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### Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES)

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Association for Slavic, East European & Eurasian Studies (ASEEES), established in 1948, is a nonprofit, nonpolitical, scholarly society and is the leading private organization dedicated to the advancement of knowledge about Russia, Central Eurasia, and Eastern & Central Europe.

### Contribute to NewsNet!

*NewsNet* invites ASEEES members—including graduate students—to submit pitches for cover articles. *NewsNet* publishes public-facing original essays of 2,500-3,000 words on contemporary issues or matters of broad professional interest to the Association's membership. We especially encourage submissions on underrepresented areas of scholarship and pedagogy as well as reflections on the (possible) future(s) of the SEEES field. To read previous cover articles, see the [NewsNet archive](#). If you are interested in contributing to *NewsNet*, please send abstracts of no more than 300 words, including ideas for visual illustrations, to Leah Valtin-Erwin at [newsnet@pitt.edu](mailto:newsnet@pitt.edu).

*Note: The views expressed in NewsNet articles are solely the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of ASEEES or its staff.*

**Cover Photo:** "Gorky Mosaic." A mosaic along the path to one of Maxim Gorky's residences on the island of Capri. Photo by Aaron M. Thompson, 2023.

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*Juliet Johnson delivering the 2023 President's Address at the 55th Annual ASEEES Convention in Philadelphia (November 30 – December 3, 2023).*

# 2023 President's Address

## De-Centering Russia: Challenges and Opportunities

by Juliet Johnson  
2023 ASEEES President

Although it's not yet a widespread practice in the United States, in Canada we often begin important events with a land acknowledgement. Here's one I adapted from language suggested by the City of Philadelphia:

"For centuries, the land now known as Philadelphia was home to and cared for by native peoples. These include the Lenni-Lenape and the Poutaxat. We recognize these Tribes' strength and history of resistance to colonization. We commit to honoring their history, presence, and future. We further know that our modern systems of growing food and owning property are built on the stolen land of Indigenous people and the enslavement of African people. These violent acts continue to impact Black and Indigenous communities today."

What is acknowledgement? Acknowledgement means forthrightly naming wrongs that have been done and recognizing their ongoing contemporary implications. But more importantly, acknowledgement imparts a collective responsibility. If they are to be meaningful, words of acknowledgement should be precursors to action, not substitutes for it.

How can we move from words to deeds to meaningful institutional change? What complications and pitfalls lie in our path?

So, as we meet once again under the shadow of war, I want to speak for the next half hour about the call to de-center Russia in our scholarly lives, and on our own responsibility to act. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has prompted a welcome thirst for acknowledgement backed by action in our academic community. How can we move from words to deeds to meaningful institutional change? What complications and pitfalls lie in our path?

I speak from my own position as a political scientist who was, for the first several years of my career, completely focused on Russia and wrote my first book on Russian banking in the 1990s. I then gained a much deeper understanding of Russian politics and of the need to de-center Russian

perspectives in my own work when I started doing field research in other countries of the region a little over twenty years ago. I came away both with a better understanding of the diversity of the region and Russia's complex role in its histories, as well as with a more profound recognition of the pervasiveness within Russia of paternalistic and harmful views towards other peoples of the region. Here's one small personal example. After spending several weeks doing research with Kyrgyz colleagues in Bishkek, I traveled to Moscow and went to dinner at the home of a Russian acquaintance, a sociologist. As a hostess gift, I brought her two beautiful Kyrgyz embroidered pillowcase covers. When I offered them to her, she refused even to touch them, saying "why would I want something so provincial"? All these years later, it still shocks me to think about it.

I also speak today acknowledging that many of you have long been working towards de-centering Russia in your academic research and teaching, and in our association. The call for de-centering Russia is far from new. What's new is the increased willingness to listen and to act. It's to our collective shame that it took a devastating war to do it. But maybe it can be a transformative moment. So, how can we effect meaningful change in our fields that outlasts the war?

To address this question, I'm going to talk about three issues.

First, what does it mean to de-center Russia?

Second, where are we as an association coming from and what concrete progress has been made?

Finally, I'll discuss why we as scholars of the region can't do this alone, and how we might build support for our efforts among broader audiences.

So, what does it mean to de-center Russia in our scholarly lives and associations? Let me first emphasize that "de-centering" is NOT a call to stop studying Russian politics, society, culture, and language. As our incoming ASEEES president Vitaly Chernetsky said in a recent media interview, "no one is canceling Russia." Instead, it is a call to abandon a particular *understanding* of Russia that marginalizes others and privileges a "Great Russian" narrative.

So de-centering Russia above all requires acknowledging the perspectives, choices, and central roles of other countries and peoples in the region, including indigenous and racialized peoples. What does that mean in concrete terms?

It means not equating Russia with the Soviet Union, and in historical studies of the USSR, not treating the non-Russian Soviet peoples and republics as somehow lesser or "peripheral." It means acknowledging the complicated imperial and colonial nature of the Soviet Union in regards to its non-Russian peoples and to Central and Eastern Europe. De-centering contemporary Russia means not naturalizing a Russian "sphere of influence" or using terminology like the "near abroad" or "former Soviet republic" to characterize the sovereign states that border Russia. If you wouldn't talk about the "former Soviet republic of Russia," you shouldn't talk about the "former Soviet republic of Armenia."

De-centering Russia also means taking a pluralistic view of the region as a whole, and even questioning whether or not it is in fact a meaningful region. To what extent does it still make analytical sense to talk about a "postcommunist" or a "post-Soviet" region, especially one implicitly centered around the Russian Federation and Soviet-era legacies? "Postcommunist" and "post-Soviet" as descriptors increasingly obscure more than they reveal, implying continuities and similarities that in many cases no longer exist.

## Intentionality is the first step towards change.

De-centering Russia means questioning the still-predominant narrative that privileges the relationship between the United States (or the "West" more broadly) and Russia. Just like it's not all about Russia, it's not all about the US or the West, either. For example, one of the most infuriating implications of the popular narrative that Western expansion of NATO and the EU is to blame for Russia's ongoing violence in the region is the implicit assumption that the countries wanting to join both are somehow pawns to be swapped between Great Powers. No, these peoples made and continue to make their own choices. And more than that, it is Ukrainians, for example, that have re-united and reinvigorated a faltering European Union and have through sheer force of will and blood made themselves a viable potential member state.

De-centering Russia means understanding Russia itself differently and in all its complexity. Henry Hale, Tomila Lankina, and I recently faced this challenge when we agreed to co-edit the 10th edition of the [Developments in Russian Politics](#) textbook. How can you de-center Russia in a Russian Politics textbook? Is that even possible? Well for one thing, there's a full chapter about Russia's war on

Ukraine. Throughout the book we consciously tried to not take elite Russian narratives at face value (that is, avoiding the “Russian gaze”); to reflect on Russia’s multinational, multiethnic, and imperial character; and to include previously marginalized perspectives and voices in the work.

On that note, and most importantly, de-centering Russia in our academic lives means raising the voices and prospects of scholars and students from across the region. It requires solidarity. *This won’t just happen on its own.* As Erica Marat, for example, has [recently written in regards to Central Asia](#), “international discussions of Central Asia continue to be dominated by Western scholarship ... Stepping into the next decade, we need to be more intentional about representing the entirety of our field.” Such intentionality is the first step towards change.

So, what does progress look like? At ASEEES, where are we coming from and what progress has been made?

This year is the 75th anniversary of our organization. It was founded in 1948 as the American Association for the

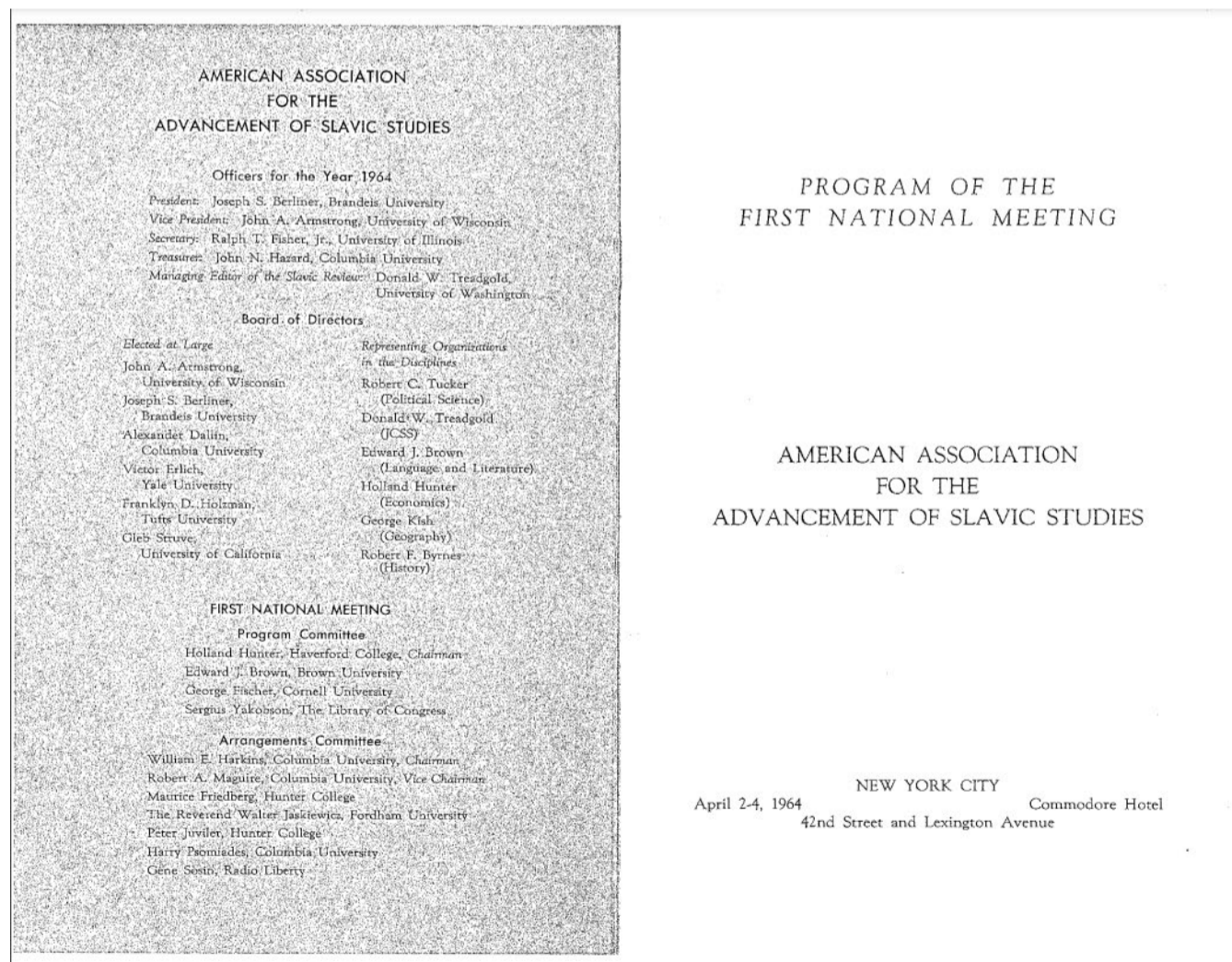
Advancement of Slavic Studies and it was from the start very much a creature of the Cold War. AAASS held its [first national convention in April 1964 at the Commodore Hotel in New York City](#). Looking back at the program is instructive. Alexander Gerschenkron gave the keynote, entitled “What We Are Doing” - and hasn’t that been the theme of pretty much every presidential address since then?

There were nearly 70 speakers on the program. Of these, only three were women. Not surprisingly, the panel titles freely conflated Russia and the Soviet Union, and of the 15 panels, there were only two on Eastern Europe.

As Norman Naimark noted in his [50th anniversary ASEEES presidential address](#), “The focus at the [association’s] founding on Russia and Russians to the exclusion of the other peoples of the Soviet Union is striking. There were a few voices in the academy and out who tried to bring Ukrainian, Baltic, and Belorussian concerns to the attention of the Slavic studies community, but with little success.”

People knew about the problem from the beginning, but knowledge was not translated into action. This original Russo-centrism, exacerbated by the Cold War, begat an institutional path dependency that proved difficult to combat.

