

Report Introductory Workshop IOCM 2021/22

On October 15th the new cohort of the IOCM master program met for the first time. After an initial introduction by the program's founders, Prof. Dr. Rafael Biermann and Prof. Dr. Christian Kreuder-Sonnen, the students had the chance to meet their peers, explore Jena and discuss cultural and academic differences. The workshop included an evening at "Daheme", a renowned Jena bar, as well as an excursion to the site of the former concentration camp Buchenwald. The institute issues a warm welcome to all students and wishes them all the best for their time in Jena.

Just in time for the start of the new semester, the new cohort of the IOCM master program came together for the first time on October 15th 2021. They met right in the city center of Jena at the prestigious "Rosensäle", one of the university's main halls for events and festivities. There the group also made the acquaintance of the IOCM staff and the program's initiators: Prof. Dr. Rafael Biermann and Prof. Dr. Christian Kreuder-Sonnen.

The two professors first introduced the interdisciplinary program, highlighting its singularity and the cohorts' virtually handpicked character, then themselves. Both Biermann, former advisor of the German government and current Chair of International Relations, and Kreuder-Sonnen, former Merit Fellow at Harvard University and now head of the research unit International Organizations, emphasized their closeness to the program, calling it their brain child. The two-year master's has been in the making since 2016 and – with its semester abroad, internship, broad offer of classes, summer school and excursion – is attractive to students from all over the world. This year's second intake has brought to Jena a diverse cohort of highly motivated students who excelled in their previous studies.

In a round of introductions the new students had the chance to meet their peers as well as say a few words about themselves. The predominantly female cohort is composed of people from many different nations: Peru, Belarus, Spain, Columbia, the United States, Switzerland, Turkey, Pakistan and Germany. In total 21 students started the program, each one of them with their own remarkable background. Some have already worked in the private sector, some in International Organizations, some in diplomatic employment – others have studied, worked or lived in several countries. Their interests range from women's rights via climate issues to security matters and migration. Amusement spread when it became apparent that two students had already played in the same volleyball team in Sweden, while others had lived and studied in the same city (Chicago) – if you want, a sign that the cohort has already been closely connected before they even met.

Then, the IOCM staff had the chance to introduce themselves: Franziska Sandt, Tim Bausch, Philip Tantow, and Dr. Carolina Rehrmann. They gave some information on the course of studies and answered questions of the students. Afterwards, Dr. Rehrmann took the group on a short city tour, showing them where to find the botanical gardens, the library (ThULB), the main building as well as the city center. The tour ended on campus where some of the students decided to go for lunch at the Mensa.

In the afternoon, the course met again with Dr. Rehrmann to discuss best practices and academic culture, cultural stereotypes and international academic and professional environments. As the program is especially directed at internationals, but Germans as well, an exchange of experiences and cultures is of high value for the group's future. The first day of the pre-course was rounded up by a get-together at "Daheme", a renowned Jena bar which is located in the picturesque Wagnergasse in the city center.

The second day was much less formal. After meeting at the "Rosensäle" again in the morning and discussing academic practices in different countries as well as German culture, the group went on to learn more about German history. Studying in Jena certainly opens one's eyes for GDR history and the former division of East and West Germany. The group engaged in a lively discussion on the impact of the country's formative years.

Then they walked over to "Schillers Gartenhaus" where they heard a short lecture on Friedrich Schiller, namesake of the university, and his time in Jena. The philosopher and author had spent around ten years in Jena where he taught at the university and conversed with other scholars such as Goethe who had then lived in Weimar. The last item on the agenda was a visit of the former concentration camp Buchenwald. The site, now turned into a museum, offers a glance into the darkest chapters of German history. The somber mood of the visit was lightened at the idea of the intercultural exchange the program offers.

The pre-course brought the new cohort closer together, giving students the opportunity of meeting their classmates before the semester starts. The team, too, was delighted to meet all the students and to get to know them better. The institute wishes the students the best of luck in their studies and welcomes them warmly to the university and the city of Jena. The IOCM staff is looking forward to seeing all students in seminars, lectures, and maybe in between for a quick chat or a coffee!