



# NewsNet

News of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies

## A Philosopher on the Streets of Belarus Tatiana Shchytsova, European Humanities University and MAG

### Breakthrough

A moral breakthrough has profoundly transformed Belarusian society, including people who have not yet joined the protests. They might still be living their lives, going to their jobs, but they are engaged just due to the fact of living here, working alongside protesters, seeing what is happening in the streets.

For a long time, the authoritarian Belarusian regime kept itself in power by means of a “social contract” in which the state guaranteed a minimum level of social-economic stability and, in return, citizens abstained from political life.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Belarus enjoyed a brief democratic moment, ended by the 1996 ratification of constitutional amendments that dramatically expanded the scope of presidential authority, in effect abolishing the democratic principle of separation of powers. Belarusian citizens adapted to this authoritarian regime, tacitly accepting the “contract.” The regime was able to administer the country without interference. Civil society paid a high price, forfeiting its political subjecthood for many years. Social apathy became the dominant characteristic of the period. The moral transformation that is now underway

derives from a sudden and traumatic lurch from apathy. The shock of the events of August 9-12, made it impossible to return to any sort of social contract with Lukashenko’s regime.

What happened after the elections is nothing less than a legal and humanitarian catastrophe.

Of course, one might object to this characterization of the situation, saying that people were also detained and beaten before the elections. The difference now is that a majority of our citizens have fundamentally changed the way they relate to what is going on in the country. It is possible to be aware of problems for a long time – yes, there is an opposition; yes, we read that somebody got arrested – without connecting any of this knowledge to oneself. It is possible to keep one’s distance, to avoid being personally touched. Moving from apathy to active involvement in social-political affairs occurs only when the authorities’ behavior shocks people, causing a collective trauma. This time, of course, it was the abrupt unmasking of the regime’s monstrous inhumanity that was the crucial trigger.

It started when we heard about Lukashenko’s 80% success. The next thing we learned, already on the morning of August 10,

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was that people had been beaten and taken away. Later, news spread of vicious beatings and the brutalization of victims. Our society was injured and deafened, just as in a concussion. One can get used to a loud noise, but not when the volume is turned up until eardrums burst. The same happens with our psychological life and our moral sense of self.

It is possible to keep functioning under the rules of a social contract, to keep going to work in order to receive the minimum needed for survival, and to somehow make a little money on the side in order to get slightly ahead. The country lived with this mindset until the catastrophe. Then the country exploded, and all patience came to an end.

### Rebooting the Political System

People joined together out of indignation, against the insolent violation of law and against inhuman cruelty. Our protest was motivated by a sense of justice and compassion for the people being mistreated. For this reason, our opposition to the regime had not only a political character, but also one that was clearly moral and ethical. When we say we are outraged, we mean we are inspired by humanistic values (justice, the value of human life, respect for human dignity, and human freedom) and we want to establish them as the basic principles of our social life. These values – the moral basis of our protests, shared by all – are also the basis of our political unity.

The unprecedented protest mobilization was due to Svetlana Tikhanovskaia's unique political program. Essentially, it



Photo credit: A student protests in front of the Minsk State Linguistic University, September 4, 2020. Photo by Maria Bershadskaya.

insisted on new elections, in order to present the Belarusian nation with the opportunity to realize its constitutional rights. Such a program does not promote any specific ideology. It is neither right nor left, neither Christian-democratic nor liberal-democratic.

What happened? Representatives of all political associations and perspectives were able to join together in the streets, because all sane people agreed it was necessary for us to reboot the political system and to restore the rule of law and representative democracy. The potential presidency of Tikhanovskaia became the prerequisite for political renewal in our country.

What is happening in Belarus today is a reaffirmation of the nation on new grounds, which are shared by the protesting majority. This reaffirmation is unique. Its specificity consists in the fact that the national agenda came to the fore decidedly not in the way it had been promoted for many years by the old national-democratic opposition, reaching back to the time of Zenon Poznyak. The old opposition always championed a so-called ethnic (as opposed to civic) nationalism. This strategy was unconvincing; it just did not work in Belarus. It failed to gain wide support in the population.<sup>1</sup>

It is impossible to describe today's reaffirmation of the nation by means of existing conceptual models, such as the dichotomies between civic and ethnic nationalism, or the national and the post-national.

