

# Horst S. Daemmrich, German

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DEATHS

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*Horst Daemmrich*

Horst S. Daemmrich, emeritus professor and former chair of the department of Germanic languages and literatures, died November 26 at his home in Flourtown, PA. He was 91.

Born in Pausa, eastern Germany to parents who ran a successful business making cloth and delicate white lace, his idyllic childhood ended at age 9 as Germany invaded Poland. His family was forced to manufacture Nazi uniforms instead of lace. Over the next six years, his family faced scant food, falling-apart shoes, and even the bombing of his boarding school. His father was drafted in 1944 and captured by the American army. In 1947, with Germany divided, schools reopened and his father safely home, he joined a friend in protesting the East German communist regime by handing out banned western newspapers before escaping to West Germany.

He completed his high school studies in Munich and worked for a United States Army PX. In November 1953, he boarded a freighter for America. In Detroit, Dr. Daemmrich lived with an aunt while studying political science at Wayne State University. After graduating Phi Beta Kappa, Dr. Daemmrich won a scholarship in 1959 to pursue graduate studies at the University of Chicago. He switched his academic focus to German literature and achieved his PhD in 1964.

Dr. Daemmrich trained two generations of graduate students in German literature at Penn and chaired the department for a decade before retiring in 1998. Famous for his engaging lecture style, Dr. Daemmrich made his popular course “Mann, Hesse, Kafka” a must for many undergraduate students outside the German field. Before coming to Penn, he taught from 1962 to 1980 at Wayne State University.

“In his lifelong engagement with literature as a genuine human pursuit, he extended themes and motifs into a study of perennial moral conflicts, providing guidance from the great poets and writers,” said professor emeritus of German Frank Trommler.

In 1990, Penn honored him with its top teaching prize, the Ira H. Abrams Award. His career included more than 40 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters, along with additional books he edited. Dr. Daemmrich and his wife, Ingrid, contributed to Penn in setting up and increasing the value of the Daemmrich-Guenter Fund with awards prizes to graduate students in Germanic studies and comparative literature.

Dr. Daemmrich devoted more than six decades to literary criticism, studying major German writers ranging from Goethe to Günter Grass. He is best known for his research on recurring thematic patterns, which he explored in a series of books. Dr. Daemmrich remained focused, directing his family to mail out copies of his final book, a self-published memoir he wrote for his family, which was published in September. .

Dr. Daemmrich is survived by his daughters, JoAnna Daemmrich (David Loughlin) and Ursula Daemmrich von Luttitz (Eckart); his son, Arthur Daemmrich (Saiping Tso); and seven grandchildren.

A memorial service will be held in Dr. Daemmrich’s honor on Saturday, January 8, 2022, 11 a.m., at Upper Dublin Lutheran Church, 411 Susquehanna Road, Ambler PA 19002. Interment private. In lieu of flowers, contributions in his name may be made to the University of Pennsylvania.