

Seth Peabody

GSA Seminar presentation

“Rethinking Green Germany: From Transaction to Mutual Empowerment”

This paper arises from my experience teaching a course entitled “Green Germany” with a significant academic civic engagement (ACE) component. After briefly discussing the thinking that went into the creation of the course, I will focus on the lessons learned while carrying out the course plan and describe how I intend to revise it to emphasize partnerships and relationships in future iterations of the course, compared to what I consider a more transactional model in the first attempt.

In my second year at St. Olaf College, I was assigned to teach a course entitled Green Germany. The course was mine to design—but with significant input from my department. I first planned the course with a similar arc to what is seen in many overviews of German ecocriticism.<sup>1</sup> I would start with literary visions of nature in German romanticism, continue on to Stifter or other examples from poetic realism, then move into scenes of urban transformation, blood-and-soil propaganda, postwar rubble, and toxicity in the twentieth century, and finish by discussing what implications this cultural tradition might have for the *Energiewende* and other aspects of contemporary German environmentalism. I had taught a film course with a similar arc the previous year, with very positive student responses, so this approach seemed well-conceived. But there was a catch: the course was envisioned to reach out to STEM students; starting with two months of literature was not, my department chair suggested, a useful way to welcome them into the German department. So I flipped the chronology: start by discussing technical innovations, as well as cultural critiques, from contemporary German environmentalism, then cycle back through cultural history before ending with a final project that would involve discussion of both contemporary issues and earlier texts and events.<sup>2</sup>

It is at this point in the planning process, when I had already reversed my initial trajectory for the course, that I first spoke with Alyssa Melby, the director of Academic Civic

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the opening chapters of Axel Goodbody’s book, *Nature, Technology and Cultural Change in Twentieth-century German Literature: The Challenge of Ecocriticism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) or the set of texts covered in two prominent edited volumes from 2017, Caroline Schaumann and Heather Sullivan’s *German Ecocriticism in the Anthropocene* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); and Sabine Wilke and Japhet Johnstone’s *Readings in the Anthropocene: The Environmental Humanities, German Studies, and Beyond* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> A number of secondary sources provided useful input at this point in my course design process. In particular, Charlotte Melin describes a course on contemporary Germany in which students also examine their own environmental impact; see Charlotte Melin, “Climate Change: A ‘Green’ Approach to Teaching Contemporary Germany,” *Die Unterrichtspraxis* 46.2 (Fall 2013): 185–199. Regarding the use of visual media studies in order to help students develop critical distance for topics related to German environmentalism, see Marianna Ryshina-Pankova, “Understanding ‘Green Germany’ through Images and Film: A Critical Literacy Approach,” *Die Unterrichtspraxis* 46.2 (Fall 2013): 163–184.

Engagement (ACE) at St. Olaf, regarding the possibility of an ACE component in my course. She had already developed relationships with a number of potential partners in Northfield. She helped me understand how the project might work and served as a crucial liaison between me and the community partners. She also encouraged me to join a newly-formed community of practice comprised of educators at St. Olaf who were employing civic engagement pedagogy. Based on input from Alyssa Melby and the community of practice, I developed the final plan for the course: my students would study a number of texts early in the semester to gain introductory knowledge and vocabulary for environmental topics. Then, they would meet with the Environmental Quality Commission (EQC) of the Northfield city council to learn of the city's environmental goals, particularly in relation to the city's ongoing process to develop a Climate Action Plan. Based on this information, students would pursue research projects on initiatives in Germany that were related to the EQC's goals and then present their findings to the partners in Northfield. The meeting dates with the EQC determined the structure of the syllabus, so that there were a few class meetings to discuss introductory material at the beginning, then about two months focused on the ACE project (bookended by the two EQC meetings), and a few weeks at the end for students to prepare their final projects. The final projects took the form of a grant application (personal statement and project description, written for a hypothetical funding source) to pursue ongoing, related research in a German-speaking country.<sup>3</sup>

