

Hello and Happy New Year

It has been just a year since our last newsletter and, well, what a difference a year makes! In that short time the world has truly been turned on its head so that certain aspects of our lives have become almost unrecognisable. At the same time it has been heartening to observe how many of the valuable things that exist in our diverse societies and communities have endured and adapted with the help of some imagination and big dose of solidarity. The GBZ and our MA in British Studies has happily been a case in point. As usual, this year's Newsletter is designed to keep you up to date with the ongoings at the Centre for British Studies. As well as introducing you to our new students, telling you about some events past and future, I'm very happy to also bring you some chronicles/tales/stories and accounts from the staff at the Centre, which were originally posted as blog entries on the GBZ website. I also have a couple of favours to ask you regarding two things that we would really appreciate your help with. You will see these on pages 2 and 5.

So welcome to the Centre for British Studies Newsletter 2020/21! I am your host, editor and alumni contact, Sam McIntosh :-).

sam.mcintosh@hu-berlin.de

ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 2020/21

In November of this year (two weeks later than normal because of the pandemic) we had the pleasure of getting to meet our new cohort of MA British Studies students. 25 Students whose home countries spread across the globe from Argentina to China and everywhere in between. As always, many of our new students share backgrounds in linguistics, pedagogy and cultural studies, but we also have graduates in subjects such as architecture, history and international relations. This bright bunch have joined our veteran class of 2019-21 in adapting to a very different, and at times challenging, university experience with patience and determination, whilst at the same time maintaining a real enthusiasm for discovery and learning.

WELCOME TO CLASS
2020-2022!



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HELLO FROM THE EDITOR

My dear Alumni, I hope this year's Newsletter finds you all safe and well!

It has, of course, been a truly difficult year for everyone, with the pandemic being just the most disruptive of many challenges the planet has faced and is still facing. But this challenging year has also given rise to countless examples of individual and communal resilience, and demonstrations of humanity that have at times been inspirational and heart-warming.

The Centre has obviously had its own struggles over the past year adapting to conditions under the pandemic, but we have been incredibly lucky to have such a fantastic student body that has adapted to circumstances along with us with patience and good humour. Our luck also extends to having truly superb support staff without whom it would never have been possible to so radically change the format of the course (now for a second term) at such short notice.

While everyone can perhaps imagine or appreciate the problems that social distancing presents for simply teaching a class during a pandemic, the numerous practical difficulties it causes for the behind-the-scenes running of the MA in British Studies are often forgotten. Catherine, Corinna and Sylvena and our incredibly hardworking student assistants have, as always, been absolutely fantastic in keeping the Centre running smoothly and allowing us to continue to offer students an exciting and valuable educational experience.



Happy Birthday Jürgen

The Centre celebrated the 80th birthday of its founding Director last month: So Happy Birthday again, Professor Jürgen Schlaeger, CBE!!! He was "treated" to an incredibly moving rendition of Happy Birthday and Viel Glück und viel Segen by his colleagues (in that it probably moved him to mute his computer). We wish Jürgen the best of health and all good things for the many years to come.

LAST REMINDER: We would be very grateful if those who have not already done so could fill out our very short alumni survey. It is anonymous and will take you roughly 2 minutes.
<https://umfrage.hu-berlin.de/index.php/625324?lang=en>

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100 Years of Britons in Berlin

An interactive journey through the decades, in which academic rigour, youthful curiosity and Berlin's well-known subversive vein come together for an exciting project.



LANGE NACHT DER WISSENSCHAFTEN/BRITONS IN BERLIN PROJECT 2020

Anisia Petcu

For years now, the students of the Centre have been organising creative and engaging exhibitions as part of the Berlin Lange Nacht der Wissenschaften. This year, the plan was to be no different... except, of course, it had to be. Just as the creative process was in full swing, we were faced with a cancelled Lange Nacht, and with the challenge of quickly finding an alternative that would still enable us to build on and build up our students' many talents.

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Discover the Decades

1. THE 1920S



2. WEIMAR BERLIN



3. WORLD WAR II



4. THE COLD WAR



What resulted was an interactive, innovative and chic online exhibition, entitled 'A Hundred Years of Britons in Berlin: From the Roaring 20s to the 2020s'. In this online exhibition, our students explored the rich and varied history of British nati-

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Quiz

What neighbourhoods in Berlin were under British control during the Cold War?

 Neukölln, Kreuzberg, Schöneberg

 Charlottenburg, Wilmersdorf, Spandau

 Wedding, Prenzlauer Berg, Pankow

 Mitte, Friedrichshain, Lichtenberg

onals making Berlin their home. An exploration through the decades, in which academic rigour, youthful curiosity and Berlin's well-known subversive vein come together for an exciting journey. The students explored topics such as sexuality and gender in Berlin, the chequered history of espionage in a city divided by the Cold War, creative productions inspired by the city, and the future that lies ahead post-Brexit. Alongside the academic articles, visitors of the website can find interactive formats such as quizzes, a memory map, and the possibility of literary explorations. The whole event was launched on July 3rd, 2020, with an online panel discussion that brought together a musician, a writer, an editor, a drag queen and a sociologist. Curious? Head on to the website (<https://british-berlin.com/>) and have a look!

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Isherwood's Berlin



"I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking. Recording the man shaving at the window opposite and the woman in the kimono washing her hair. Some day all this will have to be developed, carefully printed, fixed."

