



Department of German, Nordic, and Slavic+

Scandinavian Studies Newsletter

Fall 2020

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A Message from the Program Chair



Greetings to all of you. We sincerely hope that this newsletter finds you well and COVID-free. We also hope that our newsletter will provide you with some interesting reading material now that we're once again pretty much confined to our homes.

Needless to say, this has been a very strange semester for students, staff, and faculty. As you probably know, we started off with smaller classes taught face-to-face, but because of a surge of students testing positive for COVID, we soon had to shift to online teaching. After a couple of weeks, the COVID cases diminished, and once again faculty and staff teaching low-enrollment classes were allowed back on campus in order to resume face-to-face teaching. Some chose to do so, while others did not. After Thanksgiving, we have all been teaching online. The winter break has been extended by one week, and spring break has been eliminated. This is, of course, an attempt to keep the virus from spreading.

We have both good and sad news. We are delighted to welcome two new faculty members: Benjamin Mier-Cruz and Liina-Ly Roos. Both are featured in this newsletter. They bring to the Nordic Unit interesting, new courses and research projects, and we're very happy to have them as colleagues. The sad news is that Peggy Hager, our lecturer in Norwegian, decided to retire. We're going to miss her very much. She, too, is featured in this newsletter.

Among other things, our newsletter includes a list of Scandinavian and Finnish movies recommended by faculty, staff, and students. We figured that during the holidays, you might like suggestions for entertainment, since spending time with extended family and friends is somewhat risky these days.

From the Nordic unit: Our best wishes to you for a happy and peaceful holiday season. Please stay safe.

- Program Chair, Kirsten Wolf

Photo credits

Cover photo: Van Hise Hall at the University of Wisconsin-Madison is pictured on June 8, 2020. (Photo by Bryce Richter / UW-Madison)

Above: The W-shaped flower bed in front of the Mosse Humanities Building is pictured at the University of Wisconsin-Madison on June 15, 2020. The building is home to the College of Letters and Science. (Photo by Bryce Richter / UW-Madison)

In This Issue

Fall 2020

**Newsletter is available online at
gns.wisc.edu/gns-newsletters**

Page 4: **Research in the Time of COVID**

Page 5: **Updates from Norden: Olivia Larson**

Page 6: **Welcome Benjamin Mier-Cruz**

Page 7: **Welcome Liina-Ly Roos**

Page 8: **Notes from Our Alumni: Hilary-Joy Virtanen**

Page 8: **Notes from Our Alumni: Laura Jacobson Øraker**

Page 9: **Notes from Our Alumni: Eva Branson**

Page 10: **New Grant for Scandinavian Folk Arts**

Page 10: **Knausgård Beyond Autofiction**

Page 11: **Peggy Hager Retires**

Page 12: **Autumn 2020 Film Recommendations**

Page 14: **Faculty and Staff Updates**

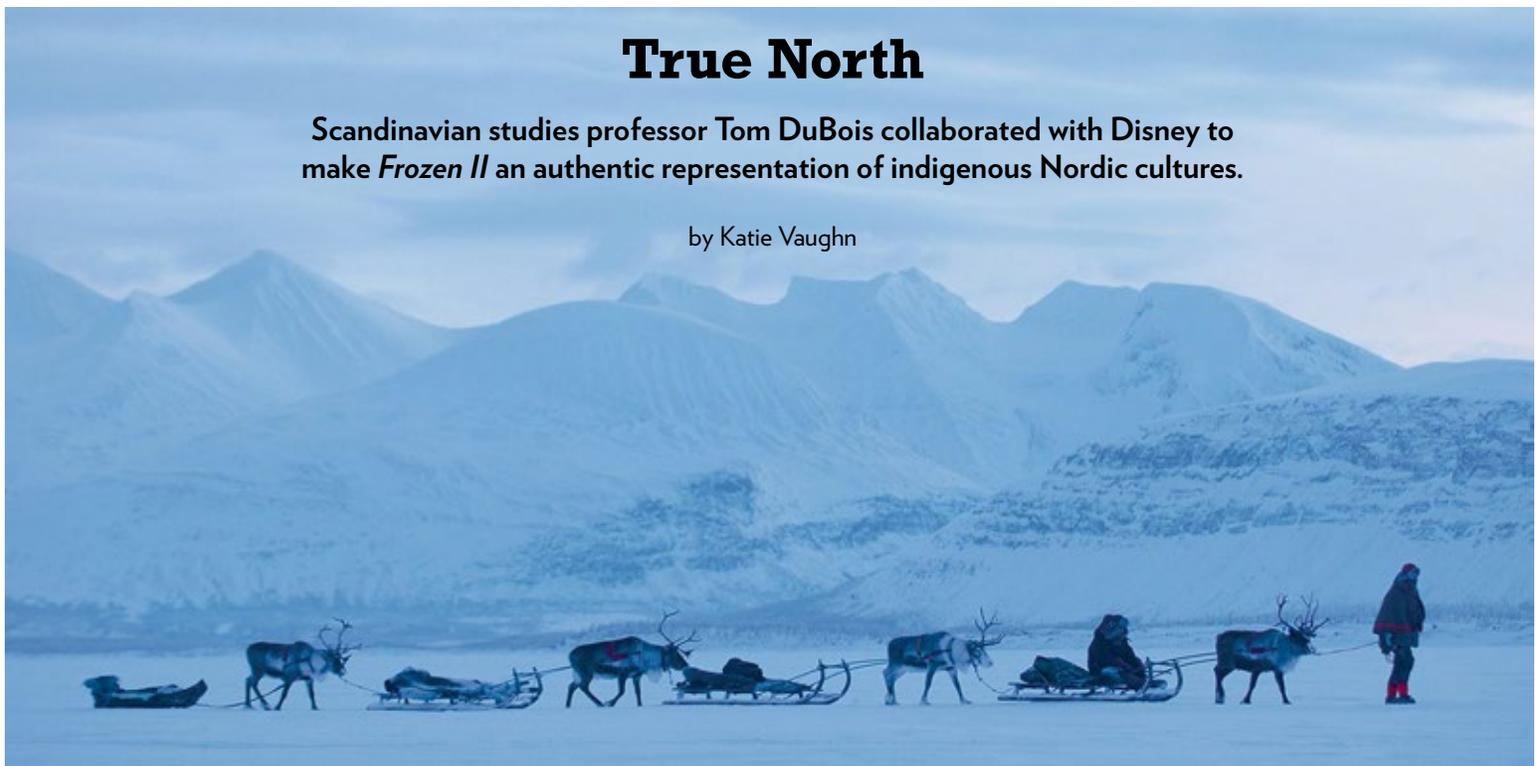
Page 18: **Graduate Student Updates**

Page 21: **Study Abroad Year in Sweden...or What Was Supposed to be a Year: Kendall Allen-King**