Overall, the partners in Northfield offered very positive feedback regarding the students' presentations. Student feedback was more mixed: while a number of students loved the project, some students reported feeling a disconnect between the course readings and films on the one hand, and the ACE project on the other. In addition, some students felt that they weren't able to start the project quickly enough at the beginning, and others felt disappointed at the end when their findings were already familiar to some audience members. These problems resulted from expectations, not outcomes: to expect to find a transformative idea for their city within a six-week project, starting just a few weeks after they had begun studying environmental issues in Germany in the first place, while doing all of it in a foreign language—all of this provided fertile ground for unrealistic expectations. I had attempted to guide students toward more reasonable expectations, but I could certainly mitigate these issues through more carefully targeted preparation for the project.

But I am not just interested in making my students feel more comfortable giving presentations and receiving critical feedback. That can happen in any course. My biggest question for this course is: How can I make it more transformative, so that it might maximize the impact of the ACE project?<sup>4</sup> And how can my students engage more fully with their community partners? Looking back at the project I designed, I realize that my course inadvertently created a transactional connection between my students and the EQC: the city

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<sup>3</sup> For further details regarding the course design, see the appendices to this paper, including the syllabus and excerpts from the Institutional Review Board documents I submitted for the ACE project.

<sup>4</sup> For discussion of ACE or service learning as a high-impact practice, the AACU's description of HIPs at <https://www.aacu.org/leap/hips>, excerpted from George D. Kuh and Carol Geary Schneider, *High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter* (Washington, DC: AACU, 2008).

gave students their ideas and needs, students carried out projects and gave back their findings, for which the students received course credit. It was in several cases still a fascinating and very successful project, but it was built on exchange of tasks and rewards, not investment in relationships. Instead, I would like students to engage more directly, and more locally.

It is well established the strong, mutually beneficial partnerships are crucial to successful academic civic engagement projects.<sup>5</sup> Rather than thinking about research findings, it might prove beneficial to think about the partnership itself—the identification of committed partners both on campus and in the surrounding community, as well as the effort and time required to build a relationship—as the desired outcome, not the means to an end. Further, the on-campus “partner” must be bigger than just one faculty member. Kevin Kecskes, a professor at Portland State University who has spent decades as a leader in the field of engaged pedagogy, recently pointed out that the “deeply collaborative nature of community-campus partnership work” suggests a need to “deemphasize individual faculty awards and focus instead more on supporting and celebrating collective efforts.” In my case, the problems of a partnership located at the individual level go well beyond Kecskes’s observations about the collaborative nature of the work. My course was limited to one semester, and the ACE project was just a several-week project within a semester. Of course, I might teach another course that could continue building a partnership. But what if I am in a short-term position and may never offer the course again? What if I am on the tenure track and discover, after one or two semesters of building a partnership, that ACE work is extremely time-consuming and is not valued in the criteria for tenure and promotion, so I need to stop doing it or risk my job?<sup>6</sup> Unless a professor can promise some stability, the partnership seems to be doomed from the start. Should I (as a 3-year VAP) therefore not do civic engagement work in my courses?

What I propose is a framework of mutual communal empowerment. This idea builds on what Harry C. Boyte calls “pedagogies of empowerment”—Boyte departs from “civic engagement” and “service learning” toward a model that makes explicit the goal of having

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<sup>5</sup> A thorough introduction to issues of partnership-building can be found in Sarena D. Seifer, “Walking the Talk: Achieving the Promise of Authentic Partnerships,” *Partnership Perspectives* IV.1 (Winter 2007): 1–33. A useful collection of resources for this topic is the Campus Compact “toolkit” for the topic “How to do community-academic/university partnerships well”:

<https://compact.org/resource-posts/how-to-do-well-community-academicuniversity-partnerships/>.

