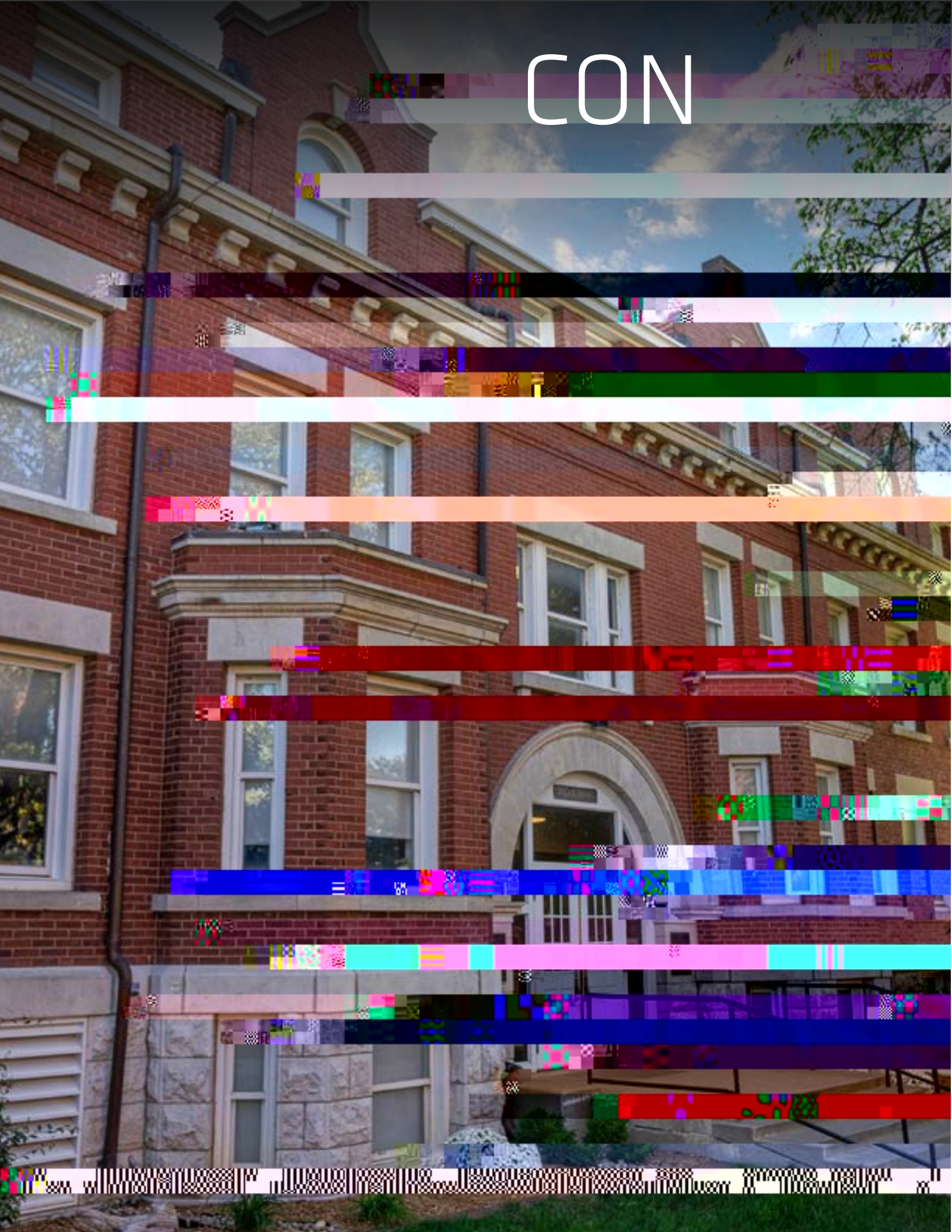
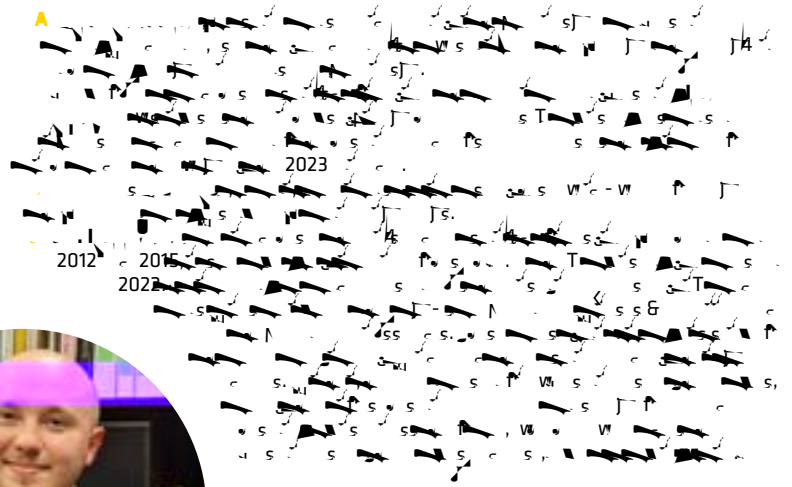


