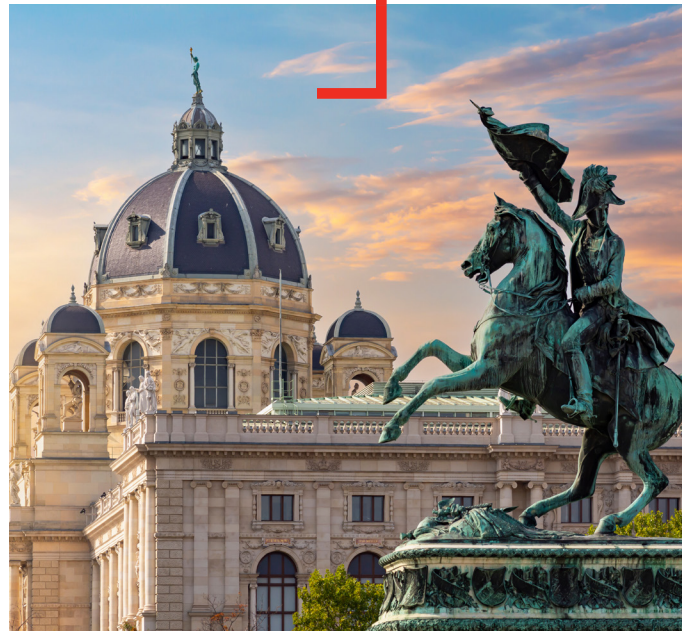




DEPARTMENT OF  
GERMANIC LANGUAGES  
AND LITERATURES

NEWSLETTER  
FALL 2025



[lsa.umich.edu/german](https://lsa.umich.edu/german)

# LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



## Dear friends,

Fall is in the air and the days are turning golden. We have resumed our routines and welcomed back students, heartened by their curiosity and

excitement even in the face of the ongoing assault on higher education in this country. And so I'm reminded, as summer comes to an end, of the words with which LSA Dean Rosario Ceballo celebrated our graduating students back in May: She called on them to "become ambassadors for this incredible education that is now a part of you. When you hear attacks on the principles that underpin our institution — academic freedom, freedom of speech, our system of democracy — I encourage you to remember the powerful education that you received here."

As they have in the past, our department's offerings have again contributed mightily to the College's educational mission and practice. In a room filled with happy graduates, their friends and families, we celebrated 90 German majors and minors and two Dutch minors (p. 9). We were delighted to see a few more German graduates than last year and the very first students completing the newly instituted Dutch minor.

To mark this historic moment Annemarie Toeboosch, Director of Dutch Studies, addressed the graduates in a moving speech that laid out the minor's unique curricular principles. Based in critical historical inquiry and decolonial language pedagogy – and thanks to the expertise of Denice Gravenstijn – the program includes lessons in Sranan Tongo, the lingua franca of Suriname. To celebrate the 50th anniversary of Suriname independence from Dutch colonial rule, Dr. Shanti Venetiaan, Chair of the Board of the Anton de Kom

University of Suriname, will deliver the 25th DeVries-VanderKooy Memorial Lecture on October 1, 2025. Please join us if you can!

Johanna Ericksson, Director of Scandinavian Studies, continued a long-standing tradition and took all students enrolled in second-year Swedish to Stockholm during Spring Break. They conversed with Swedish peers, took in the beautiful vistas of Sweden's capital, and came back inspired to continue their studies.

As a department of languages and cultures, we continue to build bridges – across the Atlantic as well as across fields of knowledge. We do so in the classroom but also through extensive (peer) mentorship, our donor supported study abroad and internship programs, the Max Kade House community, and the honors program. This year, we celebrated two students who completed substantial, interdisciplinary honors theses that were inspired by their study abroad experiences (p. 9).

Our graduate students garnered competitive recognition and three of them will be residing in Germany during this academic year for dissertation work. They will be supported by the Berlin Program for Advanced German and European Studies (Luci Cook; see also p. 6), Fulbright (Laura Stahl), and the Sturm FU Berlin Exchange Fellowship (Sarah Lime). Veronica Williamson, one of their peers who already returned from a year in Berlin, has branched out to join the Inclusive History Project, showcasing the range of our graduate students' involvement across the University (p. 7).

