Engaging with you this year, it is impossible not to address the pandemic, the ensuing economic calamities, and continuing racial oppression in form of the most recent anti-Black police brutality; all of these incidents happened simultaneously in spring and summer of 2020. These different and yet interdependent events have been both humbling and overwhelming for all of us! All the more can and does literature help us to find words that express our anger and offer hope when coping with injustice, danger, or hardship. Hence, we can be proud to turn to Emory’s poet Jericho Brown and his The Tradition—recently awarded with the Pulitzer Prize—where he powerfully expresses injustices against African-Americans that unfortunately have become conventional. For scholars who interact with German language and culture at large, we also can point to the poet Friedrich Hölderlin who was born 250 years ago, and quote some of his famous lines, which are still fitting: “Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst das Rettende auch” / Where there is danger, the rescue grows as well (translator Scott Horton).

For as topsy-turvy, difficult, and abhorrent as these past months have been for too many fellow citizens, they created a new experience for many of us. After all, many of us have witnessed a number of paradoxes in the past few months: the physical distancing generated more meetings, the public health challenges prompted politeness, and a readiness to help each other, the disproportionate vulnerabilities of African-Americans created greater sympathies and support for them than before. In short, painful and difficult as these past months have been, they helped to bring out the very best in many of us.

Likewise, our entire department! We felt stirred to take a strong stance when being forced by the police brutalities to reflect on our own work, and documented our statement on our website: “As a department focused on German- and Yiddish-speaking societies, we are committed to teaching, research and outreach that emphasizes the interwoven histories of anti-Black racism, antisemitism, fascism, genocide, colonialism, xenophobia, misogyny, Islamophobia, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and economic exploitation. We believe it is our duty to critically examine cultural memories of oppression and resistance, and to explore how they have been forgotten and repressed.”

In light of the department’s outspoken identity, let me in the end look forward rather than backward, as our annual newsletter typically does. We are lucky to welcome two new colleagues in the fall: Didem Uca as an Assistant Professor and Frank Voigt as our first DAAD lecturer. Both of them are committed to diversify the German curriculum in different ways. Frank comes as an expert on the German-Jewish philosopher Walter Benjamin, whose texts defy a simple denominator precisely due to his eclectic approach to history, aesthetics, and philosophy. With her work on diversity and migration in German-speaking cultures, Didem’s arrival will advance our department’s commitment to studying an increasingly multi-cultural Germany. She already has been active as a member of the national caucus on Diversity, Decolonization and the German Curriculum.

It is similarly befitting to be able to welcome the Afro-German actress Sheri Hagen in October, albeit only virtually when she will be ready to answer questions after the screening of her movie Auf den zweiten Blick or At Second Glance. And while the department has recently offered courses on how German-speaking countries had to face their racism and anti-Semitism, we will be offering next spring a newly designed course on German racisms, ranging from German colonialism to anti-Semitism and the Holocaust to today’s multicultural Germany.

It is these steps and events that make me proud to be working along with my colleagues towards a world that hopefully will be more just, safe, and peaceful.

Peter Höyng
Chair and Professor of German Studies
Hallo und Auf Wiedersehen

Marianne K. Lancaster
Senior Lecturer in German Studies

Professor Lancaster joined Emory University in 1991 as a part-time lecturer in the Department of German Studies. Prior to this, she received an MA from Friedrich Alexander University in Erlangen-Nuremberg in 1984, followed by two additional years of pedagogical training in Germany; she was granted tenure by the state of Bavaria in 1991. After moving to the United States, she taught courses at Agnes Scott College and Oglethorpe University in addition to those at Emory. Hired full-time on Emory’s lecture track in 2000 and promoted to Senior Lecturer in 2007, she served for 19 years as the Department of German Studies’ First-Year Coordinator and frequently directed its Summer Study Abroad Program in Vienna. Throughout her career at Emory, Professor Lancaster regularly taught first- and second-year German classes (being one of the first of Emory’s foreign language instructors to design her own interactive website for Beginning German), “Business German” (having developed this offering as a two-semester course for third-year students), and various courses in the Vienna Program. She also occasionally taught “Reading German for Academic Purposes” as a summer graduate course, a Freshman Seminar, and “Language across the Curriculum” courses in coordination with other departments.

As part of frequent service to broader learning communities, Professor Lancaster gained certification as a tester for the German Business Diploma (WPD) and as an evaluator in the southeastern United States for the Certificate for German Business (ZDfB).