LECTURES AND EVENTS AT THE CENTRE 2020

- Historical Perspectives on the Policing of Extreme Political Activism in the UK, Dr. Iain Channing (20 January).
- The UK Election of 2019 and the Possible Break-up of the Country, Professor Iain McLean (10 February).
- British History and Society Research Colloquium (11 February).
- 100 Years of Britons in Berlin: From the Roaring 20s to the 2020s -- A student-led exhibition and programme (3 July).
- Centre for British Studies Keynote Lecture: Law, Judges and the Unwritten Constitution in Britain - Some Contemporary Issues with Insights from Shakespeare, The Right Hon Lady Arden of Heswall DBE (2 November).

“A Decade of Centenaries: Ireland and Northern Ireland”

A Collaboration with Professor Gisela Holfter, University of Limerick and Professor Paul Carmichael, Ulster University, and the Embassy of Ireland in Berlin

- Nationalists and Unionists: Two Irreconcilable Tribes?, Dr. Ruth Dudley Edwards (7 December 2020).
- Amongst the Nations of the World: Commemorating and Reimagining the Formation of an Irish Foreign Policy, Dr. Michael Kennedy (18 January 2021).



Supreme Court Judge, Lady Arden of Heswall giving her virtual Keynote lecture to the Senatsaal, 2 November 2020.

2021 LECTURES AND EVENTS TO LOOK FORWARD TO

- The Future of Northern Ireland, Professor Jon Tonge (8 February 2021).
- Oxford-Berlin Lecture: Money, Books and the Interpretation of Wills: the 1720 Case of All Souls College v Codrington (SoSe - date tbc).
- Literary Field Kaleidoscope Event: Public Reading by writer and Novelist, Glenn Patterson (SoSe - date tbc).
- Workshop - Diversity in Publishing (26 April 2021).
- Britons in Berlin - An Exploration through Art (5 June 2021).
- Oxford-Berlin Partnership Literaturhaus Exhibition Opening “Happy in Berlin? English Writers in the City, The 1920s and Beyond” (15 June).
- The 21st Century Scottish Publishing Ecosystem: Independence, Equity, Economics, Professor Claire Squires (5 July 2021).



The Centre's Professor Dannemann introducing the GBZ's 2020/21 keynote speaker, The Right Hon Lady Arden of Heswall DBE



Dr Iain Channing giving a pre-pandemic talk on 20 Jan 2020

Please help if you can!

If ever there was a time when our current international students needed your help, it is now.

Many of them have lost their student jobs due to business closures, in particular in service-related industries, and due to their home economies having crashed, they have lost their savings as well.

Brexit and the unclear future of the Erasmus funding scheme (which helps to pay for the work placements) make their economic future even more unpredictable.

Your donation will go to our Friends account. 100% of this money goes to helping students through difficult times. This could be to help students who are having difficulties meeting daily expenses after losing their jobs to the pandemic, or after support from families is affected by the economic impact of the pandemic; extra Visa costs; extra travelling costs incurred because placements have to be cut short because of the pandemic; or costs associated with students being unable to get out of rental contracts in Berlin when circumstances mean they have had to return or remain in home countries.

One issue that has arisen in relation to the pandemic situation is the heavy toll it is having on some students' mental well-being. Some of our students were (and still are) confined for long periods in small accommodation a long way from home, family and friends in a situation that was, and still is, quite scary for them, whilst trying to cope with the demands of the course, and whilst watching quite upsetting situations unfold in their home countries. All of this without the regular face-to-face

contact they would normally have with staff and the other students.

Over the past months, one of the things some of the hardship fund has contributed towards (along with a couple of other emergency pots of money) is counselling/coaching for students who have been struggling to cope with things.

Any payment made will be tax-deductible and we will acknowledge your contribution in our Annual Report if you wish.

Here is how to proceed:

Förderverein des Großbritannien-Zentrums der HU Berlin

Berliner Volksbank

Account Number 88 48 18 30 09

Bank Number 100 900 00

SWIFT Code: BEVODEBB

IBAN: DE53 1009 0000 8848 1830 09



2019-21 students attend the student Interdisciplinary Project Course poster session, 8 January 2020.

Brexit, Cultural Project Management, A Jurist Uprooted and Teaching during a Pandemic – short articles by staff

In the following pages, you will find some stories, descriptions, experiences and much more, written by staff for the GBZ blog over the past year

- Brexit and Corona, Prof. Dr. Gesa Stedman - p.6
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- Refugee Lives Matter: Emotional Responses, Practical Research, Dr. Sam McIntosh - p.14
- A Jurist Uprooted: The Life and Times of F.A. Mann, Dr. Jason Allen - p.16
- Pandemics, War, Literature: The First-Ever Virtual Meeting of the Research Group Writing 1900, Prof. Dr. Gesa Stedman - p.18

Brexit and Corona

(First published 11 May 2020)

Brexit? Isn't that yesterday's news? It might seem that Corona has overtaken everything, but in actual fact, Brexit and austerity are as relevant as they were before the current crisis hit the UK. Britain is a contested nation, whose current problems with a lack of healthcare provision and the expected effects of an economic downturn on the already existing social divisions and geographic imbalances can be traced back to earlier political decisions and developments. Ten years of austerity politics under the Conservative-LibDem coalition and under the subsequent Conservative governments, and, in particular, the drastic lack of funding for the National Health Service (NHS) have left the country ill-prepared for the current pandemic. As ever so often, poor people are being hit the hardest, as their health is often bad to start with, and they are more adversely affected by losing their precarious, badly-paid jobs, and will be by the economic recession which is expected to hit the UK along with most other countries.

No Deal or a Prolonged Transition Period?

The current Brexit negotiations had to be postponed due to Corona, and have resumed only to become once again mired in the question of how to deal with the fact that Northern Ireland belongs to the UK, but is geographically on an island with the Republic of Ireland, an EU member state. Very soon, the British government will have to decide whether it wants an extension of the transition period which it has promised not to allow, or let Britain crash out of the European Union with no deal at the end of the year, with even more drastic economic and other consequences than were predicted for such a case before the Corona crises began.