The current agenda for the nation is grounded both in our cultural ethos and in a common civic aspiration to self-determine the rules for living together in our country. We are guided by a specific ethos, a collective understanding of how we should build our common life. An ethos is not a construction invented on the spot. It is formed historically, and, in the end, it reveals what scholars call a "national habitus."<sup>2</sup> Today our feeling of national belonging has grown in strength, because the majority of our citizens shares an understanding of how we should build our common life. From this national unity is born the determination to persevere against all odds.

### White-Red-White Returns

There is one more very important (and astonishing!) point to make. We see the re-emergence of the white-red-white flag, which for many years had been associated with the old opposition and which had not had wide support in the society. Now almost everyone rallies around this flag as a symbol of nationwide solidarity. How did this happen? I think the political program of Tikhanovskaia was a crucial factor. Let us ask, what do the civic protests seek? United in support of Tikhanovskaia's program, they demand a *different*

Belarus. They want to exchange the existing political order for a fundamentally new one. With the radicalization and sharpening of political conflict, and an ever-stronger demand for bringing a different Belarus to life, new symbols are needed—symbols not tainted by association with the state authorities.

In this conflict, the demand for political symbols that are not official quite naturally shifted attention to the white-red-white flag. I write “naturally” because there was no reason to invent *another* flag. One already existed and had been an important part of our national history. The former national symbols have gained renewed currency. Moreover, today it is not just the flag. People sing the “Pogon” and other Belarusian songs, use Belarusian ornament and coloring. Just to be clear, despite the well-deserved criticism that might be directed at the “old opposition,” their struggle for national revival played a vital role. It is in large measure due to their efforts that our historical symbols survived. The specificities of Tikhonovskaiia’s program have therefore led to a natural return of national symbols, which historically preceded the symbols of the contemporary state (the flag, the anthem). Today historical, national symbols present themselves as an alternative to official symbols, which are associated with the Soviet system. Tikhonovskaiia’s political program has created a window for re-activating our historical heritage.

### The “Second Sex” for a Different Belarus

There is one more symbol that significantly strengthens the civic demand for different Belarus. It is the “second sex” of Lukashenko’s principal challenger in the elections. We must speak not only of the reaffirmation of the nation but also of the reaffirmation of women as political actors in our

society. In the mid-twentieth century, Simone de Beauvoir wrote a celebrated book, *The Second Sex*, which posed the question of women’s political subjecthood. Our events provide an excellent reason to write a new book with that title. This time “the second sex” worked as a meaningful political code, symbolizing a “second” i.e. different Belarus. From a sociological point of view, it is important that the three women who stepped into the political arena – Maria Kolesnikova, Svetlana Tikhonovskaia, and Veronika Cepkalo – each represent a different social group, with the effect that the new political position of women in our society resonates widely.

### The Asymmetrical Power of the Powerless

There is much criticism from abroad (very often from Ukrainian citizens) against the peaceful character of Belarusian protests. I realize this strategy is highly controversial, but I support it for several reasons.

First, the Belarusian authoritarian regime commands an extremely large and consolidated security apparatus. Second, the violence and atrocities committed by these people after the announcement of the official results of the elections have been so brutal and so shocking that physical violence as a prioritized political instrument became a symbol of Lukashenko’s usurpatory regime. At the very core of the Belarusian uprising is a moral trauma. People chant: “We will not forget. We will not forgive.” Faced with outrageous violations of basic human values, Belarusians have fought back asymmetrically by calling out: “Stop violence!” It is this moral response that gives rise to political solidarity.

As a philosopher, I would like to point out the extraordinary transformative potential of such an asymmetrical response, which is built on a shared moral sensibility (individual and social at once), impelling people to struggle for a better society. As long as this moral sensibility persists, we can hope for change in our society and collectively to struggle for it—to keep taking to the streets and all that entails. I think it is an important lesson for modern politicians in general: our societies need to cultivate a moral sensibility, an ability to show compassion for one another.

