

HISTORICAL NOTES ON THE DEPARTMENT OF GERMANIC STUDIES  
INDIANA UNIVERSITY, BLOOMINGTON

Centennial Celebration, 17 - 19 October 1986

The Department of German at Indiana University was founded 9 Nov. 1885 and began its operation in September 1886. Prof. Hans Carl Gunther von Jagemann was the unanimous choice to chair this department created out of the Department of Modern Languages and to receive a salary of \$1500 per year for his labors. Although German had been taught at the University since its inception, the baccalaureate degree in German was now officially instituted. And, in 1886, the first M.A. was granted to William W. Spangler, whose thesis was "The Genealogy of Andrew Weyer, founder of the Weyer family in America." (This was already "German Studies" -- hardly a 20th century concept!)

Information about von Jagemann is scarce for he left the Department in 1889 to go to Harvard. Prof. Gustaf Karsten assumed the Departmental helm in that year and remained there until 1903. The Department grew in importance and size under his leadership -- in 1893, ten of IU's seniors were German majors and of the 400 students attending the university in that year, 155 were enrolled in German courses, which "perhaps [was] the largest number in any one department except that of the English Department" (Indiana Student, 5 Dec. 1893).

The course of study was arranged much as it is today: the first two years were devoted almost exclusively to language acquisition and the last two years to literature and civilization -- the study of which was "to give a fair development of the life, customs, and writings of the people" (ibid). Seniors and postgraduates were to be given "a correct view of the language" in order to realize that "Language is a great branch of nature" (ibid).

That the linguistic aspect was so emphasized is not surprising. The reasons are two-fold.

- 1) The stated purpose of the German Department at the turn of the century was "to prepare teachers to present this subject in common and elementary schools, or to give elementary instruction in higher institutions" (ibid). Indiana residents of the 1980's must realize that German was the Muttersprache of many Hoosiers a century ago. The State of Indiana was the seventh in the nation to institute German as a foreign language in high schools (1867) and, in 1907, a state law was passed making German a requirement in high school.

In fact, many elementary schools offered seven years of German -- making German high school instruction a delicate balance between beginning and quite advanced language instruction.

2) Most, if not all, German Department instructional staff was trained in philology. Consider Dr. Karsten who received his Ph.D. at Freiburg in 1883, taught Germanic and Romance Philology in Geneva before coming to IU in 1886 and published predominantly in the field of linguistics, for example: The History of the Old French Consonants and "Paul's Principien der Sprachgeschichte." It was Dr. Karsten who, in 1897, founded the Journal of Germanic Philology (now the Journal of English and Germanic Philology).

Or, in this context, consider Dr. B.J. Vos, who was the Departmental Chairman for 30 years (1907 -1937). His book, Essentials of German went through seven editions, and became the standard high school textbook for years. From a review of the sixth edition, we learn the methodology which Dr. Vos helped standardize:

Unperturbed by recent beginners' books that commence each lesson with a short German reading selection in which the new grammatical difficulties stand out in bold-faced type and are then treated systematically in the subsequent paragraphs (the so-called inductive method), Dr. Vos, as in the first edition, begins each new lesson with several paragraphs of rules and paradigms. Then come German sentences illustrating the rules, followed by anecdotes or stories in connected German, and finally brief drill exercises of various types, and a minimum of English sentences to be translated into German. Professor Vos's procedure has much to commend it. Not infrequently a teacher using one of the new-fangled textbooks has to explain the grammatical paragraphs before the students can read the German passage intelligently.

(IU Alumni Quarterly, Fall 1936, p.466)

Instruction of modern foreign languages had long centered on the acquisition of a solid reading knowledge rather than oral and written ability and this was, indeed, the thrust of the German Department's offering. Of 38 courses offered in the Spring of 1924, 23 were first and second year language courses -- some entitled "Rapid Reading" and others ear-marked solely for science and medicine majors.

Yet literature was by no means slighted. The Department's first Ph.D. was granted in 1915 to E.O. Wooley, whose dissertation was entitled "The Sphere of Music and Musical

