

## William G. and Elke Durden Dickinson Program in Bremen, est. 1985

### Annual Report 2016-17

Dickinson



### Academics



This year, our program welcomed six full-year students plus two students for the fall and one for the spring. They arrived in Bremen at the end of September, after taking a four-week summer language course in another German-speaking city (Freiburg, Vienna, Munich). We started the semester with an extended, two-week-long orientation, thoroughly introducing the University of Bremen and the program. The students also had enough time to attend some student-organized first-semester events, which helped them find friends. We counseled them extensively on their selection of courses and made sure beforehand that they would receive credit for them by their respective Dickinson departments.

Our students were majoring and/or minoring in German, International Studies, Classical Studies, INBM, Economics, Political Science, Music, Mathematics, Environmental Sciences, and Biology.

Aside from advanced language courses and sports courses, they took the following classes:

- ❖ *German*: Comparative Cultures: USA – Germany; Urban History and Geography of Bremen; Goethe and Visual Arts; German Refugee Politics in Europe; Introduction to German Literary Studies; Urban History and Geography of Bremen and Northern Germany; Grammar I: Phonology & Morphology; Introduction to German Linguistics; Myths of the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times; Soccer Fandom in Northern Germany; Physical Geography of Northern Germany; Drugs and Luxury Goods in the History of Bremen; From *Harry Potter* to *King's Quest*: Narration in Children and Youth Media; Islam and Politics in Germany; Religion in the Third Reich; The Empirical Analysis of Social Inequality: Germany and the United States
- ❖ *Environmental Science/Studies*: Ecological Excursion to the Giant Mountains, Silesia
- ❖ *Biology*: Structure and Function of Vertebrates; Calculus Methods in Sciences, Chemistry, and Biology; Animal Diversity Lecture, Lab, and Tandem
- ❖ *US Diversity*: Key Topics in Cultural History: Analyzing Hollywood Cinema
- ❖ *Music*: Adorno's Philosophy of Music; History of Music in Pictures; University Choir; Introduction to Music Sociology
- ❖ *Mathematics*: Operations Research; Bifurcation Theory and Chaos
- ❖ *International Studies*: The United Nations Peace and Security; German Refugee Politics in Europe; Policy-Making in the European Union; Europe in a Mass Media Discourse; Borders and Border Regions in

Europe; A Europe of Citizens? Development and Impact of Civil Society Organizations in Europe; Foreign Policy of the European Union

- ❖ *Political Science*: World War and Welfare State
- ❖ *Economics*: Applied Economics Research Questions Using Stata; Economics of Transition and Emerging Economies
- ❖ *International Business and Management*: International Business Environments; International Management
- ❖ *Classical Studies*: Latin: De Bello Gallico (at the University of Hamburg)
- ❖ *Independent study*: An analysis of Germany's current attitude towards NATO's goal to receive 2% of the GDP of each member country in funding and the opinions of different parties on it; an assessment and prediction of what will happen depending on which parties win the upcoming Federal elections in September 2017. The study was based on interviews with politicians of all parliamentary parties and was supervised by Prof. Ulrich Franke of the "Institute for Intercultural und International Studies" (IN-IIS) of the University of Bremen.

In addition to intensive counseling during the whole semester, we also organized a one-day workshop in which our students were introduced to the specifications of the German academic system by a professional, who also explained how to prepare, research, and write a paper (called "Hausarbeit"), including correct citation styles. Some of our students had a so-called "study buddy" in one of their courses; others had tandem partners focusing on German language acquisition.

## Resident Directors' Meeting in Bremen

On November 11 and 12, 2016, the Dickinson Durden Bremen Program hosted the annual conference of the Association of American Study Abroad Programs in Germany (AASAP). 27 members of the association, plus speakers and students, met at the guest house of the University of Bremen "Auf dem Teerhof 58," which was purchased in the 1980s with the support of Dickinson College. The venue is beautifully located on an island in the Weser. The participants, representing different German-American study abroad institutions from all over Germany, discussed trends and goals in study abroad. The keynote speaker, Neil van Siclen, President of the Carl Schurz German-American Club (CSDAC) in Bremen, presented an insightful meta-study on motivations of American students for studying abroad (esp. in Germany).