I don’t want to imply that nothing changed. There was some meaningful progress, especially after 1989. To give just a few small examples: In 2007 then-president Mark Beissinger made “Empire” the official conference theme and gave his presidential address on the “Persistence of Empire in Eurasia.” In 2010 AAASS managed to [change its name](#) to the still imperfect but more inclusive Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies. ASEEES’s prizes, fundraising, membership, conventions, and regional scholar and graduate student grants gradually and palpably began to reflect greater diversity.



7:00 - 9:30 p.m. Dinner and informal talk  
 West Ballroom: “WHAT WE ARE DOING”  
 Chairman: Joseph S. Berliner, Brandeis University  
 Speaker: Alexander Gerschenkron, Harvard University

But it has now been many years since the Soviet collapse – most of our graduate students and even many assistant professors weren't yet born when it happened. People grow complacent and institutional change in normal times is slow. Today, we are not in normal times. The profound shock of Russia's full-scale war on Ukraine has spurred the association and its members to reflection and action.

ASEEES is an organization of its members, and it is at its best when it serves as a focal point and clearinghouse to amplify diverse voices and share new approaches in our fields. Last year, in response to the full-scale invasion, the annual convention spotlighted Ukrainian studies and the work of our Ukrainian colleagues. Over 90 scheduled sessions last year addressed Ukrainian studies.

ASEEES has undertaken a range of Ukraine-centered initiatives in the wake of the war. The Association launched a fundraising campaign for the [Ukrainian Studies Dissertation Research Grant Fund](#), developed a resource page and webinars to facilitate support for displaced and embattled Ukrainian scholars and students, created a centralized calendar for Ukraine-related online events, hosted forums on the war and decolonization in *Slavic Review*, and worked to highlight the massive international mobilization, led and inspired by Ukrainian scholars, to uplift and fund Ukrainian academia and Ukrainian perspectives.

[At our conference this year](#), at least 175 sessions explicitly address the annual theme of "Decolonization" in some way – that's nearly 30% of the total, which must be some kind of record. As one scholar recently remarked on a social media platform that I refuse to name, "The conference program for ASEEES23 may have more occurrences of the word 'decolonization' than any other I have read. Take that, Putin!" The theme clearly resonated with many.

I was especially inspired by the young scholars who spoke yesterday at the Presidential Plenary on "Decolonization in Practice" - Zuhra Kasimova, Chelsi West Ohueri, Viktoriia Savchuk, Jennie Schulze, Darya Tsymbalyuk, and Brian Yang. Scholars like these are the future of our association. Darya has also posted on her personal website her moving and challenging remarks, entitled "[Do Not Despair: A Letter to a Scholar Whose Homeland Will Be Attacked by Russia Next.](#)" I encourage everyone to read it, and to really listen.

All this shows not only that there is a hunger for change, but that we ourselves can change quickly if we actually want to do so. No more excuses. Now the challenge is to

build on what's been done so far, both within and beyond Ukrainian studies. We can do much more individually and collectively, and I hope that our conversations at this conference have helped to advance that goal.

But deeper institutional changes, beyond our individual scholarship and beyond ASEEES, require those outside our fields to invest in change as well.

How do we explain the need for de-centering Russia in academia to outsiders? One of the legacies of our own long-time Russo-centrism, and of the Cold War, is that others have internalized the view that studying Russia and Russians is inherently more important than understanding other countries and peoples of the region. The challenge is thus not only transforming our fields internally, but explaining to outsiders why it is important to do so and why these efforts should be supported with money and time.

There are at least six groups of people to persuade.

First, we must persuade our academic colleagues who don't work on the region. I vividly remember a workshop I did for my last book, [which compared central bank transformation in five countries in the region](#). During one of the breaks, a well-known international relations scholar pulled me aside to warn me that "people will only care about the Russia chapter." In the end, that book didn't have a Russia chapter, it instead had a chapter comparing central bank development in Kyrgyzstan and Russia, and [it turned out fine](#). But it is just a fact that our non-specialist colleagues typically regard research on Russia as inherently more important and it is often better rewarded professionally.

This attitude entrenches a vicious circle of Russo-centrism. Who sits on admissions committees and hiring committees? Who writes the job advertisements? Who evaluates applications and tenure files? Scholars of the region will typically be in the minority, if they are present at all. From a social-science perspective, a non-specialist might very well make the Russo-centric assumption that a Russian specialist can teach about the entire region while simultaneously considering an expert on Central Asian politics to be "too narrow."

We see these problems in our disciplinary conferences as well. My political science colleagues can testify to the train wreck for area studies that is the American Political Science Association annual meeting. I heard Emily Channel-Justice yesterday lamenting that the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association had all of



two panels on Ukraine. There are even issues in related regional studies associations. Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans have often been treated as afterthoughts in European studies, as somehow secondary to the “real Europe,” meaning Western Europe.

All of this takes intentional work to change. For example, Milada Vachudova took the initiative to put together a special “snap” roundtable on Ukraine at the [2022 European Union Studies Association conference](#), and Maria Popova gave a powerful [keynote address](#) at last summer’s annual meeting of the European Consortium for Political Research entitled “Ukraine is Europe.” We must continue to talk loudly and often, not only to each other, but to our disciplinary colleagues.

The second group to persuade is university administrators. Administrators are the ones who decide which hiring lines to grant, which centers to promote, which funding priorities to champion. This is ever more difficult and important in times of budgetary stress, and in fields that devalue areas studies more broadly. The education challenge here can be immense. Here’s another story for you. For many years, Dominique Arel’s Chair of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Ottawa has held the Danyliw Research Seminar on Contemporary Ukraine, which is one of the most important annual interdisciplinary gatherings of Ukraine specialists in the world. As is usual at such events, at this year’s meeting the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences opened it with words of greeting. In these introductory remarks, she admitted that when she started her job, she had asked the chair of political science something to the effect of: “Is this Ukraine chair really important?” This is so often where we start.

Each new department chair, new Dean, new Vice-President, and new President must be actively engaged with. We need to think about new methods of outreach to administrators, and to work across disciplines in doing so. Moreover, if you’re at a place in your career and life in which it makes sense, please consider taking on these important administrative positions yourselves and using your power for good. Those with expertise in Soviet bureaucratic practices may find it to be a special advantage in working in administration.

The third group is students. Students arrive with their own preconceptions and interests influenced by Russo-centrism. Every time Putin does something terrible, our Russian Politics and Russian History classes fill up. Yet even when we can manage to offer a broader set of courses on languages, literatures, histories, cultures, politics, and so forth, it can be a struggle to get enough students to take them. Here we can continue to work both to make existing courses and syllabi on Russia more inclusive, and to use our collective voices to encourage students to explore a wider range of inquiry, including across disciplines. We can also try to teach and, especially, to co-teach interdisciplinary courses when possible.

For graduate students, we need to address the professional ramifications of doing more inclusive research in the region, and for those not from the region, investing time in learning languages other than Russian. Will there be jobs? Publications? Funding? Recognition? Here the fact that it has now become much more difficult to do research in Russia might ironically encourage and reward this greater diversity, as students who once might have done Russia-focused research reorient their work instead. Maybe Russia has helpfully de-centered itself.

The fourth group is funding agencies and donors. Many funding agencies and donors, especially in the US, have established priorities and implicit practices that strongly privilege Russian studies. When we sit on selection committees and boards, we can help to change that. Please, if you are able, volunteer your time for these roles when asked to do so and volunteer yourselves for these roles.

Only by listening to and  
working with each other  
can we move forward  
in de-centering Russia,  
especially given such  
challenging international  
and institutional  
environments.

We can also encourage funders to direct more attention towards supporting regional scholars, regional exchanges, regional collaborations, and different and more equitable models of scholarship. In many places the situation is simply dire, as universities are chronically underfunded, as our Ukrainian colleagues literally research and teach from bomb shelters, and as authoritarian leaders in Russia as well as in backsliding and repressive regimes elsewhere in the region actively repress critical scholarship.

The fifth group is policy makers. In North America there is a continuing battle for scholars of the humanities and social sciences to justify their mere existence and to show that we can be “useful” and “practical.” Lobbying and organization is needed. For example, when ASEEES [sends out a call](#) to contact your representatives, please do so. This is a perennial problem and in practice we honestly don’t have much control over this, but let’s keep doing what we can. Moreover, we can work harder to bring a broader range of knowledge *into* policymaking as well. Imagine if US policymakers had spent more time before the full-scale invasion listening closely to experts on the Baltics and other East European states rather than focusing predominantly on Russia and Russia experts – might policy have evolved differently? Scholars of Russia and others who already have a seat at these tables can lead the push for greater inclusivity. That, in turn, will make for better policy.

The last group is the public. Colleagues in the United States – at Thanksgiving, how many of your family and friends asked you to explain what Putin is thinking? This is a Russia-centering question, focusing on Russian goals, actions, strategies, and motivations to the exclusion of others. Public perceptions of Russia do not easily align with a de-centered approach, and there is resistance to accepting new narratives that deviate from established views. Many scholars have been doing tireless and uncompensated work to get better, more accurate information out to the public. Let me give another shout out to my McGill colleague Maria Popova, who since February 2022 has done over 350 media interviews as well as written an [accessible book](#) about the run-up to the war with Oxana Shevel.

Finally, I want to emphasize that we are all in this together. Only by listening to and working with each other can we move forward in de-centering Russia, especially given such challenging international and institutional environments. It’s not just up to the scholars of Ukraine, or the Balkans, or Central Asia, to do this on their own. To echo the apocryphal quote attributed to Benjamin Franklin when signing the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia in 1776, “We must all hang together or, most assuredly, we shall all hang separately.”

As many of you know, Vitaly Chernetsky’s chosen [theme for next year’s ASEEES conference](#) is liberation. In the ensuing year, let us work to liberate ourselves from old blinders, old assumptions, and old patterns of inaction. Let us not allow cheap talk or symbolism to become a substitute for deeper change. And, most importantly, let us hope that by the next time we meet, we can pay tribute to the liberation of Ukraine.



**Juliet Johnson** is Professor of Political Science at McGill University and an elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. Her research focuses on the politics of money and identity, particularly in post-communist Europe. She is the author of *A Fistful of Rubles: The Rise and Fall of the Russian Banking System* (published by Cornell in 2000) and *Priests of Prosperity:*

*Transnational Central Bankers and Post-Communist Transformation* (published by Cornell in 2016), which won the 2017 Davis Center Prize, the Shulman Prize, and the Hewett Prize.



# 2023 Presidential Plenary: “Decolonization in Practice”



2023 ASEEES President Juliet Johnson with plenary speakers Jennie Schulze, Darya Tsymbalyuk, Brian Yang, Viktoriia Savchuk, Chelsi West Ohueri, and Zukhra Kasimova at the Annual Convention in Philadelphia.

Watch the 2023 Presidential Plenary

▶

Video Interview with Presidential Plenary speaker Chelsi West Ohueri

▶



Subscribe to the new [ASEEES Youtube channel](#)

ASEEES Spring 2024

## Research Meetup Series

SHARING PRACTICAL TIPS FOR ARCHIVAL RESEARCH AND FIELDWORK

Join us to share practical tips, logistical questions, and local resources!



Please note that these events are open to ASEEES members only.

### Doing Research in the Caucasus

Wednesday, January 24  
12:00PM ET

### Doing Research in Central Asia

Wednesday, February 14  
12:00PM ET

[www.aseees.org/research-meetup-series](http://www.aseees.org/research-meetup-series)

Contact [leah\\_aseees@pitt.edu](mailto:leah_aseees@pitt.edu) with questions or to volunteer to moderate future meetups.

## 2024 ASEEES DISTINGUISHED CONTRIBUTIONS AWARD

### CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The Association’s Distinguished Contributions to Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies Award honors members of the profession who have made major contributions to the field.

Distinguished Contributions may be conceived of in diverse ways, and the Association seeks to recognize outstanding service, leadership, scholarship, mentoring, and public outreach.

DEADLINE MAY 1

# “Why I Donate to ASEEES”

By Christine D. Worobec



ASEEES (formerly AAASS) has not only been an essential part of my entire professional career, it has become a part of my identity. As a doctoral student, beginning in 1979, I couldn't wait for the next issue of *Slavic Review* to appear on the library shelves. But my initial encounter with the organization itself had to wait until fall 1982 when I attended my first convention. I was so excited to have conversations with scholars whose work I admired as well as to observe how senior professors encouraged doctoral candidates' work in various panels. Once I was able to present my own research findings, I benefited from generous faculty members who went beyond the convention halls to help me publish my work and to write letters of recommendation. And, of course, I met countless people over the years who enriched and continue to enrich my life with friendship and support.

