

## Michael Bryant - Academic and Pedagogical Foci

To the degree that nearly all collective memories are influenced by a multitude of individual experiences coalescing into a single (sometimes misrepresentative) ethos, the perception of Germany has attained its current form because individual people - German citizens and foreign travelers alike - have experienced the culture and its representative sites firsthand and have contributed their encounters to the collective experience. If, as Claude Levi-Strauss says, culture “can be considered as a combination of symbolic systems...which express certain aspects of reality,”<sup>1</sup> then it seems worthwhile to examine the secular process of site sacralization and the prominence of these sites in Germany’s modern-day symbolic system.

In my research I plan to investigate the ways in which local institutions such as the tourism industry are complicit in the collective construction of German culture. Likewise, I plan to incorporate an examination of the Non-Place and its role in modifying and amplifying daily routines and how human interaction taking place within the Non-Place creates new perceptions of people and place. I’m interested to find out how Place, Non-Place, tourism, and the search for the authentic through tourism encourage non-Germans to construct their own versions of what Germany once was and currently is, as well as how these impressions about certain aspects of German national identity confirm and/or contradict reality.

In addition to my own academic research, I also take particular pride in my role as Associate Instructor in the Department of Germanic Studies. I engage with some of my colleagues in monthly colloquia focusing on current research in Second Language Pedagogy, and I constantly reflect on the efficacy of my methodological approach so that I can provide my students with the best possible the learning experience. My five years of experience teaching German at the high school level and leading professional development initiatives, coupled with the opportunity to learn from the teaching innovations coming out of our graduate-level pedagogy courses and our Associate Instructors’ classes, I feel confident that I will continue to create a top-quality learning environment in our department’s language classrooms.

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<sup>1</sup> Levi-Strauss, Claude. Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss. (Cited in: Augé, Marc. In the Métro. transl. Tom Conley. The University of Minnesota Press. 2002.)