Press Release

American Academy in Berlin Announces
2016-17 Berlin Prize Recipients
23 Scholars, Writers, and Artists Chosen for Semester Stays in Berlin


Academy president Gerhard Casper said: “We look forward to welcoming another group of outstanding fellows to the Academy. By working with their peers and partner institutions in Berlin and presenting their projects to the public, they will actively contribute to the exchange of ideas between the US and Germany.”

The fellows, who were chosen by an independent selection committee, will explore an array of projects and topics—some, but by no means all, directly related to Germany. Projects include the first book-length comparative study of environmentalism in Cold War Germany; a screenplay inspired by an American intelligence project that recruited German scientists and brought them to the US at the end of World War II; an investigation into the role of race, gender, class, and sexuality in the algorithms used by network analytics; and an exploration of the right-wing radicalization of Hungarian politics since the early 2000s.

The highly coveted Berlin Prize is awarded annually to scholars, writers, composers, and artists from America who represent the highest standards of excellence in their fields. Fellows receive a monthly stipend, partial board, and accommodations at the Academy’s lakeside Hans Arnhold Center in Berlin-Wannsee.

The Berlin Prize provides recipients with the time and resources to step back from their daily obligations to work on academic and artistic projects they might not otherwise pursue. The fellows are encouraged to work with local individuals and institutions in the Academy’s well-established network, forging rich connections and lasting transatlantic relationships. During their stay, fellows engage audiences through public lectures, concerts, performances, and readings, which take place at the Academy but also throughout Berlin and Germany.

The Fall 2016 Class of Berlin Prize Fellows

ESRA AKCAN
Associate Professor of Architecture, Cornell University

Akcan will explore the concept of open architecture in the context of housing regulations for noncitizens, with a focus on the 1984/1987 Internationale Bauausstellung (IBA) that took place in Berlin-Kreuzberg. At a time when Germany is taking in record numbers of migrants, her project offers perspectives on how existing populations and policies, the supply of housing, and noncitizens have interacted in the urban sphere.
Rebecca Boehling
Professor of History, University of Maryland, Baltimore County
As director of the International Tracing Service in Bad Arolsen from 2013-15, Boehling focused on the victims of Nazi persecution. In Berlin, she will make a comparative assessment of how the United States, Great Britain, and France approached the process of undoing Nazi influences in post-World War II German society, examining the divergent theories behind denazification and how they were implemented.

Timothy Brown
Professor of History, Northeastern University
In his project “The Greening of Cold War Germany,” Brown seeks to understand the commonalities and differences in environmentalism and related social movements in the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic from 1968-1989.

Jennifer R. Davis
Assistant Professor of History, The Catholic University of America
Davis will focus on the law and its uses in Frankish kingdoms, specifically how and why different communities chose to adapt royal law for their own purposes.

Mary Ann Doane
Class of 1937 Professor of Film and Media, University of California, Berkeley
Doane will be completing a book on the use of the close-up in film practice and theory, and the ways in which screen size and its corresponding scale have figured in the negotiation of the human body’s relation to space in modernity.

Tom Franklin
Writer; Associate Professor of English, University of Mississippi
Franklin’s books strive to blend what the author loves about “high” literature with what he loved reading as a young person: the horror novels of Stephen King or the fantasy novels of Edgar Rice Burroughs. At the Academy, he will work on a novel set in rural Alabama.

Charles Häberl
Chair and Associate Professor of African, Middle Eastern, and South Asian Languages and Literatures, Rutgers University
Häberl will continue his research of the Mandaeans of Iraq and Iran, one of the Middle East’s smallest and most ancient religious communities. Focusing on Mandaeans folklore about persecution and migration, he will speak with members of this community who have sought refuge in Western countries, including Germany.

Daniel Joseph Martinez
Artist; Donald Bren Professor of Art, Claire Trevor School of the Arts, University of California, Irvine
Martinez uses photography, painting, site-specific installation, printed works, performance, and public interventions to raise politically inflected questions. In Berlin, he will focus on an interrogation of war and architecture, contemplating the disappearance of Western civilization in an age of intelligent machines.
**Alex Novikoff**  
*Assistant Professor of History, Fordham University*  
Novikoff will examine the penetration of scholastic learning into arenas of public life that flourished far beyond the supposedly cloistered environment of the medieval university. His work shows how this intellectual and cultural exchange contributed to the formation of a pre-modern public sphere.

**Ioana Uricaru**  
*Filmmaker; Barksdale Jr. Assistant Professor of Film and Media Culture, Middlebury College*  
Uricaru will be working on a screenplay and film project inspired by the American intelligence project Operation Paperclip, which recruited German scientists and brought them to the US at the end of World War II.