At the same time, without the substantial financial backing I received from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the University of Toronto I could not have attended that 1982 conference in Philadelphia or completed my dissertation. Most of the time, the national research funds were supplemented by a TAship salary under a union contract. Once I found myself teaching at public universities in the US, I was pained by the fact that graduate students in my respective departments for too many years running earned less than I had as a doctoral student.

Given the decline in funding from US government and research agencies for graduate education in our field, I welcomed the opportunity in 2018 to give back to the academic community I loved by joining ASEEES 's campaign to raise monies to endow and expand its programs for graduate students and to jump start new ones that would help diversify the field. I gladly made and solicited donations knowing ASEEES was in the capable hands of a dedicated professional staff. As members shared their stories about ASEEES, they generously opened their wallets. The traumas of the COVID years have only reminded us of how much we appreciate the ASEEES community. And now the stakes could not be higher as we continue to help refugee scholars and students displaced by Russia's ghastly and unconscionable war. I have donated to funds about which I feel passionate and to memorialize scholars who have departed this world knowing that they are dispersed to talented individuals who represent the future of our field.

## Donate to ASEEES Today



[www.aseees.org/donate](http://www.aseees.org/donate)

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# 56th ASEEES Annual Convention

Boston Marriott Copley Place, Nov. 21-24, 2024  
Virtual Convention, Oct. 17-18, 2024



## Theme: Liberation

2024 ASEEES President:  
Vitaly Chernetsky, University of Kansas

## Call for Proposals

ASEEES is again offering a small virtual convention on October 17-18 followed by the main in-person convention in Boston on November 21-24. When submitting, session organizers must choose either the in-person or the virtual convention. All participants in a given session must agree to participate in the format (in-person or virtual) for which the session is proposed. We are unable to accommodate the option to move from an in-person to virtual or virtual to in-person format after acceptance notifications are sent out.

NEW: ASEEES will offer [childcare grants](#) of up to \$250 to assist members who have childcare costs during the convention.

Please review the best practices for fostering accessibility and inclusivity at the Convention [here](#).

### Important Dates

**March 1** – Deadline for all panel/roundtable/individual paper proposals for the 2024 convention

**April 1** – Deadline for meeting room requests and film screening submissions

**September 1** – Deadline for ancillary event space requests

### Membership

**March 1** – All submitters must be ASEEES Members

**May 15** - All participants appearing in the program must be ASEEES Members

### Accepting proposals for:

- Panels
- Roundtables
- Book Discussion Roundtables
- Lightning Rounds
- Individual Papers (virtual convention only)
- Film Screenings (in-person convention only)
- Affiliate Group Meetings
- Ancillary Events

Please review the [categories](#) for 2024.

### Professional Bios

Required for convention participants: Please enter a one-paragraph professional bio in your profile on the ASEEES member site for use in the convention proposal review process.

NEW FROM SLAVICA PUBLISHERS

**Linda Mëniku and Héctor Campos.** *Advancing in Albanian*, textbook 451 p., workbook 324 p. (978-089357-518-2, set), \$94.95.

The authors' introductory textbook of Albanian (*Discovering Albanian 1*, U. of Wisconsin Press, 2011) received the AATSEEL award for best annual contribution to language pedagogy. Now Slavica presents their intermediate-advanced textbook, *Advancing in Albanian*, to provide enhanced access for students to one of the major, but less commonly taught European languages. Albanian has been on track to join the EU since 2014, and there are 5 million speakers of this language. The textbook and accompanying workbook transition from English to Albanian as the language of instruction over the course of the year, and are supported by substantial online downloadable

audio files, making it more feasible to achieve proficiency in Albanian without extensive in-country experience.

**Michael S. Flier et al., eds.** *Muscovy and the World: An Empire and Its Limits. Essays in honor of Valerie Kivelson*, viii + 303 p. (ISBN 978-089357-521-2), \$35.95.

The scholars who have contributed to this collection demonstrate the range of Kivelson's interests by exploring issues of witchcraft, politics, art, and empire. Like her, they build their arguments on primary sources, taking nothing for granted if not demonstrated in the texts. Additionally, they honor her constant moral compass, making shrewd arguments about how Muscovite history is being used and abused in Putin's political rhetoric, just as she herself has called out analogous dimensions of Muscovite practice.



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Three String Books is an imprint of Slavica Publishers devoted to translations of literary works and belles-lettres from Central and Eastern Europe, including Russia and the other successor states of the former Soviet Union.

**Maria A. Shelyakhovskaya.** *Being Grounded in Love: The History of One Russian Family, 1872–1981*, trans. **Christina E. Petrides and Maria A. Shelyakhovskaya**, xlvi + 450 p. (ISBN 978-089357-517-5), \$44.95.

Leo Tolstoy claimed that all happy families resemble one another; many in the West believe that all Russians are equally miserable. Maria (Gruzdeva) Shelyakhovskaya's *Being Grounded in Love: A History of One Russian Family, 1872–1981* challenges both such simplistic notions. *Being Grounded in Love* "is a conscious effort to look at and grasp the meaning of the tumultuous one hundred years of Russian and Soviet history (1872–1981)

by taking an ordinary family perspective as a vantage point and reconstructing it based on the materials of a well-preserved family archive. The result is a deeply entertaining and engaging collage of personal recollections, authentic voices, intimate



Three String Books

details, through which events of great magnitude—including multiple revolutions and wars—get illuminated in a distinctly personalized way. For sure, the ultimate result is partisan and partial, imbued with the partiality of love to one's own kin, the Gudzyuk-Gruzdev family. It is difficult to resist the feeling of compassion while reading entries of the personal diaries, the intimate correspondence of family members or listening to the collector's own voice recounting the family's itinerary through the century of troubles. Ultimately, by foregrounding love as a key motive, the book provides a story about the perseverance of human love and about the persistence of family ties as opposed to the heaviness of History."

—From the introduction by Vladimir Ryzhkovski

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## ‘Everything Exists to Be Told’: Archival Research in Unfamiliar Places

by Aaron M. Thompson

Russia is big, without a doubt, but not enough to contain everything Russian. I learned that firsthand while conducting research on Maxim Gorky and other Russian figures in the archives of Italy, of all places. Until the war against Ukraine, Russia had been the only place I had expected to go for my dissertation research. However, when the obvious route became impossible, what remained was, at best, an uncertain lead in uncharted waters. In the end, the experience grounded my work in history, delivered sources that will shape my work for some time, and helped me form important contacts for the future. It gave me everything I wanted and needed from a first major archival expedition. That said, my time in Italy also unexpectedly left me with lingering questions about what this trip means for the future of my research and my field as we study the elephant that is not in the room.

My experience demonstrates that expanding the scope of one’s field research can be more than just a worthwhile experiment. This article is a reflection on the advantages of and obstacles in doing scholarly work in “unfamiliar places.” By this, I refer to research conducted in archives outside of Eastern Europe, Eurasia, and other conventional locations for the field. I use my experience conducting dissertation research in Italian archives during the summer of 2023 as a case study in non-traditional exploration for research.

I ended up there due to a confluence of factors big and small, partially within but mostly out of my control. With only an educated guess that there was anything at all to be found, I took the chance on an opportunity for archival research in “unfamiliar places” because I knew that what—if anything—did exist there, the world deserves to know. “Everything exists to be told,” as Gorky said, according to Italian poet Sibilla Aleramo in her unpublished memoirs I found in Rome. Ultimately, I found myself confronted by the question of whether, if not for the circumstances I had found myself in, what exists in Italy would ever get its chance to be told?

Expanding the scope  
of one’s field research  
can be more than  
just a worthwhile  
experiment.

In addition to the research itself, I would like to focus on four aspects of the trip as a way of distilling the essence of my research in an “unfamiliar place” for present purposes. First, what may be the obstacle of all obstacles: language, which can—and did—make every other aspect of the

experience more complex, but also rewarding. Second, preparing for a trip to an “unfamiliar place,” even as an experienced traveler, left me faced with many unknown unknowns. Third, navigating archives and working with archivists themselves unfamiliar with my topic meant that I needed to leave time for on-the-job training. Finally, I reflect on the perspective shift I have undergone since the trip and how it may be a step in the right direction for not just my work but scholarship on Russia in general—albeit with plenty of caveats. Strange though it may be, Italy contained enough Russianness, so to speak, to redefine my private and professional views on the matter.

### *Ma che bella...*

“Why Italy?” is an obvious and commonly posed question, and I do not wish to bury the lede. I began my dissertation just after the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, so by 2022 I was eager to make up for lost time in the archives of Moscow and other locations in the Russian Federation. The tragic invasion of Ukraine in February that year meant that my long-anticipated trip was morally and legally untenable. As it turned out, though, my project had come to focus on literature and people whose presence became untenable in the Russian Empire following a day known as “Bloody Sunday.” On January 9, 1905, Gorky joined Father Georgii Gapon to demand better working conditions in the Empire in a march on the Winter Palace that precipitated the century’s first Russian Revolution. The alliance with Gapon, who was a priest too radical for Nicholas’s liking and a labor leader too religious for Lenin’s liking, garnered the ire of both politicians simultaneously. Gorky’s first trip to Italy was officially to aid recovery from health issues, but the time abroad more importantly gave him refuge from the dangers that closed on him from multiple sides at home.

Such were the experiences that helped formed his infamously doctrinaire novel *Mother* and many of the political views that would come to characterize later works, but it was not the whole story. Gorky lived a cumulative two of the last three decades of his life in different locales across Italy’s southern half, yet published literature offers few first-hand accounts of what took place there. I first believed that the lack of citations attributed to Italian sources indicated that the Bolsheviks had gathered everything related to Gorky and moved it back to Russia. Nonetheless, it was important for my purposes to understand what his life looked like in Italy once he was



An unpublished photo of Gorky at the Roman Forum, dated 1907.



An unpublished photo of Gorky at the house of Sibilla Aleramo in Rome, dated 1907.



out from under the watchful eyes of the Tsar and Lenin. (As I eventually discovered, not only did the Tsar's guard and the Bolsheviks continue to keep tabs on Gorky while he was abroad, Italian monarch Vittorio Emanuele III kept him under near-constant surveillance across the kingdom, including from within the author's household.) For the first six months or more of planning, however, doubts far outweighed any hopes I had for finding anything on which I could stake my project.

Thankfully, after months of dead ends, I stumbled upon the road that led to Rome. Traces of Gorky's Italian life began to pop up in repository databases and in correspondence with archivists, independent researchers, and colleagues with experience in Italy. Nobody had gone looking for the Russian writers' records, but with time I saw enough signs of their presence scattered across institutions. To be honest, the skeptic in me was certain that this trip would be for nought even as my plane touched down on the Leonardo da Vinci International Airport runway. There was no blueprint or blog post for me to consult as I made my plans, which is a frightening position for most, not to mention as a graduate student. When the time came to decide, I took the gamble that there would be an answer to "Why Italy?" somewhere out there because it was the only chance I had.

### When in Rome...

In the memoirs and other articles about Gorky I found



Personal photograph signed by Gorky with Italian inscription "To the great Sorrento artist Raffaele Viriani with esteem Massimo Gorky," dated 5 September 1926 in Sorrento.

in the archives, I was surprised to learn that the Italian language brought out Gorky's shy side. It was news to learn that he had such a side in adulthood; nevertheless, if something made Gorky second guess himself, it was expressing himself in an unfamiliar language. We all know the feeling. When I committed to going to Italy, I did not know much Italian beyond my favorite menu items. If I could do the process again from scratch, that would be the first change I would make. Ideally, we do not have to learn a new language for every research trip we go on. However, I dedicated an hour daily in the two-and-a-half months leading up to my departure to language learning. This was an investment that paid dividends. Most importantly, the ability to explain my aims to local archivists opened literal and metaphorical doors from the beginning.

I wanted to prove—  
to myself more than  
anyone—that there is  
knowledge to be found  
beyond conventional  
boundaries of  
investigation.