<sup>6</sup> Several scholars have spoken to me about their decision to abandon ACE work until after receiving tenure. This decision reflects institutional priorities that can be assessed, so that the problem might be quantified and possibly changed. For ways of assessing an institution’s commitment to civic engagement, see Barbara A. Holland, “Analyzing Institutional Commitment to Service: A Model of Key Organizational Factors,” *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, Vol. 4 (Fall 1997): 30- 41. In a similar vein, see the discussion of ways of evaluating an institution’s or individual educator’s readiness for engaged partnerships in Susan Eckerle Curwood, Felix Munger, Terry Mitchell, Mary Mackeigan, and Ashley Farrar, “Building Effective Community-University Partnerships: Are Universities Truly Ready?” *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* 17, no. 2 (2011): 15-26.

increased benefit for both sides of the partnership, framed within a discussion of public service as a means of reinvigorating democracy.<sup>7</sup> I add “communal” because I think it is unrealistic to limit empowerment to a single course or professor on the one side, when the partner is an organization or community on the other. Rather than an intellectual descending from the ivory tower to engage with the “community” below, I envision multiple communities—one an institution of higher learning, the other(s) taking any number of possible forms, each likely having multiple splinters and fields of overlap—engaging with each other for mutual empowerment. In this model, my conversations with Alyssa Melby would take a decidedly different tone. Rather than thinking what she could do to help my course be more innovative, I would need to ask how my class could contribute to a broader community partnership that she has helped to facilitate, and will continue to facilitate—together with myself and/or other faculty members—into the future. My students’ role would also change. Rather than attempting to pose as experts, they would enter as listeners who offer a different perspective, and who might in turn gain new perspectives themselves. In this case, mutual empowerment arises from intercultural communication that might yield new ways of thinking about pressing global—and local—challenges.

This reframing also helps correct what I see as an error in the approach to environmentalism within my past Green Germany course. The ACE project created a technophilic impression: *Look at the shiny achievements of Germany! Perhaps we too can make such shiny green technologies!* Students needed to find projects that they could study from afar—thus, quite often, projects with a major web presence. As a result, the course seemed to promote big science, expensive technological development, and a touristic curiosity to see these flashy technologies in their native soil. Would it be possible, I wonder, to have my students engage with community partners in a way that still allows them to share lessons gleaned from studying German-language environmentalisms, but that would emphasize investing locally rather than travelling globally?

So, in the end, I have arrived at yet another new trajectory for my course. I provide content on German environmental culture, not unlike the first iterations of my course design. Then, as we continue to learn about German environmental culture throughout the semester, students also engage in conversations with partners in Northfield and listen openly, perhaps sharing ideas from the German-speaking world or from their own background. They might learn perspectives that would have remained hidden when the course was focused on big fixes to technological problems. Issues of environmental justice might emerge; for example, how are local communities differently affected by pollution, or how are different local communities included in, or absent from, clean energy initiatives? As the semester progresses, students reflect on German examples and local conversations. At the end of this revised course, student work returns to the fundamental humanistic skills of synthesis and interpretation—how do they understand the different views on the environment they have encountered, based on conversations as well as texts? John Dewey wrote in that “We do not learn from experience... we learn from reflecting on experience,” and discussions of service learning repeatedly emphasize student reflection is one of the most important elements for an impactful student

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<sup>7</sup> Harry C. Boyte, *Awakening Democracy Through Public Work: Pedagogies of Empowerment* (Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 2018).

experience.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, rather than presenting recommendations for the city or requests for funding, my students end this revised course by reflecting on their own status as ecological citizens: Based on all they have learned, how can they understand and improve their own role in the world? This reflective thought process has the potential to empower my students not only as local conduits for knowledge from abroad, but as creative and empathic members of both local and global communities.

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, *Connecting Thinking and Action: Ideas for Service-Learning Reflection* (Denver, CO: RMC Research Corporation, 2003), 1.

