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## GERMAN HISTORIANS IN NORTH AMERICA AFTER 1945:

### Transatlantic Careers and Scholarly Contributions

Workshop at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Thursday, March 3 and Friday, March 4, 2022

### Aims of the Workshop

The workshop focuses on the migration experiences and the transatlantic impact of German historians who emigrated to North America since the late 1950s and made their academic careers in Canada or the United States. Through their bicultural experience, several of them became important transatlantic intermediaries, providing their American colleagues and students with insights into their country of origin and interpreting these for them. Conversely, they also informed German audiences about developments and debates in the American and Canadian academic systems and the history profession. With their specific transatlantic perspective, many of these historians have participated in and influenced theoretical and methodological debates on both sides of the Atlantic. Though the majority of the German historians who came to North America after the Second World War have focused on Modern Central European history, Jewish history, and the history of the Third Reich and the Holocaust as their main fields of research, an increasing number have also contributed to the development of other fields of historical scholarship.

The main objectives of the workshop and the planned book project are: *first*, to explore the experiences of this considerable group of German migrant historians (currently we have identified 82), which is much larger than any other group of European historians that migrated to Canada and the United States since the late 1950s, and ask what informed both their education and career choices and motivated them to emigrate to North America; *second*, to examine how their migration experiences informed their own research and teaching as well as their professional service, standing, and influence in both the North-American and German history profession; and *third*, to discuss more generally the question of whether and how

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The Zoom URL for Public Panel of the Workshop

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The Zoom URL for the public panel of the workshop is: ¶  
<https://unc.zoom.us/j/91052764008?pwd=MmQyYTBVCV2R0ZFhV2ZlXQWpsalczZz09> ¶

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If you want to participate in the whole workshop, please send an email to Karen Hagemann (hagemann@unc.edu). The number of workshop participants is limited. ¶

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historians can and should draw on their own experiences and biographical stories to contribute to the collective history of their academic discipline and the university system.

We intend to address these aims and the related questions in the workshop and the book project by combining three approaches: *first*, a database analysis of the social composition, migration history, and career paths of the whole cohort of 82 German migrant historians born between the 1930s and 1980s that we have identified so far will provide a quantitative framework; *second*, individual biographical stories told by 16 male and female historians of different ages and backgrounds about their socialization, education, and migration experience and the impact of these on their scholarship and career; and *third*, more generalizing interpretative comments on these biographical stories by other historians who share the migration experience. With this combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, we intend to make an innovative contribution to the scholarship on academic migration and transatlantic careers and at the same time to explore the role that the historian's own socialization, experience, and identity play in their writing of history.

The preliminary analysis of the group of 82 German-born historians indicated three successive age cohorts of migrant historians, who mainly came from West Germany (only four grew up in East Germany):

1. *The historians of the first cohort who were born before 1950 and grew up during the war and postwar period.* Most of them seem to have left their German home country, which struggled to cope with the Nazi past and the destruction of war, for a better education, a freer intellectual atmosphere, and more job opportunities in Canada and the United States. In our sample of the 82 German-born historians, twenty-one—three of them women (14 percent)—belong to this cohort.
2. *The historians of the second cohort who were born in the years of the economic recovery of the 1950s and 1960s.* Many of them grew up in relative prosperity in West Germany but experienced a dramatically changing society during the 1960s to 1980s. Several seem to have crossed the Atlantic for an international university education or because they hoped for a job they could not obtain in the overcrowded and underfunded academic system of the unified Germany. Forty belong to this age cohort; three of them were born in the former GDR; fourteen are women (35 percent).
3. *The historians of the third cohort who were born and grew up in the times of change during the 1970s and 1980s.* Several of them seem to have experienced the American and Canadian education system first as exchange students at high schools and colleges and afterwards decided to pursue their doctoral degrees in one of the two countries and stayed there afterwards to pursue an academic career. Twenty-one belong to this age cohort; one of them was born in the former GDR; seven are women (33 percent).

In the study of these three cohorts of German historians, who migrated to North America since the late 1950, we hope to explore both the personal trajectories and the institutional structures that governed their departure from home, their subsequent fates in their new environment, and the nature of their intellectual contributions. We envision the three age cohorts as an open framework for the structuring of the workshop and the book project. We are interested not only in the similarities and differences of the experiences of the three cohorts, but also in the group as a whole. What we intend to avoid is a *“heroic” self-*

*construction of the individual biographical stories written in hindsight.* This is challenging because we all are subject to our own “*biographical illusions,*” but we have encouraged all presenters to stay away from streamlined success-narratives that focus on achievement, and instead to reflect also on ambiguities and paradoxes and to address obstacles they have faced. We hope to foster a (self-)critical and intersectional analysis that relates and compares the individual stories and places them in their transatlantic historical context.

## Workshop

3:00–3:30 PM

### Welcome and Introduction

KAREN HAGEMANN AND KONRAD H. JARAUSCH (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

3:30–4:30 PM

### *“A sense of freedom, possibility and a wide-open future”:* German Historians in North America after 1945 – A Cohort Analysis

KAREN HAGEMANN (UNC-Chapel Hill)

4:30-4:45 PM

Break.

