

Dear Friends of UMass German & Scandinavian Studies,

2016-17 has been a full and exciting year for our GSS community! Our faculty hosted two conferences and a number of distinguished guests. In the fall semester the DEFA Film Library brought Herrmann Zschoche, award-winning director for the DEFA Studio from 1960-1990, to campus for a film series featuring his work. Professor Emerita Sigrid Bauschinger presented her recently published book, *Die Cassierer* (2015). We also invited two noted authors: Ingeborg-Bachman-Prize recipient Sharon Dodua Otoo, who shared her award-winning short story "Herr Gröttrup setzt sich hin," and writer and journalist, Carmen-Francesca Banciu, who read from *Berlin ist mein Paris* (2002).

This spring GSS faculty Ela Gezen and Jonathan Skolnik and Priscilla Layne, Professor of German at UNC, organized a conference held at three of the Five College campuses on "Minorities and Minority Discourses in Germany since 1990." The conference was the first of its kind to bring together leading scholars working in Turkish-German, Black-German and German-Jewish studies for three days of presentations, discussion, and even dancing! Professor Emerita Sara Lennox also participated in the conference, and presented her newly published volume, *Remapping Black Germany: New Perspectives on Afro-German History, Politics, and Culture* (2016).



*DJ Ipek Ipekcioglu spins at a party after presenting at the "Minorities and Minority Discourses" conference*

Continuing the Scandinavian Impulses series this spring, Professor Sherrill Harbison organized an interdisciplinary symposium, "Managing Multicultural Scandinavia." The symposium, supported by a grant from the Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation, provided a forum to discuss some of the most pressing issues and questions related to refugee resettlement and the larger topic of migration and the Nordic welfare states. In concert with the symposium, Professor Harbison and GSS welcomed a Fulbright-Hildeman Fellow in Scandinavian Studies, Markus Huss, who joined us from Södertörn University in Stockholm for the spring semester.



*Participants engage in discussion at the Scandinavian Impulses Symposium*

We also held our traditional outreach event, German & Scandinavian Day, organized for the second year in a row by Anca Luca Holden. Students from regional high schools attended classes taught by faculty and graduate students, and toured the campus.

In this newsletter you will read about the many accomplishments of our students and faculty in the last few years, but I would like to mention one particular honor to start: Our own Barton Byg was awarded the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany for his "outstanding contributions to the promotion of German culture and language." This is a rare and well-deserved honor!



*German Consul General, Ralf Horlemann, UMass Chancellor Kumble Subbaswamy and HEA Dean Julie Hayes congratulate Barton Byg on the Order of Merit*

Finally, and with mixed feelings, I would like to share that Sherrill Harbison will retire at the end of this academic year. Sherrill has been a beloved teacher and colleague, and a vital part of the Scandinavian Studies program at UMass for 12 years. In that time she has organized many events, invited some of our most popular guest speakers, and raised an astounding amount of both money and awareness for Scandinavian Studies through numerous grants and fellowships. Her scholarship has influenced the discipline in the US and internationally, and I am certain that her future work will continue to do so as well. Sherrill will be deeply missed in GSS, but we celebrate her contributions to our program during her career, and wish her much happiness and success as she moves on to the next adventure.

To our donors: Thank you so much! Our achievements and the rich cultural life of the program are in large part because of you. And to our alumni: We would love to hear from you! Send your news to [gssnews@german.umass.edu](mailto:gssnews@german.umass.edu) so we can include it in our next newsletter. Be sure to visit our new website [[www.umass.edu/german](http://www.umass.edu/german)] and our Facebook page [[www.facebook.com/umassgerman](http://www.facebook.com/umassgerman)] to find out about our most recent news and upcoming events.

Mit herzlichen Grüßen aus Amherst,

Andy Donson

Program Director for German & Scandinavian Studies

**Join us at the GSA in Atlanta for the 2017  
GSS and DEFA reception!**  
**email [gssnews@german.umass.edu](mailto:gssnews@german.umass.edu) for details**

# Faculty News

**Skyler Arndt-Briggs** continues to serve as the Executive Director of the DEFA Film Library. In this capacity, she oversaw the 2015 Summer Film Institute on “Sex, Gender & Videotape: Love, Eroticism and Romance in East Germany,” and has coordinated and presented at numerous screenings and events both on and off campus. She is currently editing the first volumes of a new book series on Film and the Global Cold War (with Berghahn Books) and working on her own research into filmmaker Iris Gusner. She also sits on several dissertation committees, advising and mentoring graduate students in the program.

**Barton Byg**, founding Director of the DEFA Film Library, has recently presented DEFA/Eastern German films at Amherst Cinema, Goethe-Institut Washington, and Smith College Museum of art. As part of the 2016 career retrospective of the films of Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub, at MoMA and now touring internationally, he was invited to speak at Miguel Abreu Gallery, Harvard Film Archive / Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, and the National Gallery. Current research projects focus on Christa Wolf and the cinema, Susan Sontag, and Mid-Century Modern. In April 2017 he received the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany.

