

Theme Two: “Germany and the World: Transformation and Transmission of Ideas, Ideologies, and Identities”

Theme Leader: **Pamela Potter** (Professor, German and Musicology; Director, Center for German and European Studies)

Key Campus Faculty:

Julie Allen (Associate Professor, Scandinavian Studies; affiliate Department of German)

Barbara Buenger (Professor, Art History; affiliate Department of German)

Heinz Klug (Professor, School of Law)

Weijia Li (Assistant Professor, German; Researcher, Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis)

B. Venkat Mani (Associate Professor, German; affiliate Center for Global Studies, Center for South Asia)

Lynn Nyhart (Professor, History of Science; affiliate, Integrated Liberal Studies)

Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen (Associate Professor, History)

Marc Silberman (Professor, German; affiliate Department of Theatre and Drama, Department of Communication Arts)

Weltanschauung is perhaps one of the best-known German terms to achieve an iconic status in the non-German speaking world. Yet the term itself and its origins encapsulate complexities surrounding Germany’s self-identification, political history, and cultural mission. “Germany and the World: Transformation and Transmission of Ideas, Ideologies, and Identities” extends our current DAAD project “Translation, Transformation, Transposition: Processes of Transfer among Languages, Cultures, and Disciplines” (Trans³), and engages Wisconsin faculty from the departments of German, History, History of Science, Art History, Law, Scandinavian Studies, Theater, and Music. We will explore the various ways in which German culture and ideals have been developed and exported to shape widely accepted ways of viewing the world. If Trans³ focused substantially on issues of knowledge transfer and interdisciplinary practices, we now shift our attention specifically to Germany’s historical and contemporary role in steering intellectual activities and discourses around ideals of the organic, the universal, and the global. Our reconstituted group aims to study how Germany’s unique position arises from the tension in its history of charting its own national and international courses simultaneously. Noted for its regional peculiarities and disunity, for centuries Germany lagged behind its neighbors in achieving political unification, economic competitiveness, and a global presence. However, this very fragmentation and lack of political power created fertile conditions for devising new concepts, structures and modes of thinking, securing Germany’s intellectual and cultural position in the world.

Faculty affiliated with “Germany and the World” will pursue an interdisciplinary inquiry of German-inspired concepts, structures, and strategies used widely in history, philosophy, natural science, literature, music, visual arts, and legal discourse and to analyze their complex genealogies within and beyond Germany. We turn our attention to the formation of concepts at critical moments in German history, their transformation

from inward-looking to outward-looking phenomena, and their transmission to the rest of the world. The development of methods to measure the world in aesthetic, political, historical, economic, linguistic, geographical, religious, and racial terms has pre-occupied German thought for over two centuries, with both positive and negative impacts on our understanding of the human condition. The processes to be examined are products of specific historical and cultural moments in German history, when a cosmopolitan orientation to the world was accompanied by an investment in the cultural organization of German language, arts, and sciences.

From the eighteenth century onward, German intellectuals engaged in grounding German identity through the common bond of cultivating literacy, developing arts criticism, and leading the geo-cultural West as a center of book culture, museum culture, humanities, and social sciences within and beyond institutions of higher education. Both unity and universality came to preoccupy German statesmen and intellectuals as key components in conceiving of a German national identity that had proven to be so elusive. Yet all of these activities bore the markings of a concurrent interest in situating Germany as a world player. Nation-centered projects to unify artistic and literary movements, such as the ideal of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, became part of a wider agenda to establish models for the rest of the world. A proactive investment in the sciences; in the production and circulation of knowledge; in the collection, adaptation, and purported “improvement” of foreign artistic achievements (especially in the notion of “German music” as an adaptation and improvement of foreign styles); and in the access to knowledge through translations from other languages fostered an unprecedented interest in comparison, leading to the establishment of disciplines of comparative literature, comparative religions, comparative linguistics, and comparative musicology. Despite defeats in global conflicts and only a modest presence as a colonial power, Germany’s “place in the sun” was being colonized on cultural turf. Even after the turn to a racially defined national unity and world dominance proved catastrophic in the twentieth century, German initiatives since World War II have continued to invest in the cultural sphere to regain international stature and respectability, demonstrating leadership in the centralization and dissemination of world literature, music, art, and cultural literacy.

Much of the inspiration for this theme arose from the very recent CGES conference, “Measuring the World: Formation, Transformation and Transmission of the ‘National’ and the ‘Universal’ from the Eighteenth Century to the Present,” which took place on September 25-27, 2014. In planning the conference, co-organizers Pamela Potter and B. Venkat Mani drew on ideas offered from the Theme 2 core faculty discussions, courses, and events and chose to broaden the concept of “translation” by focusing on aspects of German cultural endeavors to dissolve borders and establish dialogues with other world partners. The conference brought together contributions from graduate students, Wisconsin faculty, and guest participants from Germany (Peter Goßens, Bochum; David Oels, Mainz; and Vanessa Agnew, Duisburg-Essen), the United States (H. Glenn Penny, University of Iowa; Kira Thurman, University of Akron; Randall Halle, University of Pittsburgh; Daniel Purdy, Pennsylvania State University), and other DAAD Centers internationally (Sara Jones, University of Birmingham; Ulrich Best, York University) to investigate the German role in “translating” and transmitting not only texts but also

approaches toward conceiving of self and others in the fields of music, literature, geography, and philosophy, and in questions of political expansion at home and abroad. The screening of Olivier Morel's film *Germany: As Told by Writers Christoph Hein, Wladimir Kaminer, Emine Sevgi Özdamar, and Bernhard Schlinck*, followed by a discussion with the filmmaker (a professor of film at University of Notre Dame) and the keynote address "Who's Afraid of the *Auslandsdeutsche*? The Promise of Respatializing Modern German History" (H. Glenn Penny) established a framework for exploring internal and external views on Germany and its history, while individual papers broadened the scope chronologically and globally, spanning the eighteenth century to the present and exploring German interactions as far away as China, Africa, and the United States.