# German 276: Green Germany

St. Olaf College, Fall Semester 2018

Tuesday 9:35-11:00am \* Thursday 9:30-10:50am

TOH 212

Dr. Seth Peabody

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**Office Hours: Tu 2:45-4pm, Wed 12:30-2:30pm, or by appointment**

## Note on Inclusion, Access, and Disabilities:

I work to make my classroom inviting and course materials accessible to all students. While the texts and ideas may (and should) be challenging, I will try to remove any barriers that would prevent you from fully engaging with those challenges. Please contact me by email ([peabod1@stolaf.edu](mailto:peabod1@stolaf.edu)) or phone (507-786-3168) if you have any concerns or would like any changes in order to best access the course content.

If you have a documented disability for which accommodations may be required, please contact either Laura Knobel-Piehl ([knobel@stolaf.edu](mailto:knobel@stolaf.edu)) or Joe Young ([young9@stolaf.edu](mailto:young9@stolaf.edu)) in the Academic Support Center (ASC in Buntrock Commons 108; 507-786-3288; [wp.stolaf.edu/asc/dac](http://wp.stolaf.edu/asc/dac)). If you have already registered for accommodations through Student Accessibility Services, please arrange for the submission of your letter to me.

## Course Description:

Since the 1970s, Germany has abandoned nuclear energy and made a massive push toward renewables, giving it a reputation as a global leader in sustainability. Germany's green reputation extends to daily life as well as high technology: contemporary stereotypes portray Germans as zealous recyclers, ardent bicyclists, and diligent innovators of efficient urban planning, to say nothing of a collective "arborphilia" reaching back to late-eighteenth-century Romanticism. To uncover the connected implications of policy, technology, and cultural history, the course is structured around four main questions:

1. How has the *Energiewende* emerged through specific developments in technology and policy?
2. How and why did this movement take hold specifically in Germany? What cultural and social movements prepared the way?
3. What are the international implications of the German model? To what extent is it translatable to other cultural contexts?
4. How can an understanding of the German model and its cultural context help us reframe our thinking about sustainability in Minnesota?

The course begins with the contemporary situation by examining current practices, policies, and discourses in Germany; it then works back toward deeper cultural history. Final course projects tie the two together in a transnational perspective and consider international implications of the German model.

Readings, discussions, and assignments are in German. Texts include news articles, films, policy papers, and literary texts, as well as secondary sources in environmental history. Students summarize, analyze, and critique these diverse cultural products, both orally and in writing. In their final projects, students examine a specific aspect of German sustainability with regard to both its cultural and technical components, and make recommendations for adaptation in our local Minnesota context based on their findings.

The course is designed to fulfill the WRI general education requirement. The course emphasizes disciplinary conventions and revision strategies for writing analytic essays, project reports, and formal presentations in German. Strategies include preparatory study of expectations for genres such as a grant proposal or conference presentation; organizational pre-writing; building specialized German vocabulary and prose conventions for analytical writing; regular, rotating peer review; and required revision of major writing tasks based on instructor's written and/or oral feedback.

**Required Course Materials**, available at St. Olaf Bookstore:

Volker Quaschnig, *Mülltrenner, Müsliesser & Klimaschützer: Wir Deutschen und unsere Umwelt* (Hanser, 2010).

Course Packet and 3-ring binder.

Occasional additional materials may be supplied via Moodle to be printed by the students.

### **Content-Based Intended Learning Outcomes:**

*Students will demonstrate:*

1. The ability to research, summarize, and synthesize relevant social, political, and economic developments related to technological advances.
2. The ability to work collaboratively on group projects that draw on expertise from the natural sciences, social sciences, and the humanities.
3. The ability to compare cultural contexts in Germany and Minnesota and to make recommendations for action based on these comparisons.
4. The ability to understand, analyze, and interpret a range of German-language texts about the environment and to present their findings orally and in writing in German.
5. The ability to create written texts and give oral presentations on complex issues in a way that makes them accessible to a general audience, both in English and in German.

### **WRI Intended Learning Outcomes:**

*Students will demonstrate:*

1. The ability to write effectively in a form appropriate to a particular disciplinary or interdisciplinary course of study (in this case, German Studies and Environmental Studies).
2. The ability to write as a means for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating.
3. The ability to engage in writing as a systematic, iterative process, using flexible strategies for generating drafts, responding to feedback, revising, editing, and proofreading.

