Dear Members and Friends of the Waterloo Centre for German Studies:

It is once again my pleasure to update you on the activities of the Waterloo Centre for German Studies at the University of Waterloo. The Centre exists to support research into the society and culture of the German-speaking world, to help students pursue studies in Europe, and to organize lectures and other cultural programming in the Waterloo Region.

None of the work at the Waterloo Centre for German Studies would be possible without the contributions of our staff and executive committee. Misty Matthews-Roper, WCGS Administrative Assistant, excellently manages all of our activities and is to be commended for her commitment to WCGS and all it does. Executive Committee members - Ana Ferrer, Anne Marie Rasmussen, Michael Boehringer, and Gary Bruce - provide advice and input on our affairs. My job as Director is considerably easier thanks to the assistance of Misty, Ana, Anne Marie, Michael, and Gary, and I thank them for that.

Every five years all research institutes at the University of Waterloo are reviewed by the Senate and Graduate Research Council, a committee that then makes a recommendation to the University Senate regarding the institute’s status as an official university research institute. Our review was held this year, and you can find the full report on our website, [www.wcgs.ca](http://www.wcgs.ca) (follow this path: “About the Centre” >> “Administration” >> “Reports and Reviews”). I'm very happy to report that WCGS received unanimous approval for a renewal of its status, and we were commended on our many accomplishments over the past five years. Many of you contributed to the report by participating in a survey we conducted, and your comments showed that WCGS has earned a reputation for providing stimulating intellectual and cultural programming.
One of the new initiatives we launched this year was the WCGS Book Prize. Any author who has published their first work on any topic in German studies in English (or in French if published in Quebec) is eligible. A world-class jury consisting of Karin Bauer (McGill University), Ann Marie Rasmussen (University of Waterloo), Ritchie Robertson (University of Oxford), and Karina Urbach (Institute of Advanced Study, Princeton), with me assisting as Jury Chair, read submissions from literary studies, history, music studies, anthropology, philosophy, and other fields. The work being done by new scholars in German studies is both wide-ranging and impressive, and while only one book could be chosen as the winner, many of the books submitted met the award’s criteria for originality, scholarly relevance, and contributions to public-oriented scholarship. But the one that stood out was Alice Weinreb’s Modern Hungers: Food and Power in Twentieth-Century Germany. Prof. Weinreb, who teaches at Loyola University in Chicago, examines how hunger has been a central motivating force in German politics throughout the 20th century. By focusing on hunger’s role in German society, Prof. Weinreb demonstrates “the fluid relationship between state power and food provisioning.” If governments control the food supply, they can also control the populaces they govern, and Prof. Weinreb uses Germany as a case study to illustrate this important point. In March 2019, Prof. Weinreb came to Waterloo to give a lecture on the book and collect her $2,000 prize.

We held other lectures this year, as we always do. The annual Grimm Lecture saw 150+ people come to the Balsillie School for International Affairs in uptown Waterloo to hear a lecture marking the 200th anniversary of the birth of Karl Marx. Leading Marx biographer Gareth Stedman Jones (University of Oxford) discussed Marx’s views on just how long capitalism might continue to dominate western economic practice in light of the changes he and others fought for during the 19th century. Indigenous playwright and documentarian Drew Hayden Taylor came to campus to present his CBC documentary Searching for Winnetou, a film that examines the German fascination with the old west and First Nations culture. With the assistance of the Goethe-Institut, Toronto, we were able to invite best-selling German author Benedict Wells to give a reading from the English translation of his novel Vom Ende der Einsamkeit (The End of Loneliness), a reading that was of particular interest to members of the active WCGS Reading Group (spearheaded by WCGS member Lori Straus). Gary Bruce from UW’s History department presented a lecture based on his recently published history of the Berlin zoo.

WCGS supports research in other ways. Centre member Professor Alice Kuzniar has been the driving force behind an informal research group into poetics and nature in German cultural history, especially
the 18th and 19th centuries. In April, along with Fraser Easton and John Savarese from the Department of English Language and Literature, Prof. Kuzniar organized an interdisciplinary symposium entitled The Nature of Experiment: Intelligence, Life, and the Human. WCGS provided logistical support as well as funding, as did the Dean of Arts and the departments of English Language and Literature and Philosophy. The symposium attracted speakers and attendees from across campus and featured a keynote address by CalTech professor Jocelyn Holland on dimensionality and virtuality in the history of thought experiments.

WCGS also continues to provide excellent support for students to travel to and study in German-speaking Europe. Long-time WCGS supporter Marga Weigel has provided money to launch two new travel scholarship programs at the University of Waterloo. One is based in Engineering and is managed by that faculty, but the other is in the Faculty of Arts and managed by WCGS. These awards - $1,000 per student, with up to five being awarded annually in each program - are a testament to her long-held belief that Canadian students need exposure to German-speaking society and economies in order to be successful in their chosen careers. These scholarships complement the long-standing Stork Awards in German Studies. This year we’ve been able to assist over 30 students from across Canada attend summer programs in Germany with awards ranging between $500 and $1,000. These are competitive scholarships, and I’m grateful to Professors Barbara Schmenk and Paul Malone for helping me select the recipients from among the many applicants. The number of applications far exceeds the amount of money we have available for these awards, and while that is somewhat frustrating - we want everyone to learn German! - it is also a sign that German studies is of interest to students throughout Canada, and that the Waterloo Centre for German Studies can play a key role in fostering this interest.

Let me close by reminding you that you can connect with the Centre via Facebook, Twitter (@uWaterlooWCGS), or our website (www.wcgs.ca) where you can also sign up for our mailing list. And please feel free to get in touch with questions or comments by emailing us at wcgs@uwaterloo.ca. We very much appreciate your support and interest.

Sincerely,

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