Moreover, such a peaceful stance is inextricably tied to identity, in particular, to a critical rethinking of the Soviet heritage. A major protest action was called “the chain of repentance.” It connected *Окрестина* (“Okrestina,” the unofficial name



Caption: Historical Belarusian flag which became one of the key symbols of the protest. September 6, 2020, Minsk. Photo by Ruslan Vashkevich.



of the detention center where people detained on August 9-12 were tortured) and *Куропаты* (“Kuropaty,” the site near Minsk of Stalinist mass executions). The action drew a historical link between the Soviet system and the authoritarian regime of Lukashenko. The cruel violence of today’s riot police (OMON) against protesting citizens was juxtaposed with historical crimes, not only of fascists but also of NKVD officers. Such reflection is, without doubt, indispensable for Belarus, as well as for the entire post-Soviet region.

### Everything Depends on Moral Decisions and Resolve

The state now does everything it can to artificially create social divisions, to provoke a civil war. One of the rhetorical turns used by the state is to call the protesters an opposition. However, what today’s political crisis shows is that we no longer have an opposition, just as we no longer have legitimate state power. What we have is a majority of society that seeks to restore the rule of law, and, ranged against it, a vertical power structure blocking that restoration by means of its apparatus of violence.

One of the main unknowns today is how the rank and file nomenklatura – the middle management of the state administration – will behave. What will happen next depends very much on them. For that reason, it is extremely important to keep protesting – in every way possible. Today it makes no sense to speculate or predict, because

predictions are only justified and will only be reliable when they are based on the logic of concrete social and political processes. However, we now find ourselves in a phase of maximal indeterminacy. Very much now depends not on any sort of systemic mechanisms but on how real human beings will behave, on their moral decisions and resolve.

September 7, 2020

*Edited and translated by Andrzej W. Tymowski, Director of International Programs at the American Council of Learned Societies.*

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### Endnotes

1 For those who really want to understand the issue, I highly recommend Valentin Akudovich’s book, *The Code of Absence: Basics of Belarusian Mentality*. The book is originally published in Belarusian and is available also in Russian and German translations. Valiantsin Akudovich, *Kod adsutnastsi. Asnovy belaruskai mental’nastsi* (Minsk: Logvinai, 2007).

2 This concept, being widely used in modern scholarly literature (in the humanities and social sciences), is based on the sociological theories of Norbert Elias and Pierre Bourdieu. See: Elias, Norbert (1939). *The Civilizing Process* (5 ed.). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell; Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge University Press, 1977).

## ACADEMIC FELLOWSHIPS IN RUSSIA

Provided by a grant from Carnegie Corporation of New York, Academic Fellowships in Russia supports U.S. graduate students, faculty, and independent scholars as they conduct field research for 3-9 consecutive months on topics within the social science disciplines in Russia.

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## THE ASSOCIATION CONGRATULATES THE WINNERS OF THE 2020 ASEEEES PRIZES

### Distinguished Contributions to Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies Award

**Katherine Verdery**, Julien J. Studley Faculty Scholar and Distinguished Professor of Anthropology at the City University of New York's Graduate Center.

**Wayne S. Vucinich Book Prize** for the most important contribution to Russian, Eurasian, and East European studies in any discipline of the humanities or social sciences

**Eliot Borenstein**, *Plots against Russia: Conspiracy and Fantasy after Socialism* (Cornell University Press)

**Honorable Mention: Joan Neuberger**, *This Thing of Darkness: Eisenstein's Ivan the Terrible in Stalin's Russia* (Cornell University Press)

**University of Southern California Book Prize in Literary and Cultural Studies** for outstanding monograph published on Russia, Eastern Europe or Eurasia in the fields of literary and cultural studies

**Simon Franklin**, *The Russian Graphosphere, 1450-1850* (Cambridge University Press, 2019)

**Reginald Zelnik Book Prize in History** for outstanding monograph published on Russia, Eastern Europe, or Eurasia in the field of history

**Kate Brown**, *Manual for Survival: An Environmental History of the Chernobyl Disaster* (W. W. Norton & Company)

**Brendan McGeever**, *Antisemitism and the Russian Revolution* (Cambridge University Press)

**Honorable Mention: Isolde Thyret**, *Saint-Making in Early Modern Russia: Religious Tradition and Innovation in the Cult of Nil Stolobenskii* (New Academia Publishing)

