

The University of Georgia
2015 Academic Affairs Faculty Symposium
Unicoi Conference Center
March 27-28, 2015

Panel II - Graduate Student Experience

presentation by
Derrick Angermeier¹
PhD Student, Department of History
Franklin College of Arts and Sciences

If I had to do it all again, repeating the first two years of my UGA graduate career with the knowledge I now have, I would largely pursue the same path I had pursued. In the past two years, I have presented my work at three conferences. I have had the distinct pleasure of being a guest lecturer on four different occasions. I founded and continue to run an academic workshop for the History Department. Perhaps most importantly, I have had the honor of leading two breakout sections attached to the History of Western Society since 1500 course. I have accomplished these professional development goals all the while taking three foreign language courses, earning two teaching awards, taking an extra pedagogy class, and finishing the coursework requirements of my degree. I have had a very successful two years at the University of Georgia and would not change any of it.

That being said I am a unique case within my own department. I am a European PhD student in a department that is nationally known for recruiting outstanding graduate students who predominantly study the history of the American South. The department is now trending well in their recruitment of graduate student outside of the US South which is a testament to the superbly well-rounded faculty present in the History Department. However, my PhD cohort featured three other scholars focusing on American history. Therefore, the coursework available in my field was naturally limited. As a result, I decided that I needed to take ownership of my own graduate career in order to maximize my experiences and become the best PhD candidate that I possibly could.

I have taken every opportunity available to me. While accomplishing departmental goals, I have also worked towards my own career aspirations. I have never been afraid to ask a professor to let me pursue a project that reaches a middle ground between their course goal and my own goals. For example, I, as a historian of Nazi Germany, took a US Southern History course in which the end project was a historiography paper on some topic within Southern History. I could have accomplished a paper in that field, but it would not have served me very well. So I approached James Cobb, a nationally recognized expert in Southern History, and asked for the opportunity to analyze two historiographic trends I noticed in Southern and German history. He liked the idea and now I have a paper with publishing potential. I could have relinquished myself to a fate of limited and indirect coursework, but I instead took ownership and ensured that my first two years in the program were truly valuable.

Therefore, if we are seeking to transform graduate education, I think we need to be more mindful of this process as professional development. While we are in many ways students, we are nonetheless engaging in the exercise of advancing our professional expertise. Students should be made aware that they can tailor their department's goals to work for their own personal goals and faculty should be flexible in allowing students to accomplish said tasks. By encouraging graduate students to take ownership of their

graduate careers, students will generate interesting work, meet deadlines quicker, and reach the job market much more accomplished.

¹*Derrick Angermeier is presently a second year PhD student in the History Department of the University of Georgia under the direction of Dr. John H. Morrow, Jr. He previously earned BA's in both History and Political Science from the University of Georgia and a Master's Degree in History from East Tennessee State University under the direction of Dr. Stephen Fritz. His major field is European History, specifically German, even more specifically Nazi Germany. While his MA work sought to tie Nazi actions to their ideology, his doctoral research focuses on how Nazis portray history and how those portrayals represent ideological consistency among the ever-inconsistent Nazi Party. Since attending UGA, Derrick has earned two teaching awards and presented his work at three conferences. Most recently, he presented a paper on Nazi interpretations of the First World War at the 82nd Annual Society of Military History Conference. Once finished with the PhD, he will pursue a University-level teaching position and continue research on Nazism.*