

# German & German Studies at St. Olaf College

## First Annual Newsletter

Vol. 1

Fall 2018

So many exciting things have happened this past year in the St. Olaf German Department that we have decided to put together a newsletter to tell you about them. Our intent is that such a newsletter will become an annual communication from us to you.

We are emailing this newsletter to German majors and German Studies concentrators from the Class of 1989 forward. If you know older alums or others who would like to receive it, please forward their names and e-mail addresses to Wendy Allen ([wallen@stolaf.edu](mailto:wallen@stolaf.edu)).

### Faculty news

As many of you perhaps know, long-time faculty member **LaVern Rippley** retired from St. Olaf in August 2017 after fifty years as a member of the St. Olaf faculty. His contributions to the College and to the Department were recognized at a College-wide reception, and we in the department hosted a dinner in his honor.



Dr. Rippley's retirement allowed us to bring **Visiting Assistant Professor Seth Peabody** to St. Olaf last fall. Seth did his undergraduate work at Northwestern and his Ph.D. at Harvard. Prior to coming to St. Olaf, he taught at the University of Minnesota at Duluth and the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. Seth and his wife Christine Howard, who works as a speech-language pathologist in the Northfield Public Schools, have two children: four-year-old Josephine and two-year-old Benjamin.



Seth's most recent area of scholarship and writing is environmental humanities. Last Interim, he taught an on-campus Environmental Studies course on environmental literature and film in the United States and Germany. In fall 2017, he taught a 270-level German course on German Media, and in spring 2018 he taught a new 370-level German course on Identities and Boundaries of the German-Speaking World. The course examined the history and culture of German identities and the concept of a "German nation" through the centuries. It focused on a series of issues and questions related to the notion of "Germanness," including the role of environments and architecture in creating or questioning national identities; the function of borders to both unite and divide; the power of film and literature to create as well as critique national narratives; and the political

and social status of Germans abroad and of foreigners in Germany. The course was intended as a capstone to the German major. As part of a [“Liberal Arts Summit”](#) organized by St. Olaf and Carleton’s German departments, the class presented their research on German identity that synthesized numerous topics from their study of German here at St. Olaf and abroad.

During fall 2018, Seth is teaching a new 270-level German course entitled *Green Germany*. In the course, students examine Germany’s successful sustainability initiatives and their roots in a long history of cultural values and scientific innovation. Focusing on both primary and secondary sources, the course begins with the contemporary situation by examining current everyday practices, technological developments, policies, and discourses in Germany that relate to sustainability; then it works backwards toward deeper cultural history. Students will bring their study of the present and the past together in an [Academic Civic Engagement](#) research project that runs throughout the semester. For the projects, they will collaborate with community partners working on the city of [Northfield’s Climate Action Plan](#). Students will carry out research on German initiatives that may be of interest for Northfield’s sustainability efforts and ultimately make recommendations on whether and how the German examples might be useful here in Northfield, bearing in mind the different cultural contexts. We are very excited about this course, which has been in the planning stages for the past two years. Stay tuned to hear more about it.

For summer 2019, Seth has been awarded a fellowship from the [Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society](#) in Munich, Germany, where he will work toward completion of his book project entitled *Environmental Fantasies: German FilmHistory for the Anthropocene*.

**Assistant Professor Amanda Randall**, hired in Fall 2015 after completing her PhD at the University of Texas at Austin, was on a family leave last fall as she, her husband Mason and her 4-year-old son, August, welcomed a new baby, Isaac, into their family. While



on leave, Prof. Randall created a new 250-level [Interim abroad](#) course that we will offer for the first time this coming January. The course, entitled “Gateway to the World: Global Connections and Local Identities of Hamburg,” is grounded in ethnographic observation and analysis. Students will experience and critically examine cultural institutions, events, and social behaviors at diverse local and regional sites where the historical and contemporary significance of Hamburg’s reputation as “Gateway to the World” is manifested. Count on Prof. Randall to give us some on-the-spot reports via [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)!

Prior to her leave, Prof. Randall contributed to an inter-departmental event series celebrating the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation (1517-2017). The collaboration between College Ministry and the Departments of German, Music and Religion featured Bach orchestra and choir performances, guest lectures, and library and department displays sponsored in part by a major grant from the Embassy of Germany. Among the in-kind gifts the Embassy provided is a 5-foot tall Playmobil Martin Luther figure who has provided lots of fun for St. Olaf students and faculty alike.

Last spring, Prof. Randall received a major faculty development grant from St. Olaf for summer research and teaching in Germany. She spent June through mid-July as a guest professor at the [Institut für Kulturanthropologie und Europäische Ethnologie](#) of the University of Freiburg conducting ethnographic and archival research on the historiography of German

cultural anthropology and folklore studies and teaching a course on diversity and decolonization. The research portion of the excursion extends from her dissertation work and marks the first step toward a sabbatical publishing project. She will return to Freiburg next summer with her family to start phase two of research and to teach an encore of the diversity and decolonization class.