## Assignments and Projects:

Participation and Daily Homework: This is a small class built on discussion and group work, so your daily homework and participation are vital to make it a productive experience for all.

Active Vocabulary Exercise: In the second full week, there will be a short exercise to make sure we all have active command of foundational vocabulary about environmental topics before beginning the research project.

ACE (Academic Civic Engagement) Research Project: This project involves a number of discreet tasks including a project proposal, research and interview summary, public presentation in English (for which you will first submit a draft of slides and outline), and a final project report. As a whole, the project is designed to link our topic in Germany with our local context in Northfield. You will first meet with civic leaders in Northfield to learn about sustainability initiatives here, then do research—including interviews—on relevant topics in Germany and write a short research summary. In a presentation and final report (or policy brief), you will describe your findings and make recommendations for how they might be applicable to the different cultural context in Northfield.

Cultural Introduction: Starting around Thanksgiving, we will study a number of German-language cultural works related to the environment in order to understand the broader context of present-day German environmentalism. You will write a paper that analyzes one or more of these works and discusses their relevance (if any) for contemporary German sustainability efforts. Then, in the final draft of your research project report, you will use these broader cultural concerns to help frame your conclusions and recommendations.

## Grading:

### Daily Work

Participation (including meeting with Northfield partners).....	15%
Daily Homework.....	10%
Active Vocab Exercise.....	5%

### Project-Related Work

Proposal ( <i>Projektvorhaben</i> ).....	10%
Research and Interview Summary ( <i>Forschungsbericht</i> ).....	10%
Public Research Presentation* (draft and rehearsal 5%; final presentation 5%)...	10%
Cultural Introduction ( <i>Einführung</i> ).....	15%
First Draft of Project Report / Policy Brief ( <i>Kurz dossier</i> ) .....	10%

### Final Project

Project Report / Policy Brief. ( <i>Kurz dossier</i> ) .....	15%
Total: 100%	

\*The public presentation will be in English; all other work is in German.

## Late Work Policy:

Because this class moves quickly and is structured around dates that have already been agreed upon with our community partners from Northfield, it is crucial that all work be completed on time. Assignments on paper are due at the beginning of class; Moodle dropboxes will close when



the assignment is due. If you cannot meet a scheduled deadline, please let me know in advance and we will work out a solution.

### Technology:

Unless explicitly stated, electronic devices will not be allowed during class sessions. There may be occasional in-class tasks that require internet access; these will be clearly announced.

Otherwise, use texts and notebooks, and be prepared to discuss face-to-face.

### Kursplan: Überblick (Veränderungen vorbehalten)

Tag	Thema und Aktivitäten	Aufgabe
6.9	<b>Einführung</b> “Die Vögel und der Test”; <i>Die Wolke</i> (Trailer); Nachhaltigkeit; Einführung: ACE Projekt	
11.9	“Umweltweltmeister” (Quaschnig) Einführung: Umweltpolitik Grammatik: Vergangenheit	-Online-Kurs: “General Social and Behavioral Investigations” (CITI) -Lesen: Quaschnig S.5-6 -Kurspaket (KP) S.36 (Atommüll)
13.9	<b>Thema: Geschichte der Umweltpolitik</b> in Northfield und in Deutschland	-KP 17-18 (Zeitstrahl, Fragen), 19-22 (Radkau, Fragen) -In English: Read “Climate Action Plan Implementation” (Moodle: GNSC >> resources >> ENTS 310 class papers) -In English: Brainstorm questions/goals for EQC meeting <b>EQC-Treffen um 19.00 Uhr</b>
18.9	ACE-Projekt: Themengebiet und Gruppen  Grammatik: Nebensätze	-Kurze Schreibaufgabe über Nachhaltigkeit in Northfield. -KP 38-40 (Hellige, Quaschnig)
20.9	Umweltpolitik in Deutschland und in den USA	KP 23-27 (mit neuer Schreibaufgabe)
25.9	<b>Thema: Abfall</b> Überblick: Projektvorhaben Grammatik: Passiv	Quaschnig 11-41 Forschung beginnen
27.9		Metabolon (Video und Website) Forschung weitermachen Gliederung: Projektvorhaben
2.10	<b>Thema: Projekt und Interviews</b>	<b>-Wortschatzübung</b> -Forschung weitermachen (ohne Professor: kurzer Bericht, Fragen, Rückmeldung)
4.10	Interview-Vorbereitung mit Prof. Randall	(Texte werden noch angekündigt)
9.10	<b>Thema: Energie</b>	-Bis Ende des Tages am Sonntag: <b>Projektvorhaben</b> hochladen (Moodle-dropbox)

