

PRUSSIA:  
PHILOSOPHY  
REBELLION  
AND THE  
STATE



International Summer University

July 11 - August 12, 2011



**European College of Liberal Arts**  
**INTERNATIONAL SUMMER UNIVERSITY 2011**  
**PRUSSIA: Philosophy, Rebellion and the State**

PROGRAMME DATES: July 7 – August 12

This year's Summer University at the European College of Liberal Arts in Berlin explores the classics of German and European philosophy and literature in connection with their historical setting. Taught by specialists in the field of German intellectual history, the University is an interdisciplinary programme that includes lectures on visual art and visits to architectural sites and museum collections in Berlin and its surroundings. Students follow a main schedule of core lectures and seminars, and can choose from a range of related additional seminars in philosophy, literature or historical methodology.

The programme is residential. All applicants can apply for financial aid. ECLA offers financial assistance up to the full amount of the cost, depending on the means of the student. Applications must be received in hard copy by April 1, 2011. Forms and contact details are available at: <http://www.ecla.de/>

## INTRODUCTION



Once extending from its capital Berlin into what is now Lithuania in the east, and to the borders of France in the west, 'Prussia' names the only important power of nineteenth-century Europe that no longer exists. Many of the classic works of German philosophy, by among others, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and Marx, were written partly in response to the conditions of this unusual kingdom. Prussia had a peculiar history. One of the first modern states, which created itself through strategic annexation and planning, it also had a precarious reality. Formed from a diversity of territories and peoples, it was beset by the problem of what constituted its fundamental unity. Its predicament inspired the most philosophically abstract formulation of the theory of the state, as well as projects of education, and of military and bureaucratic induction, that sought to shape its subjects into its servants. The achievements of Prussia were on the one hand progressive, but on the other exerted a pressure which is manifest in the proliferation of mechanical and artificial human forms in the literature of its greatest writers. Our course explores the effect of political forms on philosophical concepts and literary and aesthetic works, and addresses the central paradox of Prussia's history: how a centre of enlightenment came to be regarded as a locus of totalitarianism and unreflecting obedience, unworthy of any legal existence.

Thursday and Friday, July 7 – 8

- Arrivals and Orientation

Saturday, July 9

- Art and Architecture Tour through the Reichstag Building

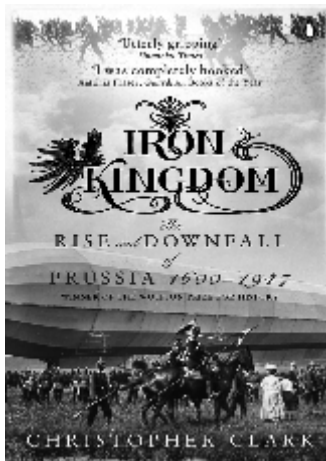
Sunday July 10

- Visit to Potsdam and Sans Souci

## Week One: The Rise of a Lost Kingdom

Monday, July 11

Inaugural Lecture: Christopher Clark, University of Cambridge



Emerging from an inauspicious territory—Brandenburg, an electorate of the Holy Roman Empire—Prussia was created from a far-sighted project of territorial acquisition through marriage and military conquest undertaken by its rulers, the Hohenzollerns. Just as this process resulted in an extension of their sovereignty beyond the boundaries of the Empire, and ultimately, challenge to and replacement of its pre-eminence, the religious culture of the Hohenzollerns departed from the Catholicism of the Hapsburgs. The Electors converted first to Lutheranism, in 1555, and then to Calvinism in 1613, while the population remained largely Lutheran, a division which ultimately contributed to a condition of religious tolerance in Prussia. The

ambiguity of Prussia's confessional politics, and the delicate manoeuvring required to expand and secure its territories, meant that it occupied an important yet vulnerable position between the great powers of Europe. It was twice devastated by invasion from putative allies: during the Thirty Years' War of 1618-1648; and during the Napoleonic Wars. Both traumas furthered its internal consolidation as a state: efforts at reform of the army, bureaucracy and education system. Such initiatives raise a fundamental paradox concerning the character of Prussia: while progressive in practical terms, it resisted the liberalism of democratic representation. Even after 1848, the monarchy retained control of military power, an arrangement the consequences of which led to the stereotype of the Prussian subject as an unthinkingly obedient product of military discipline. This stereotype was reinforced by Nazi appropriation of Prussian symbols and 'virtues', which in turn influenced the Allied forces' condemnation (and final dissolution) of Prussia as an incubator of authoritarianism.