In spring 2019 Prof. Randall is co-organizing the second biannual conference on [Diversity, Decolonization and the German Curriculum](#) (DDGC) at St. Olaf, together with St. Olaf German alumna [Kathryn Sederberg](#) '07. You can read Prof. Randall's public scholarship on the initiative's web page, which also will appear in abridged form in a forthcoming collected volume. The conference has received major funding support in the form of a "[To Include is to Excel](#)" Mellon grant. One way Prof. Randall is putting the ideals of the DDGC and "To Include" initiatives into action—to diversity the image of "Germanness," decenter the canon, and engage social justice issues—is by offering a new 270-level course in Fall 2019 on colonization and decolonization in the German-speaking world, covering works from Kleist, to Karl May, to May Ayim.

In addition to her research, teaching, and St. Olaf service, Prof. Randall has assumed the Presidency of the Minnesota chapter of the [American Association of Teachers of German](#) (AATG) in 2018, with the mission of connecting all levels of German instruction in order to help secure the future of German study in the state. Most recently she helped to organize the chapter's first immersion weekend with a workshop program facilitated by Prof. [Mohamed Esa](#) (McDaniel College) who also gave a guest presentation for St. Olaf world languages faculty on teaching for and through multiculturalism.

**Professor Karen Achberger** is currently planning a two-week trip to Austria with her daughter Erika, which will take place in early to mid August. This summer, she has been hard at work putting the finishing touches on

a book-length manuscript which provides an English translation and detailed notes relative to important letters written by Austrian writer and philosopher Ingeborg Bachmann which up until now have been unavailable to a non German-speaking audience. We look forward to a gala celebration on the publication of this important volume which has occupied large amounts of Karen's time for the past five years. Beginning this coming fall, Karen will embark on the path toward retirement. For the next two years, she will teach two sections of German 111 in the fall and her very popular German cinema course during the Interim; spring semester she will be off. This summer, Karen was invited to be a major presenter at Northfield's Summer Film Festival. She presented on Carol Reed's *The Third Man*, based on the story by Graham Greene.



**Wendy Allen**, who retired in August 2017 after forty years of teaching French on Manitou Heights, began chairing the German Department in Fall 2016; she will continue in this position until July 2020. Her main task has been and will continue to be shepherding the department through a period of faculty and curricular transition. Serving as department chair has enabled Wendy to renew her contact with the German language, which she had not studied formally since her graduate days at Indiana University-Bloomington. On a more personal note, Wendy is married to Richard Allen, Professor of Computer Science and Mathematics at St. Olaf. They have two grown children, both of whom live in the Twin Cities, and four grand-children, ages 9, 6, 3 and 2. One of Wendy and Richard's passions

is leading study abroad programs, and this fall they will lead an adult St. Olaf program to Bordeaux and the Dordogne. Just in time for the annual *vendanges* (grape harvest)!

### Students

In May 2018 we graduated five German majors and eight German Studies concentrators. Two of these majors, **Mari Arneson** and **Rebekah Gregory**, graduated with departmental distinction in German. Mari's distinction paper, *A Comparison of the Nomination Processes of the U.S. Supreme Court and the German Federal Constitutional Court* ("Ein Vergleich zwischen der Richterberufung des United States Supreme Court und des Deutschen Bundesverfassungsgerichts"), grew out of work she had done during her study abroad year in Flensburg. Rebekah's paper, *The Dream Chapter in Ingeborg Bachmann's Malina: An Explanatory Look at the Reality of Female Oppression* ("Ingeborg Bachmanns Malina Traumkapitel: Ein erklärender Blick in die Realität der Frauenunterdrückung") grew out of work she had done at St. Olaf with Karen Achberger and Amanda Randall, as well as work done during her semester abroad in Konstanz. Mari and Rebekah presented their papers—in German—at a Celebration of Distinction held in early May. It was a grand event for the German Department.



In addition to our Distinction candidates, St. Olaf German is proud to have founded a chapter of the German national honor society, Delta Phi Alpha, in 2016. Society members—outstanding German majors and German Studies concentrators—have taken

up the task of enhancing the department's cultural co-curricular programming.

