



Press Announcement

The 2024-25 Berlin Prize Recipients

BERLIN—Updated — July 2024—The American Academy in Berlin is pleased to announce the Berlin Prize recipients for the 2024-25 academic year. The Berlin Prize is awarded annually to US-based scholars, writers, composers, and artists who represent the highest standards of excellence in their fields, from the humanities and social sciences to journalism, public policy, fiction, the visual arts, and music composition. Chosen by an independent selection committee, the 2024-25 class of fellows will pursue a wide array of scholarly and artistic projects, each summarized below.

The Berlin Prize provides recipients the time and resources to advance important scholarly and artistic projects, free from the constraints of other professional obligations. Fellows work throughout the semester with Berlin peers and institutions in the Academy's well-established network, forging meaningful connections that lead to lasting transatlantic relationships. During their stays, fellows engage German audiences through lectures, readings, and performances, which form the core of the American Academy's public program.

FALL 2024 BERLIN PRIZE FELLOWS

PETER H. CHRISTENSEN

Ani and Mark Gabrellian Director of the Humanities Center

Arthur Satz Professor of the Humanities

University of Rochester

Living with Dignity

In his book project *Living with Dignity*, Peter H. Christensen explores how the built environment confers human dignity—or does not—through the lens of four human rights: to safety, work, privacy, and self-actualization. By treating dignity as a matter of design, Christensen applies these perspectives to the challenge of forging a more just society in the face of global upheavals such as climate change.

IZA DING

Associate Professor of Political Science

Northwestern University

Green Waves: Environmental Nationalism Past and Present

Green Waves is a study of global histories of modern environmentalism that draws on cases across the United States, Europe, and Asia. From its birth in conservative politics inspired by romanticist reactions against industrialization to the liberal movement galvanized by labor activists and anti-war protesters, Iza Ding documents the malleability of environmentalism as a political idea up to the present, when conservatives are gradually discovering the political limits of climate-change skepticism and denial.



JAMES N. GREEN

Professor of Brazilian History and Culture
Brown University

Generation 77: Youth Culture and the Demise of the Brazilian Dictatorship

Combining oral histories and textual resources, *Generation 77* is a book project that traces the emergence and impact of student-led mobilization efforts in the years preceding the fall of the Brazilian dictatorship in 1985. Centered in São Paulo in the years 1976-78, this activity went beyond the prior generation's opposition to dictatorship and served as an incubator for budding social movements focused on issues of personal identity, politics, and social change. By bringing such considerations to the forefront, these student mobilizations energized the labor strikes of 1979-80, which, in turn, challenged the dictatorship economically and enabled the rise of new political leadership, including that of future Brazilian president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

DAVID GRUBBS

Distinguished Professor of Music
Brooklyn College and The Graduate Center, CUNY

Sound in Multidisciplinary Collaboration

David Grubbs's book project explores the demands that composers and musicians face when working collaboratively in emerging hybrids of performance, installation, expanded cinema, interactive media, and sound art. Drawing on his own compositional work in ongoing collaborations with visual artists Anthony McCall, Angela Bulloch, Josiah McElheny, and poet Susan Howe, Grubbs offers insights into the contemporary role of music composition within a landscape of diverse practices.

MICHAEL KIMMAGE

Professor of History
The Catholic University of America
Senior Non-Resident Associate, Center for Strategic and International Studies

Europe and the United States in the Shadow of War

With an eye to the nearby war in Ukraine, Michael Kimmage is in Germany to explore a number of topics for a planned set of essays. These topics include the impact of the war on Europe and the transatlantic relationship; German policy debates concerning the course of the war, the proper strategic approach to Russia; the best way of integrating Ukraine into "institutional Europe"; and how the US presidential election and European decisions on Ukraine will intersect.

AYANA MATHIS

Novelist, Essayist, Distinguished Lecturer in English, MFA Program
Hunter College

Imprinted by Belief

Ayana Mathis's collection of essays builds upon her eponymous *New York Times* series, which explores Christianity's indelible imprint, for better or for worse, knowingly or unwittingly, on American identity and culture as well as the ways in which Christian ideas of morality and justice continue to inform the nation's literature.



NELL IRVIN PAINTER

Edwards Professor Emerita of American History
Princeton University
My Elsewheres

In *My Elsewheres*, renowned historian of the United States, artist, pundit, and memoirist Nell Irvin Painter undertakes a personal exploration of place and identity. Reflecting on her life abroad—in her youth in France and Ghana, and in her writing, in Germany—Painter’s book examines how these experiences shaped her self-understanding, perspectives on race and history, and the value of narrative storytelling.

