The Anxious Ear: Aural Experience and German Modernity

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Abstract

The Anxious Ear is a book about designing the experience of sound and reading the extraverbal text of noise. In close readings of scientific discussions, media theory and artistic practices, I track an enterprise of applied aesthetics that both described and formed the modern sonic world. Reconstructing that dual project brings into focus a multidimensional map of modern aural experience, and that map in turn interlinks with a genealogy of the modern listening self. This study links my home field of German studies the emerging field of sound studies. On the rare occasions when the two have met, the results have favored musical interpretation or broadcast content analysis. The Anxious Ear opens a new field of inquiry by focusing on the listening self’s conscious and unconscious endeavors to immerse itself in and abstract itself from a German soundscape that became steadily more complicated throughout the nineteenth century, then feverishly so in the interwar era. To cultural studies of modern Germany, this book offers one fully formed strand in the nascent scholarly narrative of the historical contingency of sensation and perception in the first multimedia age. To sound studies, it offers test cases of how to generate, via analysis of texts that fall within and outside the traditional bounds of the humanities, more culturally precise models of sound capture, propagation, and reception.

I have completed archival research in Germany, and this project has yielded conference papers, an article, two full and two partial chapter drafts. An ICS fellowship would allow me to complete all chapter drafts, revise two chapters and prepare and submit proposals to publishers.
The Anxious Ear: Aural Experience and German Modernity

*The Anxious Ear* is a book about designing the experience of sound and reading the extraverbal text of noise. It joins my home field of German studies to the transdisciplinary field of sound studies, offering at their intersection a new contribution to both. In close readings of scientific discussions, media theory and artistic practices, I track an enterprise of applied aesthetics that both described and formed the modern sonic world. Reconstructing that dual project brings into focus a multidimensional map of modern aural experience, and that map in turn interlinks with a genealogy of a listening self that evolved in a precarious balance. On the one hand, this modern auditor was acutely aware of its corporal exposure to the overwhelming force of noise. On the other, it had an appetite for new sensations and an intellectual drive to achieve analytical command of modernity’s dizzying field of sensory stimuli.

Sound studies has gained significant international momentum in the last decade, as books ranging from Jonathan Sterne’s *The Audible Past* (2003) to Benjamin Steege’s *Helmholtz and the Modern Listener* (2012) attest. But on the rare occasions when sound studies and German studies have met, the results have favored musical interpretation or broadcast content analysis.¹

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Concepts, Content, Argument:

At the height of the Enlightenment in German-speaking Europe, the sheer physicality of sound made aural experience suspect in the eyes of thinkers who posited a transcendental faculty of reason as life’s principal ordering force. Wolfgang von Kempelen’s *speaking machine*, which stood alone among vocal sound synthesizers of the 1780s in its capacity to mimic full utterances, was a severe disturbance in this context. Reports on the machine in the *Teutsche Merkur* (the leading German press organ of the Enlightenment) described a strange interpretive dilemma, in which aural signs of authentic human utterance co-existed with visual signs of synthetic sound: in the presence of the machine, listeners perceived voice as noise, and vice versa. Accounts also documented an unusual power to arrest the senses: averting their eyes in order to restrict the stimulus stream, audiences could not help but turn back and behold. This compulsion made it impossible to maintain analytical attention in the presence of the audiovisual spectacle.

In this failure of attention, physical force thwarted intellectual design, or, as Veit Erllmann might put it, resonance—the effect of sonic oscillations joining source and receiver in shared vibration—overwhelmed reason. But Romantic impulses soon contended with this Enlightenment model of resonance as antagonist of reason: Adam Müller’s 1810 lectures on eloquence, for example, posited the resonant relationship between orator and listener as a *necessary condition* for the coalescence of meaning. By the mid-nineteenth century, these questions became more scientific than philosophical, and technical advances made precise

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laboratory modeling of human audition possible. Hermann von Helmholtz’s acoustics research could thus probe the empirical substrata of the aural dynamics that encompassed Kempelen, Müller, and their respective audiences. Helmholtz’s theory pushed him into what he designated the psychological realm of aurality. Here, he concluded, aural perception culminated in a conception (Vorstellung) formed through inferential interpretation of sensory stimuli. To hear was thus not to enter into aural oneness with a person or thing but to read a sonic sign.