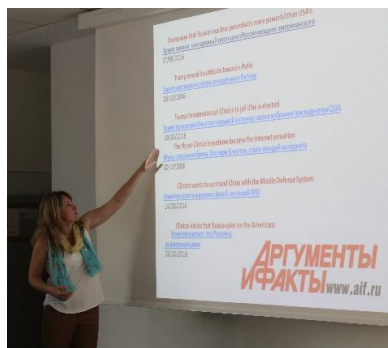


Student panel – Meghan (l.) and Zhen (r.)

The exchange of experiences between program directors helps them to strive towards improving their programs and adapting to new trends and situations. Thus, one of the highlights of the conference was a workshop with six Dickinson students, who were currently spending their junior year abroad at the University of Bremen: In small groups, Katelyn King, Liza Konovalova, Zhen Luo, Lee Mottola, Caroline Pappalardo, and Meghan Straub talked to the participants about their experiences, motivations, and strategies in different areas. After having spoken to all students, the participants presented summaries of what had been discussed. They were very impressed with the students: both with their level of German and with the interesting reflections they shared.

## Dickinson College Public Lecture # 4

On May 15, 2017, the Carl Schurz German-American Club Bremen and Dickinson College invited members of the University of Bremen as well as the public to the Fourth Dickinson College Public Lecture with the title *Trumped-up Good Relations? – A Russian Perspective on the USA Today* held by Dr. Irina Filippova. When Donald Trump was elected the 45th President of the United States of America on November 8, 2016, many were shocked – but others may have harbored faint hopes as well. Since Trump had already announced his intention to improve American relations with the Russian Federation, many Russian citizens might have expected a new thaw between the two nuclear powers. However, events and debates in the USA over the last few months have left an ambivalent impression: Amid allegations that Russia attempted to influence the US presidential election, President Trump's team has also been (and remains) under attack from his own party for its members' relationships with Russian contacts.



This raised the question of what Russians think of and expect from the USA right now. And more importantly, will future generations improve relations or further entrench the status quo? Dr. Irina Filippova, Director of the Dickinson-in-Russia Program at the Russian State University for the Humanities in Moscow (RGGU), provided us with some answers. Rather than presenting a political analysis of what can only be described as an uncertain *status quo*, she gave us a first-hand insight into public opinion in Russia and the mindset and sentiments of so-called “ordinary people” there. To that end, she had collected statements from colleagues at the RGGU, from the press, from Muscovites, and from Dickinson students currently studying in Moscow. The latter explained how important it was to them, besides all clear differences, to be confronted with opposing views from Russian students and to engage in discourse. Those students believe in and prove the importance of intensive study abroad programs as Dickinson offers them – they keep communication alive and train them to become competent global citizens.

## The William '71 and Elke Durden Literary Series at Bremen # 2

*Writer's Visit – Workshop, Reading, and DJ Set with Thomas Meinecke:* On June 2 and 3, the Durden Dickinson Program in Bremen hosted the acclaimed writer Thomas Meinecke. His brand-new novel *Self* (“Selbst”) deals mainly with blurring (gender) identities, love, and erotic desire by analyzing phenomena from fashion, music/entertainment, and lifestyle. As part of “The William '71 and Elke Durden Literary Series at Bremen,” he held a public lecture in the off-scene arts, culture, and music club *Spedition*. An audience of sixty to seventy people followed a lively mix of reading, video clips, and discussion between Meinecke and Janine Ludwig. Afterwards, DJ Winkhorst warmed up the crowd before Meinecke turned the tables from midnight to 3 a.m.