Frankly, little of the institutional knowledge on which I was relying to help me navigate Russian archives could help me in Italy. Before getting to that, however, it is worth mentioning one maxim that applies to the familiar and unfamiliar alike: there is no better single resource in a collection than its keeper. From senior scholars' stories, it was clear that communicating intelligibly with archivists was my only sure tool to get what I was looking for once I got there. I was quickly disabused of the notion that all locals in a cosmopolitan region like Rome would speak English—nor did I want to be *that* person—and for that I am thankful. In fact, of the approximately two dozen archivists I met, only two could and would speak English conversationally (and one spoke Russian conversationally). Instead, every bit of the local language I could muster rewarded me handsomely. "When in

Rome,” as they say. And fellow Millennials, N.B.: an Internet connection is not a sure thing, either. Some places will forever be analog, and maybe for the better. Once I could explain my purpose and the key figures associated with my search, a new set of institutional knowledge became available to me via the experts on the ground. Ultimately, the professional connections made through thoughtful communication will undoubtedly grow into the most impactful artifacts collected that summer.

Returning to a previous point, I want to point out that learning a new language for every trip to the archives is more farcical than feasible for most. It is not my intention to do so, but I feared I would be remiss to mention the issue anywhere but at the beginning. Dedicating time and effort to becoming proficient enough in the language is a serious undertaking. In my circumstances, there was no end to my doubts about what was possible in just a couple months. Moreover, having spent a decade already on learning Russian as a non-native speaker, going through the language-acquisition process yet again made me question the rigor of my decision-making processes. To be forthright, I benefited from privileges such as having control over my own schedule and the financial means to purchase study aids. All that having been said, the linguistic connection—a most humanizing kind of connection—categorically improved every experience inside and outside of the archives. As it would turn out, knowledge of Italian would be integral for making sense of what I would see in the archives and bringing into conversation the locals’ side of Gorky’s story.

### Goose Chase or Golden Egg?

After language, the most daunting obstacle I faced was planning how I would spend my limited time in my unfamiliar destination. As enticing as twenty-eight days in Italy with or without archives sounded, the very real possibility of coming home with nothing to show for all the effort weighed on me. Rather, I wanted to prove—to myself more than anyone—that there is knowledge to be found beyond conventional boundaries of investigation. Gorky crossed the geopolitical borders of the Russian Empire after Bloody Sunday in search of open philosophical pastures, so I would follow, but where? I found myself with nothing more than tenuous connections to certain locations and began the tedious work of looking up local repositories. The biggest archives in Italy have a searchable database, which was invaluable in locating specific collections

that may contain pertinent material. For the majority of archives, however, particularly for the small, private, or specialized repositories that constituted at least half of my final itinerary, there are no such details of what you may find. Everything that remained without a definitive answer, which was to say a great deal of my plans, were known unknowns.

My under-planning had consequences which both worked for and against me at different times, and I will likely repeat my methods with a few adjustments in the future. I say this because of the unpredictable serendipity to be had within archives, though that surely will not always be the case. Failed inquiries were in no short supply, and occurred far more often than I would have liked. Some archives lacked anything of interest, others were in the midst of renovations, and one opportunity was missed because I overlooked the fine-print mandatory waiting period (presumably for a background check) prior to accessing potentially materials in the archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Often, serendipitous gifts of knowledge came from the stacks themselves, the expert staff, and other researchers’ willingness to bounce ideas back and forth. For example, unable to gain access to a specialized archive, I took the suggestion of a fellow young scholar whom I had met by chance in the reading room. What initially seemed like a wild guess led me to some of my most exciting discoveries, including the memoirs mentioned above. This is to say that I was not fully prepared for what would happen, but also that what turned out to be more important in the end was persistence in the search.

Foregrounding the  
personality of each  
archive made me  
a more effective  
researcher.

Walking into the hushed archives from the bubbling streets of Rome felt like exiting a hot water slide at terminal velocity into a giant oasis, relieving yet disorienting at the same time. Especially on my first visit to each institution, of which there are many in unfamiliar places, I had the sense akin slipping into another dimension entirely, as each archive had its own fundamental laws and constants. Before I could dive in, I found it was helpful if not necessary

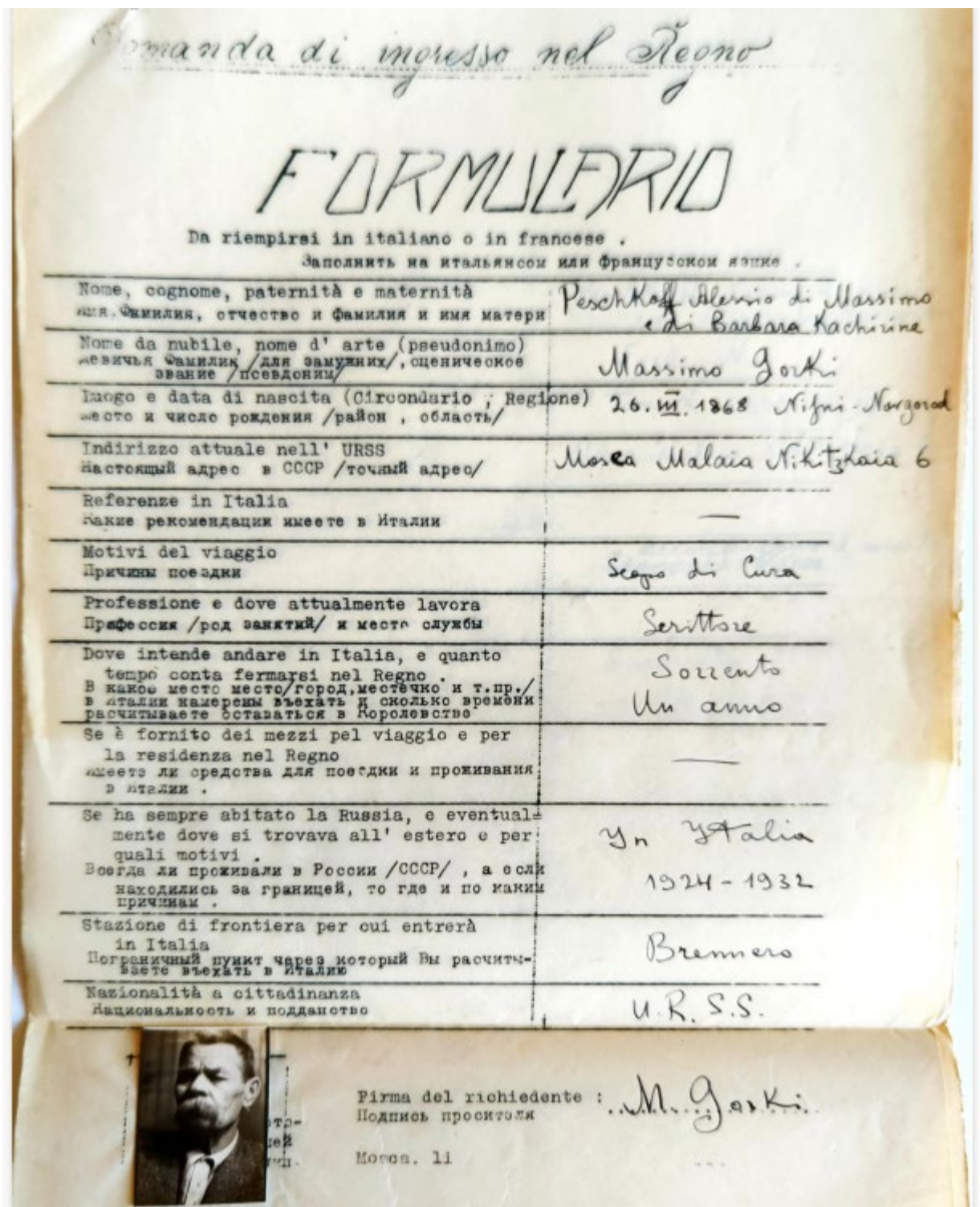
to take the first day at any archive to familiarize myself with the unique characteristics thereof. Establishing a workflow at each location was integral to getting what I needed out of a resource. I utilized a digital assistant to make notes of everything from call number formats to passwords to the best scanner to use for copies because each archive had its own way of doing things, which I could learn only once I had arrived on location. Foregrounding the personality of each archive made me a more effective researcher and prepared user of the resources available.

**Revolution from Afar**

The oddity of going to Italy to learn something about Russian culture and history has never been lost on me. It genuinely felt absurd to even suggest it at first, but as the idea grew into concrete plans and then a lived reality, the trip has begun to take on meaning beyond my dissertation. As I mentioned above, it gave me more than I ever expected in terms of my research, but there is more. Each time I was questioned “Why Italy?” I was also pushed to question what exactly my research is seeking to understand. Russia has that which is “Russian,” and Italy has that which is “Italian,” or at least so I thought. My response to “Why Italy?” took different forms as I came to understand the numerous causes that put me there. At first, I only had an answer to “Why not Russia?” because I did not yet know, but now in hindsight I see that “Why Italy?” is the more interesting question, even to a doctoral candidate in Slavic Languages and Literatures. Specifically, what does it mean for my research and the field in general that I have uncovered something about a figure like Gorky because I did not go to Russia? And where then are the boundaries to demarcate our scholarly work and our subject, Russia, itself?

What I found in Italy does not magically give me the answers to all these questions, but it is a start. The only thing of which I am sure is that the fruit of my labors will

become clearer with time. Before me now I see evidence of a vibrant intellectual and spiritual community centered around Gorky, which was strongest during his years on Capri (1907-1912) after Bloody Sunday but continues in some shape and form to this day. He commanded a unique influence among locals and Russian expats in the Naples region, and powerful people, including the King of Italy and Italian Socialist Party founder Antonio Gramsci, requested regular reports of his everyday comings and goings. Likewise, the lives of those around Gorky got to shine in a place where he may have been a recognizable name but not a recognizable face to passersby. In one report I discovered, a dramatic tale of sabotage is told by an Italian spy, in which Gorky’s colleagues conspire to drive a wedge between him and his common-law wife, Maria Andreeva. With a good portion of the documentation collected still yet to be transcribed, I look forward to learning more about



Gorky's entrance form (with photo) at the border region of Brenner, dated 19 October 1932.

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|  Hebrew                              |  Tatar     |
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the other half of Gorky's life beyond the Russian borders.

Throughout this time, I could also not help but feel a connection to Gorky and the confused chaos that led him to choose Italy over Russia. On Bloody Sunday, his sense of normality was shattered—even if that sense was a touch naïve to begin with. That has happened more than a few times recently, and it will undoubtedly happen again, predictably unpredictable as always. As I argue in my dissertation, Gorky found his answer by turning all conventions upside-down and inside-out. I have similarly begun to ask if this or that standard is still the best way to do things. At some point in the future, I will take that trip to Moscow and Nizhnii Novgorod I had planned for the sake of due diligence, but I will not bemoan what has become of my unconventional alternative. The future is not always where we expect it to be, which is thankfully a known unknown. Perhaps, it would be in the last place you would look. For it to be told, as Gorky said, we simply need to go out and find it first.



**Aaron M. Thompson** is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures and the Digital Humanities program at the University of Virginia. His research interests include intellectual history, religious thought, and writing culture in the Russian Empire and Soviet Union. Aaron's dissertation project, "A Revolutionary Gospel: Orthodox Origins of Russian Socialist Literature," investigates how Maxim Gorky and other

Russian revolutionary writers drew from the Orthodox cultural tradition to invent a socialist religion to succeed Christianity. His digital research applies Natural Language Processing methods to understand corpus-level stylistics and semantic networks. In Aaron's digital dissertation, he explores the multifaceted relationship between the Russian Orthodox Bible and secular literary fiction that uses the religious text to justify social and political revolution. Before graduate school, Aaron worked as the Educational Director of a private language school in Almaty, Kazakhstan. He earned bachelor's degrees in Anthropology and Slavic Studies at the University of Arizona. More information is available [here](#).



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# 2023 Executive Director’s Annual Report

by Lynda Park  
ASEEES Executive Director

I am pleased to report that in 2023, despite ongoing challenges, ASEEES held a successful, well-attended convention in Philadelphia, awarded numerous fellowships and grants, and initiated new programs and projects, and that its membership rebounded to the pre-pandemic level.

## Membership

For 2023, we had 3,489 members (compared to 3,268 in 2022): at least 684 student members (a 13% increase from 2022 and 19.6% of total members); 267 affiliate members (7.6%); and 100 lifetime members (2.8%). We had 1,101 international members (31.5% of total members) from 60 countries, of which 407 are from countries in Eastern Europe and Eurasia. 164 of the 407 from the region gained membership at the reduced rate; 64 scholars in Ukraine or displaced from Ukraine due to the war were given complimentary memberships. The 2023 membership numbers were comparable to the pre-pandemic numbers: in 2019 we had 3,490 total members: 685 student members; 337 affiliate members; and 1,246 international members from 49 countries. For trends in membership over the last decade, please see the table appended to this report. We also had 50 institutional members: 17 premium and 33 regular members.