These three episodes offer telling responses to two of my study’s central questions: How is aural experience configured from the late eighteenth century to the interwar era? And what is the impact of sound on attempts to muster the analytical composure necessary to maintain perceptual command of the modern world? My pursuit of these questions in chapter one links Ermann’s framing of the tension between reason and resonance with Jerrold Seigel’s models of the corporal-material and intellectual-reflective self. At the moment of aural sensation, the material self becomes a physical medium of sound, and the extent to which one is able to gain aural sovereignty hinges on the reflective self’s capacity to achieve analytical attention in the midst or on the heels of that physical vibration. Moving from Kempelen through Müller to Helmholtz, we can track a three-step conceptual progression from thinkers, whose thoughts are disrupted by audition of an uncanny sound; through speaker-listeners, who seek sonic permeation that facilitates rather than impedes intellectual processes; to readers, who inferentially perform basic analyses of sonic information with such velocity that sensation and perception become indistinguishable.

In cloistered laboratory and public lecture hall, Helmholtz demonstrated a fourth step. His precision-designed generators and resonators formed an aural system free of biological clutter

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and the noise of the world. This technical achievement of what historian of science Stefan Vogel calls "mathematized physiology" was accompanied by a metaphorically elaborate series of public lectures, in which Helmholtz pushed discursively beyond the bounds of the experimentally possible. Pairing an image of the listener in the concert hall with that of the cliff-top observer of the wave-patterns of the sea, for example, he involved his audience in a visualization of sound that brought optical order to a field of aural sensation that was potentially overwhelming. I interpret these lab experiments and lecture-based visualizations of sound as exercises of a second-order aural reader (linked to the reflective self), able post facto to abstract itself from and achieve an analytical perspective on its own sensation and perception of sound.

As the central European world grew noisier in Helmholtz’s time, that kind of second-order reading became more difficult. The increasing presence of steam-driven factories as well as steam-driven trains (even in Helmholtz’s provincial Bonn) confirmed the belated arrival of a new industrial order in Germany. This not only meant more noise; it also meant a burgeoning middle class and a new kind of cultural consumption. As urban Germans felt themselves increasingly exposed to an ever-noisier soundscape, they also developed a growing appetite for aesthetically pleasing sounds in controlled settings.

By the interwar era, that appetite had become consumer demand, and those consumers found themselves in a multimedia environment that blanketed its inhabitants with wave after wave of sonic amusements and assaults. At the cutting edge of the media technologies that generated those waves was the Tri-Ergon system of sound cinematography, first introduced in 1922. By wiring their state of the art microphones to an Argon gas-filled photocell, the Tri-Ergon

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group created an apparatus that could transform sonic wave-patterns into a light-stream of varying brightness that was recordable on film. In other words: they photographed sound. The perceptual and epistemological stakes of sound-on-film were staggering. At the turn of the century, gramophone recording had provided an initial sense of what it meant to preserve and control sound. But Tri-Ergon was a technology that made Helmholtz’s metaphorical visualization of sound empirical, putting people in a position to capture, layer, blend and otherwise manipulate sounds in unprecedented fashion.

As sound film achieved commercial breakthrough in 1928 and 1929, the technical discourse on audio quality that unfolded in journals like Filmtechnik and Die Kinotechnik (which I reconstruct based on archival research at the Deutsche Kinemathek in Berlin) evinced a sophisticated sense of the distinction between a sound-image (Klangbild) as an acoustic-aesthetic object and the natural soundscape that cinematic sound recalls. This sensitivity to artifice complicated notions of fidelity: as they argued over optimizing listener experience in the cinema, the engineers lent conceptual contours to designed sound as a sensory event that need not be virtually natural in order to be convincingly real.

The film critic and theorist Rudolf Arnheim characterized how the cinematic fusion of mutually disruptive streams of three-dimensional audio and two-dimensional visual data generated remarkable potential for new forms of aural experience, a potential that his colleague Siegfried Kracauer saw stifled in the talking picture’s compulsion of speech. Here, Kracauer’s film theory corresponded to his conviction that verbal language was being evacuated of significance by the slogan-deluge of mass politics and consumer culture, even as non-verbal visual and sonic discourses proliferated in the Weimar Republic’s media-saturated perceptual environs. The cinema was a virtually unlimited opportunity to explore noisescapes and develop
competence in extraverbal discourse, but the movies’ word-based chatter too frequently got in the way. Crowd sequences were an exception to the rule of noise-marginalization, and I analyze two of the most politically charged examples to close the second chapter: the left-alternative film *Kuhle Wampe* (1932) and the 1935 Nazi propaganda film *Triumph of the Will*. The ambient sound saturation of the former contrasts sharply with the latter’s paring-down of sonic material (an aesthetic instantiation of a stark political divide), but each is designed to achieve aural manageability, not overwhelm its audience.

