

Europe in the World: (Some) Views from a Distance

Good morning to the participants of the CLIOH-WORLD First Plenary Meeting in Salzburg. Before beginning, I would like to extend my thanks to the organizers of this meeting, particularly to Professor Ewald Hiebl, for providing me with the opportunity to address you and to introduce the Salzburg Global Seminar and some of the work in which we are engaged as it pertains to the goals and objectives of the CLIOH-WORLD group.

My remarks will be divided into two parts. First, I would like to introduce the Salzburg Global Seminar, its creation and history, and the work that it does today. As I do so, I will attempt to make some connections between the creation and ongoing work of Seminar and the work that the CLIOH-WORLD group is setting out to undertake. Secondly, I would like to make some remarks on ways in which Europe, however one chooses to define that term, exists in the consciousness of some students in the United States with whom I've had a chance to work over the past few years.

The Salzburg Global Seminar

I would like to take a few minutes to give a very brief history of the Salzburg Global Seminar and the nature of its work today. Due to the time constraints, this overview will necessarily be rather general, however more information including some articles from the early days of the Salzburg Global Seminar can be found on the Seminar's website. The web address is listed below. The Seminar's founding, history, and development is in some ways unique but in other ways it fits into a general context of post-World War II projects that connected different European countries and people with one another and with the USA.

In thinking about my remarks today, I was reviewing some of the literature about the founding of the Salzburg Global Seminar and its early mission in the context of the mission of the CLIOH-WORLD. As I did so, I was struck by the fact that the ambitious and idealistic aims of the Seminar continue to be taken up and advanced by efforts like those of CLIOH-WORLD which, among other things, aims to foster and extend the notion of a common European identity and the encouragement of "an inclusive European citizenship."¹ Of course the context is different and thus so is the nature and extent of the work, but it is connected to and a continuation of a general pattern of activities and initiatives that emerged primarily after World War II.

The brief version of the founding of the Seminar is as follows: In the immediate years after the end of World War II, there was much discussion and action in the USA in political, academic and other areas about the rebuilding of Europe. While plans were being developed for what would come to be known as the Marshall Plan which called for the material rebuilding of Europe in terms of its infrastructure, economies, and political

¹ CLIOH-WORLD website. <http://www.cliohworld.net/>

systems, three young men from Harvard University began discussing the accompanying need for an intellectual rebuilding of Europe. These three students, consisted of one undergraduate student, one English instructor, and one graduate student named Clemens Heller, a Jewish immigrant from Austria who is often cited as having originally conceived of the Seminar. They believed that in order for there to be a lasting peace in Europe, the re-establishment of an intellectual dialogue and thus the restoration of a sense of European culture was just as necessary as the type of rebuilding for which the Marshal Plan called. These three students had the idealistic and brazen goal of putting together a summer seminar that would bring together young European academics, who sometimes quite literally had been on opposite sides of a battlefield exchanging bullets a few years prior, to exchange words and ideas in an attempt to better understand one another. The Salzburg Seminar was thus founded on the seemingly simple notion that a sustainable peace in Europe would require a restoration of European intellectual and cultural traditions through open and frank dialogue.

With little help or support from the Harvard University administration, the Seminar's founders conducted the Salzburg Seminar in American Civilization in the summer of 1947 at Schloss Leopoldskron under the auspices of the Harvard Student Council and the International Student Service. They convinced a few of Harvard's younger faculty members who were sympathetic to the idea to teach at the Seminar which was originally planned as a one-off six week summer school to take place in 1947. The original faculty included prominent, or soon to be prominent, figures such as the anthropologist, Margaret Mead, and the literary critic, F.O. Matthiessen.

The location of Salzburg and Schloss Leopoldskron, a beautiful palace just outside of town which some of you had a chance to visit yesterday, was, like so many of the events that gave rise to the Seminar, a fortuitous chance of circumstance. Clemens Heller father was a prominent Jewish, Viennese publisher and the family emigrated to the US as a result of the Annexation of Austria. Max Reinhardt was the famous theater director, founder of the Salzburg Music Festival, and former owner of Schloss Leopoldskron. He was forced to remain in the US after the Annexation and his Schloss was confiscated by the Nazis. Since they came from overlapping social circles in Austria, the Heller and Reinhardt families knew one another. Although Max Reinhardt had since died in New York, his widow, Helene Thimig, had regained possession of Leopoldskron after the War and offered its use to Clemens Heller for what would come to be known as the Salzburg Seminar in American Studies.