## Annual Conventions

The 55th Annual Convention was held at the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown on November 30 – December 3, 2023, with a smaller virtual convention on October 19-20 (an event much smaller than the 2022 Virtual). 609 sessions (388 panels, 192 roundtable, 29 individual paper panels/lightning rounds), 5 film screenings, and 29 meetings were scheduled in the convention program overall; 77 sessions were scheduled for the virtual convention; 532 sessions were scheduled for the in-person convention. Over 175 sessions addressed the annual theme of Decolonization in some way. The Presidential Plenary, “Decolonization in Practice,” chaired by the 2023 President Juliet Johnson, featured six young scholars: Zukhra Kasimova, Viktoriia Savchuk, Jennie Schulze, Darya Tsymbalyuk, Chelsi West Ohueri, and Brian Yang. The Vice-Presidential Roundtable, “Decolonization and Liberation: Ukraine’s Experiences and Implications for the Region,” organized by Vitaly Chernetsky, introduced the 2024 theme, Liberation. Juliet Johnson gave her presidential address, “De-Centering Russia: Challenges and Opportunities,” during the award ceremony.

The final registration numbers were as follows: 2,774 registrants, consisting of 2,436 for in-person+virtual



(87.8%) and 338 for virtual only (12.2%). 2,355 registrants were ASEEES members (84.9%); 581 were first-time attendees (20.9%); 573 were students (20.7%). Of the 890 international registrants (32.1%) from 53 countries, the largest contingents were from the UK (109), Canada (134), and Germany (90). We offered complimentary registrations to 53 participants from Ukraine or who were displaced from Ukraine. I thank the Program Committee, particularly its chair, Bob Weinberg, for their hard work on the Convention. We thank the 19 sponsors, 59 exhibitors, and 31 advertisers for their support.

The 2024 annual convention will be held at the Boston Marriott Copley Place on November 21-24, preceded by the virtual convention on October 17-18. As noted above, the convention theme is Liberation. The program committee chair is Oxana Shevel.

### Slavic Review

In 2023, Harriet Murav stepped down as the Editor of *Slavic Review* after ten years of service. Eugene Avrutin started his five-year term as the new Editor in mid-August. The journal's editorial office continues to be hosted by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Also, the seven-year publishing contract with Cambridge University Press ended in 2023, and we signed a five-year renewal contract for 2024-2028. The academic journal publishing world has changed very much in the last seven years, with a decline in institutional subscriptions and a rapid move to "transformative agreements" and Open Access. The terms of the new contract are drastically different from previous ones. Due to budget conditions and with the goal of being more eco-friendly, *Slavic Review* will become a digital journal starting with the 2024 volume, with a limited number of print copies available for members at an extra cost. About 17% of our members were receiving free print copies in 2023, with the rest already choosing to read the journal online. The new digital journal format will allow for quicker publishing and opportunities to offer new content. As the journal goes digital, it is also getting a complete re-design and a new website as part of the new ASEEES website.

### Fundraising

In fiscal year 2023 (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023), we received a total of \$516,321 in gifts, pledges, and grants, including, KAT Foundation's annual gift for the Cohen-Tucker Fellowship program. Thanks to the generosity of

individual donors and institutions to the Future of the Field Campaign and beyond, we were able to greatly increase the funding for grant programs for 2019-2023. To maintain the elevated level of funding for programs after 2023, we are working to increase our fundraising efforts. At the 2023 convention, we launched a fundraising campaign for two research grant programs to raise a total of \$120,000 by the end of 2024: \$60,000 for the Ukrainian Studies Dissertation Research Grant Fund and \$60,000 for the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Dissertation Research Grant Fund.

### ASEEES Research Grants and Other Grants

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we were able to award 62 fellowships and grants, totaling \$363,750 in the calendar year 2023.

- **Dissertation Research Grant:** We awarded 10 grants up to \$6,000 each, including the Women's and Gender studies grant, the Maya Peterson Grant in Environmental Studies, the Bradley-Ruane Russian Studies grant, and the new Ukrainian Studies Grant.
- **Summer Dissertation Writing Grant:** We awarded 7 Summer Dissertation Writing Grants up to \$6,000 each.
- **Cohen-Tucker Dissertation Research Fellowship:** We awarded 5 fellowships of \$25,000 each.
- **Cohen-Tucker Dissertation Completion Fellowship:** We awarded 3 fellowships of \$25,000 each.
- **Internship Grant Program:** We awarded 9 grants with a monthly stipend of \$2000.
- **First Book Subvention:** We awarded 5 subvention grants with the maximum subvention of \$2,500.
- **Mutual Aid Grant:** Started in spring 2023 with the ASEEES seed funding of \$10,000, we awarded 23 grants of \$250 each.

### Convention Travel Grants

For the 2023 convention in Philadelphia, ASEEES awarded 115 travel grants for a total of \$80,200:

- 49 Graduate Student Travel Grants (20 students at US institutions and 29 at non-US institutions, including citizens of 20 different countries), each up to \$500;
- 48 Regional Scholar Travel Grants to participants from 13 countries, each up to \$1,000;
- 9 Convention Opportunity Travel Grants of \$500 each;
- 9 Diversity and Inclusion Travel Grants of \$500 each.

### Other Programs

**Initiative for Diversity and Inclusion:** Since launching the Initiative for Diversity and Inclusion (IDI) in February 2021, ASEEES has offered a total of 95 complimentary 2-year memberships to interested and eligible BIPOC colleagues and first-generation undergraduates, thanks to a gift from Doug Smith and Stephanie Ellis-Smith. We have 73 active participants. The goal continues to be for ASEEES to provide structural support to create a community of under-represented students, scholars, and professionals in the US so that they can network, share their experiences, and mentor each other. The group includes students, working professionals, and professors at various stages of their careers, including students who were selected for the Undergraduate Think Tank coordinated by Howard University. Since the start of the program and throughout 2023, ASEEES has hosted several Zoom events, during which participants were able to meet each other and hold informal conversations. In addition, we offered an IDI Mentoring Program, pairing mentors or mentees.

**ASEEES Career Webinars:** In spring 2023, ASEEES continued the Exploring Career Diversity Conversation Series for members who are graduate students or recent graduates interested in broadening their career trajectories. We also continued to offer the Exploring Career Diversity Service, which matches senior colleagues in non-academic fields with junior colleagues for a one-time conversation or informational interview. This service continues to be a successful program for graduate students and recent graduates.

**New Research Meetup Series:** In the fall 2023, we launched a new initiative, the Research Meetup Series. These informal events offer scholars of a common 'sub-region' an opportunity to discuss the practicalities of doing onsite research in a given area. We held two pilot meetups, one on doing research in the Baltics and the other on doing research on former Yugoslavia. In the spring 2024, we will hold meetups on doing research in the Caucasus and in Central Asia.

### Carnegie/Lounsbery Grant Projects

ASEEES concluded two projects with grants from the Carnegie Corporation of New York in 2023:

“2022 Assessment of the State of Russian Studies and Research in the US” – Led by Ted Gerber, this was a follow-up study to the 2015 study, also led by

Gerber and sponsored by Carnegie. We applied for and received this grant before the start of Russia’s war against Ukraine, which led to a delay and re-thinking of this project, while also maintaining the goal of gathering follow-up data to the 2015 baseline data. In August 2023, we published the final report and announced the news to the members and the general public. We held a roundtable at the convention in Philadelphia to discuss the report.

Data Project on Displaced Ukrainian Scholars and Self-Exiled Russian/Belarusian Scholars – ASEEES was asked by the Carnegie Corporation and the Lounsbery Foundation in June 2022 to conduct this project. We worked with Harvard University’s Davis Center and HURI, as well as displaced scholars acting as consultants and other partners, to conduct the two studies, which were concluded in August 2023. The main purpose of the project was to assess the extent of assistance needed and to collect preliminary information about those who need it. The final reports were sent to the two funders and partners.

### Board Election/Incoming Members

The 2023 annual election for the Board of Directors was held from June-September with the following results: Adrienne Edgar (History, UC Santa Barbara) was elected Vice President/President-Elect; Antonina Berezovenko (Ukrainian Language, Literatures and Cultures, National Technical U of Ukraine “Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute”) and Stephen Badalyan Riegg (History, Texas A&M U) were elected Members-at-Large for 2024-2026; and Brian Yang (Slavic Languages and Literatures, U of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana) was elected Graduate Student Representative for 2024-2025. A total of 3,284 ballots were sent out, and 1,298 voted for a response rate of 39.5%. The other incoming Board members in 2024 are Sarah Sokhey (U of Colorado) as the APSA representative and Chelsi West Ohueri (U of Texas at Austin) as the AAA representative, who will both serve for 2024-2026.

### ASEEES Delegate to ACLS

ASEEES is a member of the American Council of Learned Societies. Delegate to ACLS serves a four-year term. Christine Worobec’s term as the delegate ended in 2023; Sunnie Rucker-Chang has agreed to serve as the next delegate for 2024-2027.



### New Website Design

In the summer 2023, we began the re-design process of the ASEEES public website after 11 years. The new site should look quite different, offer added features, be mobile-responsive, and be more user-friendly. The new site should launch sometime in the spring 2024. As previously mentioned, the new ASEEES site will also include the newly designed *Slavic Review* website. We moved the ASEEES member site to a new platform in December 2022. We thank our members for their patience regarding this transition.

I thank ASEEES staff members Jenn Legler, Margaret Manges, Leah Valtin-Erwin, and Roxana Espinoza, for their assistance in preparing this report and for their tireless work for the association.

I would like to express my gratitude to the ASEEES Board, especially the outgoing 2023 Board members for

their service: Joan Neuberger, Harriet Murav, Theodora Dragostinova, Sunnie Rucker-Chang, Zachary Hicks, Michael Bernhard, and Neringa Klumbyte.

Finally, I thank the University of Pittsburgh for hosting the main ASEEES office and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for hosting the *Slavic Review* editorial office.



Lynda Park and ASEEES staff members Margaret Manges, Roxana Espinoza, and Leah Valtin-Erwin at the 2023 convention in Philadelphia.

## Slavic Review Fall 2023 Preview

### **Cluster: Suicide, War, And The Military In East-Central Europe, 1918–1945**

“Through a Glass Darkly: Introduction to Research Cluster”

John Paul Newman and Orel Beilinson

“Suicide and the Hermeneutics of Political and National Community in the Interwar Czechoslovak Republic”

John Paul Newman

“No Song for Birds in Flight: The Life and Afterlife of Suicide in the Warsaw Ghetto”

Emily Julia Roche

### **Critical Forum: Trial By Fire—Russian Modernist Poetry Against War**

“Forum Introduction: Trial by Fire: Russian Modernist Poetry Against War”

Polina Barskova

“Ian Satunovskii: Identity and Biography, from the War to the Lyric”

Luba Golburt

“‘Anecdote in the Vein of Herodotus’: Shuttling between Particulars and the Universal in Boris Slutskii’s and Ian Satunovskii’s War Poetry”

Marat Grinberg

“Writing within the Pain: Russophone Anti-War Poetry Of 2022”

Ilya Kukulin

### **Articles**

“The Bashagurov Brothers: A Story of Brigandage and Mobility in the Urals, 1789–1792”

Andrey V. Gornostaev

“‘Like a Magician Who Tricks the Eyes’: Demonism, Epistemological Uncertainty, and Religious Heterodoxy in Seventeenth-Century Ukraine”

Maria Grazia Bartolini

“‘I am a Sincere Believer’: Rethinking Religiosity and Identity in the Early Soviet Union”

Francesca Silano

“Evil, Theodicy, and Jewishness in Fridrikh Gorenshtein”

Anna Schur

### **Review Essays**

Derek Offord, *Ayn Rand and the Russian Intelligentsia: The Origins of an Icon of the American Right*; Aaron Weinacht, *Nikolai Chernyshevskii and Ayn Rand: Russian Nihilism Travels to America* (Andrew M. Drozd)

Zarina Burkadze, *Great Power Competition and the Path to Democracy: The Case of Georgia 1991–2020*; Stephen F. Jones and Neil MacFarlane, eds., *Georgia: From Autocracy to Democracy* (Julie A. George)

## Cohen-Tucker Dissertation Fellowship

The Cohen-Tucker Dissertation Research and Dissertation Completion Fellowships offer maximum stipends of \$25,000 for graduate students in any discipline whose dissertation topics involve 19th-early 21st century Russian historical studies. This includes the Cohen-Tucker Dissertation Research Fellowship for Women's and Gender Studies. Please see the ASEEES website for full eligibility requirements. The Stephen F. Cohen-Robert C. Tucker Dissertation Fellowship Program is sponsored by the KAT Charitable Foundation.

