

Professor Steven Barnes, Modern German History Search Committee
Department of History and Art History
George Mason University

Dear Professor Barnes,

I am very excited to apply for the position of Assistant Professor of Modern German History at GMU. The position as described fits both my interests and skillsets exceptionally well. I am currently a Lecturer in the Department of History at the University of Virginia and a consultant for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. I am a scholar of Modern Germany and the Holocaust, with additional research interests in digital humanities, genocide studies, and spatial approaches to history. Previously, I held the inaugural Blumkin Professorship of Holocaust and Genocide Studies at the University of Nebraska-Omaha. Due to my mother's terminal cancer diagnosis, I returned to Virginia in 2015 to be nearby. There, I was asked to serve as the Executive Director of the Virginia Holocaust Museum. I left the museum in 2016 to return to my true love of research and teaching in academia at UVA.

My first book, *Marching into Darkness: the Wehrmacht and the Holocaust in Belarus* (Harvard University Press, 2014), investigated the local involvement of the German Army in Nazi genocidal policy. Support from Fulbright and Harry Frank Guggenheim Fellowships allowed me to explore important social historical concepts including individual complicity in genocide, organizational cultures, and social climates using German soldiers as a vehicle. In addition to exploring the nature and motivations behind participation in murder, I also uncovered complex involvement in sexual violence, theft, and rescue behavior. This book won the Thomas J. Wilson for best first book from HUP and received an Honorable Mention for the biennial Sybil Milton Memorial Book Prize for Best Book on a Topic Related to the Holocaust from the German Studies Association. A reviewer in the AHR described it as "the most convincing, most complex, and in the English language certainly the most important contribution to this crucial area of Holocaust history, of military history, and of German history."

My second book, *The Holocaust in Eastern Europe* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), by contrast is a far-reaching analysis and overview of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe which fills a surprising gap in available texts by not only focusing geographically on the East but also including topics such as the German imagination of Eastern Europe, the effects of Soviet occupation, and important new areas of Holocaust research such as sexual violence. An early review has called it a "highly accessible" book which presents "the perspectives of both victims and perpetrators, and juxtaposing macro-level historic changes with local contexts and individual experiences." I have also published in the *Washington Post*, *German Studies Review*, *Central European History*, and *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*.

In my current project, I apply both a microhistorical and multi-scalar approach to examine the evolution and role of the Janowska concentration camp in Lviv, Ukraine. This integrated history, *Between the Wires: The Janowska Camp and the Holocaust in Lviv*, focuses on the camp as a unique hybrid of slave labor camp, transit camp, and extermination center. It offers a glimpse into the confluence of extermination and labor policy, survival strategies, and the judicial and testimonial memory of both perpetrators and survivors situated in a multi-ethnic city of Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians which experienced both Soviet and Nazi occupation. A related article will appear in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* this winter. I have also received an NEH Summer Stipend to work on this project.

I have worked in the digital humanities for eleven years and incorporate digital, spatial, and interdisciplinary approaches in my own research. My interest in digital history began in graduate school when I was invited to join the Holocaust Geographies Collaborative, an interdisciplinary group of historical geographers, GIScientists, 3D modelers, and historians. We recently published an edited volume, *Geographies of the Holocaust* (Indiana University Press, 2014), which examined the challenges and opportunities of using both GIScience and spatial theory in studying the Holocaust. I employ the DH in both teaching and research. For example, I am currently building an historical GIS with the UVA Scholars' Lab, mapping 17,000 Jewish work card holders from the Lviv Ghetto. In this, I am also

working with the Center for Urban History in Lviv on what is a truly interdisciplinary and transnational project. I am also mapping and modeling the Janowska camp for the book project. In addition, I lead an interdisciplinary group of undergraduates and DH professionals working on a series of [projects](#) including a social network analysis of the Janowska camp perpetrators, dynamic mapping of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe, and mapping Himmler's appointment book 1941-1942. I presented on this project at the German Studies Association Conference this year. I have also presented my digital work at the German Historical Institute in DC and at an EHRI conference in Lviv.

My love of teaching and interacting with students greatly influenced my decision to return to academia. I find challenging students and watching them achieve incredibly rewarding and enjoy bringing the world of the historian to life in the classroom. I am also particularly proud of driving the establishment of an undergraduate minor in Holocaust and Genocide studies at UNO. I teach a diverse portfolio of undergraduate courses including History of Modern Germany (and Nazi Germany), History of the Holocaust, Modern European History, Jewish History, History of Eastern Europe, Holocaust in Film, Comparative Genocide, World Civilizations (1650 to Present), Mass Atrocities and the Law, and Historical Methodology. At UVA, I have also developed and taught courses on the History of Antisemitism and, given my experience in the museum world, an upper level course in Public History.

I have built and am currently teaching a course on Digital History where students are exposed to the Digital Humanities via readings on topics ranging from methodology to theory to the ethical practice of DH, Skype guest lecturers (Ted Underwood and Paul Jaskot), and digital "sandbox" periods which allow experimentation with various platforms. The primary assignment is a born digital project focused on slavery at UVA and relying on both digital resources such as databases as well as archival documents in Special Collections. Given the prominence and resources of the Rosenzweig Center, I look forward to the opportunity to develop additional courses and to teach current offerings such as HIST 390 and HIST 395. Finally, I have taught and mentored graduate students in both history and interdisciplinary projects and look forward to the opportunity to do so at GMU.

My teaching routinely challenges students to discover the complexity of history through assignments incorporating creative, digital approaches. For example, in my Holocaust class, student groups completed a visualization project resulting in documentaries, graphic novels, and models, among other materials. Students also heavily integrated the use of the USC Visual History Archive of survivor testimony into their projects. In my comparative genocide classes, I effectively employed an innovative transnational role-playing and simulation based on a fictional modern genocide in Congo which also formed the basis for a published scholarly journal article. In a Modern European History course, students used mapping rather than a research paper to make a historical argument. A student wrote of this assignment that "This visualization was the most interesting and unique project I have done as a history major and I am grateful for the opportunity to have learnt so much by doing it." Students in my History of Museums class partnered with a local exhibit design firm to create a professional exhibit currently on permanent display. These students also practiced the craft of history by using the UVA Special Collections as their primary source base.

Student evaluations consistently reflect my professionalism and the high level of enthusiasm I bring to the classroom while recognizing the challenging pedagogy of my classes. One student wrote "It is rare to come across a teacher who wants his students to succeed as much as Beorn does. I am very fortunate to have had him as a professor before I graduate." Another wrote that "Dr. Beorn is probably the best teacher I've had at UVA. Incredibly approachable, unbelievably knowledgeable and passionate about the subject and just a fantastic lecturer." In addition, I was honored for my teaching by two of UVA's prestigious secret societies in my first year at the university.

I look forward to the opportunity to contribute to the academic life of the GMU History Department. Please do not hesitate to contact me at beorn@virginia.edu or (434) 422-0919 if you have any questions or require any additional information.



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