Kracauer frames aural experience inside and outside the cinema auditorium as analogous, but this is not art imitating life in the traditional sense. Rather, it is the convergence of art and life, as the latter accumulates the designed aesthetic dimensions typically associated only with the former. To Kracauer, a failure to attend to the non-verbal discourses of both was troubling, if not perilous. The films underscore his point: they wield crowd noise as aesthetic material, using it to establish not only what but how the cinematic auditor hears. Their sound is designed to lend particular valence (be it racial or revolutionary) to the aural galvanization of the audiences they address. This crowd noise compels: not just in the way it recalls natural sound, but more importantly in the way it works within a deliberately selected soundstream to guide the listening subject into a politically resonant mode of audition.

Nowhere were the political stakes of listening higher than on the airwaves. Some 110 years after Müller, broadcasting triggered new theorization of the acoustic and mental space that speaker and audience simultaneously inhabit, and my third chapter tracks this theorization based on research at the German Radio Archive. This aural space of radio was given form by the broadcast voice, which critic Albert Forstreuter described as “a bringer of order to life’s flood of
phenomena." The resonance-frontier of that voice extended with every loudspeaker or set of headphones, so the shared realm of sound was virtually limitless. This oceanic imagined community exerted a gravitational pull on critics and radio professionals during the socially fractured Weimar period. In the early Third Reich, those same constituencies sought to harness shared aural experience to cement the racial state on a sensory level.

But these visions of social unity through sensory unity betrayed blind spots that were evident in the very same professional discourse that generated the enticing images of communal aurality. The microphone, wrote Forstreuter, "conducts an analysis rigorous enough to reveal correspondences between acoustics and mental processes, correspondences that remain below the threshold of consciousness in everyday speech." This technological analysis can catalyze analytical attention to the non-linguistic, aesthetic properties of the voice (in a word: its noise), as well as to the act of listening itself. Paradoxically, the medium known for immersing its listeners in a sea of sound thus also triggered the second-order aural reading that Helmholtz exemplified in the 1850s. Helmholtz used the term apperception for this effect, and such apperception makes it impossible for the audience to lose the distinction between virtual and actual presence at a boxing match, in a concert hall, or within sight of a rousing orator. Radio listening thus confronted the audience with the technologization of sensation, even as the near-identity of the wave patterns generated by vocal cords and loudspeaker membranes allowed the apparatus to virtually erase itself. Chapter three's concluding analysis of archival radio reports and plays from the first half of the 1930s tracks how the sound-texts themselves counterpose voice and noise in ways that both foster virtual presence and thematize their own mediality.

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The split state of inhabiting a soundscape and contemplating it from without is produced textually in the Weimar feuilletons of Kracauer, Joseph Roth, and Kurt Tucholsky, and my final chapter analyzes how their short-form writing for the daily and weekly press became a literary solution to problems of individualized sound recording and design. Walter Benjamin’s seminal 1936 essay “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility” posits that a principal task of avant-garde art is to generate perceptual needs that emergent media will eventually fulfill: the audiovisual shocks of Dadaism, he suggests as an example, were an attempt to create effects that the public would come to seek in sound film. Extending this line of thought, I argue that the convergence of aural-representational practices and technologies in broadcasting and sound cinema triggered needs on the creative-productive, not just on the receptive side of interwar aesthetic exchange. Today, people who want to re-present their aural experience can simply make a podcast. In the 1920s and 1930s, no such personalized technology existed, but the need to capture, shape, and share sound, born of the ubiquity of radio and film sound-images, is written all over the hearing based-feuilleton of the interwar years. Solving the recording problem involved repurposing the medium of print—medial hacking.

