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Henry J. Leir Chair Annual Reports

Henry J. Leir Chair (2008-2022)

7-2021

Henry J. Leir Annual Report, 2020-2021

Robert D. Tobin

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Robert Deam Tobin

Leir Chair Report: Highlights of 2020-21

I. Pandemic-Era Pedagogy



In fall 2020, I taught my courses in a “hybrid” format. Students in the Faust course (seen above) met with me once a week in person and once a week online. The First-Year Seminar, “Human Rights and Literature,” was slightly too big to meet at one time in one room. We met online when it was important that everyone be part of the discussion, and otherwise I alternated meeting with one half and then the other. During Intersession, “German-Jewish Culture and Modern Multiculturalism” was online. In the spring, I was co-teaching “The National Imagination” with two colleagues who needed to be online. COVID has spurred me on to rethink and improve my pedagogy. I was able to come up with short, quick assessment mechanisms, such as online forum posts, that made sure everyone was keeping up. Even online, students were able to do a lot of small group work. I also developed my ability to give short online introductory and concluding lectures that helped students understand what the key points of the unit were.

2. #Faust4Now

SPONSORED BY THE HENRY J. LEHR CHAIR
CLARE UNIVERSITY

#Faust4Now

NOVEMBER 14, 2020
ONLINE SYMPOSIUM, ALL TIMES EASTERN
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
REGISTER AT [HTTP://WWW.CLARE.EDU/FAUST4NOW](http://www.clare.edu/faust4now)



Goethe	Thomas Mann
<p>11:00 AM Wendy Nielsen (Montclair State University), "Comments: Doctoral Candidate: The State of Professorship, Love and Science in Goethe's World?"</p>	<p>11:00 AM Tobias Boes (University of Notre Dame), "Doctor Faustus and the 'Widgen' of the German East"</p>
<p>11:30 AM Ruxandra Looft (Iowa State University), "Hans Staden's 'New World,' 'New World' and the Cult of Male Genius?"</p>	<p>11:30 AM Marjorie Perloff (Stanford University), "The 'Turbine' of 'Fiction': 'Tobias Mann,' 'Fulguration,' 'Edie' and the 'Genesis' of 'Dr. Faustus'"</p>
<p>12:00 PM Simon Richter (University of Pennsylvania), "Faust, Free Press, Gender and the Climate Emergency"</p>	<p>12:00 PM Todd Kontje (University of California, San Diego), "The Dark Side of Goethe's 'New World': 'Hated Belations'"</p>

FOR UPDATES SEE: [HTTP://WWW.CLARE.EDU/FAUST4NOW](http://www.clare.edu/faust4now)

An example of rethinking pedagogy took place in my course on Faust. In this course, we read two difficult canonical works, Goethe's *Faust* (both parts 1 and 2) and Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*. Based on my positive experience of reading Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* with a reading group on Twitter, I decided to require students to tweet about the texts as they read, always using the hashtag "Faust4Now."

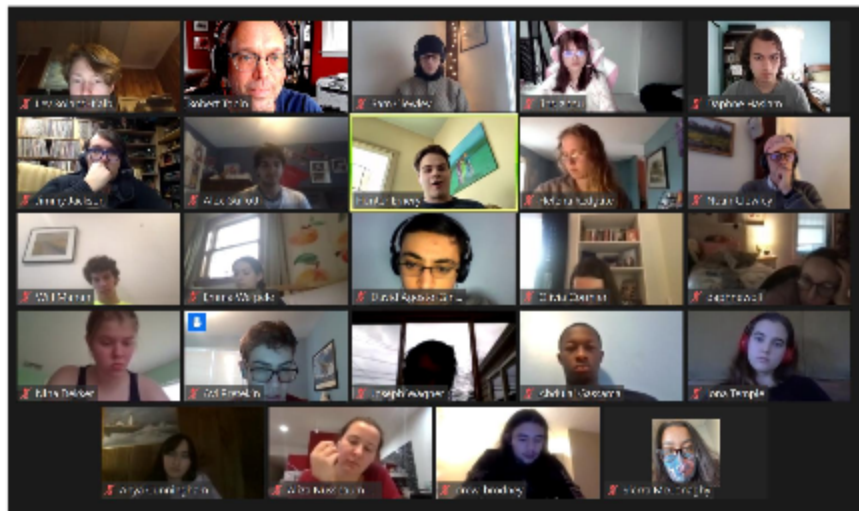
At the end of the semester, we organized a fantastic on-line symposium based on Goethe's and Thomas Mann's Faust stories, with talks by Wendy Nielson (Montclair State University), Ruxandra Looft (Iowa State University), Simon Richter (University of Pennsylvania),

Tobias Boes (Notre Dame University), Marjorie Perloff (Stanford University), and Todd Kontje (University of California, San Diego), on topics such as "motherless creation," "the cult of male genius," "Goethe and the climate emergency," connections between Thomas Mann and H.P. Lovecraft, Thomas Mann's life among the German emigrés in California, and anti-Semitism in his texts. Students stuck with the entire day-long on-line symposium; scholars from as far away as Brazil and Germany also attended.