A Four-Nations-Perspective provided by the Berlin Britain Research Network

Our most recent, co-authored book looks at Brexit and austerity, and how both are connected. It takes a four-nations-approach to the UK, including contributions from Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and England, and looks at each nation and its specific reaction and voting pattern in the Brexit referendum. It was written both by insiders and outsiders, authors based in the UK and authors based on the Continent. They have a wide variety of disciplinary backgrounds, thus making the book a rich source of different perspectives, from a quantitative-based account of regional resistance to austerity measures, to qualitative analyses of how the underfunded NHS and anti-migration politics produced a toxic brew with which the public now has to deal. It asks which forms of agency are available to different agents in Britain, and how their capacity to act has been shaped by recent political decisions. The result of a number of conferences organised by the Berlin Britain Research Network, the book was published by Bristol University Press, and is available here: <https://bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/contested-britain>

More information:

<https://www.gbz.hu-berlin.de/research/berlin-britain-research-network>

Prof. Dr. Gesa Stedman
Centre for British Studies

Researching UK Politics in Times of a Global Pandemic

(First published 20 May 2020)

In this contribution to the GBZ-Blog, I am trying to combine insights from my current research project with my personal experience in conducting such a project during the Corona pandemic. As part of my habilitation thesis, I was granted a scholarship funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft which I started in September last year. The aim during my one-year research leave is to study the relations between the devolved governments and UK Government and to conduct a series of around 60 interviews with politicians and officials across the UK. For this endeavour, I am based at the University of Stirling in Scotland as an honorary research fellow.

Devolution and intergovernmental relations

Unlike in federal states, such as Germany where the relations between the governments of the Länder and the Bund, are strongly institutionalised with the Bundesrat at the heart, intergovernmental arrangements in the UK are only weakly formalised and lack a systematic approach. Since the late 1990s, an increasing number of legislative and fiscal powers have gradually been devolved to the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales (renamed the Welsh Parliament this May) and the Northern Ireland Assembly. At the same time, however, procedures to structure how these different governments cooperate around policies and laws that affect both the responsibilities of the devolved legislatures and Westminster have been neglected. The sovereignty of the UK Parliament has remained in principle untouched and it still cannot be legally bound by a codified constitution, a constitutional court or by the devolved administrations and legislatures. Therefore, intergovernmental relations rest on the goodwill of the UK Government, which is manifested by a non-binding Memorandum of Understanding, the Joint Ministerial Committee (JMC) and a series of specific agreements and concordats. Even the Sewel Convention, which requires the legislative consent of the devolved legislatures when a bill by the UK Parliament impacts their powers, can ultimately not stop Westminster from doing so. While the convention is under normal circumstances fairly effective in protecting the devolved administrations' interests from interference by the UK Government, it depends on the latter to respect the veto of the former. In January, for the first time, all devolved legislators refused to give their consent to the European Union Withdrawal Agreement Bill. And yet, Westminster passed the bill allowing the UK to leave the EU on 31 January.

Brexit and multilevel politics

This brings us to the peculiarity of Brexit when it comes to governing a unitary, but multi-level state without a robust intergovernmental architecture. The EU has created a quasi-federal constitution integrating the legal frameworks and the interaction across – and within – Member States. While the devolution settlement in Britain conveniently evolved under the EU's regulatory regime, the decision to leave the EU has posed serious questions about the functionality of the UK's territorial policy. This is why Brexit has evoked a serious and ongoing intergovernmental conflict, as, in contrast to the UK Government, the elected majorities in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland prefer a close alignment with the European Single Market. The political relations have been particularly strained by the UK Government's intentions to exercise control over powers in devolved policy areas, once these are repatriated from the EU. On the other hand, despite these tensions, Brexit has also encouraged unprecedented levels of cooperation between the different governments involved. After all, for future internal and external trade, the UK Government relies on cooperation of the devolved administrations to ensure the implementation of common standards. Consequently (and also to prepare for a no-deal Brexit), beyond the existing, often ineffective arrangements, first and foremost the Joint Ministerial Committee, the existing web of ministerial and official forums, working groups and ad hoc relations has expanded under the public radar.

Researching intergovernmental relations in time of Brexit and Corona

Because, prior to the EU Referendum, intergovernmental cooperation was very restricted, my research has become significantly more interesting in these turbulent times. Because of the informal character of these interactions, only an in-depth qualitative study can lead to a better understanding of the different institutions and practices, of the nature of cooperation and conflict, and of the influence of the devolved administration on policies and legislation enacted by the UK Government. Although major developments are unlikely to be concluded at the time I am hoping to finalise my thesis, my scholarship has allowed me to gather extremely valuable insights from governments with profoundly different perspectives. Unfortunately, and I am certainly not the only one whose research is affected by the current pandemic, I had to return from London earlier than planned and could not meet all my interviewees in person. Since then, however, I have made considerable progress in analysing and writing up my findings so far. I had already travelled to Edinburgh, to Cardiff and to London, but have only been able to do about two-thirds of the interviews I had planned. It is, of course, possible to talk to people over the phone or via an online call, and I have occasionally done so. Still, part of gaining a better understanding of what is actually happening, is seeing the places where people work, and the action is taking place. According to my initial schedule, I had arranged to visit Belfast in June. At the moment, there seems to be at least a glimpse of hope that this might be possible. Meanwhile, until travelling to the UK becomes an option again, the data I had already collected will keep me busy in the coming weeks and months.

Dr. Marius Guderjan
Centre for British Studies

What is Cultural Project Management?