Even as we reach across the Atlantic in these and other ways, we also continue to deepen our bonds locally with language programs at Michigan public schools. Thanks to the indefatigable effort of Stacy Swennes and a fabulous keynote by Sylvia Grzeskowiak,

German Day 2025 was a roaring success (p.12). It brought to campus more than 600 students who engaged in competitions around "Alles über Österreich." To underscore GLL's connections to Austria, Scott Spector, whose research centers on the Habsburg Empire and Jewish European cultural history, interviewed emeritus Professor Ingo Seidler who has been residing in Vienna since his retirement (p.5).

Last but not least, I'd like to share the very happy news with you that this Fall, we will be welcoming a new colleague, Assistant Professor Ella Wilhelm (p. 3). A scholar of Romanticism, Dr. Wilhelm researches the literature, philosophy, and art around 1800 and brings them to bear on two areas of interdisciplinary inquiry: Media Studies and Environmental Studies.

As we embark on a new academic year here in Ann Arbor, I send along some of our campus's pulsing September energy. We'd enjoy the opportunity to reconnect. Please stay in touch!

Warmly,

Kerstin Barndt

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                             |     |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Letter from the Chair       | 2   |
| Highlights                  | 3   |
| Faculty Focus               | 4   |
| Staying Connected           | 5   |
| Graduate Student Focus      | 6-7 |
| In the Classroom            | 8   |
| Undergraduate Student Focus | 9   |
| Dutch Studies               | 10  |
| Scandinavian Studies        | 11  |

# HIGHLIGHTS

## Worldmaking, Media, and New Perspectives with Ella Wilhelm

Johannes von Moltke, Rudolf Arnheim Collegiate Professor of German Studies and Film, Media & Television

This fall, the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures is delighted to welcome Ella Wilhelm as a new Assistant Professor of German Studies. Ella earned her PhD with research on German Romanticism, focusing on literature, visual art, and the intersections of media and cultural history. Her work engages with questions of poetic worldmaking, ecology, and the history of the university as an institution. To introduce Ella to our community, Johannes von Moltke sat down with her to discuss her journey, research, and what she looks forward to at Michigan.

**Johannes von Moltke (JvM):** *Ella, you'll be joining the German Studies faculty as an Assistant Professor in the Fall. I imagine you're sitting on a packed suitcase as we're talking right now. What will you miss about Chicago, and what excites you about Ann Arbor?*

**Ella Wilhelm (EW):** I'll especially miss the Chicago summer—the access to the lake, spending time outdoors, especially biking everywhere. I love the city and my community here, but I'm also looking forward to Michigan's outdoor culture. We've camped in Michigan often, so I'm eager for more hiking, camping, biking – and getting to know the U-M community and making friends.

**JvM:** *Let us in on what you'll teach next year.*

**EW:** I'm especially looking forward to teaching a course called Planet Earth, which examines how ecology is visually mediated and how that shapes public understanding. We look at early ecology, figures like Alexander von Humboldt and Ernst Haeckel, and discuss how visual regimes from the 19th century shaped ecological science and environmental consciousness. The class will also consider the view of Earth from space as an ecological icon and its symbolic power in environmentalism.

**JvM:** *Your dissertation is on German Romanticism. What drew you to the era, and what discoveries did you make along the way?*

**EW:** I distinctly remember first reading Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802) and finding it both strange and frustrating—everything occurs without conflict but also without causal motivation, creating an impression of a harmonious world. I ended up writing a long chapter on this novel, focusing on what makes this sense of harmony feel so unfounded and inexplicable. My dissertation project more

broadly is focused on how this sort of harmonious effect connects to Romanticism's broader cosmological vision. My claim is that we should understand the broader Romantic project of "universal poetry" as a form of poetic worldmaking.

**JvM:** *As part of your work in Romanticism, you're also interested in media. For many today, "media" are largely linked to technologies (such as telephony, sound recording, film and digital technologies) that postdate the Romantic period. How do you think about media in your work, and which media are central for you?*



Ella Wilhelm

**EW:** My research focuses on literature and visual art in German Romanticism, but I'm fascinated by how Romantic ideas about these artistic media prefigure modern technological media. Around 1800, "media" often referred to the elemental substances that make up the world, which were used at the time to theorize how artistic media worked. I'm exploring how this "elemental" notion of media bridges the natural and cultural, opening up a space for thinking of artistic media as technological ways of transforming the world.