**[Application Deadline: January 29, 2024](#)**

## First Book Subvention

Awarded twice annually, First Book Subventions are awarded twice annually for subvention of books by first-time authors who have already secured publishing contracts. Multiple awards of up to \$2,500 will be made on a competitive basis each year, with funds paid directly to the press.

**[Spring Deadline: February 1, 2024 and Fall Deadline: September 1, 2024](#)**

## Internship Grant

ASEEES' Internship Grant Program provides MA, PhD, and professional school students and recent graduates (i.e. those who have graduated no more than two years prior to the competition deadline) with grants that make it possible for them to accept unpaid or underpaid internships in areas broadly related to Russia, including Russia's relations with other regions/countries. These internships must be in the US and should be substantial in duration and responsibilities (20-25 work hours per week), lasting two months for summer internships and four months for semester internships. The grant offers \$2,000 a month, to be paid directly to the grantee (intern) during their internship.

**[Application Deadline: March 15, 2024](#)**

## Mutual Aid Grant

Developments in recent years have highlighted the financial precarity confronted by many of our colleagues in Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies. For contingently-employed graduate students and faculty instructors in the SEEES field, the impacts of institutional austerity, rising living costs and other economic factors are particularly acute, warranting active intervention. To support contingent faculty and graduate student members based in the US with urgent financial need, ASEEES has established a small mutual aid grant program in collaboration with the [Working Group for Solidarity in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies](#), an ASEEES affiliate organization.

To apply for financial assistance, please complete the [online application](#), available on the ASEEES website, by the deadlines of either **March 1** and **September 1**. Applicants will be eligible to apply for up to \$250, with grants disbursed on a first-come, first-served basis for each application round. Applicants may receive the mutual aid grant once.

Help us sustain this program by donating to the Mutual Aid Fund [HERE](#).

## Dissertation Research Grants

ASEEES Dissertation Research Grants (DRGs) support doctoral dissertation research in Eastern Europe and Eurasia in any aspect of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian studies in any discipline. Graduate student of any citizenship, in any discipline currently enrolled in a PhD program in the United States (and for the Bailey Dissertation Research Grant, in the US and Canada) may apply.

*In Spring 2024, ASEEES is delighted to launch the James Bailey Dissertation Grant in Folklore Studies, thanks to the generous endowed gift from Professor Natalie Kononenko, Kule Chair Emerita in Ukrainian Ethnography at the University of Alberta.*

Thanks to the generous gifts from ASEEES members and other donors, we offer specialized grants in the following subjects (applicants' research projects need not fall into the following categories in order to be eligible for a DRG):

- **Dissertation Research Grant in Women and Gender Studies** - open to all disciplines and geographic foci in Eastern Europe and Eurasia
- **Dissertation Research Grant in LGBTQ Studies** - open to all disciplines and geographic foci in Eastern Europe and Eurasia
- **Joseph Bradley and Christine Ruane Dissertation Research Grant in Russian Studies** - open to all disciplines and any aspect of Russian studies broadly defined
- **Maya K. Peterson Dissertation Research Grant in Environmental Studies** - open to all disciplines, geographic foci in Eastern Europe and Eurasia and any aspect of environmental studies broadly defined
- **Dissertation Research Grant in Ukrainian Studies** - open to all disciplines and any aspect of Ukrainian studies broadly defined

**and NEW in 2024**

- **James Bailey Dissertation Research Grant in Folklore Studies** - open to all disciplines and any aspect of Folklore studies, broadly defined; open to PhD students in Canada

**[Application Deadline: April 1, 2024](#)**

## Summer Dissertation Writing Grants

Thanks to the generosity of donors and members, the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies is offering a limited number of grants, with a maximum stipend of \$6,000, for the purposes of summer dissertation writing on any aspect of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian studies in any discipline. The writing grant program is directed at PhD students at US universities who do not qualify for the ASEEES Dissertation Research Grant because they do not intend to conduct research in the region.

**[Application Deadline: April 1, 2024](#)**

Please consider investing in the future of the field by donating to the **[ASEEES Research Grant Funds](#)**.

# 2024 ASEEES Board of Directors and Committee Assignments

## 2024 ASEEES Board of Directors

### Executive Committee

Vitaly Chernetsky, U of Kansas - President  
 Adrienne Edgar, UC Santa Barbara - President-Elect/Vice President  
 Juliet Johnson, McGill U - Immediate Past President  
 Christine Worobec, Northern Illinois U - Treasurer, 2021-2026  
 Kimberly Zarecor, Iowa State U - Member-at-Large, 2022-2024  
 Eugene Avrutin, U of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign - Editor, *Slavic Review*  
 Lynda Park, U of Pittsburgh – ASEEES Executive Director (ex officio)

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Anna Arays, Yale U - CLIR representative, 2023-2025  
 Antonina Berezovenko, National Technical U of Ukraine “Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute” - Member-at-large, 2024-2026  
 Cynthia Buckley, U of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign - Sociology representative, 2023-2025  
 Karen Evans-Romaine, U of Wisconsin, Madison - AATSEEL representative, 2022-2024  
 Kristen Ghodsee, U of Pennsylvania - Member-at-large, 2023-2025  
 Krista Goff, U of Miami - AHA representative, 2023-2025  
 Amanda Gregg, Middlebury College - Economics representative, 2022-2024  
 Edward Holland, U of Arkansas - AAG representative, 2022-2024  
 Andrew Janco, U of Pennsylvania - Member-at-large, 2022-2024  
 Sharon Kowalsky, Texas A&M U-Commerce - Council of Regional Affiliates representative, 2023-2025  
 Stephen Badalyan Riegg, Texas A&M U - Member-at-large, 2024-2026  
 Alison Smith, U of Toronto - Member-at-large, 2023-2025  
 Sarah Sokhey, U of Colorado - APSA representative, 2024-2026  
 Alexandra Vacroux, Harvard U - Council of Institutional Members representative, 2022-2024  
 Chelsi West Ohueri, U of Texas at Austin - AAA representative, 2024-2026  
 Brian Yang, U of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign - Graduate student representative, 2024-2025

## 2024 ASEEES Committees

### Nominating Committee

Juliet Johnson, McGill U (Canada), Chair  
 Chad Bryant, UNC at Chapel Hill  
 Ted Gerber, U of Wisconsin-Madison

### Committee on Academic Freedom and Advocacy

Jan Kubik, Rutgers: The State U of New Jersey/U College London (UK), 2022-2024, Chair  
 Rachel Applebaum, Tufts U, 2023-2025  
 Ian Campbell, UC Davis, 2023-2025  
 Raquel Greene, Grinnell College, 2024-2026  
 Barbara Henry, U of Washington, 2022-2024  
 Eileen Kane, Connecticut College, 2023-2025  
 Amber Nickell, Fort Hays State U, 2024-2026  
 Valeria Sobol, U of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2023-2025

### Committee on Mentoring

Molly Blasing, U of Kentucky, 2023-2025, Chair  
 Kiril Tomoff, UC Riverside, 2023-2025  
 Katherine Zubovich, SUNY Buffalo, 2024-2026

### Committee for Careers Beyond Academia

Dana Ponte, NCEEER, 2024-2026, Chair  
 Christine Dulaney, Library of Congress, 2024-2026  
 Rachel Rothstein, The Weber School, 2022-2024  
 Rachel Salzman, US Department of State, 2024-2026  
 Terrell Starr, Journalist/Entrepreneur, 2022-2024

### Committee on Gender Equity

Anne Eakin Moss, Johns Hopkins U, 2021-2024, Chair  
 Sara Dickinson, U of Genoa (Italy), 2023-2024 (ex-officio as AWSS president)  
 Ksenia Un, Cornell U, 2024 (Graduate Student Rep)

### Committee on Environmental Sustainability

José Vergara, Bryn Mawr College, 2023-2025, Chair  
 Elizabeth Plantan, Stetson U, 2023-2025  
 Elana Resnick, UC Santa Barbara, 2023-2025

### Code of Conduct Committee

Janet Johnson, CUNY Brooklyn College, 2022-2024, Chair  
 Eric Naiman, UC Berkeley, 2022-2026  
 Alison Smith, U of Toronto (Canada), 2022-2026

**Communications Advisory Committee**

Edith Clowes, U of Virginia, 2022-2024, Chair  
 Emily Elliott, Michigan State U/H-Net, 2024-2026  
 Zachary Hicks, UC Berkeley, 2023- 2024  
 (Graduate Student Rep)  
 Nathaniel Knight, Seton Hall U, 2022-2024  
 Jasmina Tumbas, SUNY Buffalo, 2024-2026

**Committee for the Advocacy of Diversity and Inclusion**

Louis Porter, Texas State U, 2022-2024, Chair  
 Vince Bohlinger, Rhode Island College, 2023-2025  
 Bella Grigoryan, U of Pittsburgh, 2024-2026  
 Chelsi West Ohueri, U of Texas at Austin, 2024-2026  
 A'Yanna Solomon, U of Michigan, 2024-2025  
 (Graduate Student Rep)

**CLIR Executive Council**

Anna Arays, Yale U, Executive Council, 2023-2026, Chair  
 Olga Makarova, U of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign -  
 Member-at-Large, 2023-2026  
 Kirill Tolpygo, UNC at Chapel Hill - Slavic and East European  
 Materials Project Chair, 2022-2024  
 Janice Pilch, Rutgers U - Subcommittee on Copyright Issues  
 Chair, 2023-2026  
 Liladhar Pendse, UC Berkeley - Subcommittee on Collection  
 Development Chair, 2023-2026  
 Brendan Nieuburt, U of Michigan - Subcommittee on  
 Education and Access Chair, 2023-2026  
 Jon Giullian, U of Kansas, Website Administrator

**Investment Sub-Committee of the Executive Committee**

Christine Worobec, Northern Illinois U, 2021-2026, Chair  
 Kristy Ironside, McGill U (Canada), 2024-2026  
 Iikka Korhonen, Bank of Finland, 2023-2025

**2023 Prize Committees****Distinguished Contributions Award Committee**

Valerie Sperling, Clark U, 2022-2024, Chair  
 Raquel Greene, Grinnell College, 2023-2025  
 Kate Holland, U of Toronto (Canada), 2022-2024  
 Morgan Liu, Ohio State U, 2023-2025  
 Joan Neuberger, U of Texas at Austin, 2024-2026

**Wayne S. Vucinich Book Prize Committee**

Robert Nemes, Colgate U, 2023-2024, Chair  
 Ana Hedberg Olenina, Arizona State U, 2024  
 Tomila Lankina, London School of Economics and Political  
 Science (UK), 2024-2025  
 Douglas Rogers, Yale U, 2024-2025

**Davis Center Book Prize Committee**

Gulnaz Sharafutdinova, Kings College London (UK),  
 2023-2024, Chair  
 Lenka Bustikova-Siroky, U of Florida, 2024-2026  
 Fabio Mattioli, U of Melbourne (Australia), 2023-2025

**USC Book Prize Committee**

Martha Kelly, U of Missouri, 2022-2024, Chair  
 Rory Finnin, U of Cambridge (UK), 2024-2026  
 Maria Taroutina, Yale-NUS College (Singapore), 2023-2025

**Reginald Zelnik Book Prize Committee**

Aaron Retish, Wayne State U, 2022-2024, Chair  
 Stephen Norris, Miami U of Ohio, 2024-2025  
 Malgorzata Fidelis, U of Illinois Chicago, 2024-2026

**W. Bruce Lincoln Book Prize Committee**

Andy Bruno, Northern Illinois U, 2022-2024, Chair  
 Krista Goff, U of Miami, 2023-2025  
 Kristin Roth-Ey, U College London (UK), 2024-2026

**Marshall Shulman Book Prize Committee**

Elidor Mëhilli, CUNY Hunter College, 2022-2024, Chair  
 Lorenz Luthi, McGill U (Canada), 2023-2025  
 Milada Vachudova, UNC at Chapel Hill, 2024-2026

