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German Professor Brent Peterson Awarded Third NEH Grant for Seminar in Berlin

Posted on: August 23rd, 2013 by Rick Peterson

For the third time since 2009, Lawrence University Professor of German Brent Peterson has been awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities grant to co-direct a seminar in Berlin, Germany. The \$169,950 grant will support a five-week long professional development seminar June 22-July 25, 2014 for K-12 teachers designed to enrich their knowledge of contemporary German culture and history.



Peterson, in collaboration with Robert Shandley, professor of film studies and German at Texas A&M University, will lead the seminar “Migration and German Culture: Berlin’s Cultural Diversity Across Two Centuries.” This will be one of 52 seminars and institutes the NEH will support next summer for school teachers and college professors.



Brent Peterson

The program targets educators in language, literature, social studies and modern history, but any K-12 teacher with intermediate-mid German skills is encouraged to apply. Up to 16 teachers will be selected from a national, competitive application process. Each participant receives a \$3,900 stipend to help cover their expenses.

“Although Germany has long welcomed migrants from southern and eastern Europe, France, the Netherlands and more recently, from Turkey, many Americans still imagine it to be the quaint homogeneous land of Beethoven, bratwurst and beer,” said Peterson, a scholar on the construction of national and ethnic identities. “This seminar is designed to give teachers and ultimately their students, who are also very diverse, a more accurate and more appealing picture of a society shaped for centuries by migration. We use the tools of the humanities to see what it means to be German today in the midst of Berlin, Germany’s vibrant, complex and transnational capital.”

Peterson and Shandley first taught their Berlin seminar in 2010 and co-directed the program again last summer. It incorporates 19th- and 20th-century literature (children’s and adolescent), contemporary films and television programs. Two Turkish German authors will lead sessions on their own writing and the seminar also includes several walking tours of Berlin’s diverse neighborhoods.

Conducted in German, classes are held in the mornings with afternoons and weekends free for participants to explore the diverse city of Berlin on their own.

Teachers interesting in participating in the 2014 seminar can apply online after Oct. 28 at <https://www2.lawrence.edu/fast/petersob/NEH/>.