True North

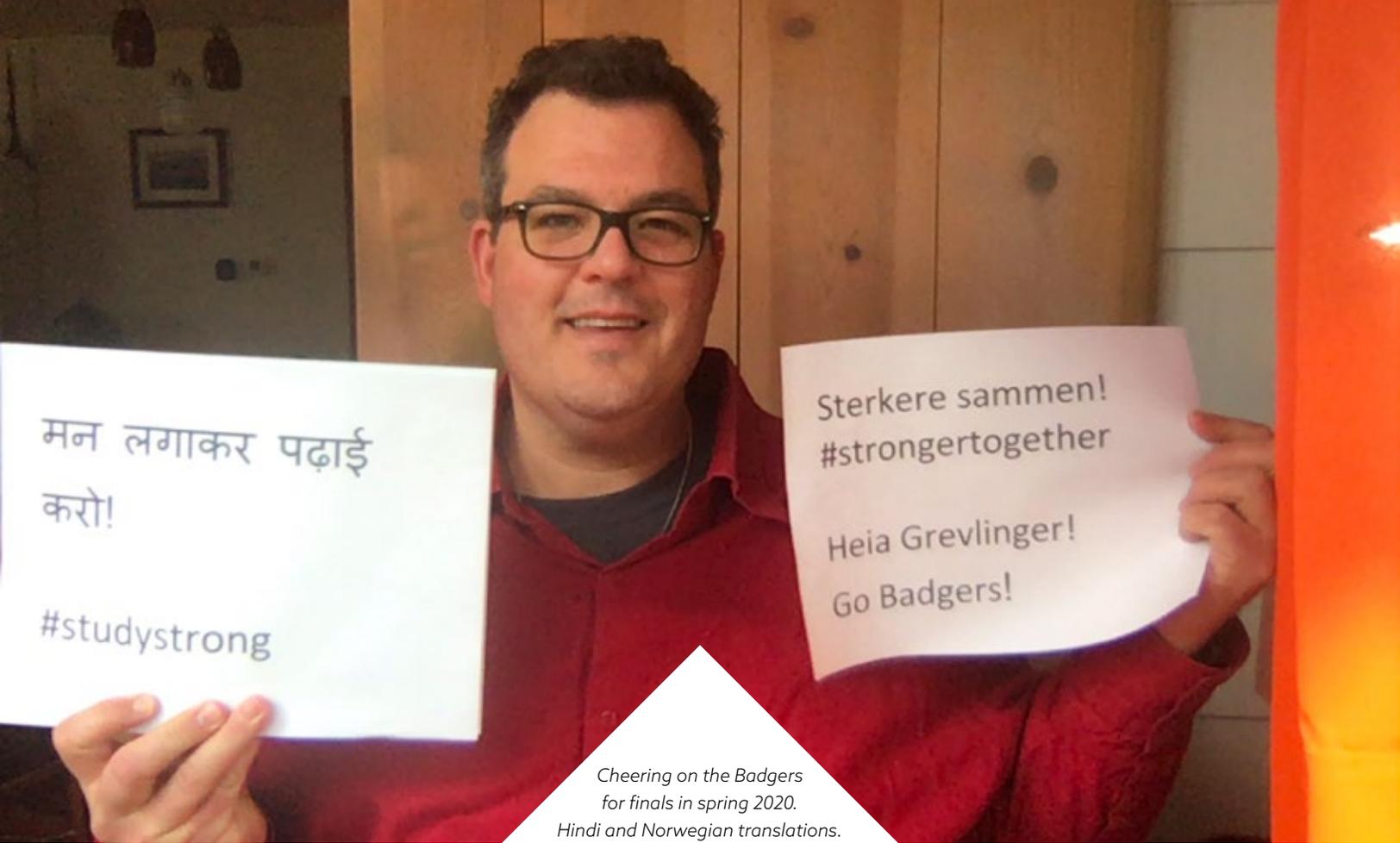
Scandinavian studies professor Tom DuBois collaborated with Disney to make *Frozen II* an authentic representation of indigenous Nordic cultures.

by Katie Vaughn



Since time immemorial, Sámi people—Sápmelaččat—have lived in the northern tracts of what today is known as Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. They practiced a largely sustainable way of life based on hunting, fishing and reindeer husbandry, living alongside their farming neighbors for many centuries, in fact, for thousands of years. Through pernicious legal maneuvers and assertions of racial difference, the rights of Sámi people were abridged over the 1700s and 1800s by leaders of neighboring states, who asserted ownership over Sámi lands and viewed the Sámi as a subject people to be controlled, absorbed or removed.

Read full article at: <https://ls.wisc.edu/news/true-north>



*Cheering on the Badgers
for finals in spring 2020.
Hindi and Norwegian translations.*

Research in the Time of COVID

The title suggests a story perhaps like the 1985 novel by Gabriel García Márquez, *Love in the Time of Cholera*. The experience of a librarian in these days of quarantine, social distance, and working from home are certainly interesting, but nothing as intriguing as the novel. Maintaining an inclusive and equitable environment has made the mission even more challenging, but so rewarding.

Since the cancellation of in-person classes last March, just around the time of spring break, my colleagues in the library and I have been trying to figure out ways that we can get information to the people. There have been some amazing strides to keep teaching, learning, and research continuing on campus. The world of education was helped by many databases, information providers, and library

consortia, opening up their digital archives to subscribers and libraries that have physical copies of books that could not be accessed. A mind for triage and creative thinking was helpful during this phase. During this time, I even ordered an item for an examination and received it and put it on my porch so that the student would have it on hand for preparations. These types of efforts continued until libraries opened up again, and we moved into a new phase.

Once the next step started, we opened collections for pick-up by appointment and slowly opened up appointments for university faculty, staff, and students to access collections. As we approached the beginning of the semester, we had to deal with the many months of items that needed to be marked as received and cataloged. We also started trying

to purchase as many new items that are available digitally as possible, so that off-campus students and staff who are can access them. Before the beginning of the semester, I received an inquiry for an item from a member of the unit about a book that had already been ordered but was lost somewhere in the many boxes that we have waiting. This time I ordered the book from Iceland to be delivered to my own house, and then I scanned the needed part, so that students again could access it.

As we move further into the semester, each day we have to find new ways to address new challenges that appear in this ever-changing landscape. If we are able to continue to provide what we always have been able to, it is a great day; if we are unable to, we will find a way around it.