The curriculum, which must be loosely understood given the somewhat laissez faire and even chaotic nature of organization in the early days, for the first Salzburg Seminar focused on American studies in the areas of history, art, economics, politics, the social sciences, etc. The first Seminar was initially billed as The Salzburg Seminar in American Civilization but was officially "refined" to The Salzburg Seminar in American Studies, the name under which the Seminar was incorporated as an institution a few years later. The decision to focus on American Studies related to three factors. First, there was a real or perceived interest of the young European academic community to whom the Seminar was targeted to learn more about the United States. Secondly, at the time it was seen as a

relatively neutral field for a group of young Europeans emerging from World War II to learn about and discuss. Finally, it was clear that the United States were assuming, and would continue to assume, increasing influence in the world and thus it would be useful for the European students to have a deeper understanding of American culture and arts as well as American political, economic, and legal systems in terms of culture, economics, politics, etc.

Early on, some European students as well as members of various US government agencies who were active in Salzburg and US Army Officers stationed nearby viewed the Seminar with skepticism as they wondered about its true intentions and motivations. Several students, primarily from Eastern European countries feared that the Seminar was in reality a propaganda arm of the US government. US Army and State Department officials nearly succeeded in closing the Seminar based on suspicions that some of the organizers and faculty were communists determined to undermine American ideals. The fears of the Eastern European students were quelled when they engaged in the Seminar and saw their American counterparts openly debating and criticizing as well as praising American policies – and encouraging the same sort of open dialogue among everyone participating in the Seminar. The skeptical reports from the US Army that had made their way back to the State Department in Washington, DC and threatened to close the Seminar were quieted by the report that an American Legation officer sent to Washington. His view was that although there were voices at the Seminar, even among the faculty and organizers, critical of the US government and its policies, the Seminar, with its encouragement of open debate, could in fact be a better example and projection of true American democracy than what the State Department's cultural diplomacy programs could hope to achieve.

Initially there was not official long term plan for the Seminar. The organizers had only considered holding a single six week summer school program without much thought given to a longer term endeavor. Based on the success of the first Seminar in 1947 and the positive feedback from the European students and the faculty, particularly a report on by Margaret Mead to the Harvard Student Council, it was decided that the Seminar should be repeated the following summer and that it should again be held at Schloss Leopoldskron. Over the course of the next few years the Salzburg Seminar in American Studies developed from a somewhat rag tag undertaking by a few ambitious students and faculty to an educational institution incorporated in the US with offices there, a president, board of directors, and an expanded funding strategy which relied heavily on American foundations. By the mid-1950's the Seminar's program was expanding to include "sessions" throughout the year which focused on particular topics within American Studies as opposed to the "general American Studies" sessions, the last of which was held in 1955. In 1959, the Seminar was able to purchase Schloss Leopoldskron, which it had been leasing until then.

As the Cold War continued to heat up throughout the late 1950's, 60's, and 70's, the Seminar played an important role in facilitating dialogue among scholars and practitioners from Eastern and Western Europe. Due to its neutrality, Austria was an easier destination for academics on the other side of the Iron Curtain to reach and proved

to be one of the few venues where people from both sides of the Iron Curtain could meet and engage in serious discussion about common concerns. Additionally, the setting of the Seminar, which created an almost fantasy-like detachment from everyday concerns, and the non-ideological pedagogical and curricular approach to the Seminar with its focus on hearing all voices, added to the sense of neutrality and fostered a sense of connectedness and community among men and women who in other situations and under other circumstances may not have found it so easy to engage meaningfully with one another.

In the 1980's, 90's and up to the present, the Seminar has continued to expand its scope and mission. By inviting participants from Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America, as well as from Europe and North America, the Seminar has transformed itself from an institution with a European and trans-Atlantic focus to one with a truly global focus. Additionally, the topics addressed at the Seminar's meetings (which had slowly shrunk from 6 weeks long to the current length of about 5 to 7 days) focus on a broad range of specific topics of global concern. Thus the Seminar is no longer exclusively about American Studies, although that remained one component of its programming until relatively recently. Rather it conducts programs that address specific topics within the fields of arts, culture, and literature, economics, politics, development, human rights, international law and legal systems, the role of civil society, media and journalism, health, sustainable development, and many more.

