The Center for European Studies is thrilled to welcome its new director, Belinda Davis! Davis is a Professor of History at Rutgers, where she has taught since 1992. She is author or co-editor of four books and several dozen articles, on themes including popular politics; conceptions of democracy and of how social and political change takes place; gender; history of everyday life; oral history, memory, and emotion; urban history; transnational history; policing, violence, and terror; and consumption. Her book The Internal Life of Politics: Extraparliamentary Opposition in West Germany, 1962-1983 is forthcoming from Cambridge University Press.

Professor Davis has served on the Center for European Studies advisory board since 2006 and was instrumental in designing the European Studies major and minor. She has participated in many of the Center’s grant-funded activities, including directing several of the German Embassy’s Campus Week programs. She is already working tirelessly to organize this fall’s conference, “Social Movements Since ’68: Germany, Europe, and Beyond,” to be held November 7-9, 2018. It will feature keynote by Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey (Universität Bielefeld) and Geoff Eley (University of Michigan). Davis also has many other events in the works for the coming year, to be guided particularly by three themes: the question of “what is Europe?”; an exploration of forms of democracy and political participation; and issues of nationalism, internationalism, and post-nation, which includes attention to refugees and migrants. Visit our new website at europe.rutgers.edu for more information. Davis also looks forward to the Center’s imminent move into the new Academic Building (AB), affording CES still greater interaction with other centers and programs.

Center for European Studies
School of Arts and Sciences

Welcoming a New Director

I am retiring from Rutgers and from the Center for European Studies after 26 years as its administrator. As I look back, I recognize the dynamism of the period starting in 1989 and continuing today. The Center began as “Local Democracy in Poland,” and assisted in setting up new processes and standards as the countries of the former Soviet bloc transitioned - mostly peacefully - away from communism. It later absorbed the old Rutgers Cold War “Soviet and East European Program” and added academic programming, including a major and minor, within Rutgers. Then, as barriers fell across Europe and the European Union expanded, the Center followed along and widened its focus to the entire continent.

Along the way, I’ve come to appreciate the importance of local democracy in the US, the rapidity with which historical events can evolve, and the ambition and hope represented by the European Union’s gradual, peaceful approach to a new model of citizenship and governance.

I thank all my directors, my colleagues in other units, and the students who have passed through this office for this continuing education! - Susanna Treesh

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5th Annual Polish Jewish Studies Workshop, March 5-6 2018
“Centering the Periphery: Polish Jewish Cultural Production Beyond the Capital”

The 5th Annual Polish Jewish Studies Workshop took place at Rutgers University on March 5-6, 2018 with the goal of discussing new research on Polish Jewish history and furthering the international scholarly conversation that began in 2014 as part of the Polish Jewish Studies Initiative (PJSI). “Centering the Periphery: Polish Jewish Cultural Production Beyond the Capital” hosted more than thirty scholars from Poland, Israel, and North America who examined topics on cultural production in Polish lands after partition and before World War II, and beyond the capital city of Warsaw. Panels highlighted innovative scholarship by younger scholars who focused on high and low cultures, including dance, music, and literature, translation and memorial projects, and other topics. Several participants employed digital humanities methodologies, such as GIS mapping.

The workshop’s six panels were organized around thought-provoking themes. In the opening panel, titled Translations and chaired by Geneviève Zubrzycki (Ann Arbor, MI), Ofer Dynes (Montreal) analyzed two poems: Antoni Slominski’s “Conversations of a Countryman” (1923) and Aharon Zeilnik’s “Monologue in Plain Yiddish.” Reading these texts together illustrated the complexities of the authors’ relationships to home and longing, the Jewish national project in Palestine, and the diaspora. Karolina Szymanska (Wrocław) reconstructed correspondence between Max Weinreich and Jan Bystroń to show multifaceted ways of mapping relationships between Polish and Yiddish cultures, examining marginality and expertise in the interwar years. Samuel Zerin (New York) raised provocative questions about translating into Yiddish texts of classical compositions from Jewish choral societies in Vilna. Jess Olson (New York), Wojciech Twerok (Toronto), Agnieszka Legutko (New York), and Karen Underhill (Chicago) offered comments and questions, creating a lively and collegial exchange for all participants.