(First published 2 June)

Time and time again, we have been told by our students that what set our MA curriculum apart for them from other university courses was our focus on interdisciplinarity and on the integration of applied courses and seminars. One outstanding example for a such an element in the teaching philosophy of the Centre is the Cultural Project Management course, which spans almost the entire length of the first academic year. In this course, the students conceptualise, document, produce and run an exhibition which focuses on a topic highlighting the academic work done by the Centre for British Studies each year. While the students benefit from supervision and guidance by a member of the academic staff, they are also allowed a considerable measure of independence and authority to decide how they design the exhibition and implement their choice of focus in the framework of the given overall theme.

An exhibition from home?

Usually, the exhibition takes place on one night in June, as part of the Berlin Lange Nacht der Wissenschaften, in the Senatssaal of the HU main building. It is an event which attracts thousands of visitors, and our exhibition represents one of the highlights of the series of events organised all over the university, as our students have consistently been able to put together an attractive and innovative programme, in which the main exhibition is embedded in workshops, public readings, musical performances, children's activities, food and drinks stalls.

This year, due to the COVID pandemic, the Lange Nacht der Wissenschaften was unfortunately cancelled, as have all other live, large-scale events. As a result we found ourselves in the position of having to come up with a creative alternative, to ensure that our students can still successfully complete the CPM course, gain all the knowledge and skills that it brings, and that the interested general public can enjoy what they have come to appreciate so much over the years. Therefore... we moved online! In a swift rethinking of our strategy, we adapted the content and project plans and are currently working on building an online exhibition, which is scheduled to go live on July 3rd.

100 Years of Britons in Berlin – From the Roaring 20s to the 2020s!

This year's exhibition is focused on the lives of British individuals in Berlin in the last hundred years. The students will be documenting the fascinating history of the German capital as seen through the eyes of Britons who have travelled, worked, wrote, played or simply lived here. We will present the fascinating interplay between a tumultuous city and the multi-faceted identities of people from Britain. The exhibition takes our visitors from a capital of sexual liberation and extravagant parties, to a city ravaged by war, divided by politics, reunited and then reinvented in the last 30 years.

Naturally, one of the biggest challenges in adapting to a new online format has been finding good alternatives for the live and interactive elements that our exhibition would otherwise have offered. Luckily, our students proved to be more than up to the task. They have come up with a number of innovative strategies to ensure that our audience will get a chance to actively participate in our efforts: in an online panel discussion, in virtual workshops, videos, interactive maps and interviews. These formats are all in the books for this upcoming highlight.

Have we sparked your interest? Then make sure to follow us on social media and have a look at our website once it goes live! More details about the programme will be made available online very soon!

Anisia Petcu, MA
Centre for British Studies

Teaching in Times of COVID-19

(First published 18 June 2020)

At the time of writing, it has been two months since the official start of the lockdown in Berlin. It has also been over a month of what feels like the oddest summer semester at the Centre for British Studies to date. Since Humboldt-Universität announced the new regulations including the complete switch to the digital teaching as a measure against the spread of COVID-19, the staff left the offices at Mohrenstraße 60 to work from home. Needless to say, it was only one of many things that since then have changed. For once, staff meetings now happen over Zoom, without the comfort of the proverbial “Kaffee und Kuchen”. Monday lectures and other events, including the annual Lange Nacht der Wissenschaften, had been cancelled or postponed. Most importantly, the concerns for M.A. British Studies students’ well-being and access to teaching have been on everyone’s mind ever since the lockdown began. I talked to my colleagues – Felicia Kompio, Dr. Paolo Chiocchetti, Dr. Sam McIntosh and Anisia Petcu, all academic staff members at the Centre for British Studies, to find out how they have been adapting to the challenges of digital teaching over the course of this first month in the “Brave New World”.

Concerns

Since the decision on distant learning was announced, it was clear there is no time for a smooth transition. Paolo Chiocchetti, who joined the Centre for British Studies last semester, is currently teaching a class on British International Relations and co-teaching an interdisciplinary course called Self, Society and Agency with Felicia Kompio. His main concern was how best to balance direct contact with the students with accessibility: “Not all our students necessarily have a personal laptop, a stable broadband connection, a quiet space to join the conversation, and live in the Central European Time zone.” Paolo’s concern had since proven to be on point: throughout this first month of teaching we have seen students tuning into class in the middle of the night from their home countries where they are currently self-isolating, while few others struggle with their internet connection or simply finding a place to work in their tiny student dorms.

For all of us, another major concern was whether it is possible to incorporate elements of interactivity which in “peaceful times” are so essential to teaching – especially given the limited technical resources. Furthermore, none of us had conceptualized an entire course for online teaching before, which meant it would inevitably be a learning experience for both lecturers and students alike.

Solutions

Even though all the lecturers are facing similar challenges, we came up with different digital solutions. Some, like Sam McIntosh and me, decided to record their lectures using Screencast-O-Matic and add the interactive components elsewhere: for his course entitled Coercive State, Sam matches the lecture format with 45-minute Zoom calls, where students are encouraged to discuss their reading materials and ask questions. Sam also managed to incorporate other interactive elements into his class: “I experimented a bit by getting the students to give presentations in one seminar and this worked really well with the students using power point by sharing their screens and giving well thought-out and interesting presentations”.

I am currently teaching a class called Literary Films and Cinematic Novels, which is also structured around the pre-recorded lecture format and the occasional Zoom conference calls. In addition to that, I decided to send out a weekly newsletter informing the students on all latest updates as well as suggesting a short film from the BFI archive. I also encourage students to submit small check in exercises “hidden” within each video lecture.