ZACHARY SHORE

Professor of History, Naval Postgraduate School
Senior Fellow, Institute of European Studies, University of California, Berkeley
National Security Visiting Fellow, Hoover Institution, Stanford University
A Wiser World: The Global Quest for Good Judgement

In his book project *A Wiser World*, Zachary Shore asks what history can teach us about making wise decisions. Drawing on global case studies from the twentieth century, he explores how wise national policies have emerged. He is particularly intrigued by the interplay of folly, friction, and pain. Some of the best decisions were often complete reversals of foolish ones, resulted from individuals working in opposition to each other and required empathy for human suffering. Understanding the conditions from which wise policy decisions arise, Shore argues, can help point us toward lasting solutions to our current global crises.

MONA SIMPSON

Writer
The Great Man, So-Called

Mona Simpson will be working on a novel centered on two women in the life of the iconic American president Franklin Delano Roosevelt: his wife, Eleanor, from whom he was deeply estranged, and Francis Perkins, his secretary of labor, and the first woman to ever hold that post. The only American president to serve more than two terms, and a man whose disability was carefully kept from the American public, Roosevelt relied on these women as he devoted his energies during his first two terms on lifting the American economy out of a debilitating depression and during his third and fourth to the growing involvement with the war. Simpson became fascinated with these two women while studying letters written by domestic workers (who were not covered by the New Deal’s protections) for her novel *My Hollywood*, about Los Angeles nannies. While most maids, cooks, and cleaning women wrote to the President their letters were often answered by Eleanor Roosevelt and Francis Perkins.

MAX K. STRASSFELD

Associate Professor of Religious Studies
University of Arizona
Disciplining Life



In this book project, Max K. Strassfeld examines the concept of life-cycle rituals connected to birth, puberty, marriage, and death. Implicit in the idea of the life cycle is the assumption that an autonomous individual is the basic unit of ritual, and that the goal of life is to reproduce. Drawing on feminist science, disability, queer, critical race, and trans studies, Strassfeld's project seeks to challenge current scholarship that tends to trace the origins of such rituals to rabbinic literature and the vision of hetero-reproductive life to classical Jewish sources.

AMY WALDMAN

Writer and Journalist

Snow: An Emotional History

In the spring of 1927, a *Schneepalast*—an indoor snow palace, featuring artificial snow—opened in Berlin, followed by another in Vienna. The first of their kind, snow palaces were short-lived entertainments, yet from today's vantage, they gesture at something unsettling: As the climate changes, both snowfall and snow cover are diminishing. In this book project, Amy Waldman examines cultural history, ecology, philosophy, and memoir to explore how snow has shaped not just our external circumstances but also our interior lives—she also explores the material and emotional impact of its loss.

SPRING 2025 BERLIN PRIZE FELLOWS

JEFFERSON COWIE

James G. Stahlman Professor of American History

Vanderbilt University

Crosswinds of a Common Nation: Unsettling the American Past

Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Jefferson Cowie traces American history through a unique assemblage of elusive stories, from Native encounters with Europeans to the rise of Black Lives Matter. Cowie writes that *Crosswinds* “explores America’s idea of itself: a victor’s memory largely based on the amnesia required to take a continent and maintain power.”

MONA EL-NAGGAR

International Journalist and Filmmaker

Behind the Byline: A Reporter's Tale on Women & Sexuality in the Arab World

Drawing on her twenty-year career spent largely in the Middle East with the *New York Times*, Mona El-Naggar writes an authoritative account of modern women in the Arab world. Centering on the stories of ordinary young women who face extraordinary obstacles because they dare to be different, El-Naggar's work explores youth, gender, sex, politics, and culture, as well as her own relationship to her native Egypt as a journalist, woman, and mother.

BRIAN EVENSON

Writer; Professor of Critical Studies, California Institute of the Arts

Handbook for a Future Revolution



Expanding on the themes of his 2005 novel, *The Open Curtain*—schizophrenia, violence, and religion—Brian Evenson’s book project *Handbook for a Future Revolution* explores the collision of Mormon ideas and ideals with European culture.

DANIEL JÜTTE

Professor of History

New York University

This Rumbling Age: Locomotion and Shakeup in Europe, 1500-1800

In the first half of the sixteenth century, a new type of four-wheeled vehicle made its first appearance in Europe: the coach. In his book *This Rumbling Age*, Daniel Jütte traces the rise of vehicular traffic in Europe and how new modes of locomotion affected—and shook up—society, culture, and economic life.