**Davis Center Book Prize in Political and Social Studies** for outstanding monograph on Russia, Eurasia, or Eastern Europe in anthropology, political science, sociology, or geography

**Lenka Bustikova**, *Extreme Reactions: Radical Right Mobilization in Eastern Europe* (Cambridge University Press)

**Honorable Mention: Justine Buck Quijada**, *Buddhists, Shamans, and Soviets: Rituals of History in Post-Soviet Buryatia* (Oxford University Press)

**Honorable Mention: Samuel Greene and Graeme Robertson**, *Putin v. The People, The Perilous Politics of a Divided Russia* (Yale University Press)

**Marshall Shulman Book Prize** for an outstanding monograph dealing with the international relations, foreign policy, or foreign-policy decision-making of any of the states of the former Soviet Union or Eastern Europe

**Kate Brown**, *Manual for Survival: An Environmental History of the Chernobyl Disaster* (W.W. Norton & Company)

**Honorable Mention: Mara Kozelsky**, *Crimea in War and Transformation* (Oxford University Press)

**Ed A Hewett Book Prize** for outstanding publication on the political economy of Russia, Eurasia and/or Eastern Europe

**Emanuela Grama**, *Socialist Heritage: The Politics of Past and Place in Romania* (Indiana University Press)

**Honorable Mention: Alina-Sandra Cucu**, *Planning Labour: Time and the Foundations of Industrial Socialism in Romania* (Berghahn Books)

**Barbara Jelavich Book Prize** for a distinguished monograph published on any aspect of Southeast European or Habsburg studies since 1600, or nineteenth- and twentieth-century Ottoman or Russian diplomatic history

**R. Chris Davis**, *Hungarian Religion, Romanian Blood: A Minority's Struggle for National Belonging, 1920-1945* (University of Wisconsin Press)

**Kulczycki Book Prize in Polish Studies** for the best book in any discipline, on any aspect of Polish affairs

**Lenny A. Ureña Valerio**, *Colonial Fantasies, Imperial Realities: Race Science and the Making of Polishness on the Fringes of the German Empire, 1840–1920* (Ohio University Press)

**Honorable Mention: Jessie Labov**, *Transatlantic Central Europe: Contesting Geography and Redefining Culture beyond the Nation* (Central European University Press)

**Omeljan Pritsak Book Prize in Ukrainian Studies** for a distinguished book in the field of Ukrainian studies

**Simone Bellezza**, *The Shore of Expectations: A Cultural History of the Shistdesiatnyky* (Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press)

**W. Bruce Lincoln Book Prize** for an author's first published monograph or scholarly synthesis that is of exceptional merit and lasting significance for the understanding of Russia's past

**Sean Griffin**, *The Liturgical Past in Byzantium and Early Rus* (Cambridge University Press)

**Honorable Mention: Brendan McGeever**, *Antisemitism and the Russian Revolution* (Cambridge University Press)

**ASEEES Graduate Student Essay Prize** for an outstanding essay by a graduate student in Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies

**Leah Valtin-Erwin**, "A Bag for All Systems: Shopping Bags and Urban Grocery Shopping in Late Communist and Early Post-Communist Eastern Europe 1980-2000," Dept. of History at Indiana University

**Robert C. Tucker/Stephen F. Cohen Dissertation Prize** for an outstanding English-language doctoral dissertation in Soviet or Post-Soviet politics and history in the tradition practiced by Tucker and Cohen, defended at an American or Canadian university

**Kelsey Norris**, "The Ties that Bind," University of Pennsylvania

**CLIR Distinguished Service Award**

**Janice Pilch**, Copyright Education Librarian, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Prize winners will be recognized during the ASEEES Annual Convention virtual award ceremony on Saturday, November 7. Full citations will be available on our website.



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## Operation ASEES and *The Slavic Connexion's* Other Adventures Cullan Bendig, Samantha Farmer, Lera Toropin, Katya Yegorov-Crate, University of Texas-Austin

In November of 2019, a skeleton crew of *The Slavic Connexion* podcast attended the ASEES convention in San Francisco to conduct what we fondly called a “guerilla podcasting” mission. For those of you who did not notice a gaggle of graduate students lugging microphones and soundboards around the Marriott, we are sorry we missed you, but we hope providing our perspective on the academic field and how we see our future in it is insightful to *NewsNet* readers. In San Francisco, we produced a miniseries of interviews with conference participants. Amid the impeccably organized chaos of ASEES, we ran around meeting our guests, packing up our equipment at a moment’s notice to move to an empty room or hallway so we could record.

