

U.Va. German Department Newsletter

Special Edition: Spring 2020



GERMANIC LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES AT U.VA.

Dear Friends,

Our Faculty, staff, and students wished to let you know that our work in the German Department continues, virus or no. We present this bonus issue of the newsletter, to show you the milestones we've reached, all while isolating in place.

We wish you a safe and relaxing summer.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen,

Cora Schenberg, Editor



A Letter from our Department Chair, Jeffrey Grossman

To our Students, Alumni, and Colleagues,

Like everyone else, the German Department faculty and students have been severely affected this semester by the overall changes wrought by the Covid-19 virus and by the closures necessary to contain it. For educational institutions across the country and no less for us, this meant switching on a dime—i.e. with a week's notice—from well-planned in-class instruction to promptly innovated online teaching. It meant turning to the now very familiar (and, alas, quite hackable) video-conferencing tool known as Zoom—a technology that most of my colleagues, our staff, and our students found themselves suddenly learning to master in the absence of any previous experience or preparation. For many—especially our students—this often meant having to work more independently and contend with less than ideal internet connections. (Cont'd., p. 2.)

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Letter from our Department Chair, Cont'd./p. 2

I want herewith to acknowledge and express my deep appreciation to all involved. I thank our students who assiduously strove to continue their studies; I thank our staff for continuing their support for department needs from their homes and being continuously available; and I thank our faculty for staying the course (no pun intended) and rising to the challenge of rapidly devising new strategies for teaching and for their ability to unfalteringly convey to our students the value and importance of intellectual work even in a difficult time.

Likewise, we owe a debt of thanks to the administration and especially the Arts and Science's office of Learning Design and Technology, under its director Judy Giering. Judy and her team went to extraordinary lengths to help us manage this change. We also received much help from our department technology specialist Will Martin, while the UVA library similarly went to great lengths to scan large quantities of instructional materials at lightning speed.

More specifically, in the German Department, I am especially grateful to our Language Coordinator/Director of Undergraduate Programs Julia Gutterman, who, beyond maintaining her own intense pace of instruction, coordinated the shift of the language program to online instruction. She and the rest of our language instructors deserve credit for their special efforts (language instruction having been identified as one of three forms of instruction most vulnerable at this time – along with lab and studio courses). But, again, all of my colleagues in the German Department must be acknowledged for their impressive *Durchhaltevermögen*.

And such *Durchhaltevermögen* is precisely what our **students** who are ultimately our *raison d'être* also clearly demonstrated !

In light of all this, I am at the academic year's end highly confident that these efforts have well positioned us – faculty and students alike – to rise to the remaining challenges that face us from now into the summer and, later, the 2020-2021 academic year.

Warm regards,

Jeffrey Grossman, Chair

Faculty News

Before the COVID 19 crisis started, two of our Faculty faced—and surmounted—a bureaucratic obstacle. German political scientist **Hajo Funke**, who planned to join the German Department this spring as Max Kade Visiting Professor, was unable to enter the United States, because the State Department delayed issuing his visa. However, Mr. Funke's two courses—one on far-right populism and another on historical-political memory in Germany—were able to go forward, thanks to **Jeff Grossman**, who arranged to co-teach Mr. Funke's two courses, with his German colleague participating via videoconference from Berlin.

While inquiries about the reason for the visa delay went unanswered, Jeff Grossman told U.Va.'s Cavalier Daily, "He hasn't been given any reason ... we suspect it's because he has a stamp from Iran in his passport."

Funke had recently traveled to Iran to visit his wife's family and for academic purposes.

Funke's research focuses on political culture in modern Germany and far-right extremism. He is an active public intellectual, and was awarded the German Federal Cross of Merit in November for his work.

Hajo Funke's visa was finally granted in mid-February. He arrived in the U.S. just in time to finish the semester—via zoom.

Mr. Funke's visa problem was first reported on in the Cavalier Daily: <https://www.cavalierdaily.com/article/2020/02/german-visiting-professor-unable-to-enter-the-u-s-visa-delayed-indefinitely>. The story was then picked up by the Washington Post: https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/this-renowned-german-professor-was-headed-to-u-v-a-to-teach-about-the-rise-of-far-right-extremism-the-state-department-held-up-his-visa/2020/02/20/ade251e-5425-11ea-9e47-59804be1dcfb_story.html.



Prof. Hajo Funke

Faculty News, Cont'd./p. 4

In addition to his increased course-load, **Jeff Grossman** published two pieces in the past academic year. One is a book chapter titled: "France as *Wahlheimat* for Two German Jews: Heinrich Heine and Walter Benjamin," which appeared in a volume titled **Wahlheimat/Spiritual/Elective Homelands**, ed. Richard I. Cohen, Sarah Wobick, and Asher Biemann. The other was an article: "The Healing-Killing Paradox: Reverse Narrative and Double Consciousness in Martin Amis's *Time's Arrow*," published in a special issue of the *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, titled: *Rückwärtsvorgänge: Retrogrades Erzählen in Literatur, Kunst und Wissenschaft*.