For his teaching, Paolo also uses a broad range of available online platforms and applications: “My solution was to create self-study modules with all necessary resources, which can be comfortably studied at home and at the students’ own time and pace, supplemented by a variety of optional learning support tools (brief

group sessions on Zoom, individual conversation on Zoom or Whatsapp, Moodle Forum, e-mail). The online teaching is working surprisingly well, with most students taking advantage of the various tools and few technical glitches.”

What didn't work?

As the first month of teaching online is behind us, it is fair to say that some things did not work as planned. For Sam, the biggest drawback turned out to be the lack of immediate response to the lectures which helps to navigate many elements of teaching: “It’s quite uninspiring lecturing to a computer and unfortunately I think this comes across in the recordings (something I need to work on!) and I miss the interaction that I normally have in the lectures. I also can’t pick up signs that a particular point I’m making might need more of an explanation and I just have to hope the students will bring their questions or queries to the seminar”. Both Felicia Kompio and Paolo also note that it turned out to be much more difficult to keep a lively discussion in an online class than in face-to-face teaching.

As all of us are currently working from home, figuring out how to divide the day into periods of work and rest has also become increasingly difficult, which from the very beginning had its inevitable effect on productivity. Felicia notes that she initially struggled with balancing teaching and other administrative tasks from home: “I always separated my private life, which includes my PhD research, and my paid work. Now, this is no longer possible, and it took me a while to re-organise myself around that.”

To add to the points mentioned by my colleagues, I have also noticed my workload has increased significantly in comparison to face-to-face teaching. For once, the first recorded lecture took me eight hours to complete, but this has since then improved. It appears that this new challenge is, above all else, a valuable exercise in flexibility.

Lessons for the future

As we ask ourselves what may the outcome of this experimental semester be – both for the Centre for British Studies, but also for the education system as a whole, it is essential to remember that moments of crisis affect different groups at a different pace. Paolo comments: “The COVID crisis is bound to deepen inequalities in society and in the university system, both among students and among the faculty and administrative staff. While some are barely affected, others have lost or will lose their sources of income, are stuck at home juggling work and care duties, face technical and travel restrictions, and so on. The political authorities and the universities should do more to address these issues”.

Anisia Petcu, an alumna of the Centre for British Studies herself, is facing, perhaps, most challenges among the teaching staff in the given circumstances: together with the current MA students she is currently re-imagining the event format of Lange Nacht der Wissenschaften in accordance with the COVID-19 restrictions. Anisia believes that above all else this time will remind us that there are benefits to face-to-face teaching that (at least as of spring 2020) no technology can offer: “I think it’s made us aware of how much more goes into the experience of studying and teaching [...] – little chats with your colleagues before the seminar starts, a quick bite or a coffee in between two classes, the enjoyment you get from free, spontaneous, face to face debates over a text, an idea, a point that was made in class. Whether a student or part of the teaching staff, I think we’ve all come to appreciate these little things a little more”.

I believe it is fair to say that all of the teaching staff at the Centre for British Studies are hoping someday to return to the “live” experience of those small simple pleasures of face-to-face teaching – and, of course, to see our students in class, for a change, without the assistance of Zoom. For now, however, both students and lecturers try to do their best to adapt to whatever comes our way.

Sonya Permiakova, MA
Centre for British Studies

Bildung durch Wissenschaft

(First published 18 June 2020)

The book, *Bildung durch Wissenschaft*, written by Jürgen Schläeger und Heinz-Elmar Tenorth and published early this year, endeavours to clarify the central message about the uniqueness of a university education encapsulated in Humboldt-Universität's mission statement.

A Question in Urgent Need of Clarification

This book investigates the Institutional Strategy: ‚Bildung durch Wissenschaft‘, our university had committed itself to for the Excellence Initiative competition. In the English version, the idea encapsulated in this formula is rendered as ‚Educating Enquiring Minds‘ and ‚Translating Humboldt into the 21st Century‘, both not particularly enlightening descriptions as to what is really at stake. A clarification seemed to us all the more necessary, because the idea of a university education associated with the founding father of our university for most of the 19th and the 20th centuries, has come increasingly under attack as a no longer useful guideline for university education in the 21st century.

Central to what came to be known as ‚Humboldt's model‘ world-wide, was the notion of ‚Bildung‘ which did not simply signify any kind of education but a special intellectual and cultural imprint, which, it was thought, only a research based University education can generate and which had to be distinguished from ‚Ausbildung‘, which was seen as an advanced professional training offered, for instance, by polytechnics or, as they are now called, ‚Universities of Applied Sciences‘.

It is hardly surprising that in our post-industrial world such a distinction between ‚Bildung‘ and ‚Ausbildung‘ has increasingly lost support. The school- and Bologna-reforms as well as the growing importance of an empirically controlled input-output pedagogics and of ‚employability‘ as major principles for preparing young people for the labour-market of the future have done much to weaken the traditional term ‚Bildung‘ as a special kind of ‚deep learning‘.

In view of the, in many cases incalculable, changes in tomorrow's labour markets, and taking into account the ongoing controversies about what kinds of skills and intellectual abilities the future workforce will have to be taught now, it seemed to us indispensable to find plausible answers to the question of how much and which parts of the traditional concepts of university teaching are still essential for preparing young people as best as possible for the challenges of the future.

In order to find the answer to this pressing problem, the book analyses the core issue at the bottom of all contemporary debates about education, namely to what extent a university's teaching philosophy should still take guidance from Humboldt's ideal of a cognitive make-up that only comes with many years of research-based studies at a university.

