

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

Annual Report 2015-16

Dickinson



This year, we had an unusually small group of four students in Bremen who stayed for the full year. Therefore, this group grew close during the many activities we conducted during the year.

Academics



Our students arrived in Bremen after a four-week summer language course in other German-speaking cities (Dresden, Freiburg, Vienna) by the end of September. As always, we started the semester with a one-week orientation, thoroughly introducing our new students to the University of Bremen. 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. The students were all majoring in German and three of them additionally in Environmental Science/Studies, Philosophy, and Computer Science.

Among other courses, including advanced language courses, they took the following courses:

- ❖ *German*: Comparative Cultures: USA – Germany; Germany in Europe: History, Politics and Everyday Life; Children & Youth Novels; German History, Politics and Culture after 1945 Through Selected Films; Readings and Interpretation of Sources for the Cultural History of the Weimar Republic; Introduction into German Foreign Policy; Urban History and Geography of Bremen
- ❖ *Computer Science*: Robot Programming with Lisp + Independent Study with TortugaBot; Database Systems; Computer Networks
- ❖ *Philosophy*: Moral Obligation and the Concept of Morality; History of Philosophy I + II
- ❖ *Environmental Science/Studies*: Glaciers and Water Availability; Climate Geography Seminar; Environmental Risks & Ecotoxicology; Nature Protection Biology & Nature Protection
- ❖ *Other*: Media, Migration, Flight; Introduction to African Literature and Culture; Parks & Gardens; The Myth of Knights; African American Protest Literature

In addition to the intensive counseling during the whole semester, we also organized a one-day workshop in which they were introduced to the specifications of the German academic system by a professional, who also explained to our students how to prepare, research, and write a paper (called “Hausarbeit” here), including correct citation styles. Some of our students had a so-called Study Buddy from one of their courses, others had tandem partners focusing on German language acquisition. Besides, we also ensured that our excursions included rich academic content.

Excursions

- ❖ *Berlin, one week:* In the year of the 25th anniversary of the German reunification, our excursion was centered around the once divided Germany, GDR history, culture, literature, and the process of reunification. We met with politicians such as the last Premier, t.i. Chairman of the Council of Ministers, of the German Democratic Republic (DDR), Hans Modrow, and Gregor Gysi, long-time chairman of the party 'Die Linke'. We visited the Stasi archives and basements, including Erich Mielke's office, and its gruesome prison Hohenschönhausen. Additionally, we partook in a live Skype conference and discussion with Julian Assange and met a member of the Transatlantic Coordinator's Office at the Federal Foreign Office.



Group with Hans Modrow



Group with Dr. Gregor Gysi



In front of the Brandenburg Gate

- ❖ *Vienna, one week:* The broader theme of this excursion is German-Austrian history and culture from the Middle Ages until today. In introductory lectures, we went back to the origins of what is "German" and why we are also named "Allemannen" or "Deutsch" (stemming from "theodisk" which actually means belonging to the people). We followed the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, from Charles the Great (800) to the Napoleonic conquests (1806). We tracked the Habsburg dynasty (1273-1918) and the Austro-Hungarian k.u.k Monarchy, later: Austrian Empire (1804-1918), overlapping with the German Empire (1871-1918).



Looking at an original Luther Bible from the 16th century, with paintings from Lucas Cranach the Elder.

With this information, the students could better understand the tours and exhibits and grasp the importance of Vienna as a former political and cultural center of Europe. Additionally, we indulged in the imperial glamour and culinary abundance of this beautiful city.

- ❖ *Poland, one week:* This excursion is organized by Jerzy Bystrowski on behalf of the Copernicus Society of America (founded by Mr. Edward Piszek), which generously sponsors this trip. We joined Dickinson's Bologna and Moscow groups for a rich experience in Warsaw and Krakow where we also heard informative lectures on Polish history at the Jagellonian University. The excursion included a visit to Auschwitz.



- ❖ *Hamburg, one day:* A day trip to the beautiful neighboring city of Hamburg focused on the city as a cultural and historic hub in Northern Germany. It included a visit to City Hall, St. Michaelis church, Hamburg's old port as well as the new Hafencity, a walking tour of the inner city and the warehouse district, and the world's largest model railway museum Miniatur Wunderland.

Cultural and Social Events

- ❖ *A Poet Just for Us: Kerstin Hensel.* “An advantage of being part of the Dickinson-in-Bremen program is having the opportunity to participate in a variety of cultural events, such as in a private workshop with German author Kerstin Hensel, preceding a reading of one of her books, *Lärchenau*, later that evening at the theater in Bremen. This workshop provided us with the comfortable environment in which to ask Frau Hensel, who began her writing career in the GDR, many questions concerning literature, culture, and cultural politics behind the Wall, as well as what it meant to be an East German author after Germany’s Reunification. [...] I did not expect to learn that Frau Hensel, despite growing up in the GDR, does not identify herself as an East German writer, but rather as a German writer.” >Carol Rynar, Class of 2017<



- ❖ Every year, the Carl Schurz German American Club hosts a wonderful *Thanksgiving Dinner*. This year, it took place at the Atlantic Grand Hotel in the city center of Bremen. After the welcome reception, the evening entailed a quiz, musical acts, and of course an amazing Thanksgiving dinner buffet that was accompanied by live piano music. Their annual *4th-of-July barbecue* took place in the fashion of a potluck dinner, for which our students met up with former and future OSAs (Bremen students studying at Dickinson for one year) to prepare homemade dishes to bring to the event.

- ❖ This year’s *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 (t.i. Bremen students who studied at Dickinson for one year), altogether a group of almost 20 people. We started off with a round of Secret Santa, followed by building one’s own gingerbread house – in miniature.



- ❖ By visiting *soccer games* at the famous (and energy-efficient) Weser Stadion, wearing green-and-white fan attire, cheering and screaming, we certainly helped our beloved city team Werder Bremen to manage to remain in the first league of the German Bundesliga with a 1:0 win on the very last day of the season... Sigh!
- ❖ 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>