Author: Todd Michelson-Ambelang

Updates from Norden: Olivia Larson

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the beginning of school for my second year in Norden, the Scandinavian language house of the International Learning Community (ILC), was definitely not the transition I experienced last year, and not as integrative as many had hoped for. However, I found the Norden house to be a comforting source of familiarity—an anchor from the previous year that made my return to campus less strange and gave me something to truly look forward to. As a Norwegian speaker, hearing all three Scandinavian languages spoken together, discussing various cultural and historical topics, and talking again with the excellent Dr. Mellor, are weekly staples that bring me positivity where other things bring stress. Norden has also been a great way for me to still feel connected with others, despite the obvious challenges and health concerns that make socializing more difficult. When entering Norden house this year, I knew that I would have something in common with everyone there. We are connected because of a common interest. Whether it be language, culture, history, or something else, we all have some interest in the Nordic countries, which is something that the difficulties brought by the pandemic cannot upset. Awareness of this made all the difference to me and put my mind at ease through the rough beginning of the school year.

Last year in Norden was very different. There were in-person seminars, dinners, and movie nights. When I decided to return, I knew it would not be the same, and sometimes it is challenging for me to remember how things were and not compare them to how they are now. But with every struggle comes an opportunity for growth, innovation, and the chance to find the positive in a difficult situation. No, Norden is not the same, but for me it is still very enjoyable. The online seminars are always interesting, and open group discussion is encouraged; they allow us to get to know one another and feel connected while we explore various topics. The people who live in the hall still talk to each other, just now with masks on and at a safe distance.

Norden has had to change almost everything else, but for me the sense of unity and familiarity it creates was not lost, and being a part of it has made this difficult time easier for me. I am a proud member of Norden and am glad that I returned for a second year!

This year's Norden students gather outside the dorm.



Welcome Benjamin Mier-Cruz



Benjamin Mier-Cruz discovered Scandinavian Studies while studying German and secondary education at Arizona State University. He was studying to become a high school German language teacher, but after visiting the classroom, he decided to focus on German literature instead. In order to fulfill credits toward his degree, he enrolled in an introductory course to Scandinavian literature and fell in love with the poetry of Finland-Swedish author Edith Södergran. The bilingual Swedish-English collection of her poetry inspired Benjamin to learn Swedish, which pulled him in the direction of Scandinavian Studies. His dissertation, completed at the University of California, Berkeley, addressed Södergran's representations of gender and her reception of Nietzsche's writing, a project that combined his interests in German philosophy and Swedish-language literature. Our newly merged department welcomes Benjamin's varied arsenal of academic skills.

Before arriving to the Department of German, Nordic, and Slavic, Benjamin taught courses in Swedish language and Scandinavian and German literature and film at the University of Oregon. Before that, Benjamin taught at Augustana College for four years, where he helped to revise their course

offerings and substantially increased the number of majors. Benjamin loves to teach courses in Swedish language and Scandinavian crime fiction, but he is particularly passionate about addressing difficult issues in contemporary Scandinavian literature and film. His courses on queer and transgender cinema are connected to his current research projects, and his current course on Scandinavian authors and filmmakers of color reflects his primary research interest. His book in progress traces a history of Swedish documentary filmmaking focused on subjects of color, but most importantly, his monograph examines Swedish documentary films by filmmakers of color. Benjamin is particularly interested in highlighting and critiquing the films of Swedes of color while decentering whiteness in critical discussions on race in Sweden. As a scholar of color, Benjamin finds it especially important to highlight the works of non-white Scandinavian writers and directors in his research and teaching, including his Swedish language courses. A part of Benjamin's appointment here at Wisconsin is in the Department of Gender and Women's studies, which is as pleased as we are to have him as a colleague.

Translation goes hand in hand with Benjamin's research and teaching. The glaring lack of English translations of Nordic women of color has inspired him to translate and seek publication for Fanna Ndow Norrby's book *Black Woman*, a harrowing multimedia project that uses social media to expose everyday racism in Sweden. He has translated Chinese-Swedish poet Li Li for Princeton's Inventory, and his translations of Finland-Swedish author Elmer Diktonius's letters and poetry were awarded the Susan Sontag Prize for Translation. His translation of Stig Dagerman's classic Swedish novel *A Burnt Child* was published by University of Minnesota Press in 2013 and republished last year by Penguin UK.

The Association of Swedish Teachers and Researchers in America (ASTRA) has long valued Benjamin's contributions as an officer of the society, who has kept an eye on ASTRA's web and social media presence. Benjamin is the primary author of the ASTRA Statement on Black Lives Matter and was recently selected to become Vice-President, so will take over as President in October of 2022.

Benjamin is excited to be at the University of Madison-Wisconsin, and he has enjoyed getting to know his students, even if it is over Zoom. He is looking forward to teaching in the classroom again, but until then, he enjoys exploring creative ways to teach and share his passion for Swedish language, literature, and film. He is extremely impressed with his students' commitment to learning and their ability to find joy in the online classroom during these difficult times. We are indeed fortunate to have such an experienced teacher helping us navigate the intricacies of online language learning.

Author: Susan Brantly

Welcome Liina-Ly Roos

As a scholar who writes about childhood in Nordic and Baltic literature and film, it is perhaps not surprising that Liina-Ly Roos found her initial interest in Nordic studies during her childhood. Watching Finnish television from her home in Tallinn, Estonia, and hearing Finnish and Swedish from her mother, a librarian for the National Library of Estonia, the young Liina-Ly became fascinated by the vibrant and interesting countries and cultures to the north and west of Estonia. Occasional trips to Finland and Sweden deepened her familiarity with the countries, as did contact with relatives who had emigrated to Sweden before or during the Soviet era. Her real “Ah-ha!” moment, however, came in junior high school, when she stumbled upon a book-length literary analysis of the novel *The Master and Margarita* by Mikhail Bulgakov. “I instantly knew: This is the sort of work I want to do!” says Liina-Ly, as she set her sights on a career in academia. Gaining the training to realize that goal involved study first at the University of Tallinn and then at the University of Washington. It also involved gaining proficiency in Swedish, Finnish, English, German, Russian, and Latvian, in addition to her native Estonian. It was also at the University of Washington that she realized how enjoyable and intellectually stimulating it is to analyze and discuss films, television, and visual arts.



Liina-Ly Roos teaches and conducts research on literature, film, and television from Sweden, Sápmi, Finland, Estonia, and Latvia, with particular attention to “not quiteness,” the term Roos uses for situations of child characters who through processes of proximate migration or colonization are both fully part of a wider society and yet perpetually somehow separated from it. What does it mean to move from, say, Finland to Sweden, and how does that process of migration compare with the experiences of a person moving from Somalia or Poland? Roos’s research engages with issues of race, migration, memory, and trauma, frequently within works that center on the experience of a child, a favorite focus in Nordic literary tradition. She is working on a monograph that will transform her dissertation into a book and is enjoying teaching courses for Madison students this term on Nordic children’s literature and on Nordic film. Her classes have drawn undergraduate and graduate students from both within and outside the department, and are filled with lively discussion, despite the online mode of delivery that the current pandemic has necessitated. Liina-Ly is impressed by the engagement and energy of UW–Madison students, whom she describes as motivated, thoughtful, hardworking, and eager.

