Maymesters Abroad: Switzerland and Vienna

The Max Kade Center is happy to announce that Professors Christoph Zeller and Robert Barsky will teach Maymester Abroad courses again in the summer of 2016. Professor Zeller will teach EUS 2260 with the topic “Maymester in Vienna: An Archaeology of Modernism for European Studies.” Professor Barsky will offer a course in the Alps, but under the new course number and title EUS 2800: “Pursuing Utopia: Social Justice & Romanticism in the Alps.” (Students who have previously taken this course as EUS 260 may not take EUS 2800.) Please see below for excerpts from their comments about the May 2015 courses.

“The Maymester was spectacular this year! We had a great set of meetings in DC, which was new for us, and our Swiss meetings, activities, and discussions were incredible. You can see what we did on the website: https://my.vanderbilt.edu/robertbarsky/maymester-in-the-alps, and view student Judith Cohen’s video of the trip here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MMO19e_eO84. Stay tuned for May 2016, because the Swiss Embassy has agreed to collaborate on the DADA and Byron/Shelley anniversaries (1816, 1916, 2016). A big year!”

-Professor Robert Barsky

“On May 5th a group of fifteen Vanderbilt students and I arrived in Vienna and were welcomed by sunny skies, a laid-back atmosphere, and the city’s most beautiful architectural sites. After a city tour and first steps into Vienna’s rich history -- we had great tours at the Roman Museum, the Jewish Museum, the Austrian Parliament, and Schönbrunn Palace -- we began to focus on the art scene as well as the history of architecture. The cultural underpinnings of two millennia helped us to understand the changes during the 19th century that lead to broader trends in the arts, architecture, and politics now known as ‘Modernism.’ Highlights of our trip were a concert at the Musikverein with the Wiener Symphoniker featuring world-class cellist Sol Gabetta, and, of course, our three-day trip to Budapest/Hungary. A cable car brought us up to one of the most beautiful panoramic views in the area, and the Rax Alm offered us entry into untamed nature with its dramatic and picturesque mountains. Check the Vienna Instagram project: https://instagram.com/vandyvienne_2015.”

Photo by student Jared Brover
International Summer School on Fraternity (July 2015)

Antwerp, Belgium

This past summer two Vanderbilt students participated in the International Summer School on Fraternity. This year’s summer school was held in Antwerp and was the last year in a series of three summer schools on how the themes of liberty, equality, and fraternity have been interpreted and implemented throughout the world since the French Revolution. Professor Joy H. Calico was also a participant, and gave a keynote address entitled “Notions of Brotherhood in the Political Appropriations of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony.” The school was multinational and interdisciplinary in character, which gave the discussions and workshops a well-rounded feel. We asked the students to share some of their experiences from the summer school.

“Upon entering Belgium, I had no idea what to expect. I had never been to a foreign country before. However, I found that there were few major differences. Yes, there were minor things: roads were not the typical perpendicular layout we have here, buildings were centuries older than ours, and we speak different languages, but fundamentally, we are very similar. I quickly bonded with many of the students, and though I was only there a week, I believe I made lifelong friends.”

- Ethan Conner, student participant

“Attending summer school at the University of Antwerp was probably one of the best decisions I have ever made. Even though the program was only a week long, it presented the opportunity to connect with students from all around the world -- South Africa, Armenia, Belgium, France, Turkey, Slovakia, Malaysia, and so many other countries — and to learn and understand the world from a different perspective. We focused on the concept of Fraternity, as the final chapter of the slogan from the French Revolution. Especially with the crisis in Greece and within the European Union and with immigration policy and with the social welfare system, we explored how fraternity intersects with all aspects of life in both Europe and around the world.”

- Robyn Du, student participant and photographer
European Studies Faculty News

Michael Bess’s fourth book, Our Grandchildren Redesigned: Life in the Bioengineered Society of the Near Future, was published in October.

Robert Barsky published a book titled Undocumented Immigrants in an Era of Arbitrary Law: The Flight and the Plight of People Deemed “Illegal.” On 8 October a book launch was held at the Law School, featured discussions based on the book and on the current refugee crisis. The event was cosponsored by the Law School, the College of Arts & Science, and the Max Kade Center.

