



Alumni Interview

1. Please introduce yourself in a few sentences and tell us what your thesis topic was.

I am Dr. Peter James Yoder and my advisor at the IEG was Prof. Dr. Irene Dingel. I served as a Doktorandstipendiat in (I believe) 2008-2009, and then I returned to the IEG in 2012 to work as a Post-Doctoral Stipendiat under Prof. Dr. Judith Becker. I currently serve as Assistant Professor of Honors and History at Montreat College in North Carolina (USA). My doctoral thesis was focused on German Pietist August Hermann Francke's theology of the sacraments. A revised version was published by Penn State Univ. Press under the title "Pietism and the Sacraments: The life and theology of August Hermann Francke."

2. How would you describe your research topic to someone without a background in history?

I usually tell people that I research those eighteenth-century German Protestants that are forerunners to the American Great Awakenings. I look at how their theological innovations influenced modern religious thought.

3. What was the application process like for you? What advice would you offer future applicants?

I found the application process to be appropriate for the fellowship being offered. I would encourage applicants to reach out to the IEG to introduce themselves and to seek out advice.

4. How did you prepare yourself for the time at the IEG, both academically and personally?

Academically, I sought to set goals that were achievable while studying at the IEG. That became challenging when my supervisor changed universities, but it provided extra motivation. Personally, I sought to improve my German in any way I could.

5. What was your favourite place in the IEG building or Mainz to write your thesis and why?

I have fond memories of working in the library and seminar room, but my favorite place was the shared kitchen and dining room. Spending time with other Stipendiaten was very valuable to my academia and personal growth. I also spent time writing at cafes around the city center, some remain and some are closed.



Alumni Interview

6. How would you describe your first week at the IEG in three words?

I was very nervous about fitting in and performing well. The thought of presenting my research in German during the colloquium haunted me. But I remember that everyone was very welcoming and helped me feel at home.

7. Where did your path take you after the IEG?

After my Doktorandstipendium, I received fellowships from the Herzog Ernst Bibliothek in Gotha and the Franckeschen Stiftungen in Halle. After completing my dissertation, I served at the IEG as a part of Judith Becker's research project. Upon returning to the United States, I became a visiting professor at Berry College, then a lecturer in historical theology at Reformed Theological Seminary, and finally a professor of honors and history at Montreat College. Oh, I also met a wonderful woman; we married and have three kids!

8. Where were there any moments of frustration or failure that later became breakthroughs?

The journey that began after leaving the IEG and led to receiving my professor position at Montreat College was long and hard for me and my family, but it has made me grateful for the opportunity to serve at an academic institution.

9. If you could return to the IEG today, what would you want to work on now?

I would love the opportunity to return to the IEG. I oftentimes think of it. If I were to have the chance to return, I would like to continue my current work on the history of catechesis in German Pietism. I am also beginning work on a short history of modern Christianity. The IEG offered me a rare opportunity to focus on research and writing that is hard to find teaching at a small college.

10. What surprised you most about transitioning out of the fellowship into the “real world”?

I was not surprised by the transition to the 'real world,' but I was not expecting the journey from Doktorand to professor would take 11 (long) years. But I am grateful!