

# A dip into history

Balz Engler

# Schönes Haus

roof timbering around 1270



# A marginal field

- 1885 Foundation of Germanisch-romanisches Seminar (GRS)
  - Gustav Soldan, professor of comparative Romance philology, also gives lectures on classical English authors
- 1895 Gustav Binz gets right to teach (*venia docendi*)
- 1904 English a separate section of the Germ.-rom.-Seminar
- 1912 Hans Hecht first chair
  - 1914-1919 absent (German army)
  - 1922 moves to Göttingen
- 1925-30 Gustav Hübener
  - 1930 moves to Bonn.

# A field firmly established

- 1930-1960 Henry Lüdeke chair
  - 1952 *Geschichte der amerikanischen Literatur*
  - The seminar spirit
- 1937 The department moves to Augustinergasse
- 1941ff. Theatre productions
- 1952 Cooper Stipendien Fonds (Clare Benedict)
  - 1961 Cooper Library
- 1960-1980 Rudolf Stamm chair (literature)
  - 1951 *Geschichte des englischen Theaters*
  - Plays as scores
- 1965-1990 Eduard Kolb chair (linguistics)
  - 1979 *Atlas of English Sounds*
- 1980ff. Four chairs
  - English literature, American literature, diachronic (historical) linguistics, synchronical linguistics

# The seminar

- 3 rooms (1937-1968)
- Students are members
  - pay an annual contribution
  - each has a key
- English only allowed on the premises
- Social activities
  - Singing (choir revived in 1989)
  - summer camps (important during WW2)
  - producing plays (*The Beggar's Opera*, 1941/42)
- The «seminar family»

# 1969 and all that

- 1968!
- Fachgruppe becomes active
  - 1967 Exhibition of theatre posters
  - 1968 Evening for first semester students
- Moving to Nadelberg, grand new premises
  - From Münsterplatz to Petersplatz (Kollegiengebäude 1939)
  - Library re-shelved by students
- The theatre
  - Promoted by Rudolf Stamm

# Then and now: Space

- 1885 Germ.-rom. Seminar (Münsterplatz) 1 room (?)
- 1937 Englisches Seminar (Augustinergasse 19) 4 rooms
- 1969 Englisches Seminar (Nadelberg 6) 8 rooms
  - Including theatre
- 2019 Englisches Seminar (Nadelberg 6) 16 rooms
  - Literature library in no. 4