Joy H. Calico published “Old-Age Style: The Case of Arnold Schoenberg” in New German Critique and “Comic Book Opera: P. Craig Russell’s Salome” in Opera Quarterly. In the summer she delivered the GSA-Berlin Program Distinguished Lecture at the Freie Universität Berlin and gave a radio interview about her book Arnold Schoenberg’s ‘A Survivor from Warsaw’ in Postwar Europe with Australian Broadcasting Company’s The Music Show. That book received the inaugural award for an “Exceptional Book in Jewish Studies and Music” from the American Musicological Society’s Jewish Studies and Music Study Group. She was also named incoming Editor-in-Chief of Journal of the American Musicological Society.


William Franke published two monographs in European Studies this semester: Secular Scriptures: Modern Theological Poetics in the Wake of Dante, and The Revelation of Imagination: From Homer and the Bible through Virgil and Augustine to Dante.

Joel Harrington has three books in various stages of production: The Journal of the Executioner: Meister Frantz Schmidt of the Imperial City of Nuremberg (1554-1634) (University of Virginia Press, forthcoming in Spring 2016); Dangerous Mystic: Meister Eckhart’s Relentless Pursuit of God (Penguin Press, under contract for 2017; German edition with Siedler Verlag); and the collection he is co-editing with Beth Plummer, Names and Naming in Early Modern Germany (Berghahn, forthcoming in 2017).

During the summer John Lachs attended an international conference in Berlin, sponsored by The Berlin Philosophy Forum, in which twenty-three critical essays on his work were presented. He is considering publishing a book with his responses to the essays presented. Professor Lachs also published a book titled Freedom and Limits with Fordham University Press. The book contains substantial discussions of German idealism.


Refugee Crisis in Europe

Ari Joskowicz organized a discussion on “The Current Refugee Crisis in Europe” on 10 September 2015 for the Max Kade Center. The event connected faculty and students from Vanderbilt with activists and scholars from Europe via Skype. The head of the Austrian NGO SOS Mitmensch, Alexander Pollak, and two migration researchers and activists from Vienna, Petra Neuhold and Paul Scheibelhofer, offered their assessment of the situation of Syrian and other refugees in Europe. There was a lively discussion between the panelists in Vienna and the audience about European immigration policy and the potential political consequences of the current crisis.

EUS student Lina Kilani has been following Tennessee’s actions with regard to Syrian refugees. She submitted the following report:

“On Wednesday, December 9, 2015, I attended the Tennessee General Assembly committee hearing on Syrian refugee resettlement in the state. It was interesting to attend such a hearing on this globally controversial and relevant issue, and to learn how the place where I live and call home will be affected in one way or another by their legislative decisions. Sentiments were given from both sides of the issue, with concerns ranging from personal safety, the safety of others, and human rights. I hope that Tennessee will recognize the humanitarian crisis that is upon us and make a decision that allows thousands of men, women, and children the chance for a new and prosperous life.”
Work and Life in Dresden

Alumna Juliana Valcarenghi (’15) reports from Dresden, where she is working for Boston University’s Study Abroad Program. She sent news of her work and her experiences living in a German city in which refugees are welcomed by many and protested by others, including members of the anti-Islamic political movement PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident), which was founded in Dresden in October 2014.

As a Vanderbilt alumna, I am beginning my post-grad life working as a Resident Assistant for the study abroad program in Germany in which I participated as a Vanderbilt undergraduate, known as Boston University Study Abroad in Dresden. Through Vanderbilt’s relationship with BU Study Abroad, students in the College of Engineering have the opportunity to study abroad in Dresden without any previous German knowledge. However, BU also offers internship opportunities in Dresden for qualified liberal arts students to work for German companies or study at the Technische Universität Dresden. This is truly an immersive experience because the American students are given the opportunity to live and study as German students. As a student, and now after college, this program continues to provide me with innumerable opportunities to experience German culture directly.