In addition to time in Finland and Sweden (she holds a particular fondness for the University of Lund, but also does a lot of work in the film archives in Stockholm), Liina-Ly has lived in Seattle, Minneapolis, Pittsburgh, and Bloomington, Indiana. She reports liking the friendly feel of Madison—it is both an intimate and livable small city and at the same time is full of cultural riches and events. She also likes the closeness of nature in town and in the area. As an avid walker, she has enjoyed exploring Madison’s many neighborhoods and parks on foot.

If you are looking for recommendations for good films to watch during these times of Covid shutdown, Liina-Ly suggests the recent (2018) Swedish film directed by Gabriela Pichler *Amatörer* [Amateurs], the classic (1990) Finnish Aki Kaurismäki film *Tulitikkutehtaan tyttö* [Match-Factory Girl], and the Latvian Signe Baumanē’s (2014) animated *Akmeņi manās kabatās* [Rocks in My Pockets]. Look for those on your favorite video streaming platform to get a sense of the varied and exciting works at the center of Liina-Ly’s research and teaching.

Author: Tom DuBois

Notes from Our Alumni: Hilary-Joy Virtanen

Since completing my dissertation in 2014, I have been Assistant Professor of Finnish & Nordic Studies at Finlandia University in Hancock, Michigan. As the only professor in this program, I have a lot of autonomy, and I have developed a program that students really seem to enjoy. My favorite classes to teach are Finnish language, the *Kalevala*, and a study-abroad course in Finland. My students and I have visited prisons, schools, court trials, Finnish baseball games, museums, and more, using ethnographic and travel writing to share our experiences with a broader public.

While Finlandia is a teaching university, I am still actively engaged in research. I have created an exhibition and published on WWI antiwar dissent, received a grant with sociologist Michael Loukinen from the American Scandinavian Foundation for a documentary series on Finnish-American folk culture, and am working now with Scott Mellor on a special issue of the *Journal of Finnish Studies* on Finland-Swedes and the autonomous province of Åland. I am also affiliated with the Center for the Study of Upper Midwestern Cultures, which keeps me connected with UW in exciting ways.

I continue to serve as assistant editor of the *Journal of Finnish Studies*. I participate in conference and public humanities planning committees as well as grant review panels. Finally, I am a member of the Board of Trustees of the Finlandia Foundation National (not affiliated with Finlandia University), a philanthropic organization that promotes Finnish culture in the United States. For all this work in the classroom, the field, and the community, I received my university's Distinguished Faculty Award in 2019, showing me that I've done something right with my life. My education at UW has put me into the career and the place I always wanted to be.



Notes from Our Alumni: Laura Jacobson Øraker

I graduated from UW–Madison with a bachelor's degree in Scandinavian Studies in 2005. My senior year was spent studying abroad at the University of Copenhagen. Before classes had even begun, I had fallen in love with the city and explored all it had to offer, some of which even included dance classes. After graduation, I moved back to Copenhagen to complete a dance performance education. Early into that second year, I met a charming Danish man, who is now my husband. Let us just say my life took an unexpected turn, and instead of following the career path I had imagined, I embraced the adventure and moved to Sweden as a “love refugee.”

In 2009, I completed an M.S. in Public Health from the University of Malmö. A few months prior to graduation, the adventure continued in Nuuk, Greenland, where I was able to finish my thesis and defend it via Skype.

The two years in Nuuk enabled me to hone my spoken Danish, as I worked with children. Children are very forgiving of mispronunciations and grammatical mistakes.

New job opportunities brought us to New Jersey, where I worked for CASA, a non-profit organization that advocates for foster children in the court system. Our oldest son was born in 2011, and we began thinking about settling more permanently. Nuuk, Greenland, seemed to offer the best of both worlds, half-way between the U.S. and Denmark. So, in 2015 we traded skyscrapers out for icebergs, FOMO for JOMO. We had missed the raw beauty of the Arctic; the ability to sail to the ice fjord, visit abandoned settlements and Norse ruins, catch fish for dinner, and pluck berries for dessert. We welcomed our second son into this modern, yet isolated oasis.

Continued on next page

My study of Scandinavian culture, literature, and language combined with a degree in Public Health enable me to thrive and work in Greenland. The primary languages here are Greenlandic and Danish, though in Nuuk, you can get by with only speaking Danish. I work for the government of Greenland in the Agency of Prevention and Social Affairs under the section, *Paarisa*, which means, “We take care of each other” in Greenlandic. Our focus is on health promotion, and the new public health program was just launched. My team and I are responsible for implementing projects to ensure the well-being and healthy development of all children, aged 0–18.



Right: Laura with her family.

Notes from Our Alumni: Eva Branson

After graduation, I took off to Denmark to pursue an internship at the American embassy and with the hope of getting accepted into my dream master’s program, Advanced Migration Studies, at the University of Copenhagen. I accomplished both of those things. The COVID-19 crisis has allowed me to extend my internship until December, and I started on my master’s program back in September. My background in Scandinavian Studies gave me a humanistic perspective that I did not get anywhere else during my undergraduate education, and I have already used it a lot in my new humanities program.

Living in Denmark has also been made a lot easier by my language skills (including my understanding of Swedish and Norwegian), which I have many Scandinavian Studies professors to thank for. I am lucky enough to work in a Danish-speaking office where I am constantly pushed to use and to improve my language skills. My personal connections in the department have also made establishing a network here so much easier.

As I continue to try to build my life in Denmark, I have been applying for student jobs, which, surprise, is also a lot easier because of my Scandinavian Studies degree. Every time I write a cover letter, I feel especially grateful to Claus and Nete for their help putting the final touches on my and my classmates’ professional Danish. Being competent in another language and understanding another culture, whether I am in Denmark or the US, is such a valuable skill to bring to the table, and although I haven’t landed a student job yet, I am sure that my intercultural competences will be a deciding factor when I do.



Above: Eva Branson with her sister Sarah and their mother at graduation in December.

New Grant for Scandinavian Folk Arts

The Sustaining Scandinavian Folk Arts in the Upper Midwest team is excited to announce a new three-year, \$1.5 million dollar folk arts and cultures grant. Since 2017, Marcus Cederström, Nathan Gibson, and Anna Rue have worked with artists, musicians, and scholars from five Nordic countries and eight different states. Hundreds of people have attended these events, partnered with the project, and shared amazing work at public events, in field schools, in university classes, as well as at a variety of public productions, from online and traveling exhibitions to CDs to books to short films.

