianne Lancaster

Invited to speak by Emory University’s Language Center (ECLL), Senior Lecturer Marianne Lancaster presented on February 23, 2019 in the Modern Languages Building to faculty from Emory and the Greater Atlanta area. Based on many years of experience teaching Business German, Lancaster shared issues she has encountered and insights she has gained in teaching business language courses. Her two-course sequence, focused on students in the third-year level of German learning, has become a staple in the curriculum of the German Studies Department. Discussion focused on integrating business related issues and everyday economic life in other languages and cultures into courses, with the pedagogical goal of enabling students to function well in formal language and culture. An important component of this work is: which content works best for a very diverse group of students who may attend business school or others who just want to know the cultural and linguistic norms of economics and business? What skills and knowledge are necessary? How can such learning increase students’ understanding of their own privileged position vis-à-vis others?

Hiram Maxim

Professor Hiram Maxim spent the 2018-2019 academic year in Vienna, Austria where he was the Fulbright-Bottstiber Visiting Professor of Austrian-American Studies at the University of Vienna for the fall semester and an Emory University Research Committee-Halle Institute International Research Fellow in the spring semester. During that time, Maxim added to teaching introductory courses in Systemic Functional Linguistics in the English Department, he had the opportunity to share his research with a wider audience on several occasions. In the fall semester, he gave a guest lecture on genre-based analysis, a graduate seminar on teacher education for Deutsch als Fremdsprache. In the spring semester, at a meeting of educational linguists at the University of Vienna he presented a case study of a beginning learner of German’s Germanic roots in the Emory German Studies curriculum. Later in the semester he gave an presentation on the influence of Systemic Functional Linguistics on the Emory German Studies curricular reform to University of Vienna students of teacher education. Most recently he has been working with instructors in the English for Special Purposes section of the English Department at the University of Vienna to consider the possible applications of a functional genre-based to their pedagogical and curricular practices.

Caroline Schumann

In February, Caroline Schumann was invited to present the keynote address at the 2019 Germanic Graduate Student Association Conference at Ohio State University, one of the largest German programs in the country. Entitled “Environmentality,” the event included a faculty roundtable discussion, a workshop, two graduate panels, and one undergraduate panel. Schumann’s address, “The Tangled Web: Alexander von Humboldt and the Anthropocene”, elucidated the search for fitting narrative genres in an age of climate change before analyzing the various depictions of his ascent of Mount Teide on the Canary Islands in 1799 as creative explorations of what it means to be a human in times of changing living beings and things on this planet earth. Then in June, on the occasion of the 250th anniversary of Humboldt’s birth, Schumann was invited to contribute to the international conference “Alexander von Humboldt: The Whole World, the Whole Human Being,” sponsored by the Berlin Academy of Sciences, the University of Potsdam, the Ibero-American Institute, and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. Her presentation “Alexander von Humboldt and the Anthropocene Challenge” focused on the contemporary importance of Humboldtian thinking for 1) its emphasis on interconnection and interaction, 2) its systems approach in which human activity is part and parcel of an ecosystem, and 3) its acceptance of dynamic change and uncertainty. The conference was widely received in the media and is available online in its entirety.

Miriam Udel

Professor Miriam Udel recently completed her academic year at the University of Minnesota, where she delivered a paper on American communist and Soviet Yiddish literature as well as a large community lecture on socialist Sabbath tales. She spent a week at the Yiddish Book Center in Western Mass as a Fulbright Scholar. With an Neustadt fellowship for her work, Udel was also named a Translation Fellow at the Yiddish Book Center for 2019 and is completing a translation of the Labzik stories, a series of linked tales set during the Depression, about the adventures of a left-leaning puppy and the proletarian Jewish family that adopts him. After three years of study in a low-residency program for mid-career learners, she received rabbinical ordination in June 2019 from Yeshivat Maharat, the first institution to ordain Orthodox Jewish women in North America.
During the past academic year, German Studies organized and hosted six events that both complemented the curricular offerings for our students and created opportunities for dialogue with colleagues from around campus. Ranging over a wide variety of topics, the events shared three invigorating characteristics: invitations to the presenters emerged out of specific courses in our department, they actively intersected with the interests of other departments, and all were well attended. We are grateful for the generous support from the cooperating departments including English, Women’s Gender and Sexuality Studies, Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies, Theater, and the Tan Institute for Jewish Studies. And, as it so often does, a special thanks goes to Emory College’s speaker funds from the Robert E. Hightower Sr. Endowment, which made some of these events possible.