Professor Lancaster received several accolades over her career at Emory: the Foreign Language Teacher of Excellence Award in 2008 from the Emory College Language Center; an ECLC Curriculum Development Fellowship in 2010; and the 2013 Stephen A. Freeman Award for “Best Published Article” from the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages for “Overcoming curricular bifurcation: A departmental approach to curriculum reform,” coauthored with four of her departmental colleagues and published in Die Unterrichtspraxis. The last of these led, in part, to the Department of German Studies’ receipt of a national award of excellence.

“Since joining Emory in 1991, I have witnessed Emory go through many ‘ups and downs.’ Besides all the many good moments, the singular worst experience for me personally was on September 11, 2001. As disaster struck, I was in the classroom teaching. What I remember the most is that this left me with the task of announcing to my students, some of whom were from New York, what had just transpired. I tried to help my students and advisors—then and later—as best I could. Our confidence and sense of security were shaken fundamentally but, over time, we learned to adapt to this new world.

Now, during the current pandemic, we are confronted with a new enemy, one invisibly endangering even more people. Unfortunately, we are again struggling to adjust emotionally, to hold on to our traditions and way of life, and to move forward. My greatest hope is that we, again, adapt well to these new necessities and grow even stronger—personally and as a community—despite and because of them.”

—Marianne K. Lancaster

Didem Uca
Assistant Professor

I am absolutely thrilled to be joining the Department of German Studies this fall as Assistant Professor! I had the pleasure of meeting many of you during my visit to campus and was inspired by your passion for German and Yiddish languages and cultures. Here’s a little about me: I am a second-generation American of Turkish-Arab heritage who was born and raised on Long Island, NY. Like many of you, I began learning German in college, eventually deciding to double major in German and Comparative Literature at Bryn Mawr. After spending a year as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant at Gaziantep University in Turkey, I began my Ph.D. in Germanic Languages and Literatures at the University of Pennsylvania. During graduate school, I completed graduate certificates in pedagogy and gender, sexuality, and women’s studies and spent a year at the Humboldt University of Berlin on a Fulbright Fellowship.

My research focuses on intersectional approaches to German-language post/migrant cultural production, multilingual aesthetics, coming of age, popular culture, and inclusive and anti-racist teaching methods. I am co-editor of the trilingual journal Jahrbuch Türkisch-Deutsche Studien, serve on the steering committees of the Coalition of Women in German and the Diversity, Decolonization, and the German Curriculum Collective, and am co-chair of the Modern Language Association’s Committee on the Status of Graduate Students in the Humanities. I am coming to Emory from Colgate University, where I served for one year as Visiting Assistant Professor of German. I’ll be joined in Atlanta by my husband, Matt, our cat, London, and our dog, Bruno.
Honey on the Page: A Treasury of Yiddish Children’s Literature

Edited and Translated by Miriam Udel
Foreword by Jack Zipes

The first comprehensive anthology of Yiddish children’s literature in English

Honey on the Page (NYU Press, Oct. 6, 2020) takes us on a journey into the past with a feast of nearly 50 stories and poems for children, translated from the original Yiddish by the author, Miriam Udel, associate professor of German and Jewish Studies at Emory University. Arranged by theme, the book takes readers from Jewish holidays and history, to folktales and fairy tales, to stories of humanistic ethics, wisdom and foolishness, class consciousness, and family. Most of the works included have never before appeared in English.

Highlighting material from the first decades of the twentieth century and stretching into the 1970s, Honey on the Page begins the work of restoring a neglected body of work that helps to tell the story of the Jewish 20th century.

Featuring material by more than 25 prominent and lesser-known authors published in Eastern Europe, New York, and Latin America, this anthology speaks the Yiddish-speaking globe. Udel includes a brief historical biography before each entry of writers such as, Sholem Asch, Kadya Molodowsky, Mosheye Kulbak, and Zina Rabinovitz.

This volume offers a rich resource to students of Jewish history and literary culture, as well as to families and educators seeking literature that speaks to Jewish children about their religious, cultural, and ethical heritage.