On the occasion of the Seminar's 60th anniversary in the summer of 2007, it was officially renamed the Salzburg Global Seminar in order to reflect the fact that its work has become global in nature and reach while its fundamental values – working to foster understanding and a common sense of purpose and identity among individuals of different backgrounds and beliefs – have remained. Today the Seminar has an alumni network of roughly 25,000 people from more than 150 countries. It continues to conduct sessions on the topics mentioned above at Schloss Leopoldskron. It remains an independent, non-profit, self-standing, higher education institute in the broadest sense. The Seminar's current mission is to challenge present and future leaders from different cultures, institutions, and sectors to collectively articulate and implement solutions to the most critical problems of global concern.

I'd like to conclude this description of the creation and development of the Salzburg Global Seminar by returning again briefly to the initial vision and purpose of those who conceived of the Seminar in 1947 and making some connections between the work of CLIOH-WORLD. In her report to the Harvard Student Council, simply entitled "The Salzburg Seminar in American Civilization," Margaret Mead said, "The Salzburg Seminar plan was a product of the sort of cross national thinking on which it will be necessary to rely in constructing a more closely knit and more mutually intelligible world."² Of course, things are quite different in Europe and the world today compared to shortly after World War II. The world is, whether we always like it or not, "more closely knit" (if not always "mutually intelligible") and cross-national thinking, particularly in Europe, is commonplace. Although the circumstances may be different today, the

² Mead, Margaret. "Report to the Harvard Student Council." 1947. Page 3. Available on the internet: http://www.salzburgglobal.org/reports/1947_MeadArticle.pdf

fundamental original vision of the Seminar as articulated by Meade above, in my opinion, is the essence of what is still needed in Europe and elsewhere in the world and is what projects like CLIOH-WORLD are aiming to achieve in relatively specific contexts. It is a testament to the success of the “European project” and the luxury that we have today that we can now focus on longer-term and strategic ways of addressing these ever-present needs rather than being in the position, as the original organizers of the Seminar were, of having to cobble a program together as the specter of war loomed in the immediate past and possibly the immediate future as well.

Europe in the World: (Some) Views from a Distance

Now I would like to shift gears a little bit and take a few minutes to talk about some informal insights into how Europe is viewed from the outside. I have to emphasize that I do not intend to address the academic literature related to Europe in the world or the trans-Atlantic relationship which has been addressed by writers for many years, including relatively recently Robert Kaplan, Tony Judt, Dominique Moisi, Jeremy Rifkin, and many others. I also will not address the issue of trying to define what Europe really is – a geographical area, a small peninsula of the Asian continent, a political, cultural, economic, and social community existing as much in people’s minds and/or the post-national state structures that some of them have created. Instead I would like to focus on what Europe is associated with by group of people from whose impressions on the topic I have been exposed to as a result of my personal and professional experiences.

Personally, as an American living in Europe, I am regularly confronted with questions from friends and family about many different aspects of “how it is in Europe.” These can relate to everything from politics, culture, society, economics, the weather, or, surprisingly frequently, what Europeans think of the latest news coming out of America. It goes without saying that people’s knowledge of and views on Europe are very wide-ranging and are dependent on many factors. However, being asked questions on a regular basis about my experience living in Europe has given me an understanding of some of the trends of how people – or at least the small set of people that I happen to interact with – view Europe.

Professionally, I have been working for the past six years on a particular program of the Salzburg Global Seminar called the International Study Program on Global Citizenship (ISP). The ISP is in its sixth programmatic year and works with American colleges and universities to offer short-term, week-long study abroad experiences to a segment of the student population who are often not able to participate in more traditional semester long study abroad programs. Most of our partner colleges and universities are large, urban community colleges. The student populations at many of these institutions includes students who are recent immigrants to the United States, come from a wide variety of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, are returning to college after having pursued other activities including various jobs, raising families, etc. The students participating in the ISP, thus represent a very diverse group and would not necessarily be what is often portrayed as the “typical” American college student (though what is the typical American college student would be a discussion for another time). The ISP program in Salzburg

focuses on the concept of global citizenship and seeks to provide the students with a broader global perspective while empowering them through knowledge to be active in their local as well as global communities.