For Tucholsky, the sonic raw material was frequently the din of life in Berlin’s tenement blocks. His feuilleton sound-constructs are in essence rhetorical tools, designed to build consensus for tenement and a host of other social reforms. For Roth, the captured sounds might be the roaring waves and shrieking bolts of crowd noise at a six-day cycling race, or the droning of Austrian Chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg, emanating from a radio loudspeaker. He shared Tucholsky’s political commitments and socially critical attitude, but he also took a poetic approach to sound as writer’s raw material. Roth experienced the sound culture of the interwar era as a thrilling climate of aural and artistic possibility. Thus it was devastating when the mid-
1930s conquest of sound media and social space by fascist aesthetics—the occupation not just of
airwaves but of the air itself—made communication via Roth's trusted and beloved German
language not only ideologically fraught but, in his judgment, physically impossible.

Roth's impossibility thesis intensifies and extends Kracauer's argument about the
atrophyng of language and the need to become competent in inarticulate sonic discourse. As
Kracauer developed that line of thought through his aural exploration of the city, he joined it to
an exploration of the virtual audibility that persists after physical audibility (of a scream, a
demonstration, a streetfight) ends. This virtual sound recalls the capacity of recording technology
to make a dead sound vibrant again, creating a synchronous aural existence of past and present
that time itself does not allow. Writing the feuilleton thus allows the auditor to inhabit two
locations in space (inside, outside) and two moments in time (during, after), then to *document*
that epistemological position astride two modes of experience. The text maintains close temporal
proximity to the event, and its mass-media dissemination shares the sensation of immersion and
the exercise in second-order reading while both are still fresh.

In the feuilleton, writing the experience of sound became retroactive sound design. The
texts model a modern urban auditor attending to sound and attending to hearing at the same time,
following and forming the interplay of loudspeaker, internal combustion, electrical current,
asphalt, glass, stone, whisper and scream. That interplay was both a sonic graph and a
component of the political tensions of the times; to attune oneself to those complicated patterns
of excitement in the air itself was thus a mode of political education. The aesthetic character of
the aural life of an entire city exceeded singular control—it could never be formed with the
ideological purpose of a crowd sequence in a propaganda film. But the degree to which fascism
succeeded in shaping sound—in the cinema, on the airwaves, in the street—dealt a fatal blow to
the sound culture of the republic and put an end to perceptual pedagogy of the Weimar feuilletonists.

Work plan

This project initially coalesced in fall 2008. Supported by a grant from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), I completed archival research at the Deutsche Kinemathek and the Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv in 2011. To date, my research and writing has generated four conference papers and a chapter in Culture in the Anteroom, a new volume on Kracauer from the University of Michigan Press. At present, I have full drafts of chapters one and two and partial drafts of three and four (67,452 words total). By the end of summer 2013, I will have completed the draft of chapter four (on the feuilleton). During the first month of an ICS fellowship, I would complete my initial analysis and grouping of radio-related archival texts and recordings and continue writing the chapter three draft. During the second month, I would finish that chapter and begin work on book proposals to respected German Studies series at the University of California Press, the University of Michigan Press, Cambridge University Press, Routledge, and Camden House. By the end of the third month, revision of the first chapter would be complete and second chapter revision would be underway. In the final month, I would conclude second chapter revision, begin third chapter revision, and submit book proposals. Work completed at ICS would thus put me in a position to complete manuscript revision during the summer following the award term.
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Curriculum Vitae

Education
PhD (magna cum laude), University of Wisconsin – Madison; major in German, minors in Communication Arts (media studies) and Germanic Linguistics; dissertation: Massography and Weimar Culture (director: Marc Silberman), Aug 2001

Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) research year abroad, Universität Oldenburg, 1997-1998

DAAD / Center for German and European Studies Summer Seminar, University of California, Berkeley, 1996

MA (with distinction), University of Wisconsin – Madison, German, May 1994

BA (with distinction), University of Kansas, Germanic Languages and Literatures, May 1992

Positions held
Associate Professor of German, Bowling Green State University, May 2008-present

Affiliated faculty in American Culture Studies, Bowling Green State University, Aug 2007-present

Assistant Professor of German, Bowling Green State University, Aug 2001-May 2008

Visiting Instructor of German, Beloit College, Jan-May 2001

Lecturer in German, University of Wisconsin – Madison, Sep-Dec 1996

Teaching experience at BGSU
Undergraduate literature and cultural studies: Modern German Literature in Translation (GERM 2600 F 2003); Introduction to German Literature (GERM 3110 F 2008); German Culture & Civilization (GERM 3150 F 2002); Contemporary Germany (GERM 3160 F 2005); Seminar in German Studies (GERM 4000 “Interwar” Sp 2008, “Weimar Culture” Sp 2003); Contemporary Austria (GERM 4160 F 2004)