Although I didn’t know anything about Dresden as a city when I came here to study, I can now easily say that there is no place I would rather be living right now. Dresden is an incredible city that rarely shows up on American tourists’ travel itineraries. Dresden’s expansive and varied history ranges from the baroque-influenced capital of the former Kingdom of Saxony, to a destroyed city of ruins after the 1944 bombings, and finally as a communist-controlled part of East Germany during the GDR. This city is both old and new, combining historical beauty and culture spanning centuries with a modern vibe following post-war reconstruction. And yet, what is most surprising is how quickly it all becomes normalized. Seeing refugees at the supermarket and talking to them in the tram are no longer uncommon experiences for me. At the same time, complaining about the idiocy and repulsiveness of Pegida and neo-Nazi demonstrations and even participating in pro-refugee counter-demonstrations have become commonplace amongst my peers. While never feeling personally threatened or unsafe, I have quickly become habituated to seeing police in the streets and checking for demonstrations before planning my routes. Nevertheless, instead of being a source of fear and uneasiness, these events have molded my sense of the world and opened my eyes by providing a sharp contrast to the political apathy that I am used to. And in many ways, Dresden is still the same city I fell in love with as a student, just as beautiful and just as much a part of the course of history. I truly feel that there is no better place than Dresden to experience German culture, language, traditions, ways of life, and, yes, politics.
Alumni Updates

Nell Koneczny, Class of 2014 — Nell started her first semester at the University of Illinois at Chicago pursuing a PhD in disability studies under a University Fellowship. She is researching disability in Poland today under her advisor Professor Sandra Sufian.

Emily Morgenstern, Class of 2014 — Emily moved from Washington, DC to Somerville, MA in August and is now a first-year Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy candidate at the Fletcher School at Tufts University.

Sam Denney, Class of 2014 — Sam is applying to graduate programs in international relations. In the Fall of 2015 he interned with the Committee on Affairs of the European Union in the German Bundestag. Read below for more on Sam’s experience.

Interning with the Committee on Affairs of the European Union

I did an internship with the Committee on Affairs of the European Union (Ausschuss für die Angelegenheiten der Europäischen Union) in the German Bundestag. It was through a DAAD program called EMGIP-Bundestag and, as part of the program, I received a stipendium. In applying for the program, I was allowed to pick a couple places in the Verwaltung of the Bundestag where I would like to be placed, and they placed me based on the needs of the committees and my desired time frame. The day-to-day work could vary quite a bit, depending on the committee assignment. In my case, I usually researched and wrote briefings on various topics, such as the demands laid out in one of David Cameron’s speeches; wrote English language communiqués and translated documents; and attended various events held by think tanks or other organizations. However, it is possible even to do higher-level work like speechwriting, depending on the committee. A pretty high level of German proficiency is required to participate in the internship. The people on my Committee staff did speak English for the most part, but I had the feeling that one could not have gotten by without mostly speaking in German. One really cool part about the internship was that I had a huge amount of access as an intern. I could go to almost any event to which my committee was invited. Additionally, the people I got to be around and discussions I was able to see were astounding. For example, I sat four seats away from Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier as he gave a talk on Europe and the Middle East. The amount of things to do and see in Berlin is also incredible. In short, I would definitely recommend the program. It is unique, and provides insight into European politics that would be hard to find elsewhere.

— Sam Denney
Heide Volkening, Max Kade Visiting Professor

We are happy to welcome Heide Volkening as the Max Kade Visiting Professor of German in the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages in spring 2016. In 2003 she received her Dr. phil. in Comparative literature at the LMU Munich. In 2001/2 she was lecturer at the Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf before she was appointed assistant professor (C1) at the LMU Munich until 2011, when she joined the German Department at the University of Greifswald. In 2009 she was Research Fellow at the IFK (International Research Center for Cultural Studies) in Vienna.


Notes from the Director

The Max Kade Center for European and German Studies at Vanderbilt University is committed to supporting and publicizing the work of our students, faculty, and alumni. In this issue of the newsletter you will see that our affiliates are active in study, research, and civic engagement both at home and abroad. The refugee crisis has been at the forefront of our minds.

Professor Ari Joskowitz published an op-ed piece about the situation (“Es braucht eine neue Flüchtlingsorganisation”) in the Viennese newspaper Der Standard in August, and responses from current student Lina Kilani and alumna Juliana Valcarenghi are published in these pages. In March 2016 we will welcome Professor Gerrit Dielissen of the University of Utrecht to speak on another topic of great concern with global implications: the radicalization of freedom of expression in Europe.