## Public Panel

4:45–7:00 PM

### GROWING UP DURING WAR AND POSTWAR: SCHOLARS BORN IN THE 1930s AND 1940s IN GERMANY

#### I. TRANSATLANTIC TRAILBLAZERS

Introduction and Moderation: KAREN HAGEMANN (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

- *Born in 1938: The Twists and Turns of a Life in Teaching and Research in Three Academic Cultures*  
VOLKER BERGHANN (Columbia University)
- *Between All Chairs: Writing an Academic Autobiography*  
KONRAD H. JARAUSCH (UNC-Chapel Hill)
- *“I came to the United States to get a job”:* The Transatlantic Mis/adventures of a Military Historian, 1977-2016  
MICHAEL GEYER (University of Chicago)

**Comment:** ANDREAS DAUM (SUNY Buffalo)

c. 6:00-6:10 pm

Short break of ten minutes before the start of the discussion.

**Friday, March 4, 2022**

### **Workshop**

9:30 AM–12:00 PM

**CHILDREN OF THE YEARS OF THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY: SCHOLARS BORN IN THE 1950s AND 1960s IN EAST OR WEST GERMANY**

**II. EAST AND WEST GERMAN AND OTHER DIFFERENCES**

**Introduction and Moderation:** ANDREA SINN (Elon University)

- *Professors, Post-Structuralism, and the 'Postwar': My Journey from the Swabian Province to Southern California*  
FRANK BIESS (University of California-San Diego)
- *Moving Transatlantic: Opportunities, Contingencies, Choices*  
ANDREAS DAUM (SUNY Buffalo)
- *From East Berlin to West Los Angeles. An unexpected Journey*  
WOLF GRUNER (University of Southern California)
- *Going East and Going West. As Central Europeanist in the US*  
GREGOR THUM (University of Pittsburgh)

**Comment:** HELMUT WALSER SMITH (Vanderbilt University)

c. 10:50-11:00 am

Short break

12:00–1:00 PM

Lunch Break

1:00–3:30 PM

### III. GENDER, DIVERSITY AND OTHER CHALLENGES

**Introduction and Moderation:** A. DIRK MOSES (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

- ***“Discrimination can take many forms...”: Historian by Passion, Professor and Migrant by Chance***

KAREN HAGEMANN (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

- ***German American Identity and the Demise of National Histories***

THOMAS KÜHNE (Clark University)

- ***Women Make History But Not on Their Own Terms***

UTA POIGER (Northeastern University)

- ***Straight Outta Niederbayern: Writing Gender History on the US West Coast***

ULRIKE STRASSER (University of California-San Diego)

**Comment:** TILL VAN RAHDEN (Université de Montréal)

c. 2:20-2:30 pm

**Short break**

3:30-4:00 PM

**Break**

4:00-6:30 PM

### GROWING UP IN TIMES OF CHANGE: SCHOLARS BORN IN THE 1970s AND 1980s IN EAST OR WEST GERMANY

#### IV. CHALLENGES OF CURRENT TRANSATLANTIC CAREERS

**Introduction and Moderation:** JAMES CHAPPEL (Duke University)

- ***The Unlikely Story of an Anglophile German in America***

ANNA VON DER GOLTZ (Georgetown University)

- ***Reexamining Histories and Memories of Violence in Central Europe from a Hybrid Space: A German-Born Scholar of Generation X in U.S. Academe***

THOMAS PEGELOW-KAPLAN (Appalachian State University)

- ***Transatlantic Mediator or German Abroad? On the Role of DAAD German Studies Professors in the United States***

ANDREA A. SINN (Elon University)

- **One Transatlantic Trajectory I Have Known**

PHILIPP STELZEL (Duquesne University)

**Comment:** ASTRID M. ECKERT (Emory University)

c. 5:20-5:30 pm

**Short break**

6:30 PM

**Final Remarks:** KONRAD H. JARAUSCH (UNC Chapel Hill)

6:50 PM

**End of the Workshop**

## Organizers of the NCGS Workshop

### Main organizers:

- **Karen Hagemann** (James G. Kenan Distinguished Professor of History, UNC-Chapel Hill)
- **Konrad H. Jarausch** (Lurcy Professor of European Civilization, UNC-Chapel Hill)

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Department of History  
 CB # 3195, Pauli Murray Hall (Hamilton Hall)  
 Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3195  
 Email: [hagemann@unc.edu](mailto:hagemann@unc.edu)  
 Email: [jarausch@email.unc.edu](mailto:jarausch@email.unc.edu)

In collaboration with:

- **Thomas Pegelow Kaplan** (Levine Distinguished Professor of Judaic, Holocaust, and Peace Studies, Appalachian State University)
- **Andrea Sinn** (Stella S. and John C. O'Briant Developing Professor and Associate Professor of History, Elon University)
- **Teresa Walch** (Assistant Professor, University of North Carolina at Greensboro)

### Workshop Assistants:

- **Kevin J. Hoeper** (Grad. Student, UNC-Chapel Hill, Department of History)  
 Email: [kjhoeper@live.unc.edu](mailto:kjhoeper@live.unc.edu)
- **Kenneth Alarcón Negy** (Grad. Student, UNC-Chapel Hill, Department of History)  
 Email: [kennethalarconnegy@unc.edu](mailto:kennethalarconnegy@unc.edu)
- **Maddie James** (Grad. Student, UNC-Chapel Hill, Department of History)
- **Till Knobloch** (Grad. Student, UNC-Chapel Hill, Department of History)
- **Pasuth Thothaveesansuk** (Grad. Student, UNC-Chapel Hill, Department of History)

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