Most importantly, the conference made it clear to us that there was much more work to be done in this exciting area of inquiry. The fruitful discussions among our core faculty and conference participants prompted us to pursue the new phase of Theme 2 in order to engage more deeply in some of the following questions: How was the German conceptualization of the world politically charged and historically conditioned? How and why did Germany become a forerunner in articulating ways of conceptualizing the world? What are the positive and negative legacies of the modes of situating the Self and the Other in German intellectual history? How do historical contingencies and political realities impact the origins and proliferation of conceptual terms and frameworks in transnational contexts?

The new concept - under a new theme leader and with the addition of three new members - concentrates on the central role of Germany in the transmission of ideas and methods and expands its investigation geographically and into new disciplines, embracing the arts, sciences, and literature and tracing Germany's influence in Europe, North America, and Asia. **Pamela Potter** (theme leader) co-edited the seminal volume *Music and German National Identity* (2002), which has remained the standard work for understanding the profound influence of the concept of "German music" in shaping the hierarchy and interpretation of music throughout the world. Her current research on the historiography of Nazi culture extends into analyzing the role of German exiles in framing the discourse of Nazi visual and performing arts through the Cold War era and beyond. Art historian **Barbara Buenger's** groundbreaking work on the complex career of German exile artist Max Beckmann adds an important dimension to understanding the central role of German artists, art dealers, and art historians in establishing the foundations for art history, art museums, and the international art trade. **Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen**, from the Department of History, has previously investigated the reception of Nietzsche in America, and her extensive expertise on the role of German exiles in shaping American disciplines will play a central role in our exploration of intellectual exchanges between Germany and the United States. **Weijia Li's** research looks at the German and Yiddish writings on China by the Central European Jewish refugees in Shanghai during World War II, shedding light on unique aspects of China reception in German and European intellectual history and promoting interdisciplinary conversations and exchanges among history, Jewish studies, and German studies.

Continuing members will contribute to the new concept as well, shifting their focus to underscore the transmission of German ideas and methods. **Lynn Nyhart**, specializing in the history of nineteenth-century German biology, will draw from her current project on the history of ideas about biological individuality and part/whole relations, examining how these ideas connected to political concepts of the organismal state in the decades around 1848, and will trace the central role of German biologists in circulating and mediating new ideas about individuality across Europe. **Heinz Klug** has investigated constitutional transitions, constitution-building, human rights, international legal regimes and natural resources in an international context, and will continue his work on Theme 2 with investigations into the (mis)applications of social science theories to policy-making that yield problematic results in the reality of legal jurisdiction. **Marc Silberman** will direct his research on Bertolt Brecht to investigate the influence of Brecht's ideas about culture and politics in general and more specifically the epic theater in its international or transnational dimension. **Julie Allen** investigates the construction and dissemination of ideas about national and cultural identity in Scandinavia and Germany, particularly through mass media such as film, newspapers, and advertising. Her current research project engages with the instrumentalization of national stereotypes and psychogeographic resonances in the service of cultural and commercial nation branding endeavors. **B. Venkat Mani's** most recent work looks at the circulation of intellectual property in the move from print to digital media through the concept of "bibliomigrancy" within the context of world literature, specifically investigating the pioneering work of German thinkers in establishing concepts of literacy and comparative literature, and leading the rest of the world in developing the function and operation of libraries. He will be directing the Mellon-funded Sawyer Seminar on the theme of "Bibliomigrancy: World Literature in the Public Sphere," creating opportunities to collaborate on inviting lecturers and forming workshops addressing the significant German component of bibliomigrancy.

"Germany and the World" will also provide an excellent opportunity to engage students taking part in a wide range of courses that will confront its central issues. The Theme will also draw on an impressive roster of external scholars many of whom have already expressed interest in coming to our campus. We will also invite these scholars to contribute essays to a collection we are compiling, based on the papers delivered at the 2014 conference.

Activities:

New Courses:

Interwar European Art (Art History 556/856, Spring 2015, Buenger)

Brecht and Beyond (German/Theatre 940, Spring 2015 Silberman)

German Art (Art History 856, Fall 2015 Buenger)

Publications:

Two book manuscripts.

Three articles.

Theme Two Alphabetical List of Guest Scholars:

Celia Applegate (History, Vanderbilt University)
David Blackbourn (History, Vanderbilt University)
Sebastian Conrad (History, FU-Berlin)
David Dyzenhaus (Law and Philosophy, University of Toronto)
Jessica Gienow-Hecht (Political Science, FU-Berlin)
Hoi-Eun Kim (History, Texas A&M)
Veronika Lipphardt (History of Science, Max Planck Institut für
Wissenschaftsgeschichte)
Kris Manjapra (Colonialism Studies, Tufts University)
Suzanne Marchand (History, Louisiana State University)
Nikolas Mueller-Schoell (Theater and Media Studies, Goethe Universität Frankfurt am
Main)
Jürgen Osterhammel (History, University of Konstanz)
Bernd Sponheuer (Musicology, Christian Albrechts Universität zu Kiel)