

**4th December 2020 14:00–16:00 by Zoom**

### **Item 10c: Germanic and Low Countries Studies**

The annual **Association for German Studies** conference took place in scaled-back form in September 2020 (2021 will, it is hoped, return to the University of Swansea). This year's conference included a very successful and thought-provoking workshop on Emotionally Demanding Pedagogy. There was also a constructive discussion of the British Academy's 'Toward a National Languages Strategy' (which has had UCML input), as well as the annual Schools and Networks round-table panel.

The traditional President's Guest lecture, normally a highlight of the annual conference, went online, and can be watched [here](#); outgoing president Prof Margaret Littler's guest was acclaimed author Sharon Dodua Otoo.

**Prof Nicola McLelland** (Nottingham) took over as **President** of the AGS, with **Prof Peter Davies** (Edinburgh) as **Vice-President**. The new year kicked off with a delayed annual **Heads of German** meeting, which took place in October, supported and hosted (virtually) as ever by the **DAAD** (German Academic Exchange Service) and co-chaired by AGS (Prof McLelland) and by UCML (Prof Allyson Fiddler). Participants shared news and experiences on student recruitment, shared experiences of teaching thus far (online, in person, and mixed), heard about pilot language-pupils mentoring scheme (run under the aegis of the OWRI projects), and had a useful introduction to the virtual **Year Abroad** materials produced by the UCML working group. AGS also heard from **Dr Hilary Potter**, Co-Chair of the UCML's Special Interest Group on **Early Career Academics**. There was been at least some take-up of mentoring opportunities.

**ALCS (Association for Low Countries Studies)** have been able to continue with their annual UG and PG essay prizes despite Covid-19 and have awarded a number of small research grants. The **PG colloquium** (planned for July 2020) was postponed to **July 2021** (Senate House, University of London). The event is entitled, 'City Lights: Urban Space and Civic Identity in the Low Countries and Beyond'. Proposals have been received from PhD candidates and early career researchers in the Humanities and Social Sciences. On 20-21 Nov 2020 ALCS organised its first **Dutch Teacher workshop**. There were 20 participants and colleagues attended from institutions that had not previously been represented (e.g. Sussex, Oxford, Westminster).

**Other future events** include the **Dutch Summer course for beginners**, to be organised at University of Edinburgh, where ALCS (and the **Dutch Language Union**) are keen to support the teaching of Dutch (summer 2021). ALCS conference – postponed to 2022, in line with agreed alternating pattern with partner organisation in the US, the **American Association for Netherlandic Studies (AANS)**.

**Policy:** As the 2018 report showed (see previous UCML reports), there is a growth in Dutch in **IWLP** and ALCS is focusing on creating a network of Dutch teachers and offering professional development opportunities. Following on from UCL centenary celebrations (for Dutch) and the very successful

conference in 2019, ALCS continues with its action plans to fill the post at UCL (oldest chair of Dutch Studies in the UK). This is paramount for the continuation of the field in the UK. ALCS has support in the form of the diplomatic representations of the Netherlands and Flanders, and the Nederlandse Taalunie (**Dutch Language Union**).

Overall though, the situation of Dutch Studies is precarious, even though there are no current threats of closure. On the contrary, the celebrations at UCL were received very positively. ALCS hopes to see a boost to Dutch in Edinburgh by organising the Summer course there, with the support of the Nederlandse Taalunie (Dutch Language Union). Dutch in Manchester (Language Centre) has been closed. Dutch in Cambridge (single module incorporating language and literature) is not running this year; there may be one more year of provision (before tutor retirement).

ALCS is strengthening its partnerships too. There is closer collaboration with the **AANS** (see above; e.g. via shared journal). The output of Dutch Studies in English may be integrated onto one platform. **Dutch Crossing** (journal), is going strong and publishes 3 issues a year.

**WIGS (Women in German Studies)** held its first online conference (organised by University of Warwick) November 5-7 2020. The keynote was delivered by Dr Rosemarie Peña. The 2020 Book Prize winner was Dr Doriane Zerka and Katherine Calvert won the Essay Prize.

WIGS would draw attention to changes and issues affecting our profession and our discipline. Supporting women Germanists in every aspect of their professional life is more difficult when over 50% of the profession are on insecure, precarious or fractional contracts, opportunities for employment are dwindling and workload is intensifying. To be representative of different groups has to mean including groups who have been marginalised in the academy, including in WIGS – and this has to start with representation on the committee.

WIGS also wants to encourage and support members who are doing ‘difficult’ and contested research – feminist research is often uncomfortable as it challenges accepted narratives and unsettles often comforting ‘truths’. WIGS needs to be a safe space for exploring these ideas and also be willing to defend them in a more politicised academic climate.

These changes are behind the request to amend the constitution so that we can appoint to an **Equality and Inclusion** role as well as to a newly **combined ECR/Fractional** role - and importantly so that all the committee roles can be open to jo- sharing. The pressure on women’s time means that some of these groups cannot commit to a role full-time, so their perspectives are missing from our discussions. WIGS wants all the new role-holders to be in place for the next formal committee meeting in May and will be advertising for the following vacant or newly created posts: Treasurer; Early Career Academic/Fractional Contract Representative; Postgraduate Researcher Representative; Equality and Inclusion Representative. Role descriptions will be circulated in January but expressions of interest and enquiries are invited.

27/11/2020

Compiled by Allyson Fiddler (**Rep for Germanic and Low Countries Studies**), with many thanks to the Chairs of **AGS** (Nicola McLelland), **ALCS** (Christine Sas) and **WIGS** (Ingrid Sharpe)