Wednesday, July 13

### What is Enlightenment?



Photo by Alina Rudya

Immanuel Kant's famous essay "What is Enlightenment?" was written in response to a question posed in the *Berliner Monatschrift* (Berlin Monthly) in 1783. The question sparked a long-running debate including contributions by the Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn and later, after he had been the victim of censorship for his *Attempt at a Critique of all Revelation*, Johann Gottlieb Fichte. The essays articulate complex and ingenious efforts to safeguard the rights of philosophical inquiry while placating the authorities. We consider them against the backdrop of the massive project of state-building—territorial expansion, urban planning, military reform—undertaken by Frederick the Great (1712-1786), as well as the public culture of Prussia's two main cities; the capital Berlin; and the second city of Königsberg, where Kant was Professor of philosophy.

Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" (1784)

Mendelssohn, "On the Question What is Enlightenment?" (1784)

Fichte, "Reclamation of Freedom of Thought from the Princes of Europe" (1793)

Thursday, July 14

### Art History: Frederician Berlin

Under Frederick the Great, Berlin was transformed from a medieval city to a centralized space of wide boulevards and imposing public buildings, still prominent in the city's official image. We explore the history of this process, its human and material costs, the architectural styles it deployed, and the peculiar form of modern power it represented, which tended to obscure the person of the monarch, foregrounding instead the machinery of the state itself.

Friday, July 15

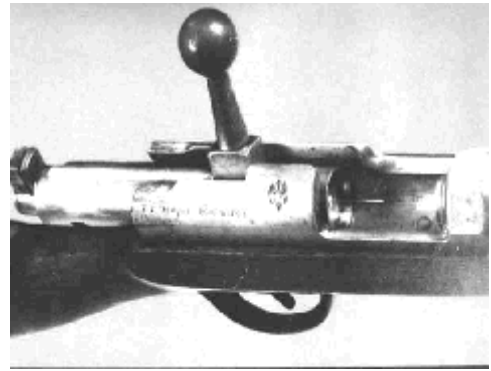
### Tour of German Historical Museum (led by Bernhard Fulda, University of Cambridge)

#### Walking Tour of Frederician Berlin

A visit to different locations such as Gendarmenmarkt, the Forum Fredericianum, Unter den Linden, Museum Island, the Deutscher Dom and its crypt, and the portrait collection in the foyer of the Bode Museum.

## Week Two: War

Following the phase of its most rapid expansion and cultural development, the state of Prussia experienced the second catastrophe of its history: invasion by the Napoleonic armies in their march across Europe. The conjunction of these two phases—of spectacular promise and dramatic reversal—spurred the work of Prussia’s greatest writer, possibly the most mysterious of all German writers, Heinrich von Kleist (1777-1811). Kleist came from a family which had sacrificed many



of its men to service in the Prussian military; he himself served in the campaigns against Napoleon from 1796-99. His play *The Prince of Homburg* (1809-10), like his other celebrated work set in his native territory, *Michael Kohlhaas* (1811), seeks to understand the character of Prussia through the prism of its earlier history—in this case the battle of Fehrbellin (1675), a victory won against the Swedes after the Thirty Years’ War. In a comparable way to the debates on ‘enlightenment’, Kleist’s play articulates a peculiar form of rebellion through obedience, and a wish to be inspired by the promise of the Prussian state as well as wariness of its demands. We read it in conjunction with another work written in the devastating aftermath of the Napoleonic incursion, Carl von Clausewitz’s *On War* (1816-32), which revises conceptions of obedience, command, flexibility and calculation, to create a full-scale philosophy of warfare.