As an aside, and a short plug for the work that I am engaged in at the Salzburg Global Seminar, I should also that there is also a related set of programs that involves the faculty and administration of partner colleges and universities in the US. The focus of that program is to work with these partner institutions to develop comprehensive institutional approaches to incorporating a more global focus at their institutions including everything from curriculum development/enhancement to institutional policies.

It is through the student ISP meetings that I have gained the majority of insights into how “Americans” view Europe from a distance which I would like to share with you all today. As they prepare for their trip and then travel to Europe, spending a week in Salzburg, these students often share their impressions of Europe with those of us working on the program either in formal classroom or informal settings. This process often involves understanding their preconceptions of how the thought about or viewed Europe and then reconciling those with the, admittedly limited, experiences that they have and things that they see while in Salzburg for the week. In addition to the formal classroom and informal exchanges with students, there was also one particular program in which we undertook an informal and unscientific poll of the first associations that European students and American students have with the terms “Europe” and America.”

For one of our ISP sessions in June, 2007, we planned a joint lecture involving our students attending the Salzburg Global Seminar program and a group of University of Salzburg students who were taking part in a course offered by the Professor Reinhold Wagnleitner at the History Department here entitled, “Europe and America: A Prejudiced History.” In advance of their trip to Salzburg, we asked roughly fifty American college students living in Orlando, Florida; Dallas-Forth Worth, Texas; Detroit, Michigan; Chicago, Illinois; and San Jose, California to write down the first five things that they come to their minds when they here the terms Europe and America. Professor Wagnleitner asked his students at the University of Salzburg to do the same thing. Most of what I want to share with you today about views of Europe from abroad are based on an analysis of the American students’ responses to this informal poll. I will bring in some of the perspectives of the European students and information based on other experiences I’ve had with the ISP or in general where it makes sense to do so in order to emphasize a particular point or highlight a particularly telling difference in the way that different groups view Europe. Please keep in mind that this was a very informal study, so I’d like to leave questions related to its methodology aside right now and take it for what it is – a fleeting glimpse of how Europe is viewed or perceived by a defined group of American students as outlined above.

So how did these American students view Europe? It will probably come as no surprise that the responses we received were very diverse both in terms of the categories in which the associations fell and whether these associations could be classified as more or less favorable. Many students’ responses included associations that fell into several categories

and included aspects that viewed Europe in a more favorable or a less favorable light. What I've attempted to do is to classify and categorize the results in a relatively neat and easy way, which unfortunately means that some of the diversity and nuance of the results is lost. In summarizing the results I have also tried to weigh the order in which I present the categories and the specific references within each one based on the frequency with which each appeared in the students' responses.

The main categories that the associations that these American students had with the term Europe are: Historical, (High) Cultural, (Differing) Values/Lifestyles, and Contemporary Issues.

Historical Associations

A majority of the students listed either exclusively or in their top 3 associations with Europe, something having to do with history. In several instances, students associated the term Europe simply with the term "history." Presumably they were not talking about the history that extends much beyond World War II because issues related to the development of the European Union appeared with less frequency and are addressed in the Contemporary Issues category below (although there are examples where the Cold War and fall of the Berlin Wall are included). They tended to refer to historical figures, periods, events, etc. ranging from the Renaissance to WWII. Some students refer to medieval history or ancient history, but those references tended to be the exception rather than the rule.

As mentioned above, one sees both favorable historical references as well as less favorable ones. The favorable references related to scientific, political, philosophical, economic, and cultural advancement and included terms such as Renaissance, Enlightenment, French Revolution (which is included with the favorable references because most of the students tend to view it that way), Age of Discovery, etc. Interestingly, the trend was for these favorable associations to be made in the context of how they relate to the USA. For example, if students referenced economic, political or social philosophers such as Adam Smith, Thomas Hobbes, or John Locke it was often related to how these figures' writings and ideas affected the development and history of the USA.