		-Quaschning 150-157
11.10	Grammatik: Konjunktiv I	-Interviews: Plan und Fragen einreichen -KP 28-31 (Energiewende) -Forschung weitermachen, Interviews organisieren
	Herbstferien	
18.10	<b>Thema: Essen</b>	Quaschning 42-56, 88-95 -Forschung, Interviews
23.10	Grammatik: Konjunktiv II	-Video: "Wir sind Bauern" -Forschung und Interviews: Zwischenbericht
25.10	<b>Thema: Wohnen, Bauen</b>	Videos: Passivhaus; Vauban -Forschung, Interviews
30.10		<b>Forschungsbericht abgeben</b>
1.11	<b>Thema: Transport</b> Überblick: Vorträge, PPT	Quaschning 125-132, 217-225
6.11		<b>PowerPoint-Folien und Gliederung abgeben</b>
8.11	Vorträge üben (Generalprobe)	Vortrag vorbereiten
13.11	<b>Öffentliche Vorträge auf Englisch</b>	Vortrag verbessern
15.11	Vorträge und Ergebnisse diskutieren	Schreibaufgabe: Kommentare und geplante Änderungen
20.11	<b>Thema: Kultur der Natur, Teil 1: Romantik und Biedermeier</b>	<b>Kurzdosier: erster Entwurf</b>
	Erntedankfest	
27.11	KdN 2: Heimat und NS	<i>Der verlorene Sohn</i> anschauen; kurze Schreibaufgabe
29.11	KdN 3: Anthropozän/-szene	Gedichte auf Moodle
4.12	KdN 4: Fazit Schreibwerkstatt	<b>Einführung: Nachhaltigkeit im kulturellen Kontext (erster Entwurf)</b>
6.12	Synthese: KdN und Nachhaltigkeit	<b>Einführung (endgültige Fassung) abgeben</b>
11.12	Einführung mit Gruppe diskutieren. Kursauswertung. Fazit, letzte Aufgaben, nächste Schritte	Revise KdN intro for use in dossier.
13.12	Lesetag	
15.12		<b>Kurzdosier (letzte Fassung)</b> bis spätestens 11.00 Uhr abgeben

### The Small Print:

#### The Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

*"I pledge my honor that on this examination I have neither given nor received assistance not explicitly approved by the professor and that I have seen no dishonest work."*

The honor system has been in effect at St. Olaf since 1911. We at St. Olaf are proud of this system. It is the responsibility of each student and faculty member to keep this system working and effective.

1. All tests, quizzes, or examinations of any kind are taken under the honor system. If the nature of the test is such that the professor must remain in the classroom, each student is still on his/her honor and the honor system is still in effect.
2. The honor system is considered violated when information that results in or could result in an unfair advantage for one or more students is given or received before, during or after a test.

For full descriptions of the Code of Test Etiquette, Honor Council Practices and Procedures, and Faculty Responsibilities, visit <http://wp.stolaf.edu/thebook/academic/honor/>.