Monday, July 18

Heinrich von Kleist, *The Prince of Homburg* (1809-10)

Guest Lecture: The Hohenzollerns and their Creation. Prussian History and the Dynastic Legend

Frank Lorenz Mueller, University of St. Andrews

The nineteenth century witnessed the creation of what the Socialist Max Maurenbrecher would later call the “Hohenzollern Legend”. This historical narrative portrayed the Prussian state as the wondrous creation of the country's exemplary royal house whose unparalleled qualities had allowed this unlikely Phoenix to rise from the sandy plains of the Mark Brandenburg. It praised the Hohenzollern dynasty's devotion to serving the country, its sense of duty, its military prowess, the frugal efficiency with which it ran the kingdom, its championing of both religious toleration and Protestantism in its very best sense, its German calling and its social commitment. It celebrated its heroes - the Great Elector, Frederick the Great and William I - and bewept its sainted martyr, the beautiful Queen Louise. This dynastic legend was consciously formed and amplified through historiography, art and a politics of memory (Geschichtspolitik) that employed statues, museums and architecture. The story left its traces high and low. The monarchical principle formed an essential plank of *Konstitutionalismus*, the distinctly German concept of constitutional government at the heart of the pseudo-philosophical “Ideas of 1914.” With the

help of an official subsidy, cheap copies of "The Hohenzollerns and their Creation", Otto Hintze's magisterial history of Prussia, found their way into tens of thousands of German homes.

Wednesday, July 20

Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (1816-32) (selections)

Thursday, July 21

Art History: Romanticism and the Wars of Liberation

Although the Prussian monarchy only adopted a policy of war against Napoleon due to pressure arising from the defection of important advisors to the service of the Tsar and popular resentment against the behaviour of the occupying French army, commemorations of victory centred on tributes to royal power rather than the heroism of the populace. This absence of memorials to the experience of ordinary people haunted the painting of Romantic artists after 1815, especially Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840), whose works have become the iconic evocation of the imaginative atmosphere of early nineteenth-century Prussia. A divergence between an official state aesthetic of neoclassical grandeur and a populist focus on landscape is discernible throughout Prussia's artistic history, culminating in the 'Berlin Secession' of 1898.

Friday, July 22

Visit to Alte Nationalgalerie

Saturday, July 23

Visit to Kreuzberg and the Schinkel Monument

### **Week Three: The State**

The period following the Napoleonic Wars saw renewed efforts at reform in education, bureaucracy, and political representation. A reforming ministry of education appointed Hegel Professor of Philosophy in Berlin in 1818. His *Philosophy of Right* (1820) and aspects of his *Philosophy of History* (1837), which identifies a Protestant civilizing mission as the final historical stage, are often taken to be a philosophical justification of the Prussian state. The contrast between Hegel's anatomy of the ideal state and the actual constitutional arrangements of Prussia render such a conclusion questionable. More plausible is that the abstract ideal represented by the state for Hegel—its status as "mind" or an objective rationality that can give meaning to individual endeavour—emerges from the peculiar character of Prussia as an unwieldy entity requiring a principle of cohesion. Hegel's articulation of this principle, like Kant's defence of



'enlightenment', may exhort as much as confirm progress. We consider it alongside Heinrich von Kleist's *Michael Kohlhaas* (1811), set during the Reformation, which dramatizes the conflict between the ideal and the actuality of the functioning of the state, apprehending Prussia's new limits in its old boundaries and enemies.

Monday, July 25

Hegel, Preface, *Philosophy of Right* (1820); "The Enlightenment and Revolution," *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (1837)

Wednesday, July 27

Heinrich von Kleist, *Michael Kohlhaas* (1811)

Thursday, July 28

Art History: Visual Representations of the Prussian State

One of the distinctively modern features of the Prussian state from its origins was the degree to which its leaders cultivated an historical consciousness, commemorating themselves and their achievements through visual as well as written representation. The court paintings of the Hohenzollern dynasty show an unusual diversity of styles, ranging from the grandiloquently allegorical to an emphasis on the 'ordinary' or casual character of the monarch, depending on the political aims of the leadership in question. Such an amalgamation of the historical and the instrumental contributed to the emergence of the category of 'history' itself—and of history as an academic discipline—in the intellectual life of Prussia in the nineteenth century, and an extensive debate over its meaning and uses.