In addition, Meinecke gave an intimate breakfast workshop to Dickinson and Bremen students the day before. One of the threads of his multi-perspective novel deals with utopian, libertarian German immigrants in Texas in the mid-nineteenth century. Ironically, a German society of noblemen (“Adelsverein”) bought land in Texas and, in order to get rid of German communists, sent them there to colonize it. They were duped with barren land, and the colonists – intellectuals with little farming experience – struggled for survival. They did, however, manage to sign a peace treaty with the hostile Comanche tribe – which

has never been broken and is still commemorated annually by the Comanches today. Meinecke has done extensive research on these settler colonies and produced a film (at the behest of Alexander Kluge/dctp) for which he interviewed the descendants of the “Texas Germans” – who still speak the language, infused



with some English terms: “Die sind hier reingemoved”; „Die Kuh ist über den fence gejump.“ Despite the settlement fiasco, the descendants still proudly remember the peace treaty as well as the fact that the colonists had opposed slavery. We watched snippets from the film, read passages from the book, and discussed the idea of “communes” without government. The workshop presented amazing insights into an almost forgotten culture between the “Beethoven Männerchor” in San Antonio, the “Wurstfest” in New Braunfels, and the “Vereins Kirche” and “Social Turn Verein” in

Fredericksburg. All this was in line with the seminar “German 340: Comparative Cultures – USA/Germany” that Janine Ludwig had taught in fall 2016/17, which covered German immigration to the USA in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. But most of all, it was a unique opportunity for the students to meet, work, and discuss with an author of such stature in an almost private atmosphere.

## Other Cultural and Social Events

- ❖ Every year, the Carl Schurz German-American Club hosts a wonderful *Thanksgiving Dinner*. Their annual *Fourthof-July Barbecue* took place as a potluck dinner on a beautifully sunny day.
- ❖ Our *Christmas celebration* served as a meeting place for current and former Dickinson-in-Bremen students who now live in Germany as well as future and former OSAs (Bremen students who studied at Dickinson), altogether a group of fifteen people.
- ❖ We attended *soccer games* of our team Werder Bremen at the famous Weser Stadion. After a terrible first half of the season, Werder showed a remarkable second half and ended up taking eighth place.
- ❖ We took the students to see two *German movies* at the cinema: *Tschick* (dir. by Fatih Akin) in the fall, based on the book by the same name written by Wolfgang Herrndorf – a coming-of-age story about friendship; and *Willkommen bei den Hartmanns* (dir. by Simon Verhoeven) in the spring – a story about a woman who surprises her family by deciding to host a refugee and the ensuing culture clash.
- ❖ Early in the year, we invited our students to see a *performance* within the series called “Aus den Akten auf die Bühne” (From the archives onto the stage), a project that is realized by bremer shakespeare company in cooperation with the University of Bremen. In it, students work under supervision by filing through the city’s archives on a given topic. The information found is then brought into a specific context and performed as a scenic reading. We saw a piece on Bremen’s role in colonialism.
- ❖ On the night of November 8, we hosted an *election viewing party* with our students and some of their friends. We had pizza and other snacks while Donald Trump won the presidency.
- ❖ We also hosted some visitors in Bremen. In November, Karen Weikel (registrar’s office) and David Kushner (associate professor of Biology) met with us and our students. In June, Jerry Philogene (associate professor of American Studies) visited, mainly with colleagues from the University of Bremen, visiting classes in Anthropology and giving a public talk with the title “Black Body.”



## Excursions

**Berlin, one week:** This excursion dealt with current German politics, history, and the once divided Germany. We met with the last Premier, i.e. Chairman of the Council of Ministers, of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), Dr. Hans Modrow, and visited the Stasi archives, including Erich Mielke's office, as well as the gruesome Stasi-prison Hohenschönhausen. Additionally, we had talks with Dr. Oliver Bientzle, a member of the Transatlantic Coordinator's Office at the Federal Foreign Office (Auswärtiges Amt), and Dr. Matthias Bartke (SPD), a member of parliament, and attended a Bundestag session. Since four of our students had taken a class on German refugee politics, we also had an appointment with Dr. Matthias Schmidt, a member of the governmental refugee politics group headed by Peter Altmaier.



