

German & German Studies at St Olaf College

Annual Newsletter

Vol. 2

Fall 2019

St. Olaf German earns national award!



This past July Amanda Randall and Seth Peabody jointly won the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign

Languages' (ACTFL) Small Undergraduate Program Award for Program Development and Advocacy. One of the award recommenders called the St. Olaf German program "a model for undergraduate liberal arts." In September, Randall and Peabody presented a webinar detailing the strategies pursued and lessons learned over the last three years of intense curricular reform and co-curricular development. This award confirms the strides the St. Olaf German Department has made in reforming its curriculum through assessment, professional development, and best practices research. The feedback and engagement of our students has been essential to our progress. *Wir bedanken uns ganz herzlich bei allen, die unsere Bestrebungen unterstützt haben!*

Upcoming faculty retirement



After forty years of teaching at St. Olaf College, Prof. Karen Achberger will offer her last course in Interim 2020. She sees 40 in 2020 as a clear sign that this is the perfect time for retirement. It is appropriate that her last course be her flagship

German Cinema, which was among the early innovations in web-based, flipped-classroom teaching at St. Olaf. Achberger's long-awaited annotated translation of the critical writings of Austrian poet and intellectual Ingeborg Bachmann is expected to appear this summer at Camden House / Boydell & Brewer. After completing an article on *The Third Man*, the 1949 British film noir set in postwar Vienna, Achberger is eager to

become "Oma" again to her three wonderful granddaughters in Silicon Valley: Addie 8, Hannah 5, and Evie 1.

Wendy Allen winding down

2019-20 marks the third year of Wendy Allen's three-year term as chair of the German Department. Allen says she is counting down the days. In September, she travelled to France with her husband, professor of computer science Richard Allen, and two adult children. In June, she is scheduled to walk the pilgrimage route to St. Jacques de Compostèle with a St. Olaf adult group. And next October, she and her husband will lead a St. Olaf adult group to Germany to experience the Passion Play at Oberammagau. Travel is definitely in Allen's future plans! She will leave the department with a feeling of significant accomplishment and many fond memories.

Faculty research

In addition to their dedication to teaching and curricular excellence, German faculty members continue their contributions to the scholarly community through publications, presentations, and especially collaborations.

Last spring's conference on *Diversity, Decolonization and the German Curriculum*, organized by Prof. Randall and alumna Kathryn Sederberg '07, was a great success. It brought more than eighty teachers and scholars of German to St. Olaf. A number of publications have emerged from the rigorous, challenging conversations that took place over the three days. These include a joint article by Prof. Randall and Prof. Peabody on teaching critical understandings of *Heimat*, which will appear in a special issue of *Die Unterrichtspraxis* on globalizing German Studies. Palgrave will soon publish Prof. Randall's chapter on practical and ethical considerations for diversifying curricula in the forthcoming volume, *Diversity, Decolonization and the German Curriculum*. Meanwhile, Prof. Randall continues her ethnographic research on the personal and professional archive of Freiburg folklorist, Hannjost Lixfeld.

Prof. Peabody is helping to organize the scholarly community of Germanists working on environmental humanities through two events: first, a seminar at the 2019 German Studies Association meeting, co-organized with Prof. Dan Nolan (UM-Duluth), on teaching environmental studies within the German curriculum; and second, a symposium at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities entitled "Ecocriticism, Community Engagement, and the Future of German Studies" that is funded by DAAD and co-organized with Dan Nolan, Charlotte Melin (UMN Twin Cities), and Kiley Kost (Carleton College). Peabody's critical introduction and annotated translation of selected chapters from Leni Riefenstahl's 1933 book *Kampf in Schnee und Eis* will be published by Camden House in the forthcoming volume *Mountains and the German Mind: Translations from Gessner to Messner*. He spent summer 2019 researching in Munich for his ongoing project on German film and environmental humanities.

Prof. Achberger continues her contributions to the area of Ingeborg Bachmann scholarship through a presentation at the German Studies Association meeting, in addition to her forthcoming translation of Bachmann's major works.