This grant will build on the events and connections the team has forged, but with several new concepts, including an artist- and musician-in-residence program. The residency programs will begin in 2021 and are investments in master artists who will be invited to campus for a semester to work with campus collections, community members and organizations, scholars, and students to inspire and inform their art and their education. This program will help ensure a collaborative environment that engages people at all levels of competency. Hopefully, as the university aims to return to some semblance of normalcy next year, you'll be able to meet the artists and to learn from and be inspired by their amazing work.

Of course, there will be more to come, like an annual symposium that provides a gathering place for artists, community members, and students to celebrate Nordic culture and heritage, exchange ideas, and practice art forms. Please visit folklife.wisc.edu for more details about the artists who have been integral to the project, upcoming events, and ongoing public programming such as our exhibition *Traveling Traditions: Nordic Folk Arts in the Upper Midwest*.

Right: Valorie Arrowsmith speaks on stage about her band weaving and Swedish heritage at the 2019 Show of Hands: Art in Education symposium in Madison, WI.



Knausgård Beyond Autofiction

Norwegian literary star Karl Ove Knausgård and his six-volume autobiographical novel *My Struggle* has had a profound impact on the transatlantic literary scene. First published in Norway from 2009–2011, *My Struggle* has now been translated into more than 20 languages. The monumental novel is one of the most important literary achievements of the 21st century, widely hailed for its heroic exploration of selfhood, compulsive readability, and restless experimentation with form and genre. Among scholars, a consensus quickly grew that the Knausgård novel was one of several so-called autofictional novels with a blending of autobiography and fiction. But designating it as autofiction, and thus as part of a new literary genre, is not at the heart of most readers' engagement with Knausgård's novel.

That is why Dean Krouk and I decided to invite scholars to contribute to a special issue of *Scandinavian Studies* under the headline of "Knausgård beyond Autofiction," to see if it was possible to bring the academic approaches to *My Struggle* more in line with the international "Knausgård phenomenon" of the 2010s. The result was published in *Scandinavian Studies* vol. 92, no. 3, in the late summer of 2020: six articles by scholars from the US, the UK, Iceland, the Netherlands, and Norway illuminated the aesthetic, ethical, and sociopolitical aspects of *My Struggle*. We hope that this volume will compel readers to find new ways not only to appreciate Knausgård's novel, but also to contextualize, problematize, and understand his contribution to 21st-century literature.

Peggy Hager Retires



The Nordic program wishes a wonderful retirement to Senior Lecturer Peggy Hager! After 25 years of teaching in Wisconsin (including two decades at UW–Madison) and living and working in Norway for four years, Peggy decided it was time to retire in 2020. As her colleagues and students know, Peggy was devoted to excellent and innovative language teaching. She inspired countless Norwegian learners with her enthusiasm, care, and individualized attention. Upon her retirement, the Scandinavian Studies program contacted former students and received an outpouring of gratitude and admiration for Peggy’s approach to the classroom. Many former students mentioned her personable and engaging manner alongside her high expectations for their language learning. She made it a priority to integrate new technologies into language teaching in a student-focused way, and she was a pioneer of intensive summer online Norwegian in recent years. Peggy was always reflecting actively on pedagogical improvements and innovations for her courses, without losing sight of the core importance of the teacher-student relationship.

In addition to her phenomenal achievement in teaching, Peggy was active in NORTANA (Norwegian Researchers and Teachers of North America) as a board member. She also gave presentations about language pedagogy at various conferences and other venues over the years, most recently at the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study (SASS) conference in Madison in May 2019, when she spoke about teaching intensive summer

courses in Norwegian. She has also given a variety of lectures and presentations about Norwegian culture, history, and society to heritage groups over the years, including local Sons of Norway groups and the University’s Continuing Education programs. Peggy remains active in the community through her membership on the board of the Norwegian American Genealogical Center and the Naeseth Library in Madison.

Regarding retirement plans, Peggy reflects that language teaching (especially online) requires a tremendous amount of detail work. In retirement, she hopes to procrastinate more and focus less on details. She plans to enjoy a lot of time outdoors—something she emphasized in her classes as an integral part of Norwegian culture. The Nordic program has been incredibly fortunate to have Peggy contribute her expert teaching in Norwegian, and we wish her the best as she lives out the ideal of *friluftsliv* in retirement!



Above: Photo of Peggy’s students at backyard dinner hosted by Peggy at her home.

Right: Photo of Peggy enjoying a summer evening dinner with students.

Photos by Becky Olson '08



Autumn 2020 Film Recommendation from Nordic Studies Faculty, Staff, and Graduate Students

Summer of '92

Recommended by Claus Andersen

I'm probably not the right person to recommend a Scandinavian film, since I rarely watch Scandinavian movies or TV-shows. And since I am not really interested in soccer, I probably shouldn't recommend a film about soccer either. Yet, this is exactly what I will do.

Summer of '92, from 2015, directed by Kasper Barfoed, is a film about Denmark winning the European Championship in Soccer in 1992. The film treats its subject with humor and gentle irony, following the team and its controversial coach. It is the kind of film that critics would call "light" and that film scholars surely could care less about. But it describes the innocence and optimism of the early 1990s poignantly and with heart: a time where the possibilities seemed endless; where Francis Fukuyama declared an "end of history;" and where Denmark— just weeks before their surprise win over World Champions of Germany—voted no to furthered integration in the EU. Or as the Danish foreign minister, who also is quoted in the movie, said at the time: "If you can't join them, beat them." *Summer of '92* is available on Netflix.

Babette's Feast

Recommended by Susan Brantly

Although I may not have much else in common with the current Pope, we both consider *Babette's Feast* (1987) a favorite. It is based on the short story by Karen Blixen/Isak Dinesen, with whom I have spent much time. It is visually interesting, funny, and uplifting. If you want to read about various interpretations of the film and the tale, you can find an essay I wrote about that linked to the GNS web site: <https://gns.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Reading-Karen-Blixens-Babettes-Feast-Brantly.pdf>

Atlantic Rhapsody

Recommended by Emily Beyer

Atlantic Rhapsody (1989) is a heartwarming documentary film from prolific Faroese filmmaker, Karin Ottarsdóttir. Over the course of one day, the camera flits from person to person in Tórshavn, covering many activities in the city. Take a journey online and be someone there too. Go through Ottardóttir's site to rent it and more: <http://bluebirdfilm.dk/>

Persona

Recommended by Joanna Scuth

My favorite Scandinavian film is *Persona* (1966). It's atmospheric and unsettling, and you spend the film wondering if there are really two women there, or just a woman and another side of herself. Its use of close ups on faces forces you to acknowledge their existence and allows you into their frailties and inner conflicts. There's also a feminist view—does the actress stop speaking to rebel against what a patriarchal society demands of her? What is a film about an actress who refuses to act saying? How do you interpret and understand the selective information that someone else chooses to reveal to you? What is more important, the said or the unsaid? Who has the most control over an identity, the person living it, or the society they are constrained by?