**Kerstin Mueller Dembling** coordinates the elementary and intermediate German language sequence, and teaches a graduate seminar on foreign language teaching methods as well as general education courses and advanced German language seminars. With Hiltrud Schulz from the DEFA library, Kerstin organized the event series WALL STORIES that took place in Fall 2014. The series consisted of ten events, including film screenings, discussions with filmmakers, a historical exhibit, and an art and essay competition. In Summer 2015, Kerstin’s essay on the German reception of Thomas Bernhard’s drama *Vor dem Rubestand* was published in the *Journal of Austrian Studies*.

**Andrew Donson** has been program director for German and Scandinavian Studies since fall 2011, overseeing the larger operations and objectives of the program, and insuring its continued vibrancy. In addition to his extensive service to GSS, he teaches popular undergraduate courses on Modern German History, 19th-Century German Thought, and The Holocaust. He is also nearing completion of his second book on the German political and cultural revolutions of 1918/19.

**Ela Gezen** spent the spring semester 2016 in Berlin as a fellow in the multi-disciplinary research program EUME (Europe in the Middle East--The Middle East in Europe) at the Forum Transregionale Studien, and an affiliated fellow with the Friedrich Schlegel Graduate School of Literary Studies at the Free University of Berlin. She is nearing completion of her first book, “Literary Encounters: Bertolt Brecht the Turkish Left and Turkish-German Culture since 1960,” which reconstructs the central role of Brecht reception in Turkish and Turkish-German literature. Professor Gezen will take over as Undergraduate Program Director for German Studies in the fall 2017.

**Sherrill Harbison** has been teaching popular courses on Icelandic sagas and Scandinavian mythology, 19th-century Viking Revival, Mystery Murder and Mayhem, and Childhood in Scandinavia. In addition to the Scandinavian Impulses events series and the Symposium on Multicultural Scandinavia this spring, she took her students to the theater and to art exhibitions in New York. Her research focuses on the Scandinavian characters and themes in work by the American writer Willa Cather.

**Frank Hugus** offers beloved courses in our Scandinavian Studies curriculum, including Old Norse; Trolls, Giants, and Dwarves; and Tales for a Dark Winter Night. He has revived his interest in modern Scandinavian drama offering a joint graduate-undergraduate seminar on the works of Ibsen and Strindberg. He recently finished his new annotated translation of Hans Christian Andersen’s

earliest novel, *Improvisatoren*. The work has not been translated into English since 1845.

**Sara E. Jackson** joined GSS as assistant professor in the fall of 2015. She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses on topics such as Viennese Modernism, and Crime and Criminals in Modern German Culture. She is working on her first book, “The Problem of the Actress: Female Performance and Subjectivity in Modern German Theater and Thought.” This year she co-founded an international organization and website, GTPR: German Theater and Performance Research ([www.gtpresearch.org](http://www.gtpresearch.org)). She also serves as development director for a new program to integrate GSS and STEM field curriculum.

**Jonathan Skolnik** has earned high praise for his book, *Jewish Pasts, German Fictions* (2014), which reviewers have called a “masterful study” and a “must-read.” His new research project focuses on German exile film in the U.S. In addition to his service as Graduate Program Director for GSS, he has been Interim Director at the Institute for Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies since the fall 2016. He is also president of the North American Heine Society, and he is on the editorial board of *German Studies Review*. Professor Skolnik teaches courses on the works of Franz Kafka, German and Jewish intellectual history, film, and German poetry.

**Robert Sullivan** is completing his final year as GSS Under Graduate Program Director. He has advised the program’s majors and minors and provided them with personal guidance through their studies at UMass for over twenty years. He also continues to be co-organizer for the Medieval and Renaissance Forum at Keene State College each spring. This forum is the largest of its kind in New England, bringing together scholars from across the region for a day-long program that includes research presentations and cultural events. Professor Sullivan recently published proceedings from the 2015 Forum, *Imagining the Self, Constructing the Past*, co-edited with Professor Meriem Pagès.

## Graduate Students

Demonstrating the breadth of their interests, our pre-candidate graduate students **Tiarra Cooper**, **Karolina Hicke**, **Julia Rittershausen**, **Konstanze Schiller**, **Ricky Quales**, and **Rosalin Happe** have taken full advantage of courses offered within and beyond GSS. In the past two years students discovered the Courtly Epic with Professor Sullivan, they explored Exile with Professor Skolnik, examined literatures of migration and postmigrant theater with Professor Gezen, and ventured out to take courses in Film & Media Studies, Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and the College of Education. They were also introduced to 18th-century theater and drama with Professor Jackson, and learned about the history of the German language with Professor Hugus.

Our advanced graduate students, done with their course work, made strides in their exam preparation and dissertation research. **Kathrin Bahr** spent the academic year 2015-2016 in Germany on a prestigious fellowship with the Berlin Program for Advanced German and European Studies. **Kevina King** presented her research at several conferences and worked as an undergraduate advisor in the Isenberg School of Management. **Katy McNally** passed her Ph.D. examination and taught International Short Story in Comparative Literature. **Victoria Rizo Lenshyn** was a research fellow at the Five Colleges Women Studies Research Center in 2015-2016, and taught German at Assumption College in Worcester MA.