**JvM:** *I know you're interested in the history of the University as an institution – which seems particularly relevant in light of the current attack on higher education in the US. Could you talk about how this interest relates to your work in the German 19th century, and how that might connect in turn to our present situation?*

**EW:** Years ago, I became interested in the influence of thinkers like Schleiermacher, Fichte, and Schelling and their ideas about universal education on the educational and research mission of American universities. In particular, these figures, who helped found the Humboldt University of Berlin in the nineteenth century, are often still upheld by universities as models for how we should think about freedom of inquiry and expression. I hope to engage students and colleagues in thinking critically about whether and how these ideas could be useful – or not – for addressing current critiques of the university from both the left (e.g. critical university studies) and from the right.

**JvM:** *Thank you for the interview. I think I can speak on behalf of everyone in the department when I say that we're all looking forward to continuing these conversations in person this fall!*

# FACULTY FOCUS

## Kristin Dickinson Receives John D'Arms Faculty Award

Kerstin Barndt, Chair, Associate Professor



Kristin Dickinson

graduate education at U-M. Her teaching, mentoring, and advocacy have touched so many graduate students' lives in German Studies and beyond. Not even a decade into her U-M career, and a mere three years after receiving tenure, Kristin has already served on an unusually large number of PhD committees

We congratulate Associate Professor Kristin Dickinson for receiving the Rackham Graduate School's John D'Arms Faculty Award for Distinguished Graduate Mentoring in the Humanities. With this award, Rackham recognizes Kristin's dedication and commitment to

across the disciplines in the Humanities, including GLL, Comparative Literature, English, Slavic, History of Art, Middle East Studies, and History. Her expertise in German and Turkish literature and visual culture, migration and translation studies, and her public humanities projects have opened new critical perspectives and skill sets to graduate students. In their testimonies, Kristin's students highlighted the immense breadth of her scholarship, and the generosity of her teaching and advice: "She passes on her multidisciplinary expertise enthusiastically and unassumingly, ensuring her mentees grow academically and personally." Kristin's commitments help ensure a bright future for German Studies – in her students and through her own generative scholarship. I was incredibly fortunate to be able to work with Kristin as director of graduate studies during my first year as Chair and I look forward to many more years of collegiality and shared scholarly commitments.

## Jon Cho-Polizzi and Alumna Ela Gezen Launch German Literatures in (Post)Migration

Tyler Sanders, Marketing & Communications Specialist, Germanic Languages & Literatures

Assistant Professor of German Jon Cho-Polizzi is teaming up with Ela Gezen, Professor of German at UMass Amherst and a 2012 U-M PhD alum, to co-edit a new Palgrave Macmillan book series, *German Literatures in (Post)Migration*. The series was announced in February 2025 and will be published by Springer Nature's Palgrave imprint.

The series focuses on literatures in postmigration across twentieth- and twenty-first-century Germany. It welcomes work that examines how movement and mobility reshape literary institutions and practices in the German-speaking world, with attention to transtextual relationships, multilingual and multimedia forms, anti-racist interventions, and evolving methods of literary analysis. In addition to monographs and edited volumes, the editors invite translations and shorter "Palgrave Pivot" projects that expand and challenge conventional boundaries of literary research.

Cho-Polizzi's own scholarship centers on contemporary literature, literary translation, and questions of migration and multilingualism—areas directly aligned with the series' mission to bridge authorship and scholarship and to foreground translation as both theory and practice.

An international editorial board underscores the series' scope, with scholars from institutions such as Dartmouth, UCLA, Emory, Michigan State, and the University of Cambridge contributing expertise. Together, the editors aim to foster new conversations about how literature registers and reimagines the social and aesthetic realities of migration in German-language contexts.



Jon Cho-Polizzi

# STAYING CONNECTED

## Ingo Seidler's Vienna

Scott Spector, Rudolf Mrázek Collegiate Professor of History and German Studies

Some of our alumni and faculty will remember Ingo Seidler, who was a professor here in the German Department for 40 years, starting as an instructor at Michigan in 1957. This October, Ingo will turn 97 years old. As someone who has remained in touch with him over these decades, I thought it was about time to use these pages to celebrate this great colleague's birthday.