**Michael Watts**  
*Class of 1963 Professor of Geography and Development Studies, University of California, Berkeley*  
Watts will explore the effects of oil capitalism and uneven state capacities in Nigeria. His work serves as a case study for grasping the relations between political violence and forms of authority, issues of pressing global importance often little understood outside specialist circles.

**Molly Antopol**  
*Writer; Jones Lecturer of Creative Writing, Stanford University*  
Antopol will work on a new novel, *The After Party*. As in her previous book, she will continue to explore her interests in surveillance and privacy, politics, and the Cold War.

**Kate Brown**  
*Professor of History, University of Maryland, Baltimore County*  
Brown is writing a history of human survival in the territories surrounding the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. In one of the first archival-based histories of Chernobyl, she explores how people negotiated daily life in the new conditions of daily exposures to radioactive isotopes.

**Wendy Hui Kyong Chun**  
*Professor of Modern Culture and Media, Brown University*  
Chun will investigate the persistence and transformation of categories of race, gender, class, and sexuality in the era of network analytics. She will look at the ways in which allegedly neutral machine-learning algorithms merge methods to identify specific individuals with those that target social identities.

**Paul Guyer**  
*Jonathan Nelson Professor of Humanities and Philosophy, Brown University*  
In his Academy project, “Mendelssohn and Kant: Forms of Freedom,” Guyer not only examines the two figures’ intellectual exchange over the course of their careers but also renders a nuanced picture of the legacy of the Enlightenment today.
Trenton Doyle Hancock  
*Artist, Houston*

Hancock’s intricate candy-colored prints, drawings, collaged-felt paintings, and site-specific installations work together to tell the story of the “Mounds” – bizarre mythical creatures that are the tragic protagonists of his unfolding narrative between good and evil.

Adam Johnson  
*Writer; Phil and Penny Knight Professor in Creative Writing, Stanford University*

Winner of the 2013 Pulitzer Prize for *The Orphan Master’s Son*, Johnson will work on a new novel. He again explores questions of displacement, scarcity, resource distribution, sustainability, social organization, and war.

Harry Liebersohn  
*Professor of History, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

Liebersohn will show how the globalization of music since Edison’s invention of the phonograph is part of a new phase in the history of cultural encounters. He looks at musical innovators who, when confronted by diverse aural worlds, developed expertise in both recording and listening to create a new global culture.

Thessia Machado  
*Sound Artist and Composer, New York*

Machado will be working on compositions for two installations/instruments that she developed in 2016. Because these installations consist of simple acoustic and synthesized sounds, as well as motors, sensors, and modulating ambient stimuli, her compositional strategies must acknowledge the physicality of how sound is produced and the relationships among sound sources in each installation space.

Virág Molnár  
*Associate Professor of Sociology, The New School for Social Research*

Molnár will explore the role of civil society in the right-wing radicalization of Hungarian politics since the 2000s to understand how Hungary, probably the most staunchly liberal and democratic of the former Eastern Bloc countries throughout the 1990s, has become one of the most nationalist-populist regimes in Europe.

Jane O. Newman  
*Professor of Comparative Literature and European Languages and Studies, University of California, Irvine*

Newman will finish her book on the German-Jewish scholar Erich Auerbach (1892-1957). Auerbach belonged to a generation of German-Jewish scholars whose work, she argues, became the foundation of most humanistic disciplines in the United States.
Mark A. Pottinger
Associate Professor of Music, Visual and Performing Arts, Manhattan College
Pottinger will examine the role of the natural sciences and its subjects (geology, physiology, electricity, and magnetism) in defining the sound, look, and understanding of the supernatural in early Romantic opera of the nineteenth century. He will focus on the friendship and collaboration between Giacomo Meyerbeer and Alexander von Humboldt in Meyerbeer’s *Robert le diable* (1831), one of the most successful operas of the nineteenth century, in order to discuss the connections between Humboldtian Science, eclecticism, and the diabolical in music.

Aili Mari Tripp
Professor of Political Science and Gender and Women’s Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Tripp will examine why women’s rights in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco are being expanded through the adoption of constitutional and legal reforms at a pace that exceeds that of the rest of the Middle East and North Africa. She is interested in explaining the emergence of these trends amidst heightened Islamist influences in the region.

The American Academy in Berlin was established in 1994 by Ambassador Richard C. Holbrooke and other distinguished Germans and Americans to foster greater understanding and dialogue between the United States and Germany. A private, nonprofit, nonpartisan center for advanced research in a range of academic and cultural fields, the Academy awards semester-long fellowships to about two dozen emerging or established scholars, writers, and professionals each year. It also brings American thought leaders to Berlin for briefer visits for a robust exchange of views between the peoples of Germany and the United States.

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