School and University: A Broken Chain in Need of Repair

The first part of the book, written by the author of this website-post, is homing in on its central theme by discussing the recent changes in methods and general principles of educating young people from an early age onwards until they enter university. The argument then moves on to the growing wave of concerns, articulated by university teachers about the ‚intellectual immaturity‘ of the generations of students now entering university. The available evidence shows clearly that the original Humboldtian chain of continuity from school to university, stretching from the initiation of children in their primary school years to maturation, which, in Germany, certifies the ability and right to enter university (‚Hochschulreife‘), has broken. In recent years this has put increasing pressure on universities to adapt their standards to what they get from the school system by offering ‚bridge-courses‘ or other ‚repair-work-classes‘ to a growing number of their freshers. Such concerns are not vented because the ill-prepared freshers are generally thought to be less talented and their motivation to learn and know weaker than they used to be. The book rather argues that it is the impact of pressures and factors on the way young people are taught to think, to access information

and to process it, which has given them a cognitive tilt that does not sit well with the requirements of research-based teaching and the intellectual solidity and creativity, it promises to foster.

In all this, the now prevailing educational philosophies and pedagogic regimes have played a pivotal role in that they have helped shape a mental imprint, that is too often dominated by short-termism, by a disposition to go for quick and superficial solutions of problems. This type of teaching philosophy unfortunately all too often also nourishes a notion of understanding things as merely putting together pre-packaged pieces of knowledge gathered from the internet and other easily accessible sources, rather than using information as a starting point for doing some serious thinking by themselves. Furthermore, inadvertently an expectation of teachers and pupils alike has managed to creep in, that learning must be easy, must be fun; that it is the task and duty of teachers to make topics and problems palatable as well as interesting. This has been reinforced by a spreading practice of rewarding graduates top marks which their efforts do not justify.

Looking Back and Forward

Whereas the first part of the book explores these shifts in cognitive mentality, motivation and expectation, and discusses their detrimental effects for a research-oriented teaching programme such as universities offer, the second part of the book, written by the eminent educationalist Heinz-Elmar Tenorth, lays bare the structural shifts and changes in teaching regimes throughout the past 200 years and puts contemporary developments in a broader historical and structural context. The conclusions on which both parts of the book converge, are quite straightforward: If universities want to carry on doing what they have been doing so successfully for many generations now – i.e. advancing scientific knowledge and helping ever new generation of students to develop the kind of intellectual imprint and creativity, needed to penetrate and deal with ever more complex problems and new cognitive challenges - then they must resist the general trend towards an increasing 'pedagogisation' of teaching.

What Needs to be Done?

The moment students enter university, they have to be told in no uncertain terms that to succeed, they have to develop the capacity for deferring gratification, for working at a problem with determination and persistence, because these are attitudes that will help them develop the intellectual muscle and mental attitudes, necessary for penetrating complex problems and solving difficult questions. Studying at a university takes stamina; it is long-distance training and not a series of enjoyable, leisurely spaced-out sprints with guarantees for applause and success. Nobody would assume that there is a quick way to become a good pianist. Everybody knows and takes for granted that to play the piano well, takes a minimum of talent and regular practice, preferably from a very early age onwards. Why present-day school-teaching regimes have forgotten this and are trying to make things as easy as possible, remains a mystery. Against such tendencies, to stick to 'Bildung durch Wissenschaft' and the unique education it offers, is an effective antidote!

Senior Prof. Dr. Jürgen Schlaeger, CBE
Centre for British Studies

Refugee Lives Matter: Emotional Responses, Practical Research

(First published 14 July 2020)

Tense Exchanges

A few years ago, I was at a large conference on migration and refugee law in Europe. The participants included academics, legal practitioners, NGO workers, campaigners, government officials and officials from intergovernmental organisations such as the EU, the UN's International Organisation for Migration, the UN-HCR and the Red Cross. As might be expected, the make-up of the conference meant that the atmosphere was at times a little tense. Very occasionally, jaws would clench, voices would rise, and anger would bubble just above the surface. This was understandable. The topics being discussed held life or death significance; the tragedies being referred to – tragedies that some of those present had witnessed first-hand – were very real tragedies; and the arguments being made sometimes strained under the weight of duplicity or naïve ideology, depending on your point of view.

Words and Platitudes

In one panel session amongst many, the audience heard from presenters who variously defended or attacked EU policy in this area. All of the panellists were articulate and referred to research, evidence and statistics to back up their competing arguments. As the Chair prepared to open the discussion up to questions from the audience, he acknowledged the strong feelings that the topic elicited and asked everyone to remember that, as he put it, we were all united in finding the deaths in the Mediterranean an “intolerable” tragedy.

At the end of the discussion, I left with something that can best be described as a mental itch. Something about the session had bothered me and I couldn't quite put my finger on what it was. Eventually, I realised it was the seemingly innocuous comment made by the Chair: in particular, the use of the word “intolerable” and the fact that he cast everyone at the conference as having the same ultimate priorities. It occurred to me that while I am sure everyone present wanted the number of deaths in the Mediterranean to be lower, I could not personally avoid the conclusion that for some at least, these deaths were a regrettable but ultimately tolerable consequence of the pursuit of what they saw as a more important priority – visibly aggressive border control. The myth, I felt, was that the only alternative to the off-shoring and securitisation of border control that might substantially reduce the number of deaths in the Mediterranean, was the (politically unacceptable) alternative of no border controls at all.

A Research Project

My research project is called 'Refugee Lives Matter - Protecting the human rights of unsettled migrants and refugees through international and regional obligations to investigate deaths'. I am looking at international and regional legal obligations to investigate certain types of death, and the scope of these obligations when it comes to the deaths of migrants and refugees within or close to Europe's borders. The project is not just concerned with deaths in the Mediterranean but also deaths at the hands of police or other State actors, deaths in prisons, immigration detention centres, refugee camps or during attempts to cross Europe's internal borders illicitly. The project is not directly concerned with arguments about border control policy: rather it is focussed on assessing a procedural tool that could, amongst other things, publicly expose the consequences of certain policies and practices, provide an important source of evidence for debates about policy change, and provide public accountability for any operational and systemic wrongdoing.