When I began as an assistant professor in 1994, Ingo was beginning to wrap up his long years of teaching. As a young scholar trained in cultural history rather than in traditional Germanistik, I did not know if I could expect members of the "old guard" of the department to relate to my interests and work, and so after my talk I was thrilled to have a long and engaging conversation with Ingo about Franz Kafka. My experience that year affirmed what our then-new Chair Fred Amrine wrote about Ingo in the wake of his retirement: Professor Seidler enjoyed high regard "for his erudition, theoretical sophistication, political conscience, gentle irony, and, not least, his personal warmth and friendship."



Ingo Seidler in Vienna, 2024

Already during his studies at Cornell in 1951, the directions of Ingo's intellectual life have always more closely approached those of the department we were to become in the twenty-first century more than the mid-century idea of German literary studies. Connecting philosophy, literary theory, and literature was central to his approach. Even the writers he focused on anticipated later trends in our field: philosophers Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger, Nobel Prize-winner Elias Canetti, and the pathbreaking Socialist playwright Bertolt Brecht, at the time rarely considered part of great modern German literature. As an intellectual and purveyor of world culture, Ingo has always been nothing if not broad and visionary.

Ingo told me early on that he wanted to move to Vienna for retirement, but he had to do some research before being sure that it was practical. It was more than practical, as it turned out. He took a one-bedroom apartment in one of Vienna's outer districts, in which he still lives, some thirty years later. For the many years I have been returning to Vienna for summer research and a few longer research stays, I met with Ingo many times. Typically we would meet for a meal and a concert or other performance, sometimes a museum exhibition. Arriving at the box office directly before a performance, the personnel at the Abendkasse at Vienna's many concert venues all seemed to recognize him—he was constantly attending cultural events. We had many walks through the central city before or after these entertainments, and enjoyed many a glass of good wine. Sometimes I sent a card or was lucky enough to receive one—one time from India. Ingo has been a friend for a long time, but he is also a model for me of the good life a cultivated person can have for decades after retirement from an institution like this one. Happy birthday, Ingo.



## In Memoriam: Gerhard "Gerry" Dünnhaupt

The department mourns Professor Gerhard "Gerry" Dünnhaupt (1927-2024), a preeminent bibliographer of early modern German literature and a beloved colleague. He joined U-M in 1976, became full professor, and taught German and Comparative Literature until retiring in 1992; the Regents named him emeritus in 1993. At Michigan, he organized the 1983 Martin Luther Quincentennial Conference and edited the proceedings, *The Martin Luther Quincentennial* (1985). His landmark works include *Bibliographisches Handbuch der Barockliteratur* and *Personalbibliographien zu den Drucken des Barock*. Remembered for his generosity and discipline, he died November 17, 2024, in Toronto. We honor his enduring impact on our community.

# GRADUATE STUDENT FOCUS

## Luci Cook Wins 2025 Frank Braun Prize, Sets Course for Berlin

Hartmut Rastalsky, Teaching Professor, Director of the German Language Program



Luci Cook

This year's winner of the \$1,200 Frank Braun Prize for the Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor in the German department is Luci Cook. All of Luci's teaching has been outstanding, but the highlight is the fourth semester course designed and taught by Luci in Winter 2025, on 1960s Countercultures in Film, Music, and Literature. The course looks at this

turbulent time from a wide range of perspectives, and incorporated multiple guest lectures and class visits, by professors, graduate students, and even Luci's family members. Students engaged in innovative class activities and writing tasks throughout the semester, and did archival research in the library's Special Collections, where they chose an object or text to work with throughout the semester. Luci's syllabus tells

students: "you will be the first scholars to interact with these materials since they arrived at UofM in the spring of 2023—and likely the first in decades, maybe ever!!" I was able to visit this class, and to see the community students had formed, and feel the joy and energy in the room. It felt like the positive ideals of the 1960s coming to life in our 2025 world.

Luci will be spending the 2025/26 academic year in Berlin as part of the Berlin Program for Advanced German and European Studies at the Freie Universität. In addition to doing archival research and dissertation writing, they will also participate in the Berlin Program's research colloquium. Conducted in German, the colloquium facilitates cultural and academic immersion as doctoral and postdoctoral fellows present and discuss their ongoing work in a transnational and interdisciplinary environment. Luci will also be participating in Prof. Dr. Ethel Matala de Mazza's colloquium on the 'Political Imaginary' at the Department of German Literature at Humboldt Universität.