The Passion of Joan of Arc

Recommended by Kyle Swenson

I am recommending *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928) by Danish director Carl Theodor Dreyer. There is something about this early film aesthetic that simply could not be recreated today as it is not operating under the influence of canon. Bold, intuitive, and innocent, are the words that come to mind when describing the atmosphere of the film and the approach of Dreyer. The film avoids both the pitfalls of mainstream cliches and the overwrought tendencies of the avantgarde.

Girlhood

Recommended by Dean Krouk

Heading south of Scandinavia, but exploring issues that are central to ongoing discussion in the region, Céline Sciamma's *Girlhood* (Bande de Filles, 2014) is the coming-of-age story of Marieme (Karidja Touré), a black teenager who joins a "gang of girls" in a rough Paris suburb. The exploration of race, class, and sexuality is textured and cliché-breaking, while the camerawork and performances are hypnotic. The film also includes an incredible lip-sync to Rihanna's "Diamonds."

Midsommar

Recommended by Tristan Matthias Mueller-Vollmer

Midsommar (2019). This artistic Swedish American folk-horror film about a pagan cult in the remote Swedish countryside has long, intense scenes with uneasy tension that will keep you at the edge of your seat and is chock-full of Scandinavian folklore references that many may appreciate. Being a horror film, *Midsommar* is not for the faint of heart, but is well worth watching for those who enjoy dark movies.

Krudttønden

Recommended by Nete Schmidt

I would highly recommend the new Danish movie *Krudttønden* or *The Day We Died* (2020), directed by Ole Christian Madsen.

It is a fictive movie based on real events, namely the 2015 attack on the venue Krudttønden and subsequent attack on the Jewish Synagogue in Copenhagen. It highlights the conflict between immigrants and the ethnic Danish population, but it doesn't stereotype either group. Rather, it gives a very nuanced picture of the terrorist attacker and the PET agents that pursued him. It gives extensive background stories about the protagonists, and you leave the film with a sensation of dread because of its topicality and relevance for what is happening in our country today: a culture clash, a clash of values, and a lack of obvious solution to the issues.

Woman at War

Recommended by Liina-Ly Roos

Woman at War (2018, Benedikt Erlingsson) is an Icelandic-Ukrainian comedy-drama about an Icelandic woman who is an environmental activist and a choir director. The film's combination of vast landscapes, music, comedy and a fight for justice is completely mesmerizing. It is available to stream on Hulu and Amazon Prime.

Wild Strawberries

Recommended by David Smith

I would recommend *Wild Strawberries*, the 1957 film by Ingmar Bergman, about an old man confronting his disappointments in life. It features haunting dream sequences and a masterful lead performance by Victor Sjöström. A work of art that will change you.

Fanny Alexander / My Life as a Dog / Let the Right One In

Recommended by Scott Mellor

Fanny and Alexander (1982), the long version. I saw the theatrical version of this movie in Sweden when it first came out and again in 1983 in the US with a Norwegian friend. I saw the long version while on German TV in 1984. Today it gives me a romanticized version of the Swedish past while at the same time reminding me of the time I spent in Sweden as an exchange student. The movie is about the Swedish past, and a young boy's struggle with the death of his father and remarriage of his mother. It is both a personal movie of the boy and yet can be read as a metaphor for Sweden.

My Life as a Dog (1985). I saw this movie in the US when it came out. Again, a romanticized vision of the rise of the social welfare state, the movie harps on nostalgia for an earlier, simpler time, through the experiences of a young boy, and to some extent, his female friend. It is both a growing up story and a story of the Swedish past.

Finally, *Let the Right One In* (2008). I saw this movie in Sweden with a friend from gymnasiet. He had seen it before and waited for me to realize that it takes place at the very gymnasium and year that we were both there. It is a horror movie, but it can be read as a metaphor of othering. An outcast, bullied boy befriends a young female vampire, who helps him in parts of his growing up experience.

FACULTY AND STAFF UPDATES



◀ Thomas DuBois

Like much of the world, Tom DuBois spent this year confronting the challenges of the pandemic, particularly in his duties as chair of GNS+. It was gratifying to see the acclaim garnered by *Frozen II*, a film that Tom consulted on, as well as the positive response to the books *Sacred to the Touch* (2018), *Sámi Media and Indigenous Agency in the Arctic North* (2020, co-authored by Coppélie Cocq), and *Songs of the Finnish Migration* (2020, co-edited by B. Marcus Cederström). The year also saw publication of the anthology *Myths, Tales and Poetry from Four Centuries of Sámi Literature* (2020, edited by Harald Gaski) for which Tom did much of the translating.

Liina-Ly Roos ▶

In 2020, Liina-Ly Roos was thrilled to accept the position of Assistant Professor in the GNS! During the chaotic spring and summer of navigating COVID-19, she managed to complete her article on parody music videos and Estonian public broadcasting as well as make some good progress on her book. In July, she and her husband Justin moved from Minneapolis to Madison, and they have been slowly exploring this beautiful town, mostly outdoors for now. She is excited to teach classes on Scandinavian film, television, and children's literature this year, and she is also looking forward to the cold and snowy winter.



Right: New GNS+ professor Liina-Ly Roos with the city of Tallinn in the background.



◀ Todd Michelson-Ambelang

Todd continues to serve the Nordic Unit as librarian, ordering books, films, and other materials and teaching classes on research methods to students. During his time working from home, he finished two articles, is finishing one now, and plans to continue. His research is found in two worlds: the world of medieval studies, focusing on outsiders, including those with disabilities, and strategies and histories of reading and information seeking in Madison, South Asia, and beyond. Unfortunately, due to COVID, he was unable to travel on a buying trip to Sápmi this summer, but he hopes to do this soon.



◀ Benjamin Mier-Cruz

Benjamin Mier-Cruz is Assistant Professor of Scandinavian Studies and Gender and Women's Studies. His research interests are modern Nordic literature and film with a focus on writers and filmmakers of color and intersectional representations of gender, sexuality, and race. Benjamin's current book project explores contemporary representations of non-whiteness in Scandinavian literature and visual culture. His additional research interests include transgender studies, black feminist theory, and German literature and film. He has recently written "Brown Eyed Boy: Narrating Internalized Oppression and Misogynoir in Jonas Hassen Khemiri's *Everything I Don't Remember*" and the co-authored "Dracula or Draculitz? Translational Forgery and Bram Stoker's 'Lost Version' of *Dracula*." Benjamin is also a translator.

