

Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures Newsletter

Summer
2011

Chair's Message

This newsletter captures some of GSLL's highlights in the 2010-2011 academic year. As you'll see in the articles below, this year we added a new essay prize in memory of Prof. Ulrich "Ulo" Goldsmith to the donor-supported student prizes our department awards. Our Max Kade German Room hosted several distinguished speakers in its inaugural year, and more are planned

for fall 2011. In faculty news, Dr. Helga Luthers, interviewed in this issue, was promoted to Senior Instructor, and Prof. Helmut Müller-Sievers became director of the CU Center for Humanities & the Arts. The Russian Program once again sponsored its very popular Russian Culture Week in April, with events ranging from a Russian Idol contest to Ukrainian Egg Decorating.

Our programs continue to thrive, and at last count our already robust major numbers are up 28% over the previous academic year and minor numbers are up 32%.

The 2010-2011 academic year was not without sorrow. We miss the warmth and enthusiasm of our colleague Thomas Hollweck, whose contributions to our department will not be forgotten.



Best wishes,

Ann Schmiesing

In Memoriam



Thomas Hollweck
(1942-2011)

GSLL mourns the loss of Associate Professor Thomas Hollweck, who passed away on March 7, 2011, after a battle with hepatitis and cancer. Prof. Hollweck joined CU as an Assistant Professor of German in 1976 and was tenured in 1982. He received his undergraduate education at the University of Munich and his doctorate from Emory University (1973). During his long career at CU, he served

as department chair and as a member of university committees including the Honors Council and the Boulder Faculty Assembly. His service also contributed significantly to the establishment of CU's flourishing Jewish Studies Program. In service to the profession, he was a member of the editorial board for the collected works of Eric Voegelin.

Prof. Hollweck

taught courses on German literature and culture at all levels of the curriculum. In recent years, his course "Inside Nazi Germany" has been a favorite among German majors and minors. Student praise for this and other courses has consistently pointed to Prof. Hollweck's immense knowledge, his outstanding lectures and discussions, and his genuine care for his students.

New Student Essay Prize in Memory of Prof. Ulrich "Ulo" Goldsmith

At our May commencement ceremony, GSLL and CU's Program in Jewish Studies jointly awarded the first annual Ulrich Goldsmith Memorial Prize in German-Jewish Studies. This donor-supported prize rewards academic writing on a topic pertaining to Jewish culture in German-speaking lands. The prize is named after Professor Ulrich

"Ulo" Goldsmith (1910-2000), professor emeritus of German and comparative literature, and co-founder of the Comparative Literature Program at CU. Professor Goldsmith was born in Freiburg, Germany, and moved to England in 1932 to study at the London School of Economics. He remained an exile in England after 1933 because of the anti-

Semitic legislation passed by the Third Reich. In 1940 he moved to Canada and earned his MA in German from Toronto University. In 1950 he earned his Ph.D. in German from the University of California at Berkeley. Goldsmith worked at CU from 1957 to 1979. The inaugural prize was awarded to German Studies MA student Daniela Färber.

GSLL's 2010-2011 Visiting Speakers

In November 2010 GSLL welcomed Caryl Emerson to CU to give two very well-attended guest lectures. Prof. Emerson is A. Watson Armour III University Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Princeton University and an internationally known specialist on Mikhail Bakhtin. On November 1, she lectured on "Tolstoy and Shakespeare," and the following day she lectured on



Dr. Caryl Emerson

"Brothers Karamazov the Opera: Turning a 'Polyphonic' Novel into Redemptive Religious Art."

The CU Max Kade German Room welcomed several guest speakers in the 2010-2011 academic year. On November 12 we held a breakfast in the room for Dr. Klaus Scharioth, the German ambassador to the United States. Co-hosted by GSLL and CU's Colorado European Union Center of Excellence, the breakfast was attended by CU faculty and administrators and by community members such as Denver Art Museum Director Christoph Heinrich and GSLL friends Tom and Jeanne Baur.

On February 23, Yale Professor Emeritus Peter Demetz presented a lecture in the Max Kade German Room on Veit Harlan's film *Die goldene Stadt* (1942).

In April, GSLL hosted Cox Family Visiting Scholar Heinrich Detering. Professor Detering is chair of Modern



Dr. Heinrich Detering

German Literature and Comparative Literary Studies at the University of Göttingen. In 2009 he was awarded the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prize, Germany's most prestigious honor for individual scholars. On April 5, he presented a lecture on "Ecology and Literature in the Age of Goethe" in the Max Kade German Room, and the following day he lectured on "A Self-Portrait of Pop Culture as Theatre of the Absurd: Bob Dylan's 'Visions of Johanna.'"

Russian Culture Week

The fourth annual Russian Culture Week included film screenings, a "Russian Idol" singing contest for students, a Ukrainian egg-painting workshop, and a spring festival with live music by the Planina folklore group and the Gora-Gora orchestra. The overall number of participants in Russian Culture Week events exceeded three hundred. Many thanks to the faculty members and students who invested their time and talents for the success of this large-scale event!



Photos: (left) Planina; (above) Russian faculty singing chastushki (traditional humorous folk quatrains); (right) effigy made by a Russian culture student.



Faculty Spotlight: Helga Luthers



Dr. Helga Luthers is head of GSLL's Nordic Program and advisor for the Nordic minor. She has taught at CU since 1998, and was promoted in spring 2011 to Senior Instructor. She is the coordinator of GSLL's Nordic Film Series, faculty advisor for the Nordic Club, and director of CU's Faculty-Led Global Studies Seminar in Iceland.

The courses you teach on the Vikings, Norse mythology, and Tolkien's Nordic sources fill up quickly semester after semester, and they invariably have a long waitlist of students eager to get into the course. What do you think accounts for the immense popularity of these subjects, both among CU students and in the popular imagination?

