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Mellon Foundation Area and International Studies Fellowships for Incoming Graduate Students

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I decided to use the Mellon Recruitment Award to support my two months of study in Germany, since the German language is crucial to my formation as a historian of colonialism in which Germans took an active part, as well as of a scholar of Poland and Eastern Europe. I spent the fellowship at the Goethe-Institut in Frankfurt am Main, where I took two intensive German language courses, explored the cultural and historic richness of the region, and conducted pre-dissertation research.

In June, I took a month-long intensive course at the B-2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, during which my language skills improved and permitted me to obtain the corresponding B-2-level Goethe-Zertifikat, which permits one to work in Germany as a skilled laborer. I particularly focused my studies on the vocabulary and expressions relating to history, geography and philosophy and practiced giving presentations on these subjects in German. In the first few weeks of July, I switched my focus to my research on Polish colonial ambitions and Polish-German interwar relations, roaming in the local libraries, for example the Herder-Institut in Marburg and the University Library in Gießen. I also made acquaintances who helped me obtain historical sources: a professor from the University of Göttingen and a student from the Justus-Liebig University in Gießen. At the end of July, I went back to the Goethe-Institut for a week-long super-intensive German course, this time already at the C-1 level, which further increased my proficiency in the language. Until then, I had managed to visit several cities and towns in Germany, especially in the state of Hesse: Heidelberg, Mannheim, Wiesbaden, Fulda, Wetzlar, Kassel and Berlin. In August, I traveled to Poland to conduct research at the National Library and the Central Archive of Modern Records in Warsaw. There, I found many Polish travel accounts and novels written by explorers of Africa and Latin America.

I am very thankful to the International Institute for making such a variety of experiences and research opportunities available to me. I have polished a foreign language crucial to my studies, made very important contacts, gathered extremely useful information and materials pertaining to my research, and visited many a beautiful place in Europe.