Susan Brantly ▶

Among other things, 2020 is the year of cancelled plans and unexpected twists. A lot of energy has gone into producing engaging and informative online versions of classes. Fortunately, she is not new to the concept, having designed *19th Century Scandinavian Fiction* as an online class twenty years ago. A somewhat greater challenge has been her role as the Faculty Director of the Bradley Learning Community. This incoming class missed their high school graduation and their proms, so how to help them find new friends and a sense of community during a pandemic? Zoom works in mysterious ways. Otherwise, Susan continues her work as the editor of *Scandinavian Studies*, which is happily thriving.



Right: Susan visiting an old friend, Karen Blixen.



◀ Kirsten Wolf

Kirsten Wolf spent the entire summer holed up in her house in Madison with only the occasional trip to a grocery store. She spent one day outside of Dane County—this was to go to Milwaukee in order to help Sune, her son, move to a different apartment. Her yard and also her research benefitted greatly from the lockdown, and she had a productive summer. Among other things, she made quite some progress on *Vikings: An Encyclopedia of Conflict, Invasions, and Raids*, which she is writing in collaboration with Tristan Mueller-Vollmer, and also finished her translation into English (in collaboration with Marianne Kalinke) of Annette Lassen's book *Islændingasagaerens verden*.



◀ Marcus Cederström

While the pandemic has made public outreach challenging, he has continued his work with the Sustaining Scandinavian Folk Arts in the Upper Midwest project. The team co-authored and was awarded a \$1.55 million grant to continue the work. In addition, Marcus finished work on a co-edited manuscript about public folklore, as well as a translation of a novel from Swedish to English. Before the pandemic restricted travel, Marcus traveled to Sweden where he presented on Signe Aurell in collaboration with Maja Heurling and Ola Sandström as they debuted their CD featuring the poems of Aurell set to music.

Claus E. Andersen ▶

Claus Elholm Andersen is the Paul and Renate Madsen Assistant Professor of Scandinavian Studies. In his research, he is interested in the novel and in questions of fiction and fictionality: what it is, how it works, and what it implies. His current work focuses on contemporary Scandinavian literature. He recently co-edited a special issue of *Scandinavian Studies*, with Dean Krouk, on Karl Ove Knausgård's *My Struggle*, and he is currently working on a book-length project on Knausgård called *The Very Edge of Fiction*. His latest publications are an article on Danish novelist Helle Helle in *Edda* in 2019 and a forthcoming article on Henrik Pontoppidan's novel *Lucky-Per* in *Scandinavian Studies* this fall. He continues to give numerous talks around Wisconsin on hygge and happiness through the Badger Talks Program – now only virtual.



◀ Nete Schmidt

Nete Schmidt transitioned her classes successfully to the new online format. But it was a relief to arrive in Denmark for a two-month stay without masks! Highlights were dinner with author Svend Åge Madsen and the annual Ministry of Education seminar with a focus on the 100th anniversary of the re-unification of southern Jutland with the rest of Denmark. Time was spent traveling around the country and doing entertaining island-hopping. In the fall, she is teaching the tales of H.C. Andersen with 205 students, second- and third-year Danish, and beginning to translate one of Svend Åge Madsen's many books.

Left: Nete social distancing in the great outdoors.



◀ Dean Krouk

What do you do when you are awarded tenure and then basically stay at home for four months during a stress-inducing pandemic? In Dean's case, the answer was to write constantly. He finished a full draft of his second book, *The Making of an Antifascist: Nordahl Grieg between the World Wars*. Dean was also fortunate to have family nearby with whom to form a social bubble, including niece Sofie (10) and nephew Elliott (1.5). As with many of us, the summer also included time spent watching and supporting our nation's much-needed moment of reckoning over systemic racism and police violence.

Left: Dean prepares for a very different semester on campus.

Scott A. Mellor ▶

Scott Mellor is active with the International Learning Community as the faculty director of the Norden Language floor and the Bradley Learning Community. He teaches a first-year Interest Group on the medieval Sagas. In October, Scott was elected the president of the Association of Swedish Teachers and Researchers in America. Scott is co-editor of a volume on Finland-Swedish culture, for which he is writing an article on the Åland Islands, part of his ongoing project. In December, Scott delivered a paper on medieval Icelandic oral poetry at the University of Tartu, which is now being written up for an article in a volume on Oral Formula in Poetry and Prose. Finally, Scott has been asked by Great Courses to create a course on the history of Scandinavia.



Right: Scott presenting some of his recent work at the University of Tartu.

Coming Soon!

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Edited by Carole P. Biggam and Kirsten Wolf

Published by Bloomsbury Press as part of The Cultural Histories Series



A Cultural History of Color presents a history of 5000 years of color in western culture. The first systematic and comprehensive history, the work examines how color has been perceived, developed, produced and traded, and how it has been used in all aspects of performance - from the political to the religious to the artistic - and how it shapes all we see, from food and nature to interiors and architecture, to objects and art, to fashion and adornment, to the color of the naked human body, and to the way our minds work and our languages are created.

Available online: www.bloomsbury.com/us/a-cultural-history-of-color-9781474273732

GRADUATE STUDENT UPDATES



Emily Hoffman Beyer

Emily Beyer is a new graduate student in Scandinavian Studies. She holds an MFA in Poetry from the University of Iowa and an MA in Medieval Icelandic Studies from the University of Iceland. She recently completed a Fulbright Fellowship for creative work and research in Latvia.



Tristan Mueller-Vollmer

After spending a productive and exciting year at the University of Uppsala in Sweden thanks to a generous fellowship from the American Scandinavian Foundation, Tristan has returned to complete his dissertation at UW-Madison. He is also working on a new book with Professor Kirsten Wolf called *Vikings: An Encyclopedia of Conflict, Invasions, and Raids*.



Richelle Wilson

Richelle Wilson is a Ph.D. candidate writing a dissertation about IKEA. This semester, she is a graduate project assistant producing a new podcast about higher education. She serves on the editorial board of the digital magazine *Edge Effects* and works part-time as a talk radio producer at WORT 89.9 FM.



Colin Gioia Connors

Colin is a Ph.D. candidate in the folklore track and is writing a dissertation on place-names and landscape in Hrafnkels saga. He is also the creator and host of *Crossing North*, a podcast at the University of Washington about Nordic and Baltic culture and society.



Mirva Johnson

Mirva Johnson is a Ph.D. student conducting linguistic and folkloristic fieldwork with Finnish Americans. This year she has been working as a Digital Media Production Assistant for the Sustaining Scandinavian Folk Art in the Upper Midwest project.