Left: An example of a student tweet, in this case comparing Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus* to Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*.

3: German-Jewish Culture and Modern Multiculturalism



For my intersession course, “German-Jewish Culture and Modern Multiculturalism,” I was also able to take advantage of the new normal of online talks and bring in an amazing series of speakers, who spoke on a fascinating set of topics:

Liliane Weissberg (University of Pennsylvania): “Benjamin Veitel Ephraim: The Life and Work of Jewish Merchant, Writer, and Spy in Late Eighteenth Century Berlin”

Elisabeth Imber (Clark University): “Theodor Herzl”

Andreas Krass (Humboldt University, Berlin): “Magnus Hirschfeld in Palestine”

Frances Tanzer (Clark University): “The Habsburg Empire and the Jews”

Marc David Baer (London School of Economics): “German, Jew, Muslim, Gay: The Life and Time of Hugo Marcus”

Hana Green (Clark University): “Passing as Aryan: Female Jewish Identity during the Holocaust”

Tiffany N. Florvil (University of New Mexico): “Mobilizing Black Germany: Afro-German Women and the Making of a Transnational Movement”

4. First-Ever Plenary Forum Devoted to Diversity, Equity and Social Justice at the annual conference of the German Studies Association

GSA Forum on Diversity, Equity, and Social Justice
 Add to Google | Outlook | Calendar
 Special Session

[View description](#)

Moderator: *Nivedita Luyar, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

Speakers:

Frans Kocantas
 Dartmouth College

Rei Rheeandrew
 University of Hawaii at Manoa

Ela Dean
 University of Massachusetts Amherst

Rogina Orser
 University of North Carolina Asheville

Harriet Jonigan
 Stanford University

Pran Mehta
 University of British Columbia

Rosemarie Parke
 Rutgers University-Camden

Robert Tobin
 Clark University

I was honored to be included in the first plenary forum on Diversity, Equity, and Social Justice at the annual conference of the German Studies Association in October, 2020, with colleagues from the University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill, Dartmouth College, the University of Hawai'i—Manoa, the University of Massachusetts—Amherst, the University of North Carolina—Asheville, Stanford University, the University of British Columbia, and Rutgers University. Most participants spoke on issues of race, particularly the Afro-German experience, and some about the role of universities and the Native American experience in the United States today. My contributions had to do with my work on LGBTQ+ studies.

5: Eurovision in America



In addition to the talk I gave on Eurovision in Israeli queer films at the Modern Language Association, I was also a leading source for Stephen Norris's documentary, "Euramerica," about Eurovision in America.

<https://filmfreeway.com/Euromerica>

6: Moderating On-Line Discussions between Queer German and American Authors



I was the moderator for two discussions on Queer Literature hosted by the Goethe Institutes of Kansas City and Boston. The Goethe Institute made sure to include diversity above and beyond categories of sexuality. One discussion (pictured above) was between Afro-German author Olivia Wenzel and American activist Sarah Schulman. The other discussion featured Jayrôme Robinet, a transman of French origin who now resides in Berlin, and Kenny Fries, a disabled Jewish gay writer currently completing a book on Nazi Euthanasia programs (pictured below).



7. Julius Evola and the Far Right Today



VIRTUAL ROUNDTABLE

CONFRONTING HATRED: Neo-Nazism, Antisemitism, and Holocaust Studies Today

A SPECIAL ISSUE OF THE JOURNAL OF HOLOCAUST RESEARCH (JHR)

THURSDAY APRIL 29 12:00 PM EST



THURSDAY
APRIL 29
12:00 PM EST

REGISTRATION REQUIRED



My work on the Italian fascist philosopher, Julius Evola, who still provides much of the ideological framework for the far right today, continues to draw attention. In anticipation of the release of a special issue of *The Journal of Holocaust Research* that includes my article, “The Evolian Imagination: Gender, Race, and Class from Fascism to the New Right,” I posted a blog entry and participated in this virtual roundtable on Neo-Nazism, Anti-Semitism, and Holocaust Studies today. We had over a hundred attendees, including at least one of my students from the course on German-Jewish culture. Between this forum and a series of blogposts by the authors, the publishers of this special issue made a real effort to get our scholarship beyond the boundaries of academe.

