

[ANN: 2015 Syllabus Contest Results](#)

Discussion published by Michael Springer on Wednesday, May 20, 2015

The 2015 H-German Syllabus Contest Results

The H-German editors are pleased to announce the results of the fourth biennial syllabus contest. Started in 2006, the contest has helped H-German create a syllabus database, and the current contest aims to expand the collection. We hope that this database will serve as a resource for new and more established scholars alike, whether in developing new courses or revamping older courses with different readings, films, and documents. (View the database [here](#).)

Our membership did not disappoint; we received more than 30 syllabi for courses taught in varying disciplines and different educational systems. Nine judges - who either are members of the H-German Advisory Committee or had previously submitted winning syllabi - had the pleasure of perusing their colleagues' work. A sincere thank you to: Manuela Achilles, Kit Belgum, Karin Friedrich, David Imhoof, Jonathan Lyon, Roland Spickermann, Paul Steege, Maiken Umbach, and Todd Weir for their hard work.

We invited H-German members to submit syllabi in the following four categories for this year's contest:

- Seminars/specific courses
- Graduate courses
- The German-speaking lands before 1789
- Interesting assignments

As with past contests, judges evaluated the submissions based on comprehensiveness, examining which syllabi effectively blended new with established scholarship, and which creatively mix various media or formats within the course.

The 2015 Contest Winners

Seminars/Specific Topic Courses

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| Winner: | Jeff Bowersox/Kristen Kopp University College London/University of Missouri | "Black Germany: The Cultural History of Africans and People of African Descent in the German-Speaking Lands from Antiquity to the Present" |
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Judges' comments: The course, "Black Germany" was initially designed to be taught simultaneously at two U.S. universities that continue to wrestle with the legacy of racial segregation, but is now being taught at one U.S. and one British university. The course topic is relevant to both historical research and students' lives; it utilizes German history across disciplinary lines to suggest new approaches to Black Studies as well. Thematically coherent, chronologically ambitious, and methodologically innovative, the course stood out among the submissions. The course requirements are well defined

and pedagogically valuable. An assignment that asks students to produce an online "virtual exhibition" seems especially well crafted to encourage students to integrate into a coherent argument the various elements of the course. To that end, the readings are well chosen and manageable, but the course also convincingly engages a range of media and other primary sources.

Graduate Courses

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| Winner: | H. Glenn Penny University of Iowa | "Readings in (mostly) Modern German History" |
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Judges' comments: "The rationale for the course is powerful and intellectually challenging (even if its tone of the introduction is a little self-congratulatory, and might alienate some); pushing the boundaries of German history both spatially and chronologically is an excellent and important move. This is then followed by very useful introductory texts to each weekly theme, which give students a clear set of challenges to confront in and through the readings. I was particularly impressed not only by the inclusion of some primary materials, but by the integration of the historiography -- including the life appearance of several authors whose texts are being studied -- with visits to local history archives. I was also delighted to see that different reading habits are being trained: some sessions are focused on gaining quick overviews over historiographical problems, others on learning deep immersion in an extremely long text, which is taught over a two-week period, to ask large questions about the nature of writing 'big histories'. In short, this syllabus is the clear winner: it is imaginative, challenging yet accessible, theoretically ambitious but also hand-on, and a real pedagogic masterpiece."

The German-speaking lands before 1789

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| Winner: | Jeff Bowersox/Kristen Kopp University College London/University of Missouri | "Black Germany: The Cultural History of Africans and People of African Descent in the German-Speaking Lands from Antiquity to the Present" |
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Comments: The judges selected this syllabus partly due to the originality of the topic but also in the way it is taught. The earlier part of the course is well integrated and deals with uncommon topics through a clever choice of sources. Notable is the way the course uses varied sources and creative assignments to engage students.

Interesting Assignments

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| Winner: | Ashley Passmore Texas A&M University | "Mapping German <i>Reiseliteratur</i> " |
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| Honorable Mention: | Melissa Kravetz Longwood University | Digital Essay |
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Comments: The judges appreciated the fact that Dr. Passmore first contextualized where and whom she taught and explained what her course aims to accomplish. Her innovative use of mapping analysis allows students to situate German literature in a time and place. Bringing the “spatial turn” that many humanities scholars have employed to undergraduate, mostly non-German students empowers them in turn to use their various skills in this classwork. Dr. Passmore also spelled out clearly how students are to use a variety of new mapping software packages and websites. Indeed, she helps students develop their mapping analyses over the course of the semester. Innovative, well-conceived and explained, rich in potential, and even practical as a skill set for job seekers, this assignment stood out amidst a group of creative pedagogical suggestions.