Friday, July 29

Visit to Schloss Charlottenburg

Saturday, July 30

Visit to Jagdschloss Grunewald

## Week Four: Rebellion



The post-Napoleonic settlement in Europe added new territories to Prussia different in character from the surroundings of Berlin and Königsberg, most notably the industrialized region of the Rhineland. This development heightened the problem of Prussia's essential unity, and placed on the public agenda the 'social question', or the degree to which the state was capable of exercising a duty of care towards its least privileged citizens. A prominent figure in the upsurge of both journalistic and philosophical treatment of this issue was Karl Marx, whose newspaper the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* became the centre of a Prussian socialist movement which by the end of the nineteenth century was the most formidable in Europe. Marx's critique of Hegel's theory of the state was elaborated in part through a discussion of contemporary Prussian events, in particular the most

violent episode prior to 1848: the weavers' revolt in Silesia in 1844. Gerhart Hauptmann's 1892 play *The Weavers* returned to this episode after the socialists, following a long period of suppression, emerged as an electoral force. The play was subject to an official ban, but its huge popularity and resonance attest to the persistent simmering of the 'social question' within a Kingdom whose structure repudiated even liberal constitutionalism.

Monday, August 1

Karl Marx, "Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*" (1843) (selections)

"On the Jewish Question" (1843)

"Critical Marginal Notes on 'The King of Prussia and Social Reform. By a Prussian'" (1844)

Wednesday, August 3

Gerhart Hauptmann, *The Weavers* (1892)

Friday, August 5

Art History: Realism and the Social Question

Visit to Alte Nationalgalerie

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, German art, specifically that produced by artists originally from the outlying and industrial regions of the Prussian lands, focused on the representation of working conditions, machinery and urban life, as if in interrogation of the nature of the unity produced by the new German Empire. Painters as divergent in style as Adolph Menzel and Kathe Kollwitz sought ways of



evoking the interior reality of an experience excluded from the pomp of public symbolism while endowing it with an epic power of its own. Menzel's *Iron Rolling Mill* (1872-75) uses impressionistic explosions of light to link the bodily condition of workers with their aversive atmospheric surroundings. Kathe Kollwitz's series of lithographs in response to *The Weavers* (1898) creates thick folds of texture (of cloth and skin) that testify to entrapment in a terminal condition of anonymous drudgery.

### Week Five: Myths of Prussia

The failure of the revolutions of 1848 left Prussia with a parliament which preserved a feudal cast, and maintained control over the army in the hands of the monarchy. Unity in the state was conserved by military means: a series of victorious wars established Prussia at the head of a new German Empire in 1871. The orchestrator of this process, Otto von Bismarck, also deployed media manipulation to neutralize political factions. Bismarck's campaign against Catholicism lent a progressive tenor to his project, as Catholicism was the adversary of liberals. Heinrich Mann's novel *Der Untertan*, published at the outbreak of the First World War, describes the culture of militarized authority and media enhancement of power considered characteristic of Prussian life in the years of the German Empire. Max Weber's essay "Charismatic Authority and its Routinization"



written in the Social-Democrat governed Prussia of the Weimar Republic, constitutes part of a wider effort to link the forms of authority and obedience developed during the Empire with the catastrophe of modern war and the threat to a democratic politics.

Monday, August 8

Heinrich Mann, *The Man of Straw* (1914)

Wednesday, August 10

Max Weber "Charismatic Authority and its Routinization" (1922)

Guest Lecture: Prussia and German Imperialism - Marie Muschalek, Cornell University

A large-scale state-coordinated German project of colonial expansion in Africa and Asia began only after the unification of Prussia with other German states to form the German Empire in 1871. The holding of the notorious 'Congo Conference' of 1884-85 in Berlin, constituted recognition both of Germany's emergent 'great power' status and of its colonialist aspirations. Prussian militarism, or the exemption of the army from representative political control, decisively shaped the nature of the

German colonial project, particularly in the case of the genocidal Herero and Namaqua wars of 1904-07. In ideological terms, the need to legitimize and consolidate the existence of a new German 'nation' drew upon the idea of a global, pan-German identity, to be created and defended through colonial expansion.

Thursday, August 11

Art History: Modernism and Anti-Militarism

The Social-Democratic coalition which governed Prussia in the Weimar years undertook the prevention of Communist revolution, but found itself at the same time unable to control the right-wing militia which had emerged from the old Prussian landowning class and a disaffected soldiery returned from the war. Its predicament reached a crisis in the Spartacist uprising of 1919. Berlin Dadaist Georg Grosz's drawing *Prost Noske!* commemorates the horrific brutality of the rising's suppression, placing at its centre the repugnant caricature of a Prussian officer. Grosz's gesture signals the pervasiveness of the Prussian Junker and the Prussian officer in modernist art and literature, as an inhuman, mechanical figure, a straitjacketed agent of conformity and violence. It was this stereotype that was further reinforced by a later Nazi appropriation of Prussian symbols and historical landmarks, and which in turn informed the view taken of Prussia in Anglo-American historiography, and by the Allied Forces at the end of the Second World War.