### Curricular changes

You have read above about several of the new German courses we have created during the past year. We have also made changes in the requirements for the German major and the German Studies concentration. In the case of the major, we reduced the number of required courses beyond German 231 from nine to eight, but specified that at least one of the courses must be at the 270-level and that the required 300-level must be taken on campus, preferably during the senior year. In addition, courses taken in Germany must be taken in German if they are to count toward the major. In terms of the concentration, the number of courses required will remain the same (five), but students must take at least one 250-level German course and at least one 270-level German course. All of these changes were made as a result of recent assessment activities that suggested to us that we needed to 1) strengthen the language dimension of the major and the concentration and 2) make the major more accessible to students, especially as the tendency to combine German with another major continues to grow. The College Curriculum Committee and the St. Olaf faculty as a whole approved all the changes.

### Experiential learning

St. Olaf German is developing its **internship** opportunities for students to apply their German language and cultural knowledge in diverse settings such as elder services (James Clevon '19, Munich), business (Chas Cerveny '19, Bamberg) and non-governmental organizations (Mari Arneson '18, Flensburg). Kirsten Cahoon, Senior Associate Director of the Piper Center for Vocation and Career, was awarded a special Fulbright Fellowship to learn about career and internship opportunities in Germany, thus furthering the scope of opportunities for our students.

## Collaboration with Carleton

Since Spring 2016 the German departments at St. Olaf and Carleton have been pursuing curricular and co-curricular collaborations sponsored by the "[Broadening the Bridge](#)" initiative that seeks to foster innovative collaborations between the two colleges. Thus far the German departments have held a series of meetings to discuss program challenges and goals, organized a curriculum development workshop with guest facilitator Charlotte Melin (University of Minnesota-Twin Cities), sent Prof. Randall and Carleton's Assistant Professor [Juliane Schicker](#) to the ADFL conference, supported Prof. Randall's and Prof. Schicker's joint ACTFL panel series on German study and the mission of the humanities, sent Prof. Randall and Prof. Schicker to observe best practices for German program development at a peer institution—Franklin & Marshall College German, chaired by St. Olaf German alumna [Jennifer Redmann](#) '89 —organized joint social events such as a spring barbecue at the German House, and executed a joint colloquium in Spring 2018 on the value of the Liberal Arts that brought together students from 7 different classes between the two colleges.

## The coming year

**Study abroad:** A record number of students are going to Konstanz (6) and to Flensburg (3) this year. In addition, as noted above, this coming January will be our first time offering our new Hamburg Interim. St. Olaf's tradition of study abroad lives on!

**DDGC conference:** St. Olaf will host the second annual conference on [Diversity, Decolonization and the German Curriculum](#) (DDGC) Thursday, Feb. 28 to Sunday, March 3. The first meeting of this group was held in Fall 2017 at the University of North Carolina at Asheville. Prof. Randall and St. Olaf alumna Kathryn Sederberg are leading the organizing this year. Over 50 college-level German instructors from the US, Canada and Mozambique will be in

attendance. The conference will include panel presentations, curriculum development workshops, a roundtable on recruiting for a diversified German Studies, and a keynote address by Priscilla Layne of the [University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill](#).

## Alumni news:

**Maria Crystal** '02 is pursuing a PhD in Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies at the University of Kansas. Maria's research examines women's roles during war and conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa and how gender was strategically deployed as a tactic of war. Her work analyzes women's oral histories to better understand the experiences of women during war, the legacy of their experiences, and lingering challenges.

**Lisa Jennings** '89, currently a Clinical Assistant Professor of German at Valparaiso, has recently been named Director of the Valparaiso Core Program. Following graduation from St. Olaf, Lisa completed an M.A. in German from the University of Wisconsin at Madison and a PhD in German Studies from the University of Minnesota. She has held a variety of positions at Valparaiso since 2003.

Two St. Olaf student recently received Fulbright fellowships to research abroad: [Sophia Magro](#) '16 completed a research fellowship in psychology in Kiel, Germany; and [Suzie Hoops](#) '17 completed a Fulbright Combined Award in teaching and research in Linz, Austria.

[Kathryn Sederberg](#) '07 was hired in Spring 2017 as Assistant Professor of German at Kalamazoo College in Kalamazoo, Michigan, upon completion of a PhD at the University of Michigan and an initial position at Texas Christian University. Prof. Sederberg recently co-authored an article with fellow alumna [Jennifer Redmann](#) '89 that was honored with the award of [Best Article](#) in *Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German* for 2017.

**Mari Arneson** '18 is working for the Immigration Law Center of Minnesota.

**Kathleen Maxwell** '17 is working for a faith-based environmental advocacy group in Chicago called Faith in Place.

**Bethany Guse** '16 just completed two years as an English teacher in Linz via the US Teaching Assistant (USTA) program in Austria.

**Sophie Buchda** '18 is beginning her year as a Teaching Fellow at the Martin Luther Schule in Rimbach, Germany, continuing a long tradition of partnership between the school and St. Olaf College alumni.