**Lecture by D. Phil. Reyhan Şahin**

On October 17, 2018, D. Phil. Reyhan Şahin, a German-Turkish scholar at the University of Hamburg, addressed current debates about racism and multiculturalism in Germany sparked by soccer player Mesut Özil’s resignation from the German national team during last year’s World Cup. Şahin is an academic linguist who also enjoys a wide following as the rapper “Lady Bitch Ray,” and it came as no surprise that many students were keenly interested in her hybrid profile as a scholar-artist. She discussed Özlü’s case as a paradigm for how anti-Islamist sentiments can be disguised by valid political criticism.

**Kirloskar-Steinbach Makes Case for Adorno’s Thinking in World Philosophy**

On January 24, 2019, Prof. Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach made the case for exploring Theodor W. Adorno’s critical thinking in support of the burgeoning field of world philosophy. Professor of philosophy at the University of Konstanz and visiting faculty at Emory’s Oxford campus for the past year, Prof. Kirloskar-Steinbach is a leader in the field of world philosophy. While Adorno might seem, at first blush, to (re) present the very type of a white male philosopher against which world philosophy tries to establish itself, the talk argued for how Adorno’s own dialectical thinking can actually open up the traditional canon of Western philosophy.

**Kovacs On the Theater of Jelinek**

On March 21, Prof. Teresa Kovacs gave a lecture on the theater of Elfriede Jelinek, the Austrian feminist writer who was awarded the 2004 Nobel Prize in Literature. Jelinek’s texts written for the stage defy the traditional concept of a drama with clearly delineated characters or a dramatic plot. The audience appreciated how Jelinek, the Austrian feminist writer (1946-2019), and social psychologist Marie Jahoda (1907-2001), and feminist Käthe Leichter (1895-1942) engage the work of two pioneer women from Vienna: the socialist feminist Käthe Leichter (1895-1942) and social psychologist Marie Jahoda (1907-2001).

On November 14, 2019, Prof. Mark Christian Thompson, Chair of English at Johns Hopkins University, delivered a lecture on the paradoxical role of African-American jazz music in German culture and politics in the early twentieth century. While leftist intellectuals understood jazz’s popularity as an outgrowth of capitalist consumer culture, the authoritarian right saw jazz as a cultural and racial threat that would destabilize the German national community. And while the Nazis initially condemned jazz as the height of modern decadence, they eventually appropriated and incorporated it into the spectacle of totalitarian rule, fashioning a form of jazz syncopation allegedly rooted in Germanic music. Prof. Thompson’s visit connected to Prof. Bowie’s seminar on travel literature, and he also met with students to discuss the aesthetic significance of racial blackness in Franz Kafka’s story “In the Penal Colony,” drawing on his recent monograph Kafka’s Blues: Figurations of Racial Blackness in the Construction of an Aesthetic.

**Vienna’s Portrait Theater**

Anita Zieher and Brigitta Waschnig of Vienna’s Portrait Theater offered a kindred artistic presentation on April 3, featuring excerpts and an audience talkback on their latest production “Women at Work.” Wrought in a highly artistic documentary style, the play explores the work of two pioneer women from Vienna: the socialist feminist Käthe Leichter (1895-1942) and social psychologist Marie Jahoda (1907-2001).
Student Awards

Max Kade Scholarship
In 2019, four students were selected to receive a prestigious Max Kade scholarship to support their study abroad in the 46th year of Emory’s Vienna summer program. Jesse Steinman, a sophomore from Beavley, Ohio, and Anudeep Venapally, a freshman from Suwanee, Georgia, have received grants for the study of second-year German while in Austria. Brooke Daly, a freshman from Orlando, Florida and Kristin Wadsworth, a freshman from Tampa, Florida, have received grants for the study of third-year German. This marks the 13th consecutive year that the Max Kade Foundation has generously supported participants in the Vienna program.

Two 100-Level Awards
Alexis Roberson is a freshman chemistry major who excelled in all aspects of our demanding first-year language sequence and plans to pursue German as a minor or major. She was a top participant in her class, always willing to raise her hand to venture an answer or pose a thoughtful question. Her written work was notable for going beyond what was required to express sophisticated ideas and meaningful personal experiences, as well as applying and extrapolating rules. Ms. Roberson ended the year with an impressive grasp of German language and culture; we are glad to recognize her achievements and support her as she continues along this path.