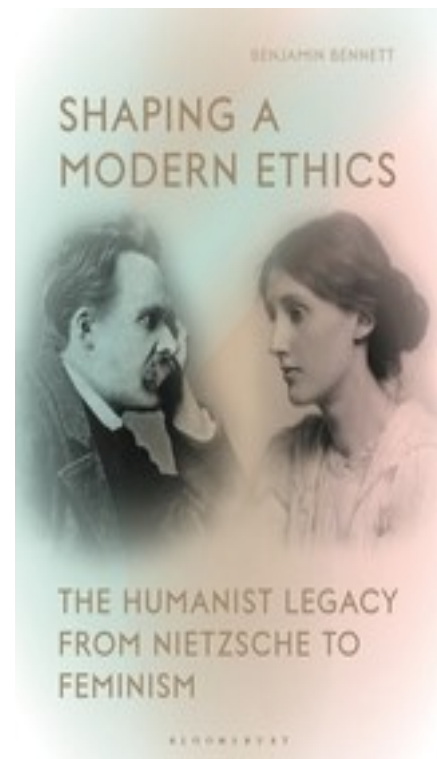
Finally, Jeff has just been selected to serve as Department Chair for another three years. Congratulations!

This spring semester, **Manuela Achilles** taught a large survey class on Nazi Germany, as well as an interdisciplinary seminar on the tensions in German history and culture between a chauvinist belief in German racial or cultural superiority and moments of genuine openness to strangers. She worked toward the completion of her book manuscript, *Invisible Fatherland: Constitutional Patriotism in Weimar Germany*, and was accepted to present papers at the Annual Memory Studies Conference in Charlottesville ("Pluralistic Memory and the Challenge of Illiberalism"), the Annual German Studies Association Conference in Washington D.C. ("Weimar and Charlottesville: A Reflection on Fascism Past and Present"), and the Weimar in 20/20 Interdisciplinary Symposium at Western University in Canada ("Constitutional Patriotism in Weimar Germany: A Reflection from Charlottesville"). Together with Hannah Winnick, she is preparing a contribution for a special issue of the *Journal of Holocaust Research* on the topic of "Confronting Hatred: Neo-Nazism, Antisemitism, and Holocaust Studies Today."



In her capacity as Director of the Center for German Studies and the European Studies M.A. Program, Manuela organized or co-organized a number of high-profile events, including the visit of French historian Florent Brayard (EHESS, Paris), who is the main editor of the forthcoming French critical edition of Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. Together with her program assistants Jessica Peck and Isabella Dillon, she hosted the visit of German-Moroccan writer and activist Mohamed Amjahid from Berlin, who gave a student-led workshop on space, marginalization, empowerment, and coexistence, as well as a public lecture on minorities and democracy in Germany today. Finally, Manuela embarked on a new adventure this semester: homeschooling her six-year old daughter Hannah, a first grader in Charlottesville's public schools.

Ben Bennett's latest book, *Shaping a Modern Ethics: The Humanist Legacy from Nietzsche to Feminism*, was published by Bloomsbury in February 2020. Ben reports that he's halfway through a draft of his next book, titled *The Dawn of Feminism in Eighteenth-Century German Writing*, and is collecting material for a subsequent book, *The Case against Literature*. For the next two years, Ben will be teaching in the College Fellows Engagements program. For this program, developed for the New Curriculum, College Fellows were asked to design their dream courses--ones they'd always wanted to teach but never had the opportunity--and then teach these course to first-year students.

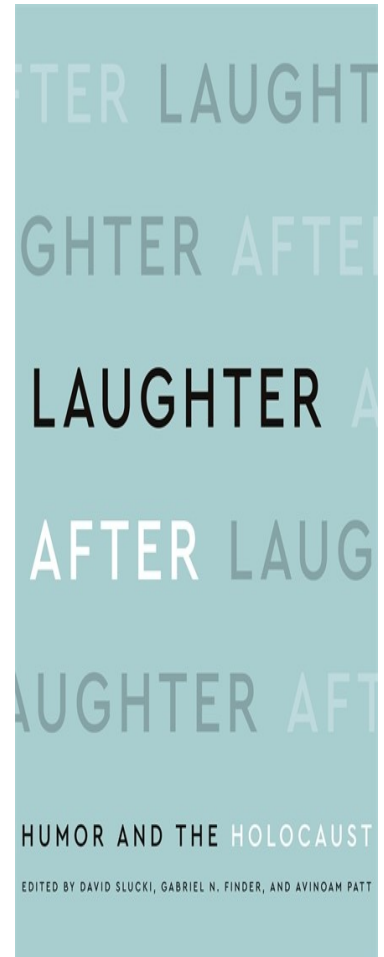


During March break, **Paul Dobryden** gave a talk at Georgia Tech, titled "Envisioning the Healthy City: German Urban Planning and Traffic Safety Films of the Silent Era." His talk showed how German educational silent films, along with imparting practical health and safety advice, "taught audiences to see themselves as part of an urban organism and ultimately, a larger social body."