# Augustinergasse 19





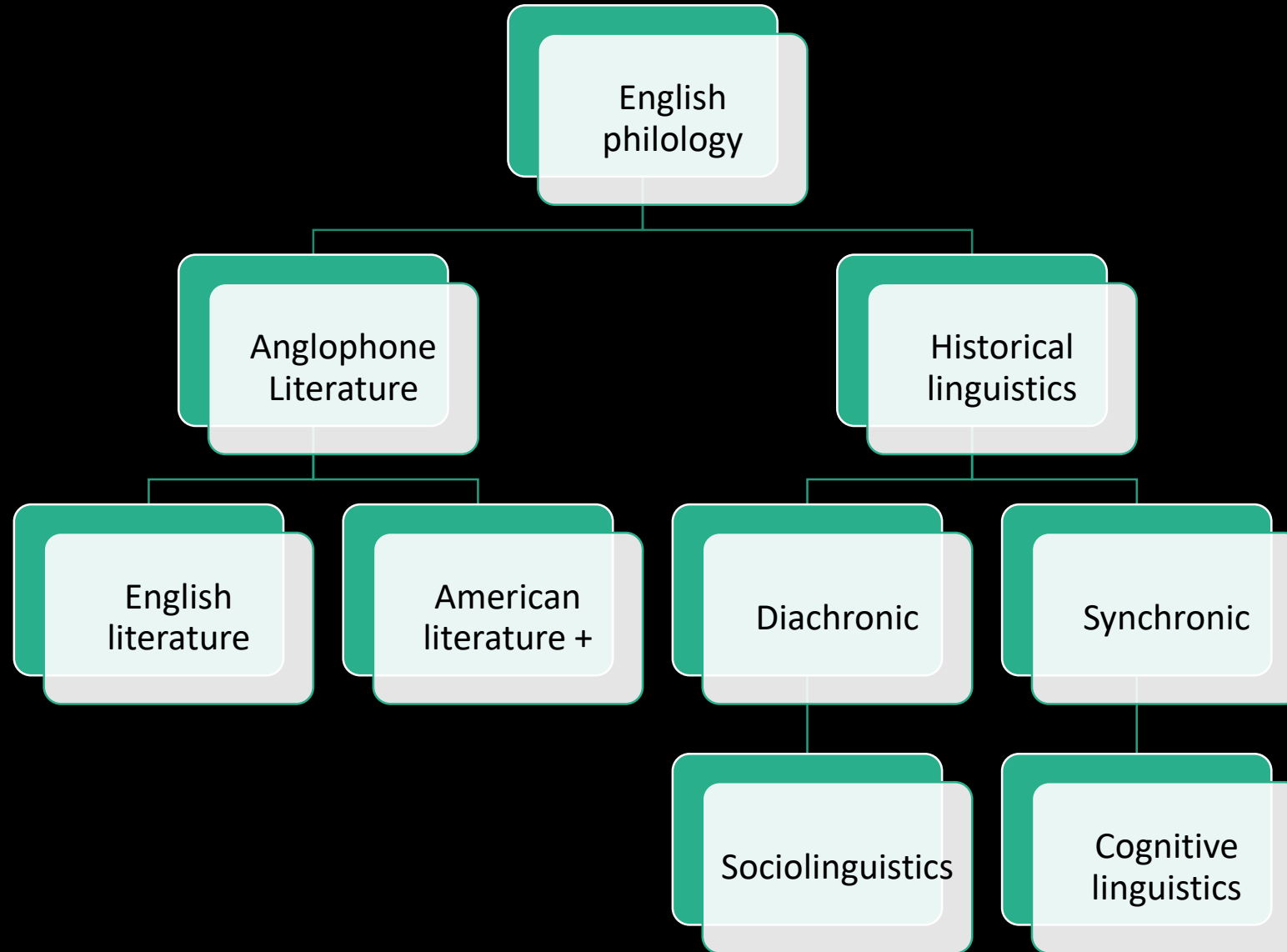
# Then and now: Staff

- **Then**

- 2 chairs, 1 guest lecturer, one assistant, one student assistant. One language teacher, one phonetician. 7 in all.
- 1969 ST offering 18 weekly meetings

- **Now**

- Website lists 20 academic staff in various degrees of employment (among them 4 professors, 5 assistants, 3 student assistants, 3 project staff, a librarian, 2 secretaries, 29 in all.
- 2019 AT 46 offering weekly meetings



2002?



# Then and now: Students

- 1939: 49
- **Then**
- 1968: 130
  
- **Now**
- 2019 AT: 405 according to latest statistics

# Then and now: Course of studies

- **Then**

- University offers one degree: Doctorate (+ teacher's degrees)
- "Testat" after each course
- 3 subjects, 2 papers in each, 2 exams, one in phonetics after the second term, the other the doctoral exam.
  - Doctoral exam: full exam in all the subjects.

- **Now**

- 2 subjects
- "Leistungsüberprüfung" after each course. Collecting credit points.
- Three consecutive degrees: Bachelor, Master, Doctorate.
  - Doctoral exam: Defence of thesis.

- 1885 Germanisch-romanisches Seminar
- Now Departement Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft



# Resources

- The department
  - <https://english.philhist.unibas.ch/en/about-us/history/>
    - The history of the buildings (from 1294)
    - The history of English at Basel University (from 1885)
    - The Cooper Library (a library of often rare books gifted by Clare Benedict)
      - Stöcklin, Elisabeth (1982): Clare Benedict and the Cooper Library at the English Seminar, Basel University. Lizentiatsarbeit , Universität Basel.
      - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clare\\_Benedict](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clare_Benedict)
  - Wahlen, Iris (2000): English Studies at Basel University: A Historical Survey. Lizentiatsarbeit. Universität, Basel.
- The Gay Beggars
  - <https://www.gaybeggars.ch/past-productions> (from 1941)



# Further resources

- Sommerer, Sabine (2003). «*Wo einst die schönsten Frauen tanzten...*». *Die Balkenmalereien im «Schönen Haus» in Basel*. Neujahrsblatt der GGG Nr. 182 / 2004. Basel: Schwabe.
- Bonjour, Edgar (1960). *Die Universität Basel von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart, 1460–1960*. Basel: Helbing und Lichtenhahn.
- Kreis, Georg (1986). *Die Universität Basel 1960-1985*. Basel: Helbing und Lichtenhahn.
- Engler, Balz (2008). “English Studies in Switzerland.” *European English Studies: Contributions towards the History of the Discipline, II*. Ed. Renate Haas and Balz Engler. Leicester: The English Association. 59–65.