The conference continued over the next two days with panels on Geographies, Traditions, Embodiments and Spaces, High and Low Cultures, and Audiences. As one participant summarized: “It was a very special experience for me, and this is not something I often say about academic conferences. Somehow, sitting in an
The concert included several modern-day premieres of forgotten compositions. The Gross Kirkpatrick Choir under Patrick Gardner’s steady baton did a glorious job performing music from the Polish Jewish past. Based on extensive research, the concert included several modern-day premieres of forgotten compositions.

This event was generously sponsored by the Borns Jewish Studies Program, Russian and East European Institute, and School of Global and International Studies at Indiana University; the SAS Dean’s Office; SAS Center for European Studies, SAS Department of History, SAS Department of German, Russian, and East European Languages and Literatures, and SAS Department of Jewish Studies; the Allen and Joan Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life; Rutgers Global; the Jan Karski Educational Foundation; the Kosciszko Foundation; the Kronhill-Pletka Foundation; the Taube Philanthropies; and Touro Graduate School of Jewish Studies.

News and Updates

The Center completed its move from its longtime location on the Douglass Campus to Suite 227 in Scott Hall, 43 College Avenue. Although we miss our well-used seminar room, we gained a closer collaboration with allied units’ students and faculty. In particular, administration of the Rutgers British Studies Center and the Medieval Studies Program were coordinated through CES administrator Susanna Treesh.


The Center participated in Rutgers Day on April 28, 2018 as part of the Global Pavilion. Our thanks to Ion Marandici who greeted the visitors, administered quizzes, and offered giveaways such as maps, coloring books, flags, and stickers.

Teach Europe

The 2017 Campus Week theme, Germany Making Choices, focused on the German elections of September 24, 2017. With the plight of refugees and migrants still making headlines and figuring heavily in elections throughout Europe – and the United States – our set of programs highlighted this issue as one of the most complex, but most consequential, for all of our societies.

The 7th Annual Undergraduate Debate was held on September 19, 2017, between the Rutgers University Debate Union (RUDU) and the Rutgers Association of International Relations (RUAIR)-the seventh time these two teams have met as part of the German Embassy’s program. This year, the teams debated the resolution “Chancellor Merkel’s acceptance of refugees is on balance good for Germany,” and RUDU finally took home the win for a second year in a row, after trading wins back and forth in previous years.

The second event of this year’s “week” was a panel discussion on November 15, 2017 on the topic “Unanswered Questions as Choice: Refugees, Immigrants, and Migrants in Germany and Beyond.” The panel met with students and community members over lunch, and included professors Ethel Brooks (Women’s Studies and Sociology, Rutgers), Nanette Funk (Philosophy, Brooklyn College, CUNY), and Jennifer Mincin (Community and Human Services, Empire State College, SUNY).

This year’s campus week wrapped up on December 8, 2017 with a conference, “The German Elections and the Future of Europe.” Drawing over 400 participants and visitors, the event highlighted the challenges and opportunities facing Germany – and the United States – our set of programs highlighted this issue as one of the most complex, but most consequential, for all of our societies.

This year, 44 teachers from local middle and high schools convened at the Douglas Student Center for a productive day of pedagogical outreach. The focus was on how to teach specific types of literature to best engage students’ interest. The first workshop, led by Martha Helfer (German), was titled “Fairy Tales for the Language Classroom and Beyond.” The second workshop, “Uses of Biographies and Autobiographies,” was led by Nancy Sinkoff (Director, CES, and History and Jewish Studies). Over lunch, Rutgers Political Science professor Jan Kubik led a discussion of current events and topics in the European Union.