Lauren Poyer

Lauren is a Ph.D. candidate in the philology track and is writing a dissertation on stories of salvation and the sea in several medieval Icelandic sagas. She is also an assistant teaching professor in the Department of Scandinavian Studies at the University of Washington.



Jill Johnson

Jill is an MA student in Scandinavian Studies. She is interested in Norway and Norwegian-American cultural exchange. A past trustee of Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, she currently supports Norway House and the Norwegian American Genealogical Center and Naeseth Library. She is a practicing attorney and holds BA, MBA and JD degrees from UW-Madison.



Laura Moquin

Laura is a Ph.D. student who researches heritage languages, historical and contemporary sociolinguistics, language change, language attitudes, and language ideologies. She is currently working on a project about the relationship between language and identity in Icelandic heritage communities in North America. Laura also teaches introductory Norwegian and is learning Icelandic.



Michael Knudson

Michael Knudson is a Ph.D. Candidate on the Philology track. He is working on his dissertation, which examines the Benedictine presence in medieval Icelandic literature, while living in Utah. Michael is teaching first-year Norwegian online as well as working as a researcher and translator for the Norwegian American Genealogical Center in Madison.



Elliott Brandsma

Elliott Brandsma is a second-year Ph.D. student on the literature track. A former high school English teacher and community college instructor, he is back in the classroom this year teaching first-year Swedish. His research focus is modernist literature from Sweden and Iceland. This past summer, he started translating a short story collection by Nobel laureate Eyvind Johnson.



David M. Smith

David M. Smith is first-year Ph.D. student from Atlanta, specializing in Norwegian literature. He recently graduated from the University of Iowa's Literary Translation MFA program, having translated a novel excerpt by Dag Solstad for his thesis. At present, he is editing and translating a collection of short stories by Tarjei Vesaas, which will be published by Archipelago Books in 2022.



Svea Larson

Svea is joining the GNS/ Folklore Ph.D. Program after receiving her Master's in Modern European History at UW-Madison. Her MA and current projects explore the role of clothing in the construction of American identity within Swedish-American populations in both in the United States and Sweden in the early 1900s.



Holly McArthur

Holly is a second-year Ph.D. student working toward a more nuanced understanding of Old Norse romances. She works as an acquisitions assistant for the UW Press and editors' assistant for the journal *Scandinavian Studies*. She also serves as an editor for *Kyngervi*, a student-centered journal in Viking and Medieval Scandinavian gender and queer studies.



John Prusynski

John is a Ph.D. candidate interested in contemporary Sámi literature, particularly how authors write about travel, and how their interest in travel intersects with the writings of earlier Sámi authors. He is also teaching Second Year Norwegian, and is enjoying hearing his students' progress despite the challenges of online language learning!



Kyle Swenson

Kyle Swenson is a Ph.D. student concentrating on 19th Century literary conceptions of the Vikings and of the sagas. He is a member of the graduate student Colloquium Committee and TA for Folklore of Central, Eastern, and Northern Europe. This summer he taught The Vikings online course.



Bridgette Stoeckel

Bridgette Stoeckel is an MA student in Scandinavian Studies. Her research language is Danish. Bridgette is interested in post-colonial Greenlandic literature and identity. Bridgette is currently writing her master's thesis on two Greenlandic novels called *Homo Sapienne* and *Zombieland*.



Ailie Westbrook

Ailie Westbrook completed her MA in the area studies track over the summer with a thesis on two medieval Danish medical manuscripts. Her research is focused on women's health and medicine, especially methods of fertility management. This year, she is teaching first-semester Danish.

Interested in graduate school?

The Scandinavian Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison offers students the opportunity to explore the languages, cultures, societies, and arts of the Scandinavian countries. This interdisciplinary approach helps students to develop a wide range of abilities, from language fluency to critical thinking and analytical skills to effective communication skills. All this while studying a region that is at the forefront of design, environmental action, arts, and business.

Learn more at:

gns.wisc.edu/nordic-graduate-program

Students Abroad

Kendall Allen-King

Study Abroad Year in Sweden...or What Was Supposed to be a Year

My first professor at Lund University spoke *skånska*, a dialect that I was entirely unfamiliar with, and I knew in that moment that my year at Lund University would be an adventure. Though I had been in Sweden for a couple of months before starting at Lund, it was still a strange feeling to constantly hear Swedish as well as to study in Swedish. Though mentally exhausting at first, I soon adjusted and, at one point, realized that I hadn't spoken a word of English in weeks. Studying at Lund, for me, was the next step in my language learning journey and perhaps the most challenging step yet.

I knew by my first year at university that I wanted to study abroad and that I did not want to study in English. As one of the first exchange students from the University of Wisconsin–Madison at Lund, I did not know what to expect. I enrolled in history courses taught in Swedish, applied for my residence permit, and off I went. I quickly developed a whole new vocabulary full of both practical terms for university life such as *föreläsning*, *salstentament*, and *nollning*—a kind of initiation month to your program of study—as well as a plethora of Swedish slang that I unknowingly picked up from my classmates.

Though my year at Lund was filled with surprises and unexpected events, one thing that I did not expect was being sent home months early due to a global pandemic. The night before I was told that I would have to return to the United States as



▲ Kendall warms up at a café on a rainy day in Copenhagen.

my exchange program had been cancelled, I was having dinner with friends in Copenhagen and would never have guessed that I would be going home in just a couple of days. I look back at those couple of days—going from being completely settled in Sweden to being told to go home—as if it all happened to someone else. I think of all the friends whom I never got to properly say goodbye to, but I look forward to when I'll finally be able to travel back to Sweden and see them all again.

**Scandinavian Studies
T-Shirts! \$20**



Interested in getting a Scandinavian Studies t-shirt? The Nordic Graduate Student Association (NGSA) is giving out t-shirts as thanks for any donation of \$20 or more. T-shirts are available in black, blue, and red from S to XXL. For more information, email Mirva Johnson at mjohnson52@wisc.edu. All donations go to the NGSA and support graduate students in their research, teaching, and professional development.

Support Scandinavian Studies

Our sincere thanks to the many alumni and friends who have generously supported Scandinavian Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Private gifts are increasingly critical to ensuring that we maintain our stature as one of the nation’s best Scandinavian Studies programs. Your donations help us attract top faculty and graduate students, support our amazing undergraduate majors, and host a stimulating series of lectures, symposia, and other scholarly activities. Gifts of any size are most welcome and gratefully received.

There are several options if you’d like to donate.

If you wish to contribute online, please go to the University Foundation:

www.supportuw.org/?s=Scandinavian+studies

For more information on making a gift of securities or including Scandinavian Studies in your estate plans, please contact:

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for past newsletters and our upcoming issues.

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