## Dissertation Spotlight



**Onyx C** successfully defended the dissertation "Playing in the Dark of German-Language Children's and Youth Literature (1950s–70s)", a project that examines how postwar German-language books for young readers depicted Blackness and Black childhood across the long 1960s. Building on Onyx's long-standing research focus on Afro-German representation in youth literature, the defense sparked a lively discussion about how this work might inspire future writing for children. We look forward to celebrating Onyx at Commencement.



**Elizabeth Sokol** successfully defended "Intersections of Surrealism, Ethnography, and Theater: Intermedial Experimentation in the Works of Ilse Schneider-Lengyel, 1934-1956." Her project traces Schneider-Lengyel's work across photography, poetry, and radio to rethink representation in mid-century Germany. We congratulate Elizabeth on a forthcoming publication and her admission to Chicago-Kent College of Law.

# GRADUATE STUDENT FOCUS

## Bridging Archives and Identity: Researching Michigan's Inclusive History

Veronica Cook Williamson, PhD candidate, German Studies

Monday morning: I sit in the Bentley Historical Library scouring archival documents about a 1970s court case in which former student Paul Johnson sued the Regents for not upholding the treaty right of free education for Ojibwe, Odawa, and Bodéwadmi students. Tuesday morning: I stand at the front of the classroom as a teaching assistant. We discuss May Ayim's poem *entfernte verbindungen* (distant ties) and consider the shifting state of the lyrical I; its formal qualities; and what it might mean to be "daheim unterwegs" ("on the road at home").

Why, you might be wondering, as a Germanist, did my week begin researching American history in the Bentley? The answer: The Inclusive History Project (IHP), a university-wide research project I got involved in after taking an affiliated research seminar. For me, understanding the history of the region I live in is part of a sustained and holistic consideration of what it means to live decolonially while working in the field of German Studies at a North American institution. My research with the IHP has helped me understand the origins of the University of Michigan and its continued relevance to the region today. In particular, it taught me about its fundamental role facilitating and shaping settler presence in the old Northwest. Understanding this history and its lingering aftereffects are what it means to be an engaged community member at U-M, regardless of my primary discipline.

While working with the IHP, I've researched topics spanning the University's tenure in the region: I've transcribed materials relating treaties from the 1830s; delved into the evolution of the honor-turned-secret society Michigamua; and analyzed Michigan Daily articles relating to protests at the Michigan Union in the early 2000s. Whereas my dissertation focuses almost exclusively on material from after 2004, turning to earlier time periods required learning methodologies new to me—ones that cast a wider net as I looked for any references or contextualizing information that might prove informative.

For example, due to the ways that archiving and collecting have been historically structured, archives typically have a high volume of materials from former colonial administrators but very few written and preserved oral materials on Native peoples navigating these treaty processes and forced removal. Due to this, there are very few collections that exist that provide insight into how Native or mixed-race families navigated treaties relating directly to lands in Ann Arbor, Dearborn, or Flint in the 1800s. The Clements Historical Library, however, holds 12 linear feet of material relating to Lucius Lyon, who was a United States representative and senator from Michigan, and surveyor general in the region during the 1830s. This includes materials from the 1837 Treaty of St. Peters (the Treaty with the Chippewa or the White Pine Treaty), which relates mostly to land in present-day Minnesota, Northern Michigan, and Wisconsin. Buried in the middle is a remarkable cache of materials documenting Native and mixed-race families who were trying to navigate the system emerging around them. These documents include hundreds of testimonies submitted as part of the claims process to receive treaty rights.

These testimonies provide a unique glimpse into the histories of prominent Native and mixed-race families in the broader region, and they serve as rich and detailed case studies into the granular details of how treaty stipulations were adjudicated, including the lines of argumentation that claimants made and the counter arguments that Lucius Lyon and the other Indian agents were making when admitting or rejecting them. Again, since preserved first and second-hand accounts of Native individuals from the 1800s are rare, these claims carry significant importance for our understanding of southeastern Michigan despite relating on face value mostly to regions further North. Working with the IHP, I was able to consider how one navigates an archive that will only ever be partial and how one might think creatively about understanding our collective history.



Plaque on the Ann Arbor central campus commemorating the land transfer from some of the "Ojibwa (Chippewa), Odawa (Ottawa), and Bodewadimi (Potawatomi)" people of Michigan.