Undergraduate/graduate: Seminar in German Studies/Topics in German Studies (GERM 4000/5820 “Weimar Culture” Sp 2002); The German Film (GERM 4150/5150 Survey of German Cinema Sp 2007, Sp 2006; “Weimar Cinema and Its Refractions” Sp 2003); Drama Workshop (GERM 4190/5190 “German Drama: From Theory to Practice,” including full productions of Soyfer's Der Weltuntergang, Sp 2010,


**Thesis committee membership:** Amy Coonce, MA, 2013; Cynthia Porter, MA, 2013; Amanda Robinson, MA, 2013; Jordan White, MA, 2012; Christina House, MA, 2011 (co-chair); Michael du Laney, MA, 2008 (co-chair); Luke Nichter, PhD (History), 2008; Margaret Jones, MA, 2007; Ailson Smith, MA, 2007 (chair); Jonathan Klein, MA, 2006 (co-chair); Courtney Johnson, MA, 2006; Megan Sinner, MA, 2006; Eric Marquez, MA, 2004 (co-chair); Beate Knollmayr, MA, 2004; Melanie Miller, MA, 2004; Melissa Beegle, MA, 2004; Eric Stencil, BA Honors, 2004; Sarah Panzer, BA Honors (Kenyon College), 2004; Elisabeth Attilmayr, MA, 2003; Michael Krapp, MA, 2003

**Curriculum development**
- Online version of GERM 4150/5150 (German Cinema), in development
- Online version of GERM 4170/5170 (Professional German), developed Summer 2010
- New professionally-oriented, project-based design for Advanced Composition and Conversation (GERM 4170/5170), Fall 2009
- New German/American Culture Studies graduate seminar: Berlin and Hollywood (Fall 2007)
- New study abroad course designations (GERM 2200 & 3200)
- New web-based content for GERM 1010 and GERM 2010
- New content/design for all upper-level courses taught

**Professional development**
- Faculty Learning Community (focus: mobile devices and apps in teaching and research), BGSU CTL, 2012-2013
- Canvas introductory training, Sep 2012
- Blackboard tutorials and Online Pedagogy course, BGSU Center for Online and Blended Learning (COBL), Apr 2010
- Grant writing workshop, BGSU-U Toledo Office of Research Collaboration, Mar 2008
- Workshop on extending the classroom experience with Podcasting, BGSU Center for Teaching, Learning & Technology (CTLT), Apr 2006
- Introductory workshop on Epsilon EPortfolio, BGSU CTLT, Feb 2006
- Workshop on improving in-class and online discussion, BGSU CTLT, Feb 2006
- Faculty Learning Community (focus: research and teaching), BGSU CTLT, 2003-2004
- Interdisciplinary workshop on Jewish & Holocaust Studies, Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC, Aug 2003
- Lilly Conference on college teaching, Miami University, Nov 2002
Research interests
- Periods & media: Weimar Republic, Third Reich, early postwar literature, cinema, radio, press
- People: Walter Benjamin, Bertolt Brecht, Ernst Jünger, Siegfried Kracauer, Fritz Lang, Leni Riefenstahl, Reinhold Schünzel, Max Schmeleng, Kurt Tucholsky
- Concepts: aural and visual experience, corporality, reading, aesthetics & politics

Fellowships and grants
- BGSU Scholars Assistance Program research travel grant, Jan 2011
- German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) fellowship to support research in Berlin in Feb and Mar 2011, awarded Aug 2010
- Application for National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship, submitted Apr 2010, not funded
- BGSU speed grant to support participation in Midwest Art History Society meeting, Indianapolis, Mar 2007
- Grant from the Ruth Fajerman Markowicz Holocaust Resource Center of Greater Toledo to support “The Holocaust and the Moving Image,” a Spring 2004 film-lecture-discussion series at BGSU
- Grant from the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, US Holocaust Memorial Museum, to fund participation in the CAHS Interdisciplinary Workshop on Holocaust Studies and Jewish Studies, Aug 2003
- BGSU professional development grant, awarded upon acceptance to Faculty Learning Community on research and teaching, Sep 2003
- Grant from BGSU to fund participation in the 22nd Annual Lilly Conference on College Teaching, Nov 2002
- University of Wisconsin Fellowship to fund dissertation research & writing, Spring 1999
- DAAD Fellowship to fund research year at Universität Oldenburg, 1997-1998

Editorship
*The Brecht Yearbook / Das Brecht-Jahrbuch*, appointed 2012 for a five-year term.