*In front of the Brandenburg Gate*



*At the Federal Foreign Office*



*In the GDR museum*

### Students' comments:

"What a week we had! Berlin is an amazing city, there's no denying that! As the capital of Germany, Berlin is full of history and politics take center stage. During our week in Berlin, we met a diverse array of politicians, including a member of the Auswärtiges Amt (the Foreign Service), the Bundestag, and a former Minister of the GDR. Having the chance to hear from, speak with, and question these powerful figures was exciting and offered intriguing insights into German politics. Not only did we get to speak with politicians, but we had the chance to tour two Berlin landmarks, the Reichstag and the Kanzleramt. Touring the Reichstag was one of the highlights of the trip for me personally! Having researched the history of the Reichstag for a paper for Professor McGaughey's class back at Dickinson, I was excited to personally tour the building and go inside the famous glass dome. We also had the chance to sit in on some political discussions happening in the famous plenary chamber with its famous blue seats! As a political science major, I absolutely loved getting to go "behind the scenes" and seeing Berlin politics in action. Touring the Kanzleramt – the German equivalent of the White House – was inspiring and a privilege few American students are afforded. I will treasure these experiences forever!" >Caroline Pappalardo '18<



"Berlin, the name itself sounds important. You can feel it as soon as you step onto the platform in the Hauptbahnhof, Berlin is a unique and interesting city. This was not my first time visiting the capitol of the Bundesrepublik; from summer time weekends to my 6th grade class trip, I have seen a great deal of the city and experienced many of its charms. That being said, our trip was another magnitude of intriguing. I was especially surprised at how much I enjoyed myself due to a preconceived notion that this would just be another Berlin sightseeing trip. Much to my surprise and pleasure, it was not. Sure, we saw the sights, how can you avoid iconic images such as the glass cupola topped Bundestag, imperial and majestic Brandenburg Gate, and storied Berlin Wall. However, because of my studies, the very politically focused agenda was a



genuine treat for me personally. Sitting in on a session in the Bundestag, personal meetings with a whole range of politicians, and a tour of the German equivalent of the White House were certainly highlights. Yet, it was the first day trip to the old Stasi archives that resonated with me the most. Seeing the results of an incredible level of government surveillance, the miles of paper containing histories of citizens' lives was a truly humbling sight relevant to these times." >Lee Mottola '18<

**Vienna, one week:** This excursion focuses on (the German-Austrian) history and culture and the different monarchies and empires. We emphasized the importance of Vienna as a former political and cultural center of Europe. For a touch of modern politics, we visited the United Nations Center and listened to lectures there. Finally, we indulged in the traditional and plentiful food and delicacies as well as in the famous coffee house culture. Students' comments:



"Vienna has quickly become one of my favorite places in the world. [...] Just down the Graben and around the bend is the Hofburg Palace of the Habsburg dynasty and within this gorgeous palace is the National Library. I'd been to the library while living in Vienna at the beginning of the year but this time around we had the extremely fortunate opportunity of getting a special tour. We learned all about the care of the books and the history of the building. The best part of the tour for me was being able to see some selected books like a Gutenberg Bible up close and even touch it. My nerdy book-loving soul was close to exploding. The trip to the library was an absolute highlight of our trip for me." >Meghan Straub '18<

"Our field-trip in Vienna began with two magnificent churches, Jesuitenkirche and St. Stephan's Dom. [...] We also had a wonderful time at the Schönbrunn Palace. The Baroque architecture has been listed as a world cultural heritage by the UN. [...] What attracted me the most about Vienna was the vibe of the city. As a cultural center in Europe, Vienna has retained its historical memory and blended it with the bustle of modern society. It welcomes people from all over the world yet is not too touristy. Coffee culture is renowned and people are seen sitting outside on every street to enjoy coffee and gelato with friends." >Zhen Luo '18<



**Poland, one week:** This excursion is sponsored by the Copernicus Society of America and joins Dickinson's Bologna, Bremen, and Moscow groups for visits in Warsaw and Krakow. This year, we met with former Dickinson scholarship holder Dr. Michal Oleszczyk at the Liberal Arts Department at Warsaw University where he now is associate professor.



In Krakow, a strikingly beautiful city, we also heard intriguing lectures on Polish history, the transformations of and after 1989, and more by wonderful professors from the renowned Jagellonian University. In both cities, our students met with Polish students for a night out in town. The excursion included a day-trip to the famous ski and recreation area Zakopane and a more somber visit to Auschwitz.



- ❖ For much more information, student voices and impressions, as well as many pictures of these events and more, please visit our blog at: <http://blogs.dickinson.edu/bremen/blog/>