I would maintain that "popular" is the key word here. Various aspects of Norse, aka Viking, history and mythology have been integrated into popular culture for decades, making both the imagery and terminology familiar to anyone who follows fantasy literature, comic books, graphic novels or action and adventure films, not to mention the countless players of video games or MMORPGs (Massively multiplayer online role-playing games). Many of my colleagues at other universities teach classes where over half of the students are the so-called heritage students, i.e. students of Nordic de-

scent. This is not the case at CU, where most of the students interested in Nordic Studies were initially introduced to the field through some form or another of popular culture. To them, my courses often serve as a connection between their (past) world of fantasy and role-playing and their new world of higher education.

Students and community members sometimes ask why GSLL has a Nordic Program, instead of the Scandinavian programs that several other universities have. What do you tell them about why we named our program the Nordic Program?

In the Nordic region the term "Scandinavia" is understood to strictly refer to Denmark, Norway and Sweden. The inclusive term used in the region is "Norden," commonly translated as the Nordic Region, a term that includes the three Scandinavian countries, as well as Finland, Iceland, the Faeroe Islands, Aland Islands, Greenland, and Sapmi, the homeland of the Sami. In recent years, we have put great effort into restructuring our courses to be inclusive of all cultures of the Nordic Region. I include discussion of Finno-Ugric and Sami religions when I teach Nordic mythologies, the folk narrative course contains a section on Sami and Inuit narratives, I emphasize the non-homogenous nature of Nordic societies with special focus on minorities and immigrants in the culture class, and we are one of few programs in the field that offers a course on Nordic colonialisms. Consequently, we felt that the Program's name should reflect our mission to represent all of the Nordic Region and its cultures.

You supervised several students this last year in Icelandic. Were you surprised that students

wanted to study this "less commonly taught" language?

To say that I was surprised would be an understatement. Many would actually list Icelandic among the ANTL languages (almost never taught languages), and although I have certainly had the occasional student inquire about instruction in Icelandic in the past, I never expected to have four students sign up for Independent Study in beginning Icelandic in one academic year. It was quite rewarding to have the opportunity to teach the language, especially as all of these students were interested in the language for purposes of graduate studies and future research.

What do you think the future holds for teaching less-commonly taught languages such as Icelandic and other Nordic languages?

Whether we are talking about Swedish, spoken by little over 9 million people, or one of the languages of the Sami, where native speakers can be counted by the hundreds, all of the Nordic languages fall under either the category of LCTLs or ANTLs. This means that unless you are located in an area with a high population of heritage students (which CU is not), maintaining minimal enrollments for language offerings becomes very challenging. Consequently, Nordic Studies at CU does not currently offer traditional language courses.

Our current focus is on creating alternative offerings in language learning. The two most appealing options are the DILS model (Directed Independent Language Study), where a small group of students directs their own language study, utilizing various online resources and meeting with a

(cont. on p. 4)

Faculty Spotlight: Helga Luthers (cont.)

language partner for support, and the partnership model, where our students would be able to register for online language classes at other institutions. A third option would be a hybrid of these two, where our students would register for online courses at other institutions, but meet with a language partner at CU for support.

You are the coordinator of the Nordic Film Series. What are some of your favorite Nordic films?

When you work in the field of Nordic cinema, you are bound to find yourself tangled in discussions

on the meaning of national cinema, minor cinema, indigenous cinema, international audience, advertising, and distribution. Questions of loyalties, sponsorship and politics pile up and make you almost feel like a traitor for mentioning one film rather than the next. That said, I love Jacob Grønlykke's *Heart of Light* (1998) for its unflinching look at Greenlandic reality, mixed with subtle supernatural elements and celebration of tradition. Nils Gaup has long fascinated me with his celebration of Sami culture in *The Pathfinder* (1987), which he revisits in *The Kautokeino Rebellion* (2008), asking powerful ques-

tions about memory, identity, and the colonial condition. *Elling* (Petter Næss, 2008) and *The Man without a Past* (Aki Kaurismäki, 2002) always make the list, as does Friðrik Þór Friðrikson's *Cold Fever* (1998). However, if I have to pick a favorite it would be the first Dogme95 film, Thomas Vinterberg's *The Celebration* (1998). The depth of Vinterberg's characters, his unflinching eye, the superb control of action in a setting that in itself defies the very concept makes me return to this film again and again and always see something new, and that, I believe, is the hallmark of good cinema.

Faculty Books

Associate Professor Mark Leiderman (pen name: Mark Lipovetsky) published two books in spring 2011. *Charms of the Cynical Reason: The Trickster's Transformation in Soviet and Post-Soviet Culture* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2011) examines the popularity of various trickster figures in Soviet culture and in the post-Soviet era. Among the literary and cinematic tricksters he analyzes are Ostap Bender, Buratino, Vasilii Tyorkin, Shtirlitz and others. As Prof. Kevin Platt of the University of Pennsylvania notes of the book, Prof.

Leiderman's "erudition is vast, his critical acumen is impressive, and his writing is superbly nuanced and exciting. In short, this is a remarkable addition to scholarship."

Prof. Leiderman co-edited the volume *50 Writers: An Anthology of 20th Century Russian Short Stories* (Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2011) with Valentina Brougher and Frank Miller. The 789-page book contains stories from every decade of the twentieth century and representing major twentieth-century themes and approaches.

Authors in the volume include officially recognized writers and dissidents, as well as new authors from the post-Soviet era. As reviewer Eliot Borenstein (New York University) says of the volume, "I've seen many English-language anthologies of Russian literature, but this is the first one that I want to give to all my non-specialist friends, so that they can finally understand what is so wonderful about modern Russian literature."

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