The objective of this miniseries was multifaceted. We had the opportunity to introduce our listenership to new topics which we had not been able to previously cover from our home base at the University of Texas in Austin, covering more diverse subject matter and engaging more broadly with scholars in the field, especially those working outside the United States. Producing the miniseries allowed us graduate students to participate in a unique way, somewhere between presenting and observing. As first-year graduate students, none of us had our own research or papers to present, so interviewing was an effective way to engage with scholars’ research beyond the limitations of panels and Q&A sessions. The interviews were informal, around 20 minutes each, and focused on the guest’s conference paper. Our ASEES miniseries was the result of almost a year of hard work and is just the beginning of a new era of digital-focused, increasingly accessible research and instruction in our field, which we hope will actively include graduate students and our unique perspectives and abilities.

*The Slavic Connexion* is a student-led podcast housed at the University of Texas Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies. The show focuses broadly on the region’s cultures, politics, people, and global connections. Unlike many shows in the burgeoning academic podcast genre, *The Slavic Connexion* works to deconstruct barriers to entry in academia, as well as providing entertaining and educational content to the general public. Although led by SEES-oriented graduate students and aspiring scholars, this project also seeks to amplify research outside of our field. We pride ourselves on steering the narrative toward the interdisciplinary, producing a show that is accessible to many different types of listeners. A number of our episodes

are recorded in Russian, and we plan to broadcast in other languages in the future, such as Czech, BCMS and Sakha (Yakut). In doing so, we hope to foster opportunities for students to apply their language skills and spotlight scholars outside of the hegemonic sphere of English-language scholarship.

*The Slavic Connexion* began recording in March 2019 as the brainchild of Michelle Daniel, a graduate student in the Department of Slavic & Eurasian Studies at the University of Texas, after she participated in a study on youth civic engagement in Ukraine. In this program, Michelle engaged in cross-cultural dialogue with Ukrainian youth. Listening to young Ukrainians express their thoughts and feelings about the disconnect between those running the country and the younger generations who are the future of the country, Michelle wanted to create a long-term project, framed in some way by youth-driven conversations. It was through this experience that Michelle noticed the untapped potential of students and youth, whose perspectives are too often brushed aside. Podcasting is an effective, affordable, and straightforward way to uplift their voices.

As of June 2020, *The Slavic Connexion* has 92 episodes, which you can enjoy and use freely in your own instruction and research. The podcast has swiftly evolved on two fronts since its humble beginnings. Firstly, the show has technically improved. Students involved with the project from the get-go learned how to properly record, edit, publish, and promote interviews, and experimented with different recording equipment. These are the kinds of applied skills graduate students are vaguely told they should acquire in order to succeed in the precarious world of academic employment, but which are rarely, if ever, formally taught. *The Slavic Connexion* crew has passed these skills on to newer team members, resulting in an alternative economy in which digital humanities skills are acquired in the field. Secondly, the podcast has grown in terms of its content, with regards to the diverse backgrounds of our guests, the breadth of subject matter discussed, and the approaches to said conversations. Although many of our episodes focus on politics or national security, we have worked to expand our coverage of culture and the humanities in order to better reflect the makeup of the field.

The strength of *The Slavic Connexion* lies in its ability to serve as a casual outlet to amplify the work of scholars, journalists, and students. The show fosters collaboration

to open up our field. Podcasting is a democratic medium, meaning it can amplify the voice of anyone with access to recording equipment. There are numerous formats—the “chumcast,” where two or more people chat freely about a certain topic; the interview, where hosts rely on bringing guests into the studio; the story, where a narrative unfolds over time. There are also numerous genres—comedy, news and politics, health, self-help, business, and the broadly educational, to name a few. Within the educational genre is the subgenre of the academic podcast, distinguished by the sharing of research or strengthening of preexisting academic networks. These podcasts can be a vehicle to publicize work already appearing in journals and books. However, the digital format is a space of knowledge production in its own right, bypassing the increasingly stringent and oftentimes inequitable market of academic publishing. Podcasting also benefits classroom instruction, providing a supplementary tool or creative project for students. Finally, as a collaborative space it invites cooperation of folks in different positions, of different expertise, and across various institutions. The field of podcasting continuously evolves, with new voices and perspectives emerging. Why not use the medium to add a new community element? In light of our increased dependence on online instruction, we have adapted to interviewing over Zoom (you know the one), meaning the opportunity to connect is now limited only by time zones and broadband.