The Max Kade Center continues to support the broader network of Germanists in the region by contributing to the Southeast German Studies Workshop (SEGSW), which will hold its annual meeting at the College of Charleston in March 2016. We are also pleased to be a sponsor of the Sixty-Second Annual Meeting of the Society of French Historical Studies, to be held at Vanderbilt 3-6 March 2016 under the leadership of Society co-presidents and Vanderbilt faculty Katherine Crawford and Lauren Clay.

I am delighted to report that European Studies is currently conducting a search for a tenure-track or tenured faculty member who is a scholar of Russian, Soviet, and/or Eastern European Studies. We look forward to welcoming a new colleague in Fall 2016 who will expand the range of our faculty expertise and enrich the curricular offerings for students from across the university. The search committee is chaired by Professor Helmut Walser Smith.

Mark your calendars for our Spring 2016 events, listed on page 8! Some are made possible by collaborations with colleagues, such as those in the History of Science from the Department of History, with whom we welcome Alexandra Hui in February; and those in Women’s and Gender Studies, with whom we are hosting Martha Feldman in April. We are working out details to bring two more speakers with colleagues in the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages, so check our website regularly for updates.

With all best wishes for a peaceful and restorative holiday season - Joy H. Calico, Director
Fall 2015 Events and Lectures

Every semester the Max Kade Center sponsors speakers and events on a variety of subjects. The lectures of Fall 2015 covered a broad range of topics and we would like to extend our thanks to all who attended and especially to those who presented lectures.

On 9 September Matthew W. Smith of Stanford University discussed Nineteenth-Century Neuroaesthetics with Mark Wallace from the Vanderbilt Brain Institute and Lutz Koepnick from German in a truly interdisciplinary event.

On 23 September we cosponsored, with the Center for Latin American Studies, a viewing of Guten Tag, Ramon, a film in Vanderbilt’s International Lens Series.

On 28 September Sabine Berendse and Paul Clement performed a theatrical reconstruction of conversations between Hanns Eisler and Hans Bunge. The event was cosponsored by Warren and Moore Colleges and the Departments of Theatre and Musicology & Ethnomusicology (Blair).

On 6 October Michael Knoche from the Anna Amalia Bibliothek Stiftung Weimarer Klassik gave a lecture on the importance of original source texts in the digital age.

On 12 October Vanderbilt’s own Jason Strudler discussed Kandinsky’s poetry.

On 4 November Dan Stone from Royal Holloway, University of London gave a fascinating lecture on rethinking liberation during the Second World War. This event was cosponsored by the Program in Jewish Studies.

The final event in the series occurred on 7 December, when Eric Jarosinski of Nein Quarterly entertained a crowd with “First as Tragedy. Then as Farce. Then as Tweet.”

Spring 2016 Events and Lectures

Wed 3 February @4:10 pm Buttrick Hall 222 — Alexandra Hui, Mississippi State University: “From Vogelflöte to wichity wichity wichity: Standardizing the Sounds of Nature in the First Decades of the Twentieth Century” (Co-sponsored by the History of Science fund from the Department of History)

Fri 12 February @4:10 pm — Christoph Bartmann, Goethe-Institut New York: “Cultural Exchange: who, why, how?” (Co-sponsored by Department of Germanic & Slavic Languages)

Fri 26 February @4:10 pm – Kerstin Barndt, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor: “Show Time. Museums, Memory and the Poetics of History in Contemporary Germany” (Co-sponsored by the Department of Germanic & Slavic Languages)

Wed 16 March @4:10 pm — Monica Black, University of Tennessee: “In Sickness and in Health: Germany after Nazism”

Tue 28 March @4:10 pm — Gerrit Dielissen, University of Utrecht: "Charlie Hebdo and Radicalization of Freedom of Expression in Europe Today"


Tue 12 April @ 6:00 pm — Martha Feldman, University of Chicago, in conversation with Katherine Crawford: “Castrati” (Cosponsored with the Program in Women’s and Gender Studies)

Fri 15 April — Pamela Potter, University of Wisconsin: “Art of Suppression: Confronting the Nazi Past in Histories of the Visual and Performing Arts"