Perhaps the most important investigative obligation for State parties to the European Convention on Human Rights arises under Article 2 (The Right to Life). As I'm sure my fantastic Law and Society students will tell you, an investigative obligation does not exist on a plain reading of the text but was instead read into it

by the European Court of Human Rights in the 1995 case of *McCann v. the United Kingdom*. In its judgment the Court held:

[... A] general legal prohibition of arbitrary killing by the agents of the State would be ineffective, in practice, if there existed no procedure for reviewing the lawfulness of the use of lethal force by State authorities. The obligation to protect the right to life under this provision, read in conjunction with the State's general duty under Article 1 of the Convention to "secure to everyone within their jurisdiction the rights and freedoms defined in [the] Convention", requires by implication that there should be some form of effective official investigation when individuals have been killed as a result of the use of force by, inter alia, agents of the State. (*McCann v. the United Kingdom* [1995] ECHR 31, para 161)

The Court would later expand the investigative obligation's scope to non-use-of-force deaths, including cases where States are accused of failing to take adequate positive steps to protect life. It also developed a number of minimum requirements for these investigations: they have to be independent, effective, carried out promptly and with reasonable expedition, open to public scrutiny, and involve the deceased's next of kin where possible.

Why is death investigation particularly important in this context?

And why is this question relevant to the story about the conference above? First of all, investigations have the potential to identify the connections between State policies and practices and their fatal consequences, and give public and official expression to those connections where they exist – helping to provide some accountability for domestic and supranational institutions that work in this area. Second, where practical, systemic or operational failures contribute to a death, an investigation can provide an opportunity for lesson learning. Third, while justice is a multifaceted and subjective concept, a reliable, public, independent, official narrative about the circumstances surrounding a death can itself constitute an important element of justice for families and survivors even if they also seek other remedies. Fourth, in contested death scenarios, an effective investigation is typically a prerequisite to the pursuit of those other remedies. Finally, providing families with answers about dead or missing loved ones is essential for the grieving process to take its course. Indeed, on a very basic level, bodies are more likely to be identified and successful contact made with next of kin where there has been a proper investigation.

Conclusion: The unnatural deaths of migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean, or in Europe's prisons, refugee camps, immigration detentions centres, or in the back of food transport trucks, are not inevitable. Independent and effective investigations into those deaths can strengthen accountability, lead to valuable lesson learning, provide families with answers, and may just help counter a growing trend for policy in this area to be dictated by political appeasement rather than evidence.

Dr. Sam McIntosh
Centre for British Studies

A Jurist Uprooted: The Life and Times of F.A. Mann

(First published, 16 July 2020)

En route to teach a class on the English Legal System at the Humboldt-Universität Law Faculty for the first time, I paused to observe a huddle of high school students around the Bebelplatz memorial to the book burning of 10 May 1933. I thought of Carl Schmitt's summary of a conference of German law professors in Berlin three years later, lamenting the fact that "on the one hand we keep pointing to the necessary fight against the Jewish spirit, yet on the other hand, at the end of 1936, a seminar library in legal studies looks as if the greater part of the legal literature is being produced by Jews." The answer, according to his colleague Hans Frank, was to put all works by Jewish authors—including "half Jews" and converts to Christianity - "without distinction" in a section of the library called "Judaica".

Universities, as institutions, subsist through seismic political and cultural changes, outlasting not only regimes but also sovereign states; they are communities that unite successive generations into an entity with a continuous existence. I had come to Berlin to study the life and work of a German Jew that had taken his doctorate from the Berlin University in 1933—and left for England the very next day. How apt it was, then, to pause at this memorial and to appreciate the opportunity to contribute, as part of the modern German academy, to our understanding of German Jews' contribution to legal scholarship.

A Legal Polymath

F.A. Mann was a legal polymath and a branch of German legal scholarship that flourished in common law soil, becoming not only a successful solicitor but a prolific academic writer. Mann's Berlin thesis was on in-kind contributions to the capital of limited liability companies. His remarkable career spanned fields of law with a combination of breadth and depth that is, frankly, astonishing. Many of these fields are highly today: The law of money, the concept of jurisdiction in public international law, the law of commercial arbitration, and foreign relations law, to name but a few.

One aspect of the latter is the law governing the recognition of states. The case of *Carl Zeiss Stiftung v Rayner & Keeler Ltd* [1966] 2 All ER 536 illustrates the combination of conceptual difficulty and practical importance that is characteristic of Mann's work. An action was brought by English solicitors purporting to act for the East-German Carl Zeiss Foundation against a West-German entity using the Carl Zeiss Foundation name. The problem was that Her Majesty's UK Government had not recognised the GDR as a sovereign state, so it was doubtful whether the organs of the GDR could bring an action in the English courts at all. Foreign relations law, of course, also became a matter of topical interest in the context of Brexit. In *R (Miller) v Brexit Secretary (No 1)* [2017] UKSC 5, the UK Supreme Court had to decide what the UK constitutional requirements for a valid notice under Art. 50 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union were. This boiled down to a question of the scope and reviewability of HM UK Government's prerogative powers in the field of international relations.

A Unique Archive

The impulse for the marvellous project, done here at the Centre, was given when Mann's daughter-in-law, Anne Kriken Mann, bequeathed an archive of over 10,000 unpublished documents—mainly letters—to the Humboldt-Universität. To these were added further documents from Mann's firm, Herbert Smith Freehills. With the support of the DFG, Professor Gerhard Dannemann made a preliminary exploration of the archive which provided the basis for the current project.