Jennifer Hou started with Ger 101 as a freshman in fall 2018 and continued with Ger 102 in the spring. She stood out with her truly exceptional participation, based on thorough homework and her courage to try something new. In her writing she showed a successfully used vocabulary and grammar concepts to express herself. She was always interested to learn more about German culture and decided to continue her German studies by participating in the Vienna Study Abroad Program in 2019. Her continued work and progress deserve this recognition and we expect to see further progress in the future.

German Studies Award for Excellence
Robert Wilson started with German in 101 and 102 class (Fall 2016 & Spring 2017) and stood out as a serious student who was eager to receive all information and tried building complex sentences early on. He continued to make the most of every lesson and asked pointed questions. Outside of class, he used his time wisely to study and review, and his German very early on showed exceptional correctness. He strived to use the exact phrase a German would use, not just to be understood.

Bobby continued with German 201 and 202 (F17/S18), and took the Business German sequence Ger 320 and 301 (Buchholz) and Fall Ger 321 and 470 (Höyng) upon his return, a great combination of his interest to double major in Business and German. He finished with a new record: a 100% in the final. So when we thought of German Studies excellence, we thought of him immediately.

Emory College Language Center Award
Jason Ginnis came to Emory University in 2014 from Greece via Vermont, where he relocated when he was in the ninth grade. Born and raised in Greece, Jason’s family traveled extensively throughout Europe and he spent a good deal of time in Austria while growing up. Hearing German as a young boy he became very intrigued by the language, so when the opportunity to pursue German studies at Emory presented, Jason was eager to do so. During his first German class in sophomore year, Jason found himself impassioned not only about learning the language, but also yearning to study more of everything German. Jason delved into studying German history, taking as many German courses as his schedule allowed. During Jason’s 3 years of participation in the German program, which included the Summer Study Abroad Program in Vienna, his passion and commitment allowed him to attain a remarkable understanding of the language in a short time and he was able to navigate through challenging works written in German. German studies became Jason’s passion, an area of deep interest that he found combined his values and abilities into something that he ardently pursued and has turned into a desire to further pursue a future creative career with.

Terez Whatley-White

After one semester learning German, he decided to save money toward his first international trip to Germany. Liebe auf den ersten Blick was easy. After three semesters and some weeks, he was easily persuaded to apply to the department’s study abroad program in Vienna, Austria. Would there be chocolate in this other German-speaking country? Zotter answered.

Back on campus, he was able to immerse in the language at the German House and as a work-study student in the department. Attempts were made to cook Käsespätzle with his roommates and Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant. Die Eistkriteriomechanise was often used. However, nothing made him feel more immersed than receiving packages of chocolate goodies from his friends abroad.

Terez continued to work for the department after graduating with Deutsch as his Hauptfach. Having been so inspired by his professors in college, he wished to teach and spread the joy of cultural exchange. He took advantage of an opportunity to teach for English as a Second Language in South Korea for a year. Unfortunately, they don’t do chocolate, so Terez opted to join the Department of German Studies at Emory University, where he feels loved and well supported. He has been able to nourish his love of other cultures by learning Brazilian Portuguese at Emory, even attending the occasional Bate Papo on Fridays.

As a sustainability representative for the Modern Languages building, Terez happily works on making the building and department more “nachhaltig.” Lovey-bray, he might be partially responsible for bringing composting to the building before it was a campus-wide policy. Terez achieves bursts of fame when grilling bratwurst at one of the department’s many sustainably hosted events. After, who knows? It might be another student’s first taste of authentic bratwurst that changes everything.

It was the chocolate. One late fall evening while waiting to be picked up after high school swim practice, Decatur/Atlanta native Terez Whatley was introduced to German culture by a new friend, a foreign exchange student. She offered him some of the chocolate from her “Paket aus Deutschland.” Milka was its name. One could call it the bite that redirected his life. When it came time to enroll in a foreign language course at Emory University, German was the obvious choice. Not only was he persuaded by the faculty, he reflected on that piece of chocolate and his friends, and it was decided.

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Terez Whatley-White (right) at Grillfest, spring 2019

Caption
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