Coronavirus Reflection – Didem Uca

When I was finalizing my syllabus for “Challenges of Modernity,” my spring 2020 core humanities seminar at Emory University, I had no idea how prescient the course would prove to be. As it turned out, the COVID-19 pandemic created a critical testing ground for exploring the course themes: the ideals of human rights and the realities of conflict and atrocity amidst developments in industry, science, and technology. Reflecting on the various human rights discussions over the past 250 years, ranging from the Declaration of Independence to abolitionist movements to feminist and queer theory, raised important questions about a person’s right to basic protections, including healthcare. Discussions of Shelley’s Frankenstein, Dürrenmatt’s The Physicists, and Levi’s The Periodic Table delve into the ethics of scientific inquiry and the scientist’s role in protecting human rights. Reading such “classic” works as Marx and Engels The Communist Manifesto and Darwin’s The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex also show us that even the best of science, and amidst developments in industry, science, and technology, interventions can make a real difference.

Dominique Thiers-Schmidt

During these challenging times of pandemic, strife, and civil unrest, I take a measure of strength in looking back into the sweep of human history. Natural disasters, pestilence, and man-made catastrophes have been far more prevalent than have peace, comfort, and abundance. To be human is to endure. More hopefully, history also shows us that the greatest progress and societal changes have their seeds planted in the hardship and upheavals that come hand in hand with crisis. So I look to the future with optimism and hope for a better, more just world.
Reflections (cont.)

Paul Buchholz

The Fall semester of 2019 was an exciting and, we could say, “normal,” time. I made multiple transcontinental trips for academic conferences, mentored students on their studies and research, co-taught a class we quickly shifted to small-group and even individual meetings on Zoom to better facilitate the completion of their final research projects, and in German 102 we made extensive use of the breakout rooms to create smaller groups for discussion. The students themselves, despite their reliance in large Zoom meetings, remained interested and committed to the material. The ingenuity of the sociolinguistics class was particularly noteworthy because originally their final project required them to examine a public space in Atlanta for its multilingualism. Sequestered at home often with limited or no ability to go outside, they turned to online tools (e.g., Google Street View; Yelp reviews; census data; websites of businesses) to access examples of multilingualism in the public sphere.

Miriam Udel

It’s a special kind of irony when you’re teaching a new first-year seminar on nostalgia, and a pandemic overtakes the globe halfway through the semester. “I’ll give you something to be nostalgic about!” the forces governing the Universe seemed to taunt us. Class about nostalgia, while feeling nostalgic for class, quickly became very meta. We embraced the irony, regrouping for our first meeting after the extended break with a roll-call reaching from London to the California coastline and naming what we longed for nostalgically now that we had lost our campus Eden. The final assignment, which was already going to be about the phenomenon of roots travel, took on new urgency. Students read and analyzed scholarly literature about various destinations for heritage and historical travel, and they wrote creative accounts to the perspectives of both consumers and service workers in the industries that make those travel experiences possible. Beautifully conceived brochures and other digital materials became a virtual escape— to India and Poland, Ireland, Oklahoma, and the Bay Area.

Meanwhile, my Yiddish language students pivoted from reading Sholem Aleichem (“How Tevye Strikes It Rich”) to following coronavirus coverage in The Yiddish Forverts. We learned about how the virus was stampeding across insular, tight-knit Hasidic communities in New York and reviewed our first-seminar poster about hand-washing, translated into Yiddish and released by the New York Department of Public Health. Varem vaser, zeyf, royn di hent tsuzamen— the vocabulary seemed more relevant than ever before.

Student responses to the question: “What surprising capacity or resources did you discover, both in yourself and in the Emory community, because of the pandemic?

I discovered my ability to work productively in spite of gloom and distraction. Dr. Nowicki, my professor, fueled that productivity by teaching me to be positive and proactive in crisis. In the Emory community I saw adaptability. Professors learned to Zoom and made themselves available for matters academic and otherwise.

Bobby Robert Wilson

I was shocked by how Zoom made me feel close to the Emory community. I not only used it to attend lectures but also to chat with my friends and even hold virtual rehearsals with my improv troupe. Despite being so far apart, seeing everyone’s faces made me feel better.

Brooke Daly

The fast-paced nature of modern life affords few moments to pause and reflect, and, for all the pandemic has taken away, it has provided this rarity. Admittedly, my indolence has, aside from the occasional overdue game of Monopoly with my family, prevented me from doing anything productive with this time, although as of late I am attempting to learn Beethoven’s ‘Appassionata’ Sonata (a particular emphasis here on ‘attempts’, because I quickly discovered that the piece is rather above my pay grade).

On a more serious note, in light of the recent murder of George Floyd, I have been extremely encouraged by the remarkable capacity displayed by the Emory community for compassion and decisive action.

Matthew Takavarasha
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