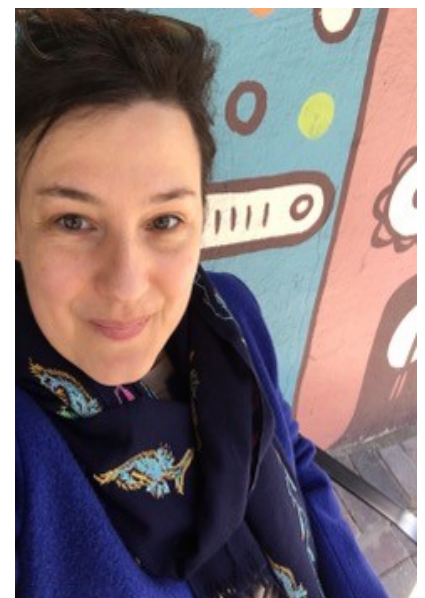


Gabriel (Gaby) Finder, who teaches in the Germanic Languages and Literatures and Jewish Studies programs, has received a prestigious, all-university teaching award. In recommending him for this award, colleagues and students testified to Gaby's excellence in teaching. One colleague wrote that Gaby Finder is, "quite simply, a brilliant and remarkable teacher, one with profound knowledge of his subject, the capacity to lucidly impart this knowledge, and the ability to inspire students as active learners in his field." A student stated that "Professor Finder always makes you feel as though you are the most important person in the room. By the end of any conversation with him, you find yourself applying for a scholarship or to present at an academic conference; researching an unconsidered angle on a paper you are writing; or going back to the library to check out a book that will inevitably shape your thinking on a particular subject." We congratulate Gaby on this much-deserved accolade.

Just before press time, Gaby's newest work was published. *Laughter After: Humor and the Holocaust*, edited by David Slucki, Gabriel N. Finder, and Avinoam Patt, is available from Wayne State University Press. According to Gaby, the book's contributors "collectively demonstrate that Jewish writers and comedians have deployed Holocaust-inflected humor to critique contemporary society's mores and values, including trivialization of the Holocaust."



This past semester, **Julia Gutterman**, who currently serves as the German Department's Language Coordinator and Director of Undergraduate Studies, successfully completed her dissertation at Yale University. In an abstract, Julia writes that her dissertation, titled "Spielarten des Heimlichen. Annette von Droste-Hülshoff wiedergelesen mit Walter Benjamin," "examines figures of the secret and of hiddenness in a selection of Annette von Droste-Hülshoff's texts, [taking] as its starting point Walter Benjamin's commentary on a letter by Droste, which Benjamin included in his anthology of 19th century epistles *Deutsche Menschen*. Recounting the story of Droste's discovery of two secret compartments in a closed ivory box, Benjamin's commentary elaborates an intimate connection between the notion of the secret and the phenomenon of collecting. Indeed, he goes so far as to claim that the uniqueness of Droste's poetic writing finds its roots in this intricate nexus of the hidden and the collection." We send our hearty congratulations to Julia!



Lorna Martens recently published an article titled “Corporeality, Materiality, and Unnamed Emotions in Rilke’s *Dinggedichte*,” in *Feelings Materialized: Emotions, Bodies, and Things in Germany, 1500-1950*, edited by Heikki Lempa, Derek Hillard, and Russell Spinney. Lorna also gave three conference papers last year. “Narrative Joy” was delivered at the International Society for the Study of Narrative. Lorna lectured on “Women’s Childhood Autobiography, 1845-1969,” at the British Sociological Association Summer Conference, at Oxford, and spoke on “Emotions and Words in Autobiography,” at 2019 PAMLA San Diego.

Pictured: A friend, who continues to visit Lorna.



Bill McDonald’s latest article, titled “Abraham in Wonderland: On Judeis-
apta and Imaginary Jewish Sovereignty in the Fourteenth-Century *Austrian Chronicle* (*Österreichische Chronik von den 95 Herrschaften*)”, is forthcoming this year in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*.