8: History of Sexual Rights

I published two short pieces on sexuality and human rights, one on the roots of sexual rights in the Enlightenment and one on how even Pompeo’s “Report on Unalienable Rights,” issued under the Trump administration, ultimately endorses sexual rights.

“The Enlightenment Origins of Sexual Human Rights,” *German Quarterly* 93.3 (Summer 2020), pp. 394-396.

“LGBTQ+ Rights after the Report on Unalienable Rights,” *Telos* 193 (Winter 2020): 127-133.

9: Talks at the Modern Language Association

I gave talks on human rights and the Enlightenment and on the importance of the Eurovision Song Contest for gays in Israel at the Modern Language Association annual conference in January, 2021, theoretically in Toronto, but of course actually online:

“Freedom as the Work of Friendship: Sexuality and Human Rights in Alexander von Humboldt’s Thinking”

“Eurovision in Israeli Queer Cinema”

10. Student Research

I was thrilled to sponsor two student posters at Clark's annual spring undergraduate research conference, Academic Spree Day.

Samantha Whittle, '21, presented a poster version of her 100-page thesis on the use of comedy and humor to memorialize the Holocaust. She subsequently defended the thesis and was awarded *magna cum laude*. She also received the J. Fannin King Award for Excellence in Comparative Literature. I'm happy to report that she has received a full tuition remission from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, where she will pursue a master's in comparative literature.

The Double Edged Sword of Laughter: Memorialism of the Jewish Holocaust Through Humor and Comedies

Samantha Whittle '21 - Excerpt from Samantha's Senior Honors Thesis in Comparative Literature (Defense Scheduled for May 13th, 2021)
Advised by Professor Robert Rubin, Professor Shelly Teitelbaum and Professor Francis Tannan



Memorialism has been around for the past 25 years since the Memorial of the concentration camps. The way how the Jews could be anything other than victims is the goal of the memorial. It is not only the victims who are memorialized, but also the perpetrators. The memorial is not just a place where the victims are remembered, but also a place where the perpetrators are remembered. The memorial is not just a place where the victims are remembered, but also a place where the perpetrators are remembered. The memorial is not just a place where the victims are remembered, but also a place where the perpetrators are remembered.

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This thesis aims to explore the use of humor and comedy in Holocaust memorialism. It examines the ways in which humor and comedy have been used to memorialize the Holocaust, and how this has affected the way in which the Holocaust is remembered. It also explores the ways in which humor and comedy have been used to challenge the way in which the Holocaust is remembered, and how this has affected the way in which the Holocaust is remembered.

Timeline of Holocaust Memorialism and Comedy



The Jewish Question by David Sussman. This book explores the ways in which humor and comedy have been used to memorialize the Holocaust, and how this has affected the way in which the Holocaust is remembered.



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(Student Research, Continued)

Ceci Bachana ('24), a first-year student who took my Faust course in the fall, continued to work on the ideas from the course in the spring semester and submitted a poster analyzing F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Great Gatsby* as a Faustian tale, with connections to Goethe and Thomas Mann.

Faust and National Trajectory in *The Great Gatsby*

Cecilia Bachana '24 – (Sponsor: Professor Robert Tobin)



The American Dream

The American Dream is a concept that has been defined in many ways. It is the idea that anyone can achieve success and wealth through hard work and determination. This dream is often associated with the idea of the "rags to riches" story, where a person starts with nothing and ends up with everything. In *The Great Gatsby*, Jay Gatsby is the ultimate embodiment of this dream. He is a man who has made his fortune through illegal means, but he still believes in the American Dream and wants to win back the love of his life, Daisy Buchanan.

Gatsby's dream is not just about wealth and success, but also about the idea of the "new man." He is a man who has made his fortune through illegal means, but he still believes in the American Dream and wants to win back the love of his life, Daisy Buchanan. Gatsby's dream is not just about wealth and success, but also about the idea of the "new man." He is a man who has made his fortune through illegal means, but he still believes in the American Dream and wants to win back the love of his life, Daisy Buchanan.

