

Minutes

The following representatives of German Studies in the Southeast United States met for the first time as a planning group at Emory University in Atlanta on September 14-15, 2007. They met at 200 White Hall.

Friday, September 14

3:30-6:00 p.m.

Peter Höyng, Associate Professor of German, Chair, Emory
Maximilian Aue, Associate Professor of German, Director of Graduate Studies for Comp. Lit., Emory
Hiram Maxim, Associate Professor of German, Director of Undergraduate Studies, Emory
Astrid Eckert, Assistant Professor of History, Emory
Sander Gilman, Distinguished Professor, Institute of Liberal Arts, Emory
Britta Kallin, Assistant Professor, Georgia Tech
Martin Kagel, Associate Professor of German, Head, University of Georgia
Sönke Lorenz, Deputy Consul, German Consulate, Atlanta
Nora Alter, Professor of German, University of Florida
Thomas Fox, Professor of German, Modern Foreign Languages & Classics, Chair, University of Alabama
Meike Werner, Associate Professor of German, Graduate Director, Vanderbilt
Jeff (Chauncey) Mellor, Professor of German, University of Tennessee-Knoxville
Scott Denham, Professor of German, Director for Interdisciplinary Studies, Davidson College
Ann Marie Rasmussen, Associate Professor of German, Chair, Duke (also representing Chapel Hill)
Nicholas Vazsonyi, Associate Professor of German, Graduate Director, University of South Carolina-Columbus

Peter Höyng had organized the meeting and convened this group in order to facilitate communication among colleagues in the Southeast. He wrote in his invitation letter in April: "Like many of us, I have been employed for the entirety of my career in the Southeast region, dedicated to the study and dissemination of German language, literature and culture. For historical reasons, a certain stigma continues to affect perceptions of our institutions and, by extension, our scholarly work. To counter these outside perceptions, it is time to become more visible, and concertedly so."

In the beginning, Peter thanked the Max Kade Foundation for their generous support, the German Consul, Dr. Lutz Görgens, for hosting a dinner reception at his residence on Friday night, and the support by the Deans office. Last but not least, he thanked his staff, Silke Delamare, Marion Hughes and Terez Watley-White for their assistance in organizing the workshop.

Friday afternoon the group exchanged information and generated a brainstorming (accompanied by severe storm outside). Astrid Eckert reported on a network organized by junior historians in the Southeast and their first workshop in spring 2008 at USC-Columbia (funded by DAAD), Martin Kagel on a conference on "The Meaning of Culture: German Studies in the 21st Century" (March 28-29, 2008), Meike Werner on "Imagining Europe: Turning Points in the Evolution of a Continent" (November 1-4, 2007), Reinhard Zachau (Saturday morning) on "Berlin and Modernism 1900-1945" (September 26-28, 2008).

During the collective brainstorming session, it quickly became clear that there is a strong interest in creating a network among the group in order to facilitate communication among each other in the Southeast region. The reports and updates on various conference models scheduled over the next year and a half in the Southeast suggested that for the planning group to organize a high profile conference along with a publication venue might not have high priority. Instead a workshop, modeled after the historians, might seem more desirable. While various ideas and themes for possible workshop sessions were tossed around (among them, Why books? History of Print Media; Uses and Abuses of Medieval Reception; History of the Body; Status of German Language), there seemed to be an agreement upon the desire for having a lower-profile, and grass-roots workshop-approach instead of a big "standard" conference. From the get go there was also a strong interest to include in the new regional scholarly network/workshop undergraduate/graduate students. What remained a point of discussion was how to define the Southeast and whom to include/exclude to this group.

Saturday, September 15

9:30-noon

Present: All of the above, except for Martin Kagel, Meike Werner and Sönke Lorenz

Additional: Reinhard Zachau, Professor of German, University of the South

Based on Friday's discussion, Saturday morning the group agreed upon the following:
In light of a common desire to create a grass-root and somewhat organic structure, the group will call itself loosely:

Interdisciplinary German Studies in the Southeast (IGSSE)

The group will create a website and listserv, at first both generated by Scott Denham (Davidson). The website ensures the most desired outcome of the planning group of sharing information and facilitating communication. Thus it should post among other items: conferences, potential speakers, visitors, and ideas of common interest.

IGSSE defines itself as a regional group and will be open to all those who are by their profession interested in an interdisciplinary approach towards German Studies.

Peter Höyng will draft a letter to the Consulate (with all representatives listed) in which we will ask for funding for the new website since it requires continuous attention and technical support.

On September 12-13, 2008 we will have another meeting as a planning group in Atlanta, structured as a tri-partite workshop which might become a blue-print for an annual workshop:

- Two or three presentations of ongoing research projects by participants followed by a discussion
- Book discussion (maybe during lunch); books will be suggested by participants
- Discussion of institutional and/or professional concerns such as status of publication venues for promotion and tenure, or on-line/distance graduate degrees

Respectfully submitted by Dr. Peter Höyng, September 21, 2007