Marcel Schmid recently published a co-edited volume on Self-reflection in Literature with Brill. The volume delivers a broad panorama of genres, forms, and functions of literary self-reflection and their connections with social, political and philosophical discourses from the 17th century to the present. Together with the co-editor Florian Lippert (University of Groningen, Netherlands) Marcel wrote the introduction (“Read Thyself: Cultural Self-reflection and the Relevance of Literary “Self”-labels”) and contributed the article: “Transmission Kleist,” which considers Kleist’s “On the Gradual Construction of Thoughts during Speech” as a performance of its subject.



Ruth Trice represented U.Va.’s German Department at a language workshop at Emory University in December. She will be representing U.Va. as an AP Exam reader this summer.

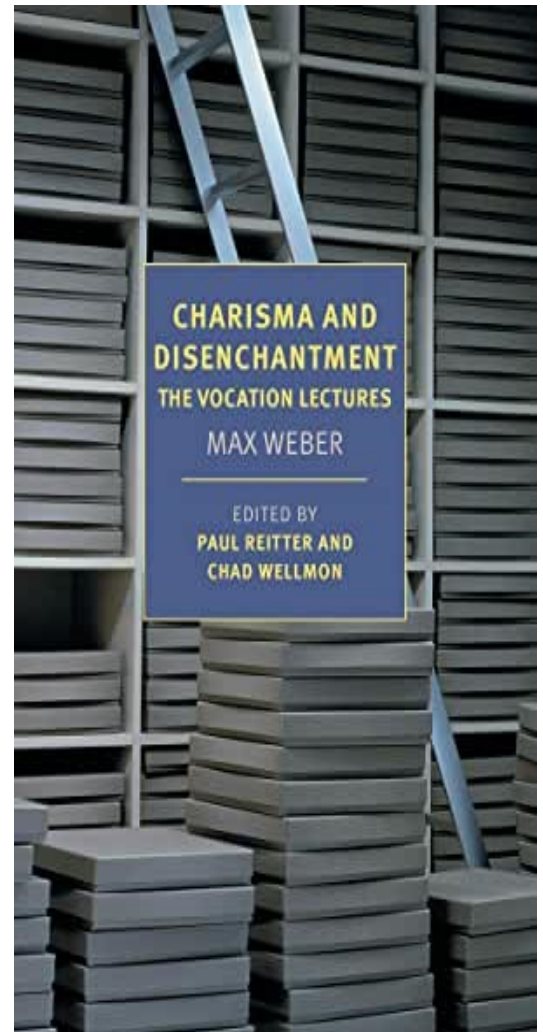
Ruth is pictured here with her “deutsche Mama.”



Faculty News, Cont'd./p. 8

Chad Wellmon recently published a new translation and edition of Max Weber's two vocation lectures. The edition was published by New York Review Books Classics and titled *Charisma and Enchantment: The Vocation Lectures* <https://www.nyrb.com/products/charisma-and-disenchantment?variant=14728903786548>

Chad's byline also appeared recently in *Inside Higher Education*, which reached out to a select group of university faculty, staff, and administrators, asking them to address the question "How Will the Pandemic Change Higher Education?" Chad contributed an article titled "After the University. When Colleges Shut Down, Intellectual Life Goes On." In the article, Chad writes that although our campus is empty, a different kind of intellectual work is taking place, noting "online quarantine journals, ad hoc Zoom seminars, reading groups organized over Twitter, my 16-year-old son's late-night discussions carried on while gaming." He says that while erasure of the boundary between his intellectual and personal life has made for more disruptions in his work, it has also encouraged him to value the "intellectual work required to make meaningful forms of life beyond the university." He sees this as positive. "The functions of my own university had to grind to a halt before I could see that our intellectual work is much bigger than any one institution — and much more urgent," Chad concluded.



Our Graduating Majors and Minors/p. 9

At this difficult time, we are especially proud of our graduating German majors and minors, who persisted, despite all obstacles. One minor, **Justin Fox**, volunteered to tell our readers about his plans for life after U.Va. Justin writes, "I'll be starting work for Jefferies Investment Bank in Charlotte, North Carolina this coming July (if everything goes as planned). I'm graduating from McIntire with a Finance and Information Technology concentration combined with my German minor. I hope to work a few years in the states and *potentially* lateral to an office in Germany to continue an occupation in finance. I hope to keep in touch with my professors in the German Department, seeing as though my favorite classes at UVA were nearly all from my German minor!"

Here is the complete list of our graduates:

Majors

- Cameron Brandon
- Mia Brandon
- Nicholas Carmichael
- Anders Christoffersen
- Wes Collier
- Jonathan Hummer
- Katarina Naworol
- Josef Shim



Graduating Fourth-Year
German Minor Justin Fox

Minors

- Sakeena Alkateeb
- William Easley
- Justin Fox
- John Grady
- John Hissong
- Frederic Klostermyer
- Jessica Peck
- Fred Wood