# IN THE CLASSROOM

## Bridging Cultures Through Music and Language

Kerstin Barndt, Chair, Associate Professor



This summer, 300 student musicians of the University of Michigan Marching Band (MMB) embarked on a concert tour through Germany, Austria, and

France. Along the way, they stopped in Munich and Freiburg, in Ettenheim in the Black Forest, in the Bavarian towns of Kempten and Aitrang, in Strasbourg, France, and amid the Austrian Alps in Salzburg and Schladming. In Ettenheim, the Michigan Marching Band's outdoor concert on the city's baroque center square left a lasting impression with locals (see photos). A concert review in a local newspaper praised the band's musicality and stylistic variety as "extraordinary" and noted the visual spectacle of the choreography. In Aitrang, the band performed together with the Bavarian Police orchestra, and in Schladming, student musicians participated in the Mid-Europe Festival with many other international and Austrian bands. During their spare time away from their instruments, students hiked in the Alps, explored cityscapes, and deepened their knowledge of German and Austrian history and culture through museum visits, including a tour of Dachau's Concentration Camp Memorial.

When Marching Band Director, John D. Pasquale, reached out to our department to ask if we could help prepare

band members for the tour, we gladly obliged and offered two weekend seminars to all students who had signed up for the tour. Furthermore, the Marching Band's European excursion inspired Silvia Grzeskowiak to design an introductory mini-course with a focus on basic language acquisition and the cultures of German-speaking Europe, "Survival German for Travelers." The course was a great success, attracting not only Marching Band students but also generating interest beyond the ensemble. Looking ahead, we hope to reach students whose travels or studies take them to German-speaking Europe, especially those whose schedules may not allow them to enroll in our other language courses. Perhaps, we'll even see some of U-M's football players in the course so that they'll be able to make the best of next year's tentatively planned season opener in Frankfurt a.M.

Lukas and Philip Schaefer, two brothers and MMB members who are pursuing dual degrees in German while also taking pre-med and kinesiology classes, stressed the experiential dimension of the tour: here they were walking through the streets of Freiburg and Munich, building "upon [...] knowledge of the German culture and language [...] developed through courses here at U-M." They were excited to see audiences connect with them, "especially when we performed German 'traditional' songs such as the Bayerische Defilermarsch and the Radetzky March." Philip added that the most amazing impression of the tour, though, was the show in Schladming in the Austrian alps: "Having the privilege of playing my instrument in such a scenic location could not have been more fun!"



Scenes from the University of Michigan Marching Band July 1 performance day in Ettenheim. Photos courtesy of The University of Michigan Marching Band, via Facebook.

# UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT FOCUS

## Congratulations to our 2025 Graduates!

Tyler Sanders, Marketing & Communications Specialist, Germanic Languages & Literatures

On Friday, May 2, 2025, the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures celebrated our students, their hard work, and many accomplishments in a graduation ceremony in the Michigan League Ballroom. The ceremony included a warm welcome and remarks from Department Chair, Kerstin Barndt, and included a recognition of the graduates and award winners by our department. A big thank you to graduates, their friends and families, and to all of the Germanic Languages and Literatures faculty and staff who helped to create a wonderful, lasting memory!

### UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES IN DUTCH STUDIES

Gigi DeJong

Jessica Maisonneuve

*Minors*

### UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES IN GERMAN STUDIES

Charles Alford IV  
Elisabeth Baumann  
Landon Butcher  
Ashley Cann  
Griffin Christie  
Reid Davis  
Eric Derr  
Regina Duerst  
Jacob Firby  
Seth Fox  
Maria Garcia Rivera  
Matthew Greenbaum  
Collin Gregersen

Valentin Heinemann  
Lily Herman  
Dylan Johnson  
Kaylee Johnson  
Ryan Kendra  
Periinkle Kietzman  
Jinju Kim  
Logan Lanfersieck  
Pedro Lapagesse  
Connor Lee  
Sophia MacKinnon  
Sophie Mazure  
Ellen Meurer

Nicholas Nedzesky  
David Nemmert  
Maja Pechanach  
Selina Rey  
Nathaniel Ritz  
Martha Schaller  
Jonas Seerveld  
Ilyana Smith  
Jamie Stout  
Mia Swart  
Rachel Toma  
George Van Der Venet  
Andrea Vargass Cabrera