At the same time many students' historical associations with Europe were also related to less favorable events. Decisively at the top of this list in this context, were references to the Holocaust, Hitler, and World War II. Some students took a broader view and referenced a longer legacy of war and repressive governments in the 20th century including World War I and still others took an even broader view and referenced centuries of warfare, bloodshed, harsh living conditions for the majority of people and repressive political systems. It must also be noted that many students' individual historical associations included both favorable and less favorable references.

(High) Cultural

The second most prevalent category can be generally described as cultural – although this encompasses a wide range of aspects of culture and partially overlaps with the historical

associations. On one end of the spectrum were associations with a notion of European 'high' culture which often referred to achievements of the past. Many students listed associations with Europe such as classical music and opera, architecture (with a particular emphasis on churches and castles which seem to be of interest for their beauty and in a romanticized historical sense), works of art, sculpture, painting, theater, literature, etc. Another cultural association that was common among the American students' associations with Europe relates generally to food and drink and how it is enjoyed. Many students referenced the café culture, pastries, croissants, and other baked goods, wine, beer, and other drinks, etc. Several students also referenced fashion making the association between Europe and well-dressed people. This latter point had some interesting associations connected with it including the notion that Europeans, with their refined sense of fashion were arrogant or snobby. This particular aspect is also related to the values/lifestyles category below. The implied message in many of these cultural references was how they relate either to a "refined" lifestyle, a discerning taste, and pleasure and enjoyment – a theme which can also be seen in part of the values associations listed below – or to a rich history as mentioned above.

'Differing' Values/Lifestyles

Associations related to 'differing' values or lifestyles ("differing" in this instance is presumably as compared to the real or perceived values and lifestyles that the students experience in their American contexts) were slightly less prevalent than the historical and cultural associations. However, they also were more varied in terms of whether they were seen in a favorable or less favorable way. Many students associated Europe with a more relaxed, laid back, civilized, peaceful, and progressive lifestyle, both in terms of 'family values', attitudes towards leisure time, and an appreciation of good food and 'the good life.' Clearly there is some overlap with the cultural associations above, but these value and lifestyle associations also relate to the social welfare state and more 'progressive' social politics that are found in many parts of Europe as compared to the United States. Specific aspects of this which were mentioned include better access to social healthcare in many countries, better public transportation, open access to higher education, a more environmentally conscious population and more environmentally aware policies. I made a point of leaving in the comparative words here because that was how many, but not all, of the students listed them. This again implies that many of these particular associations are made in comparison to the situations from which the students were coming, as mentioned above. To me a clear example of this would be the references to the social health care systems in many European countries. At a time when health care and health care reform was, and still is, a major topic of discussion in American politics and households, the European systems, or at least the perceptions of the European systems offered either a better alternative to the situation in the US, or alternatively, evidence of the state run socialist systems that are often criticized by many right-leaning Americans.

Whereas the references to "better" aspects of European values clearly show that Europe is perceived in a favorable light by some of the students, the references to a greater appreciation for leisure time and Europeans being more "peaceful" for example, were instances in which less favorable perceptions of Europe became apparent. For some students, an appreciation of leisure time was expressed as laziness. And "peacefulness"

was combined with the perception that the burden of security in the world fell unequally on the United States while Europeans simply benefited from the results. Behind these types of less favorable associations with European lifestyle (and the related “café culture” mentioned above), was the notion that Europeans benefit from the sacrifices of the United States without having to make an equal contribution. And in addition to that, according to the perceptions of some of these American students, Europeans will then sit in their cafes and criticize American policies and actions that are necessary to create a world secure enough in which the Europeans *can* sit in their cafes and criticize the Americans. (Again, let me emphasize that these are not necessarily my views, rather a reflection and interpretation of *some* of the perceptions that *some* American students seem to have of Europe.)

Contemporary Issues – EU, Euro, etc.