Daisy Buchanan as Marguerite

Daisy Buchanan is the central female character in *The Great Gatsby*. She is a beautiful, wealthy young woman who is married to Tom Buchanan. She is often described as being "under a green light," which is a reference to the green light at the end of the dock in *Paradise Lost*. Daisy is a woman who is torn between her love for Gatsby and her loyalty to Tom. She is a woman who is caught in a love triangle, and her choices ultimately determine the fate of the novel.

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Photo from *The Great Gatsby*



Photo from *The Great Gatsby*

Thomas Mann and the American Dream

Thomas Mann is a German writer who is known for his novels and essays. He is often considered one of the most important German writers of the 20th century. Mann's work is characterized by its complexity and its exploration of the human condition. In *The Magic Mountain*, Mann explores the idea of the "new man" and the American Dream. He is a man who has made his fortune through illegal means, but he still believes in the American Dream and wants to win back the love of his life, Daisy Buchanan.

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Goethe and the American Dream

Goethe is a German writer who is known for his novels and essays. He is often considered one of the most important German writers of the 18th and 19th centuries. Goethe's work is characterized by its complexity and its exploration of the human condition. In *The Sorrows of Werther*, Goethe explores the idea of the "new man" and the American Dream. He is a man who has made his fortune through illegal means, but he still believes in the American Dream and wants to win back the love of his life, Daisy Buchanan.

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Summary of all Leir Chair Activities, 2020-21

Scholarship:

Publications (appeared)

"The Enlightenment Origins of Sexual Human Rights," *German Quarterly* 93.3 (Summer 2020), pp. 394-396.

"Eine Geschichte, die Geschichte verändert," introduction to Niki Trauthwein, *Peter Pan in Hamburg. Gert Christian Südel: Transpioneer, Aktivist und Überlebenskünstler* (Berlin: LitVerlag, 2020), pp. 7-20.

"LGBTQ+ Rights after the Report on Unalienable Rights," *Telos* 193 (Winter 2020): 127-133.

"Plague and Protest in LGBTQ+ History," *Worcester Pride Guide + Resource Directory 2020-2021*, pp. 8-9.

"Behind the Issue w/Robert Tobin," Interview posted on the academic blog of *The Journal of Holocaust Research*, April 25, 2021.

<https://journalofholocaustresearch.wordpress.com/2021/04/25/behind-the-issue-w-robert/>

"The Evolian Imagination: Gender, Race, and Class from Fascism to the New Right," *The Journal of Holocaust Research* 35.2 (2021): 75-90.

Publications (submitted)

Review of Javier Samper Vendrell, *The Seduction of Youth: Print Culture and Homosexual Rights in the Weimar Republic*, forthcoming in *Monatshefte*.

Review of Katie Sutton, *Sex between Body and Mind: Psychoanalysis and Sexology in the German-Speaking World, 1890s-1930s*, forthcoming in *Social History of Medicine*.

"Zweimal James Steakley: Ein Beitrag zur Entsehung der *Queer German Studies*," forthcoming in *Festschrift für James Steakley*, ed. by Florian Mildenerberger.

"Winckelmann und die Menschenrechte," forthcoming in *Winckelmann and His Passionate Followers*, ed. Wolfgang Cortjaens and Christian Loebs.

"Queer Camp against Franco: Zulueta's *Un dos tres*," submitted to *The Eurovision Song Contest: From Concert Halls to the Halls of Academia*, ed. by Adam Dubin, Antonio Obregon, and Dean Vuletic.

Public Talks and Speaking Engagements

“So long, Beautiful Gay World? LGBTQ+ Rights in Germany since the Fall of the Berlin Wall,” American Institute of Contemporary Germany Studies, Washington, DC. Conducted as a webinar on June 12, 2020.

Lunchtime lecture on Worcester LGBTQ+ History for the employee group DuPont Pride! June 2020.

Moderate discussion between Jayrôme Robinet and Kenry Fries hosted by Goethe Institutes of Boston and Kansas City. September 24, 2020.

Moderate discussion between Olivia Wenzel and Sarah Schulman hosted by the Goethe Institutes of Boston and Kansas City. September 30, 2020.

Panelist, Inaugural Plenary Forum on Diversity, Equity, and Social Justice at the GSA, Washington, DC, online, October 2020.

“Freedom as the Work of Friendship: Sexuality and Human Rights in Alexander von Humboldt’s Thinking,” MLA, Toronto, online, January 2021.

“Eurovision in Israeli Queer Cinema,” MLA, Toronto, January, online, 2021.