Our graduate students in residence brought energy and creativity to teaching our first and second year language courses and in the Thatcher Language & Culture House, TA-ing for lecture courses such as The Holocaust, and working in the DEFA Film Library. GSS graduate students were also well represented at various conferences, including the German Studies Association, Women in German, and the Medieval Renaissance Forum at Keene State College.

We are pleased to announce that four graduate students successfully graduated in the past two years: **Delene Case White** defended her dissertation, "A Child's View in Frank Beyer's Holocaust Films: Representation, Imagination, and East German Cinema," and has been Visiting Assistant Professor at Clark University and Visiting Lecturer at Bard Microcollege in Holyoke MA. **Jason Doerre** completed his project "Pessimism in Progress: Hermann Sudermann and the Liberal German Bourgeoisie," and has since renewed his position as Visiting Assistant Professor at Trinity College in Hartford. **Maureen Gallagher** submitted her dissertation "Young Germans in the World: Race, Gender, and Imperialism in Wilhelmine Youth Literature," for which earned the Women in German dissertation Prize in 2016, and she has been teaching full time at Lafayette College. **Jamele Watkins** completed her dissertation, "The Drama of Race: Contemporary Afro-German Theater," and will begin as a postdoctoral fellow in German at Stanford University this fall.

## Undergraduate Program

Our undergraduate students in GSS continue to impress both our program and the university as a whole with their achievements. Students in German & Scandinavian Studies regularly earn Fulbright awards, helping to make UMass Amherst one of the "top producing institutions" in the country two years running. In the past two years graduates Ian Dawud (double major in German and Psychology) and Lee Drewitz (double major in German and History) went to Germany as Fulbright language teaching assistants. Our students are also very active with study abroad. We send students to universities throughout Baden-Württemberg in Germany, to Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Norway for one-semester and year-long exchanges.

In our language and content courses our undergraduates demonstrate their abilities, intellect and enthusiasm. At our annual end of the year award ceremony and celebrations we have presented awards for excellence in our language program to: Michael Amirault, Delia Bleiler, Savannah Champion, Samantha Cote, Manon Garulay, Carlin Morris, Jiayue Ni, Daniel Riecker, Cecilia Schirmeister, Nicole Tommasi, Rebecca Wandel, Desmond Whalen, and Allison Yelgin, just to name a few.

We also saw excellent work from students in our diverse range of topics courses, taught in English. These courses attract majors, minors, and students from across campus. From Professor Hugus' Trolls, Giants and Dwarves, to Professor Gezen's Berlin: Global City, in Professor Donson's popular lectures on The Holocaust, Professor Müller-Dembling's exciting course on Witches, and Professor Sullivan's intensive Junior-year writing seminar, students in our program explored a diverse range of themes and cultural materials.



*GSS majors Shannon Leniban and Anna Moreland, and linguistics major Ria Geguera present their research on poets Yoko Tawada and May Ayim in German at the three day conference "Minorities and Minority Discourses in Germany since 1990" organized by Professors Ela Gezen and Jonathan Skolnik.*

## Undergraduate Alumni Spotlight

**Jennifer Greene** (2016) started her journey in German language studies when she elected to take German for all four years of high school, and also participated in a two-week exchange program in Germany. Next, as a freshman at the University of Pittsburgh, she continued to study the language. When Jennifer transferred to UMass, however, the curricular demands of the Industrial Engineering major prevented her from taking more German courses until her junior year. Rediscovering her interest in German language and culture, Jennifer decided to study abroad in Heidelberg. There she was able to take courses in German and complete technical electives that would count toward her degree.

Her experiences in Germany were so rewarding that Jennifer moved to Hamburg after graduating in 2016. She is currently there working as an Au Pair and preparing to start in a Master's program at a German university in the fall. Jennifer's innovative approach to combining her major in Engineering with her interests in German language and culture enriched her time at

UMass, and continues to be part of life after graduation. She is a model for other students seeking a global education in our increasingly interconnected world.

*Photo by Shannon Boderick*



## Graduate Alumni Spotlight

**Maria Stehle** (2005) is Lindsay Young Associate Professor of German at the University of Tennessee Knoxville. In addition to her monograph *Ghetto Voices in Contemporary Germany: Textscapes, Fimsclapes and Soundscapes* (2012) she is the author of numerous articles and book chapters. Her work is located at the intersection of German and European Cultural Studies, Gender and Media Studies and Cultural History. In 2015 she was awarded the University of Knoxville's Jefferson Prize for her outstanding scholarship. Currently on research leave, she is collaborating with Beverly Weber (also a UMass alumna) on a monograph on the politics of intimacy in contemporary European cinema. Professor Stehle is further interested in interdisciplinary and creative strategies for teaching for social justice, practices of critical pedagogy, and student centered learning. Reflecting on her time at UMass she writes: "Everything I do now, my collaborative research, the courses I teach (including courses on DEFA films), my perspective on advising, as well as my involvement with interdisciplinary programs in film and gender studies has been influenced by my experiences at UMass."