Publications: Peer-reviewed periodical articles

“By a Thread: Civilization in Fritz Lang’s Fury,” *Journal of Film and Video* 60:3-4 (2008), 72-89.


Essays in edited volumes


Conference proceedings

Reviews
• Peter Jelavich, Berlin Alexanderplatz: Radio, Film, and the Death of Weimar Culture, in Monatshefte 100:1 (2008), 169-172.
• Sabina Becker and Ute Maack, ed., Kurt Tucholsky: Das literarische und publizistische Werk, in Monatshefte 97:1 (2005), 140-143.

Invited papers

“Reading with an Anxious Ear,” Looking After Siegfried Kracauer, international conference at the Leslie Center for the Humanities, Dartmouth College, Nov 2008.


Refereed conference papers


“Helmholtz’s Acoustics, Early Sound Film, and The Phonographic Eye,” 35th Annual German Studies Association Conference (Louisville), Sep 2011.


“Framing Ohrdruf: Photographs and Memories of the First Nazi Concentration Camp Discovered by American Forces,” 34th Annual Meeting of the Midwest Art History Society (Indianapolis), Mar 2007, with Andrew Hershberger (Art History, BGSU).


“Schmeling, Sharkey, and the Transatlantic Significance of a Low Blow,” 9th Int’l Congress of the European Committee for Sport History (Crotone, Italy), Sep 2004.


Service

- College of Arts & Sciences Promotion and Tenure Review Committee (chair 2012-2013, chair-elect 2011-2012)
- BGSU Faculty Personnel & Conciliation Committee (exec committee 2012-2013, chair 2011-2012 & 2009-2010)
- Graduate Coordinator in German, 2012-2013
- Coordinator, Austria Programs recruiting, 2011-2012
- TA coordinator in German, 2011-2012
- Manuscript review, German Studies Review, 2011
- External reviewer for Dr. Christa Spreizer (CUNY), for promotion to associate professor, 2011; Dr. Paul Gebhardt (Kenyon College), for tenure and promotion to associate professor, 2010; and Dr. Carla Love (German, University of Wisconsin – Madison), for promotion to distinguished lecturer, 2007
- Member, BGSU Arts & Humanities Curriculum Committee, 2009-2010
- Director, BGSU Academic Year Abroad in Salzburg, Austria, 2008-2009, 2004-2005
- Advisor, BGSU German Club, Jan 2006-May 2008
- Member, H-German Advisory Board, Dec 2005-Dec 2008
- BGSU Faculty Senator, 2005-2006, 2003-2004
- Member, GREAL department Budget & Salary Committee, 2005-2008 (chair 07-08), 2002-2004
- Member, BGSU Faculty Senate Committee on Professional Affairs, 2003-2004
- Member, BGSU Film Studies Steering Committee, Dec 2001-Dec 2002

Panels and series organized:

- “War and Interwar,” 31st Annual German Studies Association Conference (San Diego), Oct 2007, with Paul Steege (History, Villanova U)
- “Cultures of Contest: Sport and Society from Republic to Reich,” 29th German Studies Association Conference (Milwaukee), Sep/Oct 2005, with David Imhoof (History, Susquehanna U)
- “The Holocaust and the Moving Image,” film and lecture series, BGSU, Mar-Apr 2004
- “Nazi Cinema Studies: What is at Stake?” 27th German Studies Association Conference (New Orleans), Sep 2003
- Nazi Entertainment Cinema I: Machineries of Spectacle,” 26th German Studies Association Conference (San Diego), Oct 2002
- “Nazi Entertainment Cinema II: (Dis)continuities,” 26th German Studies Association Conference (San Diego), Oct 2002
- “Perspectives on Weimar Popular Culture,” Midwest Modern Language Association Annual Convention (Minneapolis), Nov 1999, with Christina Gerhardt
Membership in professional organizations
- German Studies Association
- International Brecht Society
- Modern Language Association
- Society for Cinema and Media Studies

Honors and awards
- Phi Beta Kappa, 1992