

GERMANIC STUDIES DEPARTMENT STATEMENT

OCTOBER 25, 2015

The faculty and staff of the Department of Germanic Studies register their adamant opposition to the concealed carrying of guns on our campus beginning August 1, 2016. The presence of guns in our classrooms, offices, and places of study and research will make us physically less safe. It will undermine the free and open expression of ideas that is central to the educational and research missions of our institution and of our department. The topics we discuss in our classes—ranging from violence, genocide, racism, to gender, sexual, and social identity, immigration, and integration — include controversial information and views. We believe such discussions will be threatened by the presence of concealed handguns.

Our department's deep and long-standing commitment to Texas German language and culture allows us a unique historical perspective on the situation. Allowing guns in classrooms is not about re-establishing an historical right. For most of its history the State of Texas had strict gun control laws. Only recently have opponents of gun control been able to overturn them. Comprehensive gun control passed by the Twelfth Legislature in 1870 prohibited the carrying of weapons into schools, churches, or any kind of public assembly. The following year, the legislature strengthened the law making it illegal for all but law enforcement personnel and "civil officers" to carry weapons anywhere, anytime in public (Gammel, Laws, VI, 927-929). The Twelfth Legislative session was dominated by so-called 'Radical Republicans,' who were determined to put an end to the rampant violence and mayhem that had plagued the state for a number of years. Their sound logic was that fewer, not more guns were the answer. When conservative Democrats regained control of state government in 1874, these gun laws were not repealed. In 1887 a revised law increased the penalty for a first offense by mandating a jail term, in addition to a fine (Gammel, Laws, IX, 805). These laws (with amendments for hunting and sport) endured until 1995. The present legislation represents a major departure from a tradition of sensible gun regulation that the majority of Texans supported for over 120 years.

We urge our colleagues across the state and nation to take a firm stand against Campus Carry. No guns in our offices, no guns in our classrooms!

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