Terms in Goethe's Lyric Poems." (The first of much scholarly research on music and German literature produced by Departmental faculty.) The number of course offerings in literature slowly increased despite the tremendous set-back suffered by the Department during World War I. Effective 9 Jan. 1919, Indiana's elementary and secondary schools were forbidden by the General Assembly to teach the German language. In fact, teachers of all disciplines were required to sign a contract containing the clause: "Any of the following shall be considered sufficient grounds for the termination of this contract: any actions, statements or connections with others which contribute to the support of or admiration for the German Kaiser, the existing government or the culture of Germany" (Ellis, Frances H. "Aufschwung und Ende des Deutschunterrichts in Indianapolis", Bildung und Erziehung 5, May 1957, p. 305).  
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Although the law did not pertain to Indiana University directly, the implications of the study of German were clear and were manifested in 1919/1920 course offerings of the German Department: 8 courses were offered in the Fall Semester as compared to 34 in 1915. But, as proof of the value of the subject and the quality of the Department, the number had, by 1924, risen again to 32 and the faculty was close to its original strong complement. The literature core once again contained such courses as "Goethe's Faust," "Modern Drama," "Poetry and Prose." Increases in the graduate course offerings are also to be recorded: "History of Literature," "Goethe," "Middle High German," "Heine," and "German Literature from Humanism to Gottsched" (examples from 1931).

"The German Department...strives to educate teachers, not just instructors of German but rather true German teachers, who have been permeated by the German Geist and in whose hearts is founded the steadfast love of all things German" (Vereinszeitung, I, 1914). \*2

This quotation from 1914 from the German Department's own Vereinszeitung seems to embody an underlying attitude and commitment of the Department throughout the years. Hand in hand with the concern for a thorough knowledge of the language and literature was the Department's realization that such must be complemented by a study of the culture of which the language and literature are expressions. This concern is reflected in a course which the Department had already offered for many years with much success -- "Deutschland und die Deutschen". Both the expertise of the German Department's faculty in the teaching of culture and the overall quality of Indiana University's curriculum led to the creation of a German Language and Area Program in 1943. At its inception, this Program existed for the benefit of the cadets in the U.S. Army Specialized Training



Program who were, it was assumed, to occupy the conquered Germany. The purpose of this Program, reported in August 1945 by Horst Frenz and Robert Ittner, was:

to familiarize certain members of the Armed Forces with the German area at the same time they were being taught the German language. This instruction was supposed to approach actual life situations within Germany...[and to train cadets] for intelligent observations of foreign conditions. The goal then, was that after nine months of intensive training...the student should have accumulated as much factual knowledge and analyzing ability as he would need in order to read a local newspaper, from the editorials to the advertisements, without great difficulty, with a reasonable understanding of the political, social, and economic problems involved, and with a measure of independent judgment (IU Newsletter, XXXIII, Aug. 1945, p.1).

This first interdisciplinary German culture studies program called upon faculty from many different disciplines: Fine Arts, English, French, Business, Economics, Zoology (!), and Government. As the organizers of this Program soon learned, no textbook existed which adequately covered all topics necessary for instruction and consequently one was compiled which suited their needs. Furthermore, much original research had to be done since most academic publications did not deal with information necessary for "many of the students [who] would be stationed in small communities and come into contact with the life of the towns and small cities rather than be in a position to shape the policies of the whole country" (ibid, p.3).

The German Language and Area Program continued for almost three decades as part of the German Department curriculum, albeit with a slightly different composition and target audience, as evidence of the academic interest in the field of cultural studies. In 1968, with a grant from the Volkswagen Foundation, the Institute of German Studies was born. With major extramural funding, the Institute has sponsored international conferences in Bloomington, published a variety of teaching and research materials, and (for the last five years) has sponsored the unique Year-Long Seminar in German Studies.

What was the Department of German became the Department of Germanic Languages and Literature in 1965 and, in 1982, once again changed its name to reflect the research and training it provides to the field of Germanistik. The Department of Germanic Studies of 1986 has 21 faculty members, 26 Associate Instructors, 25 other graduate students, and 66 undergraduate majors. In the 1986 Fall Semester, it has a total student enrollment of 1,470

in its language, literature, linguistics and culture studies courses.

Offering Norwegian as early as its first year of operation in 1886, the Department has continued to provide instruction in the less widely-spoken Germanic languages -- Swedish, Danish and Dutch. In 1987, after an absence of several decades, Norwegian will once again be introduced into the curriculum. To meet the demands of the next century, the Department draws upon its strengths of its past and it is these first one hundred years which are being celebrated this weekend.

Kirstine Lindemann  
September 1986

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"daß jede Handlung, Äusserung oder Verbindung mit anderen seitens der besagten Lehrkraft zu dem Zwecke, mitzuhelfen in der Unterstützung oder Bewunderung für den deutschen Kaiser, die bestehende Regierung oder die Kultur Deutschlands, ein ausreichender Grund für die Beendigung dieses Vertrages sein soll."

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"Die deutsche Abteilung...strebt darnach, Lehrer zu erziehen, die nicht nur Deutsch unterrichten, sondern wahre deutsche Lehrer, die vom deutschen Geist durchdrungen sind, in deren Herzen die Liebe zur deutschen Sache fest gegründet ist..."