**Plagiarism**, the unacknowledged appropriation of another person's words or ideas, is a serious academic offense. It is imperative that you hand in work that is your own and that you cite or give credit to others whenever you draw from their work. Please see St. Olaf's statements on academic integrity and plagiarism at: <http://wp.stolaf.edu/thebook/academic/integrity/>.

### **Documented Disability Statement**

I am committed to supporting the learning of all students in my class. If you have already registered with the Disability and Access Center and have your letter of accommodations, please meet with me early in the course to discuss, plan, and implement your accommodations in the course. If you have or think you have a disability (learning, sensory, physical, chronic health, mental health or attentional), please contact the Disability and Access Specialists at 507-786-3288 or in the Academic Support Center, Buntrock 108.

### **Classroom Electronics and E-mail Etiquette**

Because they can disrupt the active and engaged learning environment that we seek to establish in a discussion-based classroom, laptops and tablets may not be used in this class unless you have made special arrangements with me, except in the case of specific activities for which they are required. You are not permitted to use any electronic devices during in-class essay writing. As always, be sure to silence your cell phone when you enter the classroom.

We are living in a fast-paced, hyper-networked digital world. Nonetheless, please treat e-mail correspondence with courtesy: that is, like a business phone call or letter, not an instant messenger. It is a good idea to begin practicing business-like e-mail etiquette now: be sure to always include a salutation with my name (Dr. Peabody or Prof. Peabody) and a closing with your name. E-mail messages will generally receive a response within twenty-four hours. If you need a faster response, please call my office phone at extension 3168, and leave a message if I do not answer.

## APPENDIX 2: IRB DOCUMENT EXCERPTS

German 276

### Research Project: Sustainability in Germany and Northfield Excerpts from documents submitted for IRB approval

**Proposal Abstract.** *What are the main research questions you are seeking to answer in conducting this investigation? What kind of information will you gather from/about people, and what methods will you use? What makes this project significant or worthwhile?*

Questions: What environmental initiatives in Germany may provide useful information for people working on sustainability in Northfield? What cultural and technical aspects made the German projects successful? What obstacles did they encounter and how did they overcome these obstacles? How might similar projects function in the different cultural context in Northfield?

Methods: Early in the semester, students will meet with members of the Environmental Quality Commission (EQC) and Climate Action Plan Advisory Board (CAPAB) in Northfield in order to learn about major questions and goals regarding sustainability in Northfield. Students will then do internet research to identify and learn background information on relevant projects in Germany. They will then contact people within the German organizations by email in order to set up interviews, and will conduct phone or Skype interviews to learn more about the cultural and personal challenges faced by the projects in Germany.

Benefit: The project is worthwhile because members of the EQC and CAPAB in Northfield have put a large amount of work into sustainability planning already, and are now entering the phase of trying to transform plans into realities. German examples may provide useful information because the German "Energywende" (energy transformation) has been underway for a number of years, so people involved in the process will be able to speak from experience regarding topics that have only been planned in theory in Northfield. Because my students speak German, they will have access to more nuanced cultural information than the partners in Northfield could easily access on their own.

**This email (translated into German) will be sent by the professor, Seth Peabody, to establish contact before the course begins:**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I received your email address from \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>1</sup> I am a professor of German at St. Olaf College, a small university in Northfield, Minnesota, USA, and am also affiliated with the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society in Munich. I am writing to ask whether you would be willing to participate in a phone interview with a small group of students so that they can learn more about your work on sustainability in Germany. It is not yet certain that you would be contacted—this depends on what topics my students choose in the coming weeks.

In terms of time commitment, you would be asked to conduct one interview lasting about 20 to 30 minutes. You would receive an email from a small group of students to set up an interview time, and then they would call you by phone or Skype.

The project is part of a course I am teaching entitled "Green Germany." The course is conducted in German; students possess intermediate to advanced language skills. As a major component of the course, the students are conducting research on projects in Germany that may be of interest here in Northfield. Before they contact you, students will meet with members of the Northfield city council who are working on sustainability issues. Then, the students will do research on initiatives in Germany that might be of interest to the partners in Northfield. The research projects will involve foundational texts in class, online research. After reading these sources, students will conduct interviews with people who have practical experience in community engagement, city government, business, and technical

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<sup>1</sup> Several of my prior contacts in Germany are helping to provide a network for this project.