CON













Handwritten musical notation on a white background. The notation includes various symbols such as 'N', 'T', 'W', 'S', 'SS', and 'Kiev.' along with rhythmic markings and stems. The text 'Kiev.' is written in a cursive-like font.



A trek through Germany

by Jeff Hayton

Jeff Hayton spent his sabbatical conducting interviews and archival research around Germany for his new monograph on Socialist Summits: Mountaineering in the German Democratic Republic. While he enjoyed his time in them all (except Chemnitz, where he got Covid), the best place he worked was in Dresden where he was able to enjoy something historians often dream about, but rarely experience.

In Dresden is the Saxon Alpine Club (Sächsische Bergsteigerbund), one of the oldest mountaineering clubs in Germany. It recently opened a new building featuring a state-of-the-art climbing wall, gym, library and café. It also houses the archive of the club, a room piled high with old diaries, tour books, periodicals, letters, photographs, stacks of letters and old bits of gear. But there is no order, no record system, not even a list of materials: the volunteers who manage it don't even know what is in there. Somehow, Jeff sweet-talked his way into that room, and they even gave him a key so he could go in and out on his own. For months, he spent his days systematically going through that room, copying materials which no one has ever seen, or even knows exist anymore.

Probably his best discovery was a 13-volume history of the SBB typed on crumpling GDR-era onion-skin paper by a man named Fritz Petzold, the chairman of one of the underground climbing clubs which continued to function under the communists: 3000 pages of idiosyncratic reminiscences about club and climbing. Jeff also had the privilege of meeting several old climbers from the former GDR including the legendary Bernd Arnold who, in the 1970s, was probably the best climber in the world, even if very few ever heard of him. Now that he is back in Kansas, he must organize all the materials he collected so he can start writing; it is going to be a busy year.



A sabbatical of research and writing

A sabbatical of research and writing

For me, being on sabbatical this past semester meant having control over my time, sitting in the comfy winter study I had prepared at home, and having the opportunity to devote that time to work without interruption on a book project: "Babel and Bible: The Impact of Mesopotamia on Biblical Studies 1872–1924." This is a history of research project in my field of Old Testament/Hebrew Bible.

The last quarter of the nineteenth century was a seminal period in many of the humanities and social sciences. Major breakthroughs took place in historical consciousness and the study of the ancient past that also impacted traditional approaches to the Bible. At the same time, excavations of buried Mesopotamian cities had revealed material culture remains and tens of thousands of texts from ancient cultures that until then had only been known through biblical and Greek sources. The excavations revealed a rich and vibrant culture that had lasted for over 2500 years, that had its own script system (cuneiform) and language, political and religious history, education, arts, architecture and had dominated the entire region.

The new field of Assyriology, as it was called, interfaced with biblical studies, and gave it a new context. Other fledgling fields such as archaeology, anthropology, and folklore studies contributed to this rich period within intellectual history. I've had the temptation to go down many rabbit holes during this work, and wished many times that I could just keep going where my curiosity took me. But that doesn't lead to any end product. The sabbatical enabled me to push through in the difficult phase of producing a book manuscript, and I now have a rough draft to continue tinkering with, when time allows. Never mind that I was supposed to be working on the next book; that will have to be for the next sabbatical.

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A sabbatical of research and writing