*Minors*

Stefan Blazen

Jorja Wegryn-Jones

*Honors Students*

Jacqueline Anthenien  
Andrew Armstrong  
John Ballard  
Abigail Bartley  
Kurt Beyer  
Roxanne Burrows  
Michaela Castle  
Paige Demers  
Aimee Dubuque  
Eleanor Durkee  
Kathryn Ennis  
Elijah Erickson  
Adeline Franz  
Luke Guitar

June Harkrider  
Mia Hedman  
Abigail Jendretzke  
Caroline Kitchen  
Caleb Knoer  
William Knudsen  
Spencer Korengel  
Garrett Kracht  
Anna Ling  
Brianne Lowe  
Lucas Marra  
Jadon Nielsen  
Leah Nielsen  
Samuel Novotny

Ritvik Pasham  
Luke Pauer  
McKendra Perry  
Owen Phillips  
Rebecca Saladin  
Liam Schaefer  
Kathryn Schira  
Mindy Shimon  
Rhiannon Singer  
Cecilia Sobocinski  
Michael Tarcea  
Jonas Tomkin  
Ryan VanderMarkt  
Clara Wolff

*Majors*



German Honors Students



German Minors



German Majors



# DUTCH STUDIES

## Irene Butter Knighted!

Annemarie Toebosch, Teaching Professor and Director of Dutch Studies

After receiving the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany in 2024, it was the Netherlands' turn this year. On March 27 in the residence of Ambassador Birgitta Tazelaar in Washington, D.C., Dr. Irene Butter was decorated in the Order of Knights of Orange Nassau for dedicating her life to Holocaust education. Earlier in the same week, she received the Anne Frank Award, a collaboration by the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Anne Frank House, the Anne Frank Center USA and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

One week after she was knighted, Irene was back in our Anne Frank course, the required culture course in the new Dutch Minor. In a course that finds the links between the Holocaust and colonialism, between antisemitism and racism, she warned students about the dangers of dictatorship and intolerance of all kinds, stressing the enduring need for paths to peace and understanding with the words: "Don't be afraid of those who are different than you. Seek them out!" Well over a thousand students in our program alone have felt the weight of Irene's calls for action and we cannot adequately express our gratitude for her continued dedication to our program and our students. Hartelijk gefeliciteerd, Irene!



Dr. Irene Butter & Annemarie Toebosch

## Dutch graduation: A story of firsts

Annemarie Toebosch, Teaching Professor and Director of Dutch Studies



Denice Gravenstijn, Claire Schafer,  
Gigi DeJong, Jessica Maisonneuve,  
& Annemarie Toebosch

In a **first** for our Dutch program, department, and university, two students have graduated with a Minor in Dutch Language and Culture. Jessica Maisonneuve and Gigi DeJong are the first, and to our knowledge, only students in the world to graduate with a degree in Dutch having learned all three national varieties of the language: Netherlands Dutch, Belgian Dutch (Flemish), and Surinamese Dutch. A third Dutch Minor, Claire Schafer, completed the curriculum with them and will graduate next year.

Jessica's and Gigi's graduations stand as milestones of importance well beyond our program. They are the only students in the world to receive a Dutch degree having learned Surinamese Dutch outside of Suriname. This for sure is something to stop and think about: being the first people on the planet to learn a language as a foreign language.

Jessica and Gigi have learned that Surinamese Dutch cannot be divorced from Sranan Tongo, the adaptable, creative and resilient and English-based lingua franca of Suriname that connects the rich tapestry of Surinamese ethnicities and cultures. They learned to express themselves in both. In the same year that Suriname celebrates 50 years of freedom from the Netherlands, Gigi penned in Sranan Tongo that "Srefidensi was niet fu soso" (Independence was not for nothing). Jessica's poem called out: "Arki bun!" (Pay attention!) while Professor Tiffany Ng, Chair of Organ and University Carillonist, teaches them to play the Surinamese anthem on the Charles Baird Carillon for our campus and for our town to hear.

We were incredibly proud to present our first graduating Minors with sashes in the flag of Suriname. Jessica and Gigi: Hartelijk gefeliciteerd! and thank you for showing the world that colonial repair is possible in Dutch Studies.