The fourth category of associations with the term Europe relates to the contemporary existence of a more unified Europe in terms of politics, economics, and identity. Although fewer students overall listed terms related to the European Union, such as the Euro, European Parliament, etc., on their associations, those that did seem to have a decent understanding of the EU, a willingness to try to understand it, or an acknowledgement that they do not understand it as well as they would like. Some students, in the context of the European Union, wrote things such as, “many countries trying to form/forming a unified whole” or “the European Union is like a puzzle” or simply “confusing.” Thus there seems to be a general understanding that “Europe” does exist in a contemporary sense but that it is developing, evolving, and continuing to emerge as a political and economic entity and it tends to be a difficult notion to fully understand.

A quick comparison with some of the European students’ associations with the term Europe may be of interest as it relates to the European Union and the existence or development of a more unified European identity as well as political and economic system. A larger majority of the European students listed terms related to contemporary European issues such as the European Union, Brussels, the Euro, etc. at the top of their lists. Some of the European students also shared a common sense of confusion about the European political and economic systems with their American counterparts. An interesting contrast however is that in general, whereas the American students associated Europe overwhelmingly with the past and its history, the European students associated Europe overwhelmingly with the EU its future. There were a large number of responses from European students where the first two or three terms included something related to the European Union and something related to the term, “future.”

Final Thoughts

I hesitate to close with any conclusions or to offer any grand words of wisdom (if I were even to have any) in light of this snapshot of how Europe is viewed from the outside by some American students. I do think that it is useful, at the beginning of a project like CLIOH-WORLD to be aware of some of the views that are out there. Of course, as is the case with all of these associations and perceptions, it is true, and most of the students are

very much aware, that these associations with Europe only reflect a very narrow snapshot of a much broader, diverse, and nuanced reality. It may be interesting to try to understand where and how these types of associations originate and are perpetuated. Certainly they are influenced by the usual culprits of various media including television, movies, newspapers, books, etc. They are probably also influenced from personal experiences the students had if they or their friends or family had traveled to Europe previously.

An additional related aspect that should not be overlooked is the way that Europe presents itself to and is experienced by some parts of the world via its tourism industry. Even going back to accounts such as Mark Twain's Innocents Abroad, which chronicles one of the first organized European tours for an American market, many of the associations that we see above, particularly the historical and cultural associations, were apparent then and they persist today. In this context, Europe was, and still is to some extent, seen as something of a historical and cultural theme park, to use an analogy of Tony Judt's in a recent article of his about the role of Holocaust memorial sites in the 21st century.³ Europe has its castles and churches, nice music, fine art, the culinary delights, and, again picking up on Tony Judt's reference, even the historical houses of horror embodied in the many memorial sites dedicated to the Holocaust, both World Wars, and earlier times.

In this sense, there seems to be an opportunity and a challenge for the CLIOH-WORLD project. At least in this very limited analysis, Europe is perceived to be very much to be linked to its history. Thus it may be that outside Europe, there would be an audience receptive to a common or at least a more closely linked European history and how that integrates into world history and/or contemporary global issues. The challenge in this sense would be to break out of the historical theme park portrayal/perception of Europe. Internally, the development of a more collective European history may find a receptive audience among European youth. People who have grown up with a European identity to some extent and an understanding that Europe does exist in a political and economic sense may be more interested in, and receptive to, a common history that links their contemporary reality and vision of Europe as a place connected to the future with its historical roots.

I want to close with one more quote from Margaret Mead's report on the first Salzburg Seminar. In the section on "What the Europeans Got Out of the Seminar," she says, "at the present time [1947], Europe as a civilization – rather than a geographical area seems more real to Americans than to Europeans."⁴ That statement may have been true in 1947 and it may still be true to some extent today. However I do think that it is changing and I do think that the work of the CLIOH-WORLD project can help to change this notion in a positive and necessary way.

Thank you.

³ Judt, Tony. "What Have We Learned, If Anything?", in: *The New York Review of Books* Vol. 55, No. 7 (May 1, 2008). Available on the internet: <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/21311>

⁴ Mead, Margaret. "Report to the Harvard Student Council." 1947. Page 3. Available on the internet: http://www.salzburgglobal.org/reports/1947_MeadArticle.pdf

Information About the Salzburg Global Seminar

More information about the history of the Salzburg Global Seminar, including links to Margaret Mead's "Report to the Harvard Student Council" and an article by Henry Nash Smith published in The American Quarterly in 1949, can be found online here:

<http://www.salzburgglobal.org/2009/history.cfm>