

After reading this week's set of readings, I began contemplating why it would be advantageous for my area of study, German, to collaborate with other fields to bring a more diverse viewpoint into research or into German studies as a whole. Throughout this process, I've also been thinking about how German studies tends to work with the canonical writings of Goethe, Büchner, Adorno, or other white, cis-gendered German writers. I believe that through the collaboration of other fields, German studies has a real opportunity to reject the idea of "instant classics" that's pointed out in the article "Undisciplining Victorian Studies" and can try to focus on expanding or uplifting marginalized and oppressed voices within German literature.

A major point that jumped out at me from the "Undisciplining Victorian studies" piece was the idea to call out the idea of universal classics and push against the canon. The idea of pushing against or rejecting the "canon" is something that has come up a lot in during my time in the German program and is something that the German section at UNL does well. Traditionally, German sections will assign a list of books to their graduate students and ask that they read every item on the list before our final comprehensive exams before graduation. The list that they provide usually lists the names of famous writers within the field; however, they also fall under the category of canonical works. For my program, the German graduate cohort get to choose what authors we would like to read throughout our time here. One challenge I've noticed while trying to create the list is finding works outside of the canon. It's easy to find pieces from well-known German writers and thinkers but finding the smaller, less well-known voices proves to be a challenge.

This draws me to my next point about how German studies can bring in outside fields to help expand the literary options and reject that canon. I see this as a great opportunity for my field to reach out to different fields. Specifically, Ethnic studies and Woman and Gender studies. Before coming into this program, many of the German authors that I had encountered were often cis-gendered, white German writers. Since beginning my master's classes, I've seen an effort from my professors to introduce us to BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and Feminist German writers.

In the "Undisciplining" article, they write that "'Undisciplining' is not quick or easy, nor is it work that is necessarily ever completed" ((Chatterjee et al.). While the work of undisciplining German studies won't be quick nor easy, there is an opportunity to begin the process of working with other fields. This type of interdisciplinary work can also be done in the classroom when professor make the conscious decision to reject German canonical works, choose to include marginalized voices that students haven't encountered yet, and pull in the expertise of professors or instructors from fields outside of German studies.

Source:

Chatterjee, Ronjaunee, et al. "Undisciplining Victorian Studies." Los Angeles Review of Books, Los Angeles Review of Books, 10 July 2020, <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/undisciplining-victorian-studies/>.