# SCANDINAVIAN STUDIES

## Celebrating Scandinavian Arts, Culture, and Community

Johanna Eriksson, Collegiate Lecturer and Teaching Professor, Scandinavian Program Director

Dear Friends of the Scandinavian Program,

As the summer comes to a close, I'd like to share some highlights from the summer, which was immersed in the arts. The National Museum in Stockholm currently has two interesting exhibits: works of the Swedish painter Hanna Hirsch Pauli (1864–1940), and striking pieces by contemporary Swedish artist Ernst Billgren (1957–), ranging from massive oil paintings to just as large copper sculptures. At Waldemarsudde, Swedish and Finnish children's book illustrators are featured, which our second year Swedish students are closely familiar with, from Tove Jansson and Moomin, to contemporary illustrators. In Bästekile on Österlen, a retrospective of late photographer, artist and LGBTQ+ activist Elisabeth Ohlson (1961–2024) is shown, with works from her unforgettable career, including *Ecce Homo* from 1998.

If you happen to travel to Sunne in Värmland, reserve an evening at Västana Teater, a company that specializes in presenting Selma Lagerlöf's works on stage, this year, an adaptation of *Kejsarn av Portugallien*, with stunning costumes, newly composed folk music, and innovative storytelling. Lagerlöf, as many of you know, was the first woman awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1901. Close by, you can also visit Selma's beautiful home, Mårbacka.

In August, SWEA International Sverige Summer Days in Stockholm gathered Swedish women from all over the world at a dinner and ceremony for some very worthy scholarship winners. Here, Dr. Elly Reynolds, OB-GYN who started OperationAid in Ukraine three years ago was honored as "Swedish Woman of the Year" for her humanitarian work, tirelessly assisting with healthcare and youth programs in the country.

During spring break 2025, our second-year students enjoyed the study trip to Stockholm. Highlights included attending the Royal Opera Ballet choreographed by the legendary choreographer and dancer Mats Ek, a tour of the Parliament, several art and history museums, and an English class at Norra Real Gymnasium. Of course, no visit would be complete without sampling Swedish meatballs, having fika every day, hunting for treasures in second-hand stores, and indulging in Swedish candy—a treat that has become a global trend, now wildly popular even in New York.



Current and former U-M Swedish students on Hornsgatan, Södermalm, Stockholm: Melanie Fowles, Kristina Allen, Lily Reed-Nordwall, Ian McDonald, Johanna Eriksson, Andrew Gomes, Susie Reese Owens, Daniel Hult, Nikole Hampton, and Sofia Murad



Historical photo studio at Stockholm City Museum, Melanie Fowler, Reese Owens, Ian McDonald, Lily Reed-Nordwall and Kristina Allen

The Scandinavian Club, led by Max Hafner and Chloe Mitchell, had a fantastic year. Congratulations to Max on his graduation and his upcoming studies at U-M law school. For the coming year, please welcome Reese Owens and Kristina Allen as the new club leaders.

To kick off the fall semester, the Scandinavian Program is co-sponsoring a concert with the Swedish student choir Korgossarna, from Uppsala University Västgöta nation. This 30-member men's chorus will perform together with the University of Michigan Men's Glee Club at First Methodist Church, 120 S. State St., Ann Arbor, on September 27 at 1:30 PM. Sweden's choir tradition will be on full display thanks to co-sponsors Signe Karlström Fund and SWEA Michigan. This event is free—no tickets required.

Finally, we would like to invite you to this year's Raoul Wallenberg Medal and Lecture, featuring author, historian, politician and former Russian political prisoner Vladimir Kara-Murza, on November 4 at 4:30 PM, in Rackham Auditorium.

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## German Day 2025: “Alles über Österreich” Highlights

German Day 2025 returned to the Michigan League on April 11, welcoming hundreds of middle and high school learners from more than twenty schools. Under the theme “Alles über Österreich,” students showcased their German skills through poetry, conversation, skits, music, spelling, and visual art. Projects explored Austrian culture—from Mozart and Klimt to Sisi, Freud, cafés, and the Alps—while U-M undergraduates led games and supported visiting teams. The day closed with the Awards Ceremony and selected performances. Thank you to our teachers, students, and volunteers. German Day 2026 is set for April 10; theme to be announced. Please watch our website for updates.