**Ed A Hewett Book Prize Committee**

Timothy Frye, Columbia U, 2023-2024, Chair  
 Cynthia Buckley, U of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign,  
 2022-2024  
 Susanne Wengle, U of Notre Dame, 2024-2026

**Barbara Jelavich Book Prize Committee**

Emily Greble, Vanderbilt U, 2023-2025, Chair  
 Theodora Dragostinova, Ohio State U, 2021, 2023-2024  
 Vladimir Kulic, Iowa State U, 2024-2026

**Kulczycki Book Prize Committee**

Kathryn Ciancia, U of Wisconsin-Madison, 2022-2024, Chair  
 Stanley Bill, U of Cambridge (UK), 2024-2026  
 Anna Grzymala-Busse, Stanford U, 2023-2024

**Pritsak Book Prize Committee**

Margarita Balmaceda, Harvard U/Seton Hall U,  
 2022-2024, Chair  
 Yuliya Ilchuk, Stanford U, 2023-2025  
 Sarah Phillips, Indiana U Bloomington, 2024-2026

**Holmgren Graduate Student Essay Prize Committee**

Maria Popova, McGill U (Canada), 2022-2024, Chair  
 Adeeb Khalid, Carleton College, 2023-2025  
 Roman Utkin, Wesleyan U, 2024-2026

**Tucker/Cohen Dissertation Prize**

Kathleen Smith, Georgetown U, 2022-2024, Chair  
 Melissa Chakars, St. Joseph's U, 2023-2025  
 Alexis Peri, Boston U, 2022-2024

**2023 Grant & Fellowship Committees****ASEEES Dissertation Grant Committee**

Amy Bryzgel, Northeastern U, 2023-2025, Chair  
 Colleen Moore, James Madison U, 2023-2025  
 Zara Torlone, Miami U of Ohio, 2024-2026

**Cohen-Tucker Dissertation Fellowship Selection Committee**

Lisa Kirschenbaum, West Chester U, 2023-2025, Chair  
 Ed Cohn, Grinnell College, 2023-2025  
 Galya Diment, U of Washington, 2022-2024

**First Book Subvention Committee**

Brigid O'Keeffe, Brooklyn College, 2022-2024, Chair  
 Molly Brunson, Yale U, 2023-2025  
 Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, Northwestern U, 2024-2026  
 Gwen Walker, U of Wisconsin, 2021-2024  
 (non-voting member)

**Internship Grant Committee**

Laura Schlosberg, Stanford U, 2023-2025, Chair  
 Claire Kaiser, McLarty Associates/Georgetown U,  
 2023-2025  
 Will Pomeranz, Wilson Center Kennan Institute, 2024-2025

**Convention Opportunity Travel Grant and Diversity and Inclusion Travel Grant Committee**

Matthew Romaniello, Weber State U, 2022-2024, Chair  
 Kelly Knickmeier Cummings, Howard U, 2024-2026  
 Kenneth Yin, LaGuardia Community College (CUNY),  
 2023-2025

**Graduate Student Travel Grant Committee**

Andrea Rusnock, Indiana U South Bend, 2022-2024, Chair  
 Seth Bernstein, U of Florida, 2024-2026  
 Victoria Thorstensson, Carleton College, 2024-2026

**Regional Scholar Travel Grant Committee**

Lauren McCarthy, U of Massachusetts Amherst,  
 2023-2024, Chair  
 Janine Holc, Loyola U Maryland, 2022-2024  
 Yuliya Ladygina, Penn State U, 2024-2026



## STUDY RUSSIAN ABROAD WITH AMERICAN COUNCILS

### Advanced Russian Language & Area Studies Program (RLASP)

American Councils is pleased to offer intensive, immersive Russian language programming at the following sites in 2024:

- **Yerevan, Armenia**
- **Tallinn, Estonia (summer only)**
- **Tbilisi, Georgia (summer only)**
- **Almaty, Kazakhstan**

Summer and Fall 2024 programs provide 20 hours of intensive study per week, host families, volunteering opportunities, conversation partners, and U.S. academic credit through Bryn Mawr College.

**Applications for Summer 2024 are due February 15, 2024**

**Applications for Fall 2024 and Academic Year 2024-2025 are due March 15, 2024**

Eligibility requirements, financial aid, and scholarship info are available at:

[www.studyabroad.americancouncils.org/rlasp](http://www.studyabroad.americancouncils.org/rlasp)

Questions? Contact us: [outbound@americancouncils.org](mailto:outbound@americancouncils.org)

# THE 2023 ASEEEES BOOK PRIZE WINNERS

## on research, writing, and publishing



**Alessandro Iandolo**

*Arrested Development:  
The Soviet Union in  
Ghana, Guinea, and  
Mali, 1955-1968*

Co-Winner of the  
Marshall Shulman Book  
Prize and Winner of the  
W. Bruce Lincoln Book  
Prize



**Kyrill Kunakhovich**

*Communism's Public  
Sphere: Culture as  
Politics in Cold War  
Poland and East  
Germany*

Winner of the Kulczycki  
Book Prize in Polish  
Studies

**Tell us about the process of writing this book! How did you determine your subjects, case studies, and/or methods? What kind(s) of research did it entail?**

**AI:** The idea for *Arrested Development* was born long ago, initially as a dissertation project. When I started graduate school, I knew I wanted to look at the Soviet Union from the outside. I also knew I was not especially interested in Western Europe or North America. Thinking about political radicalism during the Cold War era, I was inspired by the idea of exploring connections between Soviet socialism and anti-imperialism in newly independent Ghana, Guinea, and Mali. I found the encounter between a society whose revolution had become institutionalized and three of the most radical anti-imperialist states

in Africa endlessly fascinating. As a historian, I work primarily with archival sources, which requires travel. To write the book, I spent long periods of time in Russia between 2007 and 2019, and I also worked in Ghana and then Mali. I had a wonderful time in all cases. Over the years, my aversion to doing research in “the West” mellowed, and I took fruitful research trips to France, the US, and even England (where I have been based for most of the time).

It was the process of writing this book that pushed me to explore unfamiliar territory.



**KK:** *Communism's Public Sphere* started out as a PhD dissertation, which is to say, I really didn't know what I was getting myself into! I came to graduate school to study Soviet history but quickly drifted towards Central and Eastern Europe. I wanted to understand what happened when the Soviet model was exported westward, perhaps in part because this paralleled my own experience: I grew up in the late USSR before moving to England and then the US. I chose to focus on two countries, Poland and East Germany, since those were the languages I could read. Then I picked two cities, Kraków and Leipzig, to make the research more manageable. My original idea was to examine how administrators in each city tried to develop a socialist culture; this was a phrase officials often used, and I wanted to understand what they meant by it. So, off I went to the archives, first in Kraków and then in Leipzig, to read the records of communist-era Culture Departments and see what I would find.



A now-shuttered branch of the Polish National Archives in Kraków, housed in a medieval castle in the village of Spytkowice.



**Did your approach or argument evolve as you wrote this book? How did your ideas, claims, or perspective on your subject change over time?**

**AI:** My approach to history changed a lot over the decade or so it took to finish the book. I started the project with an interest in very traditional aspects of international history, such as diplomacy and security. However, going through archival documents in Russia and in West Africa, it was clear that the individuals and institutions in which I was interested thought primarily in terms of economic growth and economic development. These became the main categories with which the book engages. My goal in *Arrested Development* is to place the Soviet Union in dialogue with broader trends in the history of economic change in the twentieth century. My perspective as a historian is still evolving. So far, I have researched mostly material, tangible aspects of Soviet engagement with the wider world. In recent years, I have become more and more drawn toward conceptual, intangible aspects. It was the process of writing this book that pushed me to explore unfamiliar territory.

It took me years to find the right language for what I was seeing.

**KK:** My argument evolved tremendously, both in the course of writing my dissertation and afterward, as I reworked it into a book. When I started, I figured that socialist culture would be easy enough to define: I would just look at how officials envisioned a socialist theater, a socialist literature, and so on. After a few weeks in the archives, I realized that they had no idea. Administrators argued constantly amongst themselves, but what stood out was that they based their arguments on audience response – when viewers clapped, when they booed, when they did not show up. Cultural policy, I found, was not simply imposed from above but negotiated on the ground. It was thus not enough to study state officials; to understand how policy was made, I had to study the cultural spaces where they interacted with artists and audiences. I looked more closely at the theaters, galleries, and youth clubs of Kraków and Leipzig, and discovered far more political debate than I expected. But it still took me years to find the right language for what I was seeing: to recognize that cultural spaces were a public sphere.

**What challenges did you encounter in writing this book? Is there particular advice you would give to first-time authors?**

**AI:** The main challenges I encountered are common to many early-career academics: lack of funding, constant movement chasing temporary employment, and generally insecurity about the future. I hope the profession will become more understanding toward young academics who write books in challenging financial and professional circumstances.

Historians tend to write about either something they love or something they hate. Analyzing and deconstructing something you hate is easier than doing the same with something you love. Choose wisely (I didn't).

**KK:** The biggest challenge was to craft one narrative from two case studies. Kraków and Leipzig have their own distinctive histories, which I very much wanted to capture. Yet they were also part of national, regional, and even global stories, and telling these required a broader lens. I decided to write about the two cities side by side rather than in separate chapters, to highlight both contrasts and interconnections between them. But it took many drafts to figure out when to zoom in and to zoom out, how to balance comparative and transnational approaches, or how to integrate two stories into one coherent narrative. At the same time, for all the effort it required, juxtaposing Kraków and Leipzig enabled me to see both cities in a different light. I would encourage first-time authors not to shy away from multilingual, multinational research but rather to embrace the novel vantage points it offers.

**What unexpected stories or information did you uncover while working on this book? What might readers be surprised to find within its pages?**

**AI:** I think many readers find it difficult to imagine the Soviet Union as a source of inspiration for governments and individuals. Thinking of the USSR as a possible economic "success story" does not come natural to most people. Even among professional historians, we are so used to thinking of the Soviet Union as an economic disaster, perhaps destined for an inevitable "collapse." *Arrested Development* begins with excitement and interest in the Soviet economy, at the time in which

socialism appeared capable of challenging Western hegemony. Things changed, but readers will still discover a different Soviet Union in the pages of the book.



*Alessandro Iandolo with his wife, the late Philippa Hetherington, at the ASEEES Convention in Boston in 2013. "Philippa, who was a historian of the Russian Empire, shaped every aspect of my book more profoundly than anyone and anything else."*

**KK:** In June 1958, Leipzig officials found themselves going door to door to ask about residents' cultural preferences. The East German regime had suppressed sociology as a bourgeois science, only to realize that it knew next to nothing about its subjects. Still reeling from a recent uprising, administrators went into the field themselves so they could learn what people liked and devise more effective policies. This is just one example of the many ways in which Eastern Bloc states collected and responded to public opinion; what I found on the ground looks very different from the standard image of an inflexible, indifferent bureaucracy. This vignette also illustrates how the cultural sphere became a conduit for conversations that were banned elsewhere. When asked about their tastes in film, Leipzig residents voiced criticisms of work conditions (which left little time for leisure), gender norms (which made it difficult for women to go out), and isolation from the West (which made Hollywood movies more attractive). Although it focuses on cultural spaces, *Communism's Public Sphere* is just as much a study of Eastern Bloc politics, exploring states' abilities to shape their people and vice versa.

# Event Series: Queer Focus

The [six-part virtual event series “Queer Focus”](#) will examine queer studies within Eurasia through a variety of disciplines and themes.

The impacts of Russia’s war against Ukraine can be felt far outside the actual battlefield. Modern war disproportionately affects gender and sexual minorities, something we are seeing in Ukraine even as Putin’s anti-LGBTQ+ agenda seeks to relentlessly drive support for the war at home. How can a queer-studies focus advance conversations about decolonization in East European and Eurasian Studies? To address this question, Queer Focus will have six virtual panels featuring speakers from various disciplines and institutions. Panelists and participants will explore how gendered regimes were constitutive of Russo-centric relationships of power, defining the region and how we study it, as we collectively grapple with what it means to re-examine our current research, teaching, and institutional practices.