Friday, August 12

Oral Exams

Graduation

## ELECTIVE SEMINARS

Alongside the Core Course lectures and seminars, participants in the Summer University attend one of the following seminars, taking place on Tuesday of each week of the ISU.

### From Bismarck to Hitler? Reexamining the Contours of the German 'Sonderweg' (Max Whyte)

An enduring theme in the historiography of National Socialism has been Germany's "special path" (*Sonderweg*) to modernity. In the aftermath of the Second World War, historians were quick to identify Germany's failed liberalization in the nineteenth century as the root cause of National Socialism. Hitler's Empire was seen as the logical consequence and final culmination of the worst aspects of the 'Prussian spirit': nationalism, militarism, cultural chauvinism, and political absolutism. The theory that Germany had pursued a unique and disastrous course to modernity held sway until the 1980s, when a new generation of historians sought to explain National Socialism in terms of a broader 'crisis of modernity'. This seminar will explore the shifting historiography of the political, economic, and cultural origins of the Third Reich. We shall examine the historical and theoretical foundations of the *Sonderweg* thesis, its principal advocates and critics, and its continued importance for debates surrounding the nature and meaning of the Holocaust.

### Lessing's *Nathan the Wise* and Prussia's Jewish Enlightenment (Ulrike Wagner)

Centred on questions of human equality, tolerance and religious truth, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Nathan the Wise* (1779) not only seeks answers to enlightenment's most pressing concerns, but also functioned as a conduit for Jewish emancipation in Prussia. With the invention of the Jewish merchant Nathan, Lessing created a powerful literary monument for the emancipation movement's most popular spokesman, the 'German Socrates' Moses Mendelssohn. Reading the play alongside philosophical works by Mendelssohn and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, as well as the Prussian reformer Christian Wilhelm von Dohm, we place it in the social world of Berlin's *Haskalah* or Jewish Enlightenment, where intellectual debate flourished in conversation clubs, bookstores, 'learned coffeehouses' and the evenings hosted by distinguished salonnières Henriette Herz and Rahel Varnhagen, which attracted luminaries such as Fichte, Humboldt and the Schlegel brothers.

### Immanuel Kant and Heinrich von Kleist (Bartholomew Ryan)

The playwright and story writer Heinrich von Kleist is said to have gone through a 'crisis' on reading the work of the Königsberg philosopher Immanuel Kant, regarding the latter's system as a definitive overturning of the reliability of perception and knowledge. Whether this 'crisis' had any basis in Kant's claims or in Kleist's familiarity with them, it is clear that many of Kleist's works mount a challenge to the progressivism of Kant's writings on a range of subjects, from morality and history to the prospects of

'enlightenment.' Reading them together brings out strange affinities of emphasis if not of intention. Kant's criterion for the correctness of a moral judgment, that it be convertible into a maxim, resonates with Kleist's association of human perfection with the condition of a mechanism or a machine. Similarly, Kant's vision of the advance of reason through a universal history finds concrete obstacles in Kleist's historically and geographically distant settings, where ethical potential is overwhelmed by catastrophe.

#### Theodor Fontane, *Effi Briest* (Catherine Toal)

Theodor Fontane is read as a local colourist of Berlin and Brandenburg life, and as one of the great German realist novelists. We explore how his masterpiece *Effi Briest* (1896) is linked with the general nineteenth-century effort of the novel to contribute to the creation of what Benedict Anderson called the "imagined community" of the nation. Also one of the notorious nineteenth-century 'novels of adultery'—implicitly a novel of the social contract—*Effi Briest* enacts a moral as well as a literal journey from the outer reaches of the Prussian lands to the capital Berlin, forging its own commentary on the process by which Prussia came to lead and dissolve itself into a German empire. We consider Fontane's literary realism in connection with his journalism on the Franco-Prussian war, and his meditations on Prussian history and landscape in the *Walks in the Mark Brandenburg*.