New course

This year the German Department added a new advanced-level course: German Colonialism and Decolonization. Prof. Randall and 10 students are working through the history of German colonialism, from its Enlightenment underpinnings to the chronology, organization, and ideology of German colonization captured across text genres and subject positions. We examine the colonizing logic embedded in maps, art, commodities, and in a very unique resource: Meners Konversations-Lexikon from the Kaiserzeit (1890), left to the department by Professor emeritus LaVern Rippley. After examination of the colonial period, 1884 to the Treaty of Versailles, we consider colonialist revisionism and neo-colonial strivings in the Weimar and National Socialist periods. Finally, we examine grass-roots, governmental, and scholarly efforts to decolonize German spaces, institutions and consciousness. It has been exciting to explore with students a part of German history that is largely absent in German Studies curricula and that has been suppressed in Germany itself. Ultimately, we are learning how "die Kolonialgeschichte ist noch nicht zu Ende" (Speitkamp 2014).

German exchange and study abroad

Our partnership with the University of Konstanz is still going strong. Five St. Olaf students studied there last year, and two more will depart in February for Sommersemester 2020. We welcomed two Konstanz students to St. Olaf for the year: Nils Schreiner, who has come to study American Studies and Luise Rebentisch, who studies philosophy and English for teaching licensure. Luise works as the Native Assistant in the German Department and helps to animate the German House, now located in Larson House (next to the President's residence).

Luise Rebentisch on life at St. Olaf:



"Living in the German House is even better than I could've ever imagined. Within a couple of weeks, we became a small family that is always there for each other. Even though we are not really on campus and that can sometimes be a bit annoying, it is nice to get

away from everything at the end of a long day. I enjoy the classes and their structure at St. Olaf very much because everything feels more personal than a large lecture hall. The professors are more than happy to help you with anything, and it is excellent that you can approach them with most problems. Back in Constance, I never went to office hours because I always felt like I might annoy them. Still, I will take the Ole-mindset about open doors back to Constance with me because it helps and reassures the students, and the professors at home want to support their students just as much. But at the same time, I feel like the stress-levels are a lot higher at St. Olaf. The workload took some adjusting to at first, but the environment in the house helps a lot. We are all swamped, but everyone is there to support each other. I can't wait to plan more events with my housemates, have fun nights in front of our fireplace and steal a caf tray to slide down the hill in the next months!"

News from alums

Heather Vickla, Class of 2017, wrote last fall to say that she was still teaching at New Prague High School--this year full time! New Prague's German

program is thriving, with three full time German teachers.

Emilie Smolders, Class of 2018, has been playing semi-professional hockey in Switzerland for the past year and a half. She visited campus in early March and, in addition to practicing with the St. Olaf women's hockey team, met with German students over coffee and cake.



Alex Kim '19, (B.M. Church Music) is entering his third month as Guest Teacher at the Martin Luther Schule in Rimbach, Germany. Rimbach is a town in the Odenwald, situated West of the Rhine River and North of the Neckar. At school, Mr. Kim teaches

substitute lessons in English and other subjects, holds a weekly English conversation table, accompanies the choirs on the piano, and leads a boys' singing group. While not at school, Alex is continuing his organ studies and has enjoyed exploring the surrounding area with trips into the forest and to the nearby cities of Mannheim, Heidelberg, Frankfurt, and Stuttgart. Next week, Alex will accompany the 11th grade to Berlin for a week of interactive learning in the city that was a center of conflict during the Cold War and which remains a historical and cultural center today. Alex writes, "I am grateful to St. Olaf College and Die Martin Luther Schule for the opportunity to work and explore in Germany, while continuing to grow as a teacher and musician. It has been great to get to know the school, the students, and the surroundings. I am excited about the months that lie ahead!"

Jamie Truax '19 is a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in Luxembourg this year. Her enthusiasm, experience teaching English at a French summer immersion camp, and ability to speak two of the official languages of Luxembourg, French and German, made her an ideal ETA candidate. Truax is considering becoming a high school French or German teacher or working in the nonprofit sector. At St. Olaf, she majored in French and political science with a concentration in German studies.

Benjamin Wollant '19 will spend his Fulbright year conducting research in Germany on proton therapy, a promising alternative to traditional X-ray radiation in cancer treatment. To optimize proton therapy, it is necessary to verify accurate delivery of treatment dose in the body. Ionoacoustics is a new technique for verifying accurate delivery of treatment and promises lower costs and greater accuracy than current methods. Wollant's research focuses on developing an ionoacoustic apparatus and new experimental models that will help bring ionoacoustics closer to clinical viability. To engage with his host country, Wollant will join the Munich International Orchestra (MiO). Upon returning to the United States, he will enroll in a Ph.D. program in medical physics. At St. Olaf, he majored in mathematics and physics.

Happy Holidays!