## Panel 1: Overview/State of the Field • Jan. 19, 2024 • 11:00-12:30 pm ET

**Moderator:** Emily Channell-Justice, Director, Temerty Program on Contemporary Ukraine, Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute

### Speakers:

- Simone Bellezza, Assistant Professor of Modern History, Department of Social Sciences, University of Naples Federico
- Tamar Shirinian, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, University of Tennessee Knoxville
- Vladislav Beronja, Assistant Professor of Slavic and Eurasian Studies, University of Texas at Austin
- Jasmina Tumbas, Associate Professor, Department of Global Gender and Sexuality Studies, University of Buffalo

## Panel 2: History and Archives • Jan. 26, 2024 • 11:00-12:30pm ET

**Moderator:** Anita Kurimay, Associate Professor of History and Director of Gender and Sexuality Studies, Bryn Mawr College

### Speakers:

- Feruza Aripova, Visiting Scholar, Columbia University
- Kamil Karczewski, Fellow, Institute of Historical Research, School of Advanced Study, University College London
- Irina Roldugina, UCIS Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Pittsburgh
- Roman Utkin, Assistant Professor of Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies, Wesleyan University

## Panel 3: Arts and Culture • Feb. 2, 2024 • 11:00-12:30 pm ET

**Moderator:** Philip Gleissner, Assistant Professor, Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures, The Ohio State University

### Speakers:

- Ramona Dima, Associate Professor, Center for Gender Studies, University of Stavanger
- Luc Beaudoin, Professor of Gender and Women’s Studies, University of Denver
- Maria Engstrom, Professor of Russian, Department of Modern Languages, University of Uppsala
- Aleksandra Gajowy, Assistant Professor of Modern and Contemporary Art, School of Art History and Cultural Policy, University College Dublin

## Panel 4: Politics and Law • Feb. 16, 2024 • 11:00-12:30 pm ET

**Moderator:** Helene Thibault, Associate Professor of Political Science, Nazarbayev University

### Speakers:

- Katalin Fabian, Professor of Government and Law, Lafayette College
- Jennifer Suchland, Associate Professor, Department of Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies, The Ohio State University
- Marianna Muravyeva, Professor of Law, University of Helsinki
- Piro Rexhepi, independent researcher

## Panel 5: Migration • Mar. 1, 2024 • 11:00—12:30pm ET

**Moderator:** Alexandra Novitskaya, Title VIII Research Fellow, Kennan Institute/Woodrow Wilson Center, Research Affiliate at Indiana University

### Speakers:

- Randall Rowe, Assistant Professor of Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies, University of Cincinnati
- Evgeny Shtorn, Doctoral Candidate in Political, Societal and Cultural Change, University of Helsinki
- Mariya Levitanus, Lecturer in Counselling and Psychotherapy, University of Edinburgh
- Maryna Shevtsova, FWO Senior Post-Doctoral Fellow, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

## Panel 6: Activism • Mar. 15, 2024 • 11:00-12:30 pm ET

**Moderator:** Lyosha Gorshkov, Director of LGBTQ+ Initiatives, Colgate University

### Speakers:

- Shota Kincha, Staff Writer, Open Caucasus Media
- Zhanar Sekerbayeva, Co-Founder, Kazakhstan’s LGBTQ Feminist Initiative “Feminita”
- Mohira Suyarkulova, Associate Professor, Department of International and Comparative Politics, American University of Central Asia
- Tatsiana Shchurko, Post-Doctoral Scholar, Department of Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies, The Ohio State University

This series was developed and implemented by the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies at the University of Pittsburgh, the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Harvard University, and the Center for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies (CSEEEES) at The Ohio State University with support from the Association for Slavic, East European & Eurasian Studies. CSEEEES faculty affiliates Philip Gleissner (Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures (SEELC)) and Jennifer Suchland (SEELC and Women’s Gender and Sexuality Studies (WGSS)), Ohio State Post-Doctoral Scholar Tatsiana Shchurko (WGSS) and SEELC alumnus Randall Rowe (U of Cincinnati) will be featured in the series.

### Additional financial support has been provided by:

Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies, U of Kansas  
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 Institute of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies, U of California, Berkeley  
 Melikian Center for Russian, Eurasian, and Eastern European Studies, Arizona State U  
 Robert F. Byrnes Russian and East European Institute, Indiana U, Bloomington

# 2023 Affiliate Awards and Prizes

## [Association for Women in Slavic Studies](#)

### Outstanding Achievement Award

**Catherine Wanner**, professor of History, Anthropology, and Religious Studies at Pennsylvania State University and currently Jacyk Distinguished Fellow (2023-2024) at the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute.

### Heldt Prize for best book in Slavic, East European, and Eurasian women's and gender studies

**Winner: Julia Hillner.** *Helena Augusta: Mother of the Empire.* Oxford University Press (2022).

### Heldt Prize for best book introducing new, innovative, and/or underrepresented perspectives into any area of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian studies

- **Winner: Adrienne Edgar.** *Intermarriage and the Friendship of the Peoples: Ethnic Mixing in Soviet Central Asia.* Cornell University Press (2022).
- **Honorable Mention: Margorzata Fidelis.** *Imagining the World from Behind the Iron Curtain.* Oxford University Press (2022).
- **Honorable Mention: Catherine Wanner.** *Everyday Religiosity and the Politics of Belonging in Ukraine.* Cornell University Press (2022).

### Heldt Prize for best literary translation in Slavic/East European/Eurasian studies by a woman-identifying translator

**Winner: Alex Niemi.** translator, *For the Shrew* by Anna Glazova. Zephyr Press (2022).

### Heldt Prize for best article in Slavic, East European, and Eurasian women's and gender studies

- **Winner: Orysia Kulick.** "Gender and Violence in Ukraine: Changing How We Bear Witness to War." *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 64:2-3 (2022), 190-206.
- **Honorable Mention: Jenny Kaminer.** "'One Foot in the Grave': Pregnancy and Folk Culture in Recent Russian Films." *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 16.1 (2022), 25-43.

## Mary Zirin Prize for Independent Scholars

**Darya Tsymbalyuk**, finding her to be a young scholar of extreme promise. While her work lies at the intersection of environmental humanities and the arts, she also engages with feminist and decolonial methodologies.

## Patricia Herlihy Graduate Research Prize

**Anna Smelova**, PhD Candidate at Georgetown University, "Imagining Indigenous Siberia: Populist Ethnography of Northeast Asia Under Russian Late Imperial and Early Soviet Regimes."

## AWSS Graduate Essay Prize

**Tabitha Cochran**, PhD Student at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, "Ukrainians To Their Very Soul: Discourses on Motherhood and Revolutionary Reproduction in Interwar Ukraine (1932-1936)."

## [Central Eurasian Studies Association](#)

### Graduate Student Paper Award

**Nicholas Seay**, Ohio State University, "By Tractor and Plane: Pesticides and Chemical Fertilizers in the Valleys of Soviet Tajikistan"

## [Czechoslovak Studies Association](#)

### Emerging Scholar Prize, 2023

**Martin Pácha**, Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, "The Limits of Religious Plurality: The Pentecostal Movement in Post-Stalinist Czechoslovakia," *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, vol. 23, no. 4, 2022, pp. 407-423.

## [Early Slavic Studies Association](#)

### Early Slavic Studies Book Prize

- **Winner: Alice Isabella Sullivan.** *The Eclectic Visual Culture of Medieval Moldavia.* Brill (2023).
- **Honorable Mention: Agnes Kriza.** *Depicting Orthodoxy in the Russian Middle Ages. The Novgorod Icon of Sophia, the Divine Wisdom.* Oxford University Press (2022).

## Translation of primary sources Prize

**Viacheslav V. Lytvynenko and Mikhail V. Shpakovskiy,** *Zinoviy Otenskiy and the Trinitarian Controversy* by Zinoviy Otenskiy (d. 1571/2).

## [Eighteenth-Century Russian Studies Association](#)

### Marc Raeff Book Prize

**Endre Sashalmi.** *Russian Notions of Power and State in a European Perspective, 1462-1725: Assessing the Significance of Peter's Reign.* Academic Studies Press (2022).

## [Hungarian Studies Association](#)

### Susan Glantz Book Prize

- **Georg Michels.** *Habsburg Empire under Siege: Ottoman Expansion and Hungarian Revolt in the Age of Grand Vizier Ahmed Köprülü (1661-1676).* McGill-Queen's University Press (2021).
- **Máté Rigó.** *Capitalism in Chaos. How the Business Elites of Europe Prospered in the Era of the Great War.* Cornell University Press (2022).

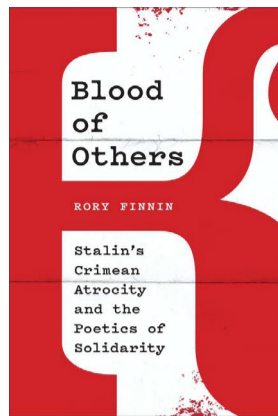
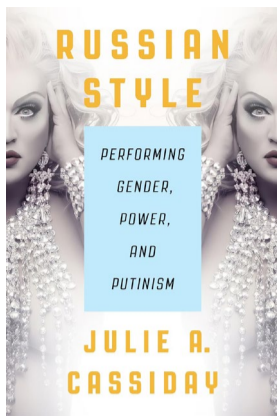
## [Society for Romanian Studies](#)

### Biennial SRS Book Prize

- **Winner: Svetlana Suvéica.** *Post-Imperial Encounters: Transnational Designs of Bessarabia in Paris and Elsewhere 1917-1922.* De Gruyter Oldenbourg (2022).
- **Honorable Mention: Constanța Vintilă.** *Changing Subjects, Moving Objects: Status, Mobility, and Social Transformation in Southeastern Europe, 1700-1850.* Brill Schöningh (2022).
- **Honorable Mention: Grant T. Harward.** *Romania's Holy War: Soldiers, Motivation, and the Holocaust.* Cornell University Press (2021).

### Annual Graduate Student Essay Prize

- **Winner: Ecaterina Vlad,** MA Student at New York University, "Geta Brătescu: Subversive Practices."
- **Honorable Mention: Emőke Gondos,** MA Student at Central European University, "Neoliberal techno-fantasies in a post-socialist city."



## Member News

**Julie A. Cassidy** published [Russian Style: Performing Gender, Power, and Putinism](#) with University of Wisconsin Press.

**Rory Finnin's** [Blood of Others: Stalin's Crimean Atrocity and the Poetics of Solidarity](#) was awarded the [Modern Language Association of America's Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prize for Studies in Slavic Languages and Literatures](#).

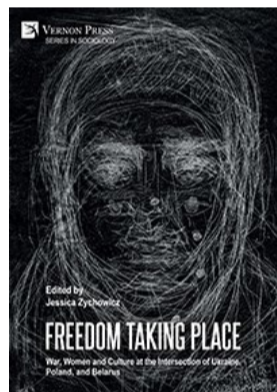
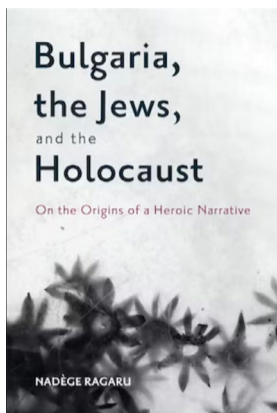
**Emilia Hrešanová** and **Paula Michaels** received a 2024 [Australian Research Council Discovery Project](#) grant of AU\$618,000 to fund a four-year project on "Medical Internationalism: Eastern Europe and Cuba, 1959-99."

**Nadège Ragaru** published [Bulgaria, the Jews, and the Holocaust: On the Origins of a Heroic Narrative](#) (translated into English by Victoria Baena and David A. Rich) with Boydell & Brewer.

**Anna Schwenck** published [Flexible Authoritarianism: Cultivating Ambition and Loyalty in Russia](#) with Oxford University Press.

**Terrell Jermaine Starr** was awarded the [National Committee on American Foreign Policy's 21st Century Leader Award](#).

**Jessica Zychowicz** edited [Freedom Taking Place: War, Women and Culture at the Intersection of Ukraine, Poland, and Belarus](#), published with Vernon Press.



## Institutional Member News

The University of Pittsburgh's [European Studies Center](#) (ESC) and the [Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies](#) (REEES) have launched a partnership with the Europa University Viadrina and eighteen higher education institutions in seventeen countries across five continents to better understand EU foreign policy, resilience and the EU's future role in global governance. The **ValEUs** network of 53 scholars (including colleagues from Istanbul, Roskilde, Guadalajara, Astana, and Kyoto) integrates scholarly lines of inquiry on EU skepticism, the EU in world affairs and post-colonial critiques of Europe and the EU. The network will include support for displaced students by offering online or hybrid co-teaching seminars in cooperation with [Kharkiv National University](#) and [Ukrainian Global University](#). For more information, see **ValEUs**.

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