German 276

Research Project: Sustainability in Germany and Northfield  
Excerpts from documents submitted for IRB approval

projects related to sustainability. They will be especially interested in aspects of culture, politics, and community that have allowed your project to succeed.

After the research project is complete, the results will be shared in a presentation to the Northfield community that gives recommendations regarding whether how the German projects can provide lessons for future sustainability project in Northfield. Short written summaries of the projects will be uploaded to an online archive for the City of Northfield. I am also planning to write a conference paper or publication that discusses the potential benefits and pitfalls assigning such a research project within a German language course. **Please note:** if you would prefer that I do not include your name or any other identifying information in public presentations or publications, I will remove that information before sharing the project results.

While I cannot promise any direct benefit to you, it is worth mentioning that some of my students will go on to work in Germany after graduation. Further, although the city of Northfield has only 20,000 people, it contains two highly selective colleges (St. Olaf College and Carleton College). Professors from both colleges will hear the students' project presentations. Therefore, the project might possibly provide academic or business contacts will be of use to you in the future, and in any case, the project will provide your project with some visibility beyond Germany.

Please let me know of any questions. Again, the students have not yet chosen the specific topic of their research, so it is not certain that you will be contacted. If you definitely do not want to participate, please let me know and I will not share your information with students. And of course, if you are strongly interested and would definitely like to participate, please reply so that I can encourage students to include you in their research.

Many thanks for your time,  
Seth Peabody  
Visiting Assistant Professor of German  
St. Olaf College  
+1.507.786.3168

**This email will be sent by students to recruit participants:**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am a student at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, USA. I am conducting a research on sustainability initiatives in Germany and am writing to ask whether you might be willing to participate in a phone interview so that we can learn more about your work. The interview would serve two purposes: First, it would contribute to my research project for a course on German environmentalism. (The course is taught by Dr. Seth Peabody, a professor at St. Olaf College who is also affiliated with the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society in Munich.) Second, I would present the information to the city leaders in Northfield, Minnesota. The city is working on a Climate Action Plan and I think your work could be of interest to city leaders.

In terms of time commitment, you would be asked to conduct one interview, which would last about 20 to 30 minutes. I am working on the research project together with two other students, and we could contact you via phone or Skype.

After the research project is complete, the information would be shared in a presentation to the Northfield community. A written document, which will give recommendations for future sustainability projects in Northfield, would then be uploaded in document form to an online archive for the City of Northfield. Further, the outcomes for the projects within the course as a whole may be used in a conference presentation or publication regarding the potential benefits and pitfalls of using comparative research projects to teach about environmentalism in German classes. **Please note:** if

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you would prefer that I do not include your name or any other identifying information in public presentations or publications, I will remove that information before sharing the project results.

Please let me know if you are willing to participate! If you have specific days or times that will work for a conversation, please let me know. I hope to speak with you soon.

Many thanks for your time,  
[Student's Name  
Major in \_\_\_\_\_  
St. Olaf College Class of \_\_\_\_\_]

Project Supervisor: Seth Peabody  
Visiting Assistant Professor of German  
[peabod1@stolaf.edu](mailto:peabod1@stolaf.edu), (+1) 507.786.3168

**Student follow-up email regarding confidentiality:**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for your willingness to participate! Please take note that I do plan to make my research findings public. However, if you would prefer that I do not include your name or any other identifying information, I will be sure to keep your information confidential.

Please reply to let me know whether:

- a) I may use your identifying information when I share my research results, or
- b) I may not use your identifying information, in which case I will remove any identifying information before I share my research results.

Many thanks,  
\_\_\_\_\_ [student's name]

**This email (translated into German) will be sent by the professor, Seth Peabody, to establish contact before the course begins:**