#### Educating Prussians: J.G. Fichte's *Addresses to the German Nation* (Ryan Plumley)

In 1807-1808, in a Berlin occupied by Napoleon's army, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, a philosopher notorious for his atheism and for his radical theory of the social basis of consciousness, gave a series of lectures designed to stir resistance to the French Emperor's rule. Fichte proposed cultural renewal through education as the path to independence from French hegemony. Following Napoleon's downfall, the Prussian monarchy undertook a series of reforms that made Prussian education into a model for pedagogical method around the world. Not only the university founded in Berlin in 1810, but the entire system of humanist formation that undergirded it were an early experiment in liberal nationalism—one conducted under the auspices of monarchical and parochial reaction. We read Fichte's text, one of the earliest manifestos of German cultural nationalism, in the context of this contradiction, as well as looking at the views of some other figures, such as the founder of Berlin's university, Wilhelm von Humboldt, who contributed to the exemplary theory and practice of education in Prussia.

## FACULTY PROFILES

**Max Whyte** is a Collegiate Assistant Professor and a Harper-Schmidt Fellow at the University of Chicago. His principal research interests lie in nineteenth- and twentieth-century European intellectual history and political thought, particularly fascism, Marxism, and German philosophy. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge in 2007, with a thesis on the relationship between philosophy and politics in the Third Reich. Alongside preparing this text for publication, he is currently beginning a major new research project on the history of the 'National Bolshevist' movement in inter-war Germany. In 2009 he was awarded the George L. Mosse Prize by the *Journal of Contemporary History* for an article on the reception of Nietzsche's thought in Nazi Germany.

**Ulrike Wagner's** research and teaching interests are in the field of German Romanticism and American Transcendentalism, in particular aesthetic theory, religion, philology, the rise of new models of *Bildung*, and debates about the relationship between classicism and modern cultures. Her PhD dissertation—in German and Comparative Literature from Columbia University—examines links between the rise of the science of antiquity, Biblical criticism and educational and cultural reform projects in works by Johann Gottfried Herder, Germaine de Staël, and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Several forthcoming publications explore these topics. In 2009/10 she was a member of the bi-national PhD-Net "Das Wissen der Literatur" at Humboldt University and she is currently an associated member of the University's collaborative research center "Transformationen der Antike."

**Bartholomew Ryan** received his PhD in Philosophy from Århus University, Denmark in 2006, with a dissertation on Kierkegaard's resonance in the work of Georg Lukács, Carl Schmitt, Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin. He holds an MA in European Philosophy at University College Dublin, where he was awarded the Professor Magennis Prize for first place in the year. His BA is in Philosophy and Political Science from Trinity College Dublin. A Visiting Lecturer at ECLA since 2007, he has also taught philosophy at the Universities of Oxford, Aarhus, and University College Dublin. His research and teaching interests include the tension between faith and nihilism in philosophy, European modernist literature, and critical theory. He has published articles on Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Schmitt and Deleuze, as well as Joyce, Beckett, Shakespeare, Shelley and Byron.

**Ryan Plumley**, a specialist in eighteenth-century German literary and philosophical culture, received his Ph.D. in history from Cornell in January 2009. His dissertation, "The Romantic Subject of Textuality: German Literate Culture in the Late Eighteenth Century", focused on how the German Romantics tried to make practices of reading and writing into modes of constituting the self and its relation to collectivities. In general, his scholarly work examines how intellectual community emerges out of literary and philosophical texts. One of his current research interests is the idea of a global, cosmopolitan intellectual community, particularly in the postcolonial context. Ryan is also interested in the theory and history of education, of reading, and of knowledge production.

**Aya Soika** was brought up and educated in Berlin. She began studying Art History, Classical Archaeology and Literature at Humboldt University, Berlin, and went on to complete a Ph.D. in History of Art at the University of Cambridge (King's College, from 1997). In 2001, Aya was appointed Research Fellow in New Hall, and taught at the Department of History of Art at Cambridge from 2001 – 2005. Having taught for ECLA as a visiting lecturer from 2002, she joined the faculty in October 2005. Her research interests include early twentieth-century European art, in particular German Expressionism. Her publications include a biography of Max Pechstein, and articles on the Expressionist group Brücke and on the history of art reception.

**Catherine Toal** (Director of ISU 2011) received her Ph.D. from Harvard University. Her dissertation was awarded the University's prizes in Nineteenth-Century Literature and American Literature in 2002. She joined the ECLA faculty following a Junior Research Fellowship at Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Her research and teaching interests include nineteenth-century French, English, American and German literature, and literary and critical theory.