ABHISHEK KAICKER

Associate Professor of History

University of California, Berkeley

The Colors of Life in Late Mughal Delhi: A Biography of Anand Ram Mukhlis

In this first full-length biography of scholar and bureaucrat Anand Ram Mukhlis (1699-1751), Abhishek Kaicker offers a study of Mughal intellectual life in a precolonial empire whose institutions of learning were vastly dissimilar to the European academy. Mukhlis’s work offers an understanding of the senses of self, life of the mind, and political engagements of an intellectual in a culture that would dissolve under British rule, while also providing an understanding of the changing cultural and political circumstances that led to the end of the Mughal Empire.

KEN KRIMSTEIN

Biographer and Graphic Novelist

Marching Toward Normal: A Nonfiction Graphic Narrative

In this semi-autobiographical graphic novel, Ken Krimstein returns to Deerfield, Illinois, the site of his bell-bottomed, trumpet-playing teen years. But just a few years before Krimstein’s adolescence, Deerfield was also the scene of egregious racial discrimination that somehow remained invisible to him and those around him. How could it be that a sordid tale involving the Ku Klux Klan, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Supreme Court of the United States so quickly vanished from the town’s memory? *Marching Toward Normal* tells (and shows) a coming-of-age story about race, remembrance, and forgetting in twentieth-century America.

AGNES MUELLER

Professor of German and Comparative Literature

University of South Carolina

Holocaust Migration: The Future of Memory

In this project, Agnes Mueller explores new literature in which today’s young German-based Jewish writers negotiate German–Jewish identity in a country where Holocaust migration history is but one of a variety of migration stories that shape their self-understanding. She considers this



aspect against the competing legacies of secular Judaism, post-Soviet heritage, new gender and race dynamics, and other marginalized cultures, especially Muslim identities.

SIANNE NGAI

Andrew W. Mellon Professor of English and the College
University of Chicago
Inhabiting Error

This book of essays explores the risks of recreating and lingering in “wrong” ways of thinking. Through close readings of writers and artists such as Marx, Hegel, Montaigne, Adorno, Ryusuke Hamaguchi, Elfriede Jelinek, and Lauren Berlant, Sianne Ngai argues that error is something we must live out to truly understand its reach, even when knowingly or artistically reenacting error risks unconsciously repeating it.

GIDEON ROSE

Adjunct Senior Fellow
Council on Foreign Relations
The Future of European Security

The former editor of *Foreign Affairs* will engage closely with security experts and policymakers in Berlin, bridging the gap between discussions on both sides of the Atlantic about how to protect Europe in the coming decades amid forced reconsiderations in response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, China’s predatory mercantilism, and the rise of populist neoisolationism in the United States.

ADAM SHATZ

US Editor
London Review of Books
Worlds They Have Not Told You Of: Adventures in Creative Music

In this sweeping chronicle of the post-war Black music avant-garde, Adam Shatz combines history, criticism, and biographical portraiture to trace the musical routes of sonic exploration and creative self-determination from bebop to free jazz to the present day.

ROCHELLE P. WALENSKY

Infectious Disease Physician Scientist
Former Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Fellow, Harvard University Business School, Kennedy School, T.H. Chan School of Public Health
Fighting Infectious Disease

Drawing upon her career as an infectious disease clinician, a decision-science researcher, hospital division head, and public-health leader, Rochelle P. Walensky comes to the Academy to complete a project about the public health and social/behavioral challenges posed by existing and emerging infectious diseases.



PAMELA Z

Composer, Performer, and Media Artist

Arbeitsklang/WorkSound

Arbeitsklang/WorkSound is a sound and performance piece that incorporates sampled work-related sounds with speech fragments from interviews with artists, food and factory workers, journalists, retailers, and educators in Berlin. Pamela Z's finished piece will be both a fixed-media soundwork and a live, intermedia performance that includes vocal and instrumental sounds woven into the fabric of collaged speech fragments and work sounds.

The American Academy in Berlin is a private, nonpartisan, nonprofit institution of advanced scholarship dedicated to upholding the cultural, academic, and political ties between the United States and Germany. For twenty-five years, the Academy has hosted residential fellows and guest lecturers from the United States who live and work together, share their expertise with German audiences, and engage with professional German peers through a robust public program and private meetings. Through these activities and more, the Academy aims to strengthen the future of the transatlantic community of values.

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