Professor Dannemann, myself, our Research Associate Christoph König and student assistants Ricarda Callies and Marco Mauer are now coordinating a group of almost 30 co-investigators and affiliates from Germany, the UK, the US, Scandinavia, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand, including distinguished practitioners, scholars, and members of the judiciary. The archive forms a kind of lynchpin for the activities of the group. Some are interested in historical research proper, and the rest bring the domain-specific expertise

necessary for a “deep dive” into Mann’s various fields of activity. As well as individual cooperation partners, the project involves the British Institute of International and Comparative Law in London (an institution with which Mann was closely involved) and the Max Planck Institute for European Legal History in Frankfurt, and a close association with the Leo Baeck Institute New York | Berlin.

My own field of research is in the law of money, which Mann is credited with establishing as a sub-discipline within English law. Mann’s major text, *The Legal Aspect of Money*, was first published in 1938 and last published by Mann in 1991 (currently, the eighth edition is in progress, edited by project member Charles Proctor). Together with the archival resources, this provides insight into the way that monetary law developed in response to technological and political changes over the course of the 20th century, as well as insight into the interaction of law and economics in our understanding of money.

Heim ins Reich?

An important aspect of our project is the question: How do we deal with the biography of a German Jew of Mann’s generation? One motivation behind a project like this is to “repatriate” German Jews such as Mann to the scholarly tradition from which they came—and which they, paradoxically, did much to preserve in exile. This is a worthy goal. But there are pitfalls. German scholars are, in effect, caught between Scylla and Charybdis. Scylla is that to identify subjects as German Jews—and not as (undifferentiated) Germans—seems to risk lapsing back into Nazi-era racial categories. Charybdis is that, to discuss subjects as “just” Germans who happened to be “of Jewish faith” or “of Jewish background” pushes a major biographical feature to the periphery—a biographical feature that assumed even greater importance post-1933.

This project thus represents an opportunity to reconsider the way that German scholarship deals with its “Jewish Question”. The impulse for many Germans is to equate Jewish identity with religious identity, i.e., rejecting the Nazi idea that Jewishness is a matter of “race”. The problem is that this does not conform with the self-identification of many Jews; for us, Jewishness is just as much a matter of culture, ethnicity, and possibly even “race” as it is of religion. The claim that Jewishness is “just the same” as Catholicism or Protestantism misses something very important about the Jewish experience, particularly post-1933; the idea that being “assimilated”, “secular”, or even “anti-religious” negates a person’s Jewish identity is not only absurd, but often quite offensive.

From the Jewish perspective, much of the existing literature seems to say: “Put him in the Ehrenhalle of the German academy, but leave that Jewish stuff at the door!” This echoes Albert Einstein’s wry remark, quoted in the *New York Times* in 1930: “If my theory of relativity is proven successful, Germany will claim me as a German and France will declare me a citizen of the world. Should my theory prove untrue, France will say that I am a German, and Germany will declare that I am a Jew.” At its worst, neglect of Jewish identity has the effect of expunging the fact that a person was a Jew from the record—rendering the German Kulturgut conveniently Judenrein. The search for a new path has already made for stimulating debate within the project group. The GBZ provides an excellent forum for these debates, and the diverse project group is ideally situated to tackle the question with the courage and the sensitivity it deserves.

Dr. Jason Grant Allan
Centre for British Studies

Pandemics, War, Literature: The First-Ever Virtual Meeting of the Research Group Writing 1900

(First published 18th November 2020)

100 years ago, in an uncanny parallel to our current predicament, the world suffered from the 'Spanish flu' pandemic. Virginia Woolf was one author who charted the wave-like ups and down of both World War I and the flu which dominated the war's turbulent aftermath.

The years after the end of WWI, rather than the war itself, was the focal point of the first-ever virtual meeting of the international research network Writing 1900 (www.writing1900.org). In preparation of a special issue of the *Journal for European Studies*, participants presented their papers-in-progress, each with a respondent to kick off the discussion.

Although it is more fun meeting in person, the workshop-style session went surprisingly well, and everyone found it productive – once the technical connection via video was stable. The volume is well on its way to being ready for publication next year, but everyone agreed that the overall coherence of the special issue would profit from renewed discussion.

Apart from the presentations and responses, we had a general seminar-style discussion based on two recent publications by historians on WWI and/or its aftermath. It emerged that writing about war is never simple, not even a hundred years after its official end in November 1918. For one thing, the war didn't end as quickly in some areas of the world, e.g. in Eastern Europe. For another, its legacy was far-reaching and had a heavy impact on the inter-war years which followed WWI, especially if one adopts a more global approach. The latter was represented by two speakers at the meeting, which focussed on the importance of the war effort by Caribbean soldiers and their treatment on the one hand, and on a comparison of Turkish and English war poetry on the other. Both the different temporalities of the war in different parts of the world, and different fall-outs, including literary outcomes, were discussed.

How difficult it was to rebuild networks across national borders was another topic which several papers concentrated on, but also on aesthetic and formal aspects of the (impossibility of) representation of war and its aftermath. English writers abroad often indirectly commented on home affairs – not always overtly – and thus one can read their interventions from a postcolonial as well as from a national perspective. Writers such as Virginia Woolf, CRL James, Hope Mirrlees, Vernon Lee, Alix Strachey, to name but a few, show how the volume's authors concentrate less on male canonical war writing, but make an effort to highlight other voices.

The workshop was a follow-up event from the large DFG-funded conference *Writing Europe 1918 – 2020* which took place at the Centre in 2018.

Prof. Dr. Gesa Stedman
Centre for British Studies