Panelist, Virtual Roundtable, “Confronting Hatred: Neo-Nazism, Anti-Semitism, and Holocaust Studies Today,” *Journal of Holocaust Research*, April 2021.

“Criminality and the Continent,” part of panel discussion with Elizabeth Blake on Anthony Minghelli’s film of Patricia Highsmith’s *The Talented Mr. Ripley* in Rox Samer’s course, “Gender and Film” (SCRN 288), April 2021.

Invited speaker, “Queering the Canon from Napoleon to Franco,” University of Missouri – Columbia, May 2021.

Featured interviewee in Stephen Norris’s documentary, “Euromerica” (May 2021). Available on line at: <https://filmfreeway.com/Euromerica>

“1869: The Birth of ‘Homosexuality’ in Germany,” On-Line PRIDE Event, June 2021.

Scholarly Service

External Review for Promotion: Baruch College, CUNY; Johns Hopkins University; Australia National University [each case required reading and assessing at least one new scholarly book by the candidates in question, as well as numerous articles]

Blind Review for Scholarly Journal: *The Journal of the History of Sexuality*

Scholarly Campus Events Organized:

#Faust4Now

Christopher Dea (independent director), *On Directing Goethe's Faust*, October 2020.

Todd Kontje (University of California, San Diego), "The Dark Side of Diversity: Saul Fitelberg's Failed Seduction," #Faust4Now, November 2020

Marjorie Perloff (Stanford University), "The 'Fascism' of Twelve-Tone Music: Emigration, Exile and the Genesis of *Dr. Faustus*," #Faust4Now, November 2020.

Tobias Boes (University of Notre Dame), "Doctor Faustus and the Weight of the German Past," #Faust4Now, November 2020.

Simon Richter (University of Pennsylvania), "Fossil-Free Faust: Goethe and the Climate Emergency," #Faust4Now November 2020.

Ruxandra Looft (Iowa State University), "Rosa Mayreder's *Anda Renata*: Subverting Faust and the Cult of Male Genius," #Faust4Now, November 2020.

Wendy Nielsen (Montclair State University), "Homunculus, Motherless Creation: The Irony of Professing Love and Science in Goethe's *Faust*," #Faust4Now, November 2020.

Human Rights and Literature

David Tse-Chien Pan (University of California, Irvine), Faculty Colloquium on the Report of the Commission on Unalienable Rights, December 2020

Christian Emden (Rice University), Faculty Colloquium on the Report of the Commission on Unalienable Rights, December 2020.

German-Jewish Culture and Modern Multiculturalism

Liliane Weissberg (University of Pennsylvania): "Benjamin Veitel Ephraim: The Life and Work of Jewish Merchant, Writer, and Spy in Late Eighteenth Century Berlin," January, 2021

Elisabeth Imber (Clark University): "Theodor Herzl," January, 2021

Andreas Krass (Humboldt University, Berlin): "Magnus Hirschfeld in Palestine," January, 2021

Frances Tanzer (Clark University): "The Habsburg Empire and the Jews," January, 2021.

Marc David Baer (London School of Economics): "German, Jew, Muslim, Gay: The Life and Time of Hugo Marcus," January, 2021

Hana Green (Clark University): "Passing as Aryan: Female Jewish Identity during the Holocaust," January 2021

Tiffany N. Florvil (University of New Mexico): "Mobilizing Black Germany: Afro-German Women and the Making of a Transnational Movement," February, 2021

The National Imagination

Patricia Layne (University of North Carolina): "Afro-German Writing Today: Olivia Wenzel's *1000 Coils of Fear*," March 2021

Velma Pollard (Jamaican Poet), co-sponsored talk in Prof. Ferly's seminar on Caribbean Women Writers, April, 2021.

Susana Antunes (University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee), "Portugal and the National Imagination," May, 2021

Teaching

Fall: Comparative Literature 109, Human Rights and Literature (First-Year Intensive) (hybrid)

German 222, Faust and the Faustian (hybrid)

Comparative Literature 297: Directed Study

Intersession: German 286, Germans, Jews, and Turks (on line)

Spring: Comparative Literature 130, The National Imagination (on line)

Comparative Literature 297: Honors Thesis

Additional teaching service:

DAAD campus liaison. Received an award for Hana Green.

Letters of Recommendation for students (medical school, graduate school, grants, post-graduate opportunities).

Sponsored 2 students at Academic Spree Day, the undergraduate research conference.