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Research

Current Projects

The German Past and the Contemporary World: The domestic and foreign politics of memory

Beginning in January 2013, the IGS Birmingham will consolidate and expand its role as a hub for the support and inspiration of German Studies in the United Kingdom, as well as its reputation as a leading global research centre, through establishing a high-profile academic network: Weltanschauungen: The German Past and the Contemporary World. The network will be structured around four short research visits by eminent scholars, each accompanied by postgraduate students. The scholars will use their time at the IGS to build closer research collaborations with researchers working in UK German Studies and present their work at UK institutions.

The project aims to examine in detail the interaction beween collective memory, policy elaboration, and the personal remembering of different individuals and social groups. The project will bring together an interdisciplinary group of scholars to consider the continuing impact of 20th-century German history, particularly the legacy of fascist and communist dictatorships, on 21st-century political decision-making. We will consider the interaction between the memory of individuals, social memory within different groups, cultural artefacts representing the past, and attempts to structure collective memory from above.

The particular research questions to be addressed by the network are:

- What is the impact of the legacy of dictatorship on political decision-making processes in 21st century Germany?
- How is the past deployed in the service of contemporary political concerns? To what end is Germany's history remembered?
- How and why do contemporary political decision-makers attempt to direct the formation of collective memory?
- How do individual and social memories interact with cultural and political memory formation? How are "memory contests" fought and won?
- Do politics in Germany continue to be directed by the legacy of fascism or are new paradigms emerging?
- How is the role of the past in contemporary German politics seen outside Germany?
- What can the study of collective memory in Germany reveal about the role of the past in other national contexts?

The research visits and associated seminars are structured around four core strands: foreign and security policy; European integration; immigration; cultural policy. "

Past projects

Zeitgeist. What does it mean to be German in the 21st century? (2010 - 13) (/research/activity/institute-german-studies/research/projects/zeitgeist.aspx)

What does it mean to be German in the 21st century? To inherit a difficult history and be subject to national stereotypes — or much more than that? Zeitgeist investigates ideas and identity in an age of globalisation and multiculturalism. What does Germany mean to the rest of the world now? What do we make of a nation that merged two states into one, is home to the 2009 Nobel literary prizewinner, and has pursued the European project in all its cultural, political, and financial forms?

Project student: **Charlotte Galpin (/schools/government-society/research/doctoral-researchers/profiles/galpin-charlotte.aspx)**

Project student (with focus on promoting interdisciplinary German studies in the UK): **Leila Mukhida (/schools/government-society/research/doctoral-researchers/profiles/mukhida-leila.aspx)**

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