*The Slavic Connexion*'s ASEEEES miniseries was an exciting way to be introduced to the truly global field of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies. Researching our own projects sometimes feels like we are wearing blinders, that we are alone in our interests and what we study. ASEEEES shows that there is a vibrant community of individuals who share our diverse interests. Nevertheless, we believe there is room for even more opportunities and roundtables at the conference exclusively for graduate students and other precarious members of the field, such as independent scholars, non-tenured faculty, and international scholars.

Attending the 2019 ASEEEES Conference was a unique experience for each member of *The Slavic Connexion* crew. Here were some of their key takeaways, in their own words:

*Cullan Bendig:* I have been advised on more than one occasion that one way to find research topics is by picking something small and turning it into your whole world. While I have found this to be helpful advice, at the time it struck me as a prescription for lonely obsession with things that are of limited interest to most people. My experience at the 2019 ASEEEES Conference dispelled that notion. When we were able to take a break from preparing and recording interviews, *The Slavic Connexion* crew attended

panels, presentations, and discussions covering every topic imaginable within our field. As a podcast team, the ASEEEES Conference also provided a space where we could hold in-person interviews that would have otherwise been impossible.

The outlook I have toward my experience at the ASEEEES Conference is not the same one now that I would have expressed a few months ago. As I write this, I have not been in a physical classroom since mid-March. Virtual classrooms may get close to the real thing, but nothing compares to the lived experience of being in a room full of fervent conversations about topics so close to your own interests. Looking back on ASEEEES, I am reminded of everything that motivated me to return to graduate school. Seeing the full depth and breadth of the field all gathered in one location made it clear to me that I had made the correct decision. From Lynda Park and Margaret Manges' indispensable help to the attendees who generously and readily participated in our show, my trip to ASEEEES was nothing but encouraging.

*Samantha Farmer:* Like most pockets of society, academia is besieged by privatization and virtually saturated with fears over the disappearing horizon of success. Jobs in humanities and our field disappear or adjunctify, and the tenure-track job market has become a lottery for the lucky few. These are not new fears, but they are certainly concerns I had (and still have) when deciding to pursue a graduate degree in the field. Attending ASEEEES and seeing the colliding ecosystem of scholarly communities that exist in the field was somewhat of a balm to my worries, though that ecosystem is still vulnerable to ongoing material crises most intimately felt by our precariat. Nevertheless, at ASEEEES I had the opportunity to attend panels and interview scholars whose research topics may not hold as much sway in the field, which is dominated by Russian and Soviet studies. As a student who does not study Russia, it was all the sweeter to have my pick of panels on the former Yugoslavia or on translation. It was also exciting to be able to meet with researchers who are not based in the United States. If our current exodus to the digital world has any silver linings, surely they include an increased opportunity to connect online and decenter US-based scholarship from the inside. Perhaps *The Slavic Connexion* provides a model for such digital disruption.

*Lera Toropin:* Deciding to pursue a dual degree in Global Policy Studies and Russian studies at UT was a significant departure for me from my previous career in Japanese language, one heavy with indecision. Would I be able to carve a space for myself in an entirely new realm of academia that appeared to have insurmountable barriers to entry? ASEEEES, a massive conference with a dizzyingly in-depth schedule of presentations and roundtables, didn't seem like the place to find out. Surely, I hadn't earned enough cred yet to sit at the table and rub elbows with published authors and impressively qualified researchers.



From our team's very first interview, a fascinating and warm discussion with Dr. Vladimir Golstein, I was immediately proven wrong. The field of SEEEES isn't necessarily vast, but it finds its strength in the small, supportive circles that promote collaboration and exchanges of ideas. All our cold interview requests were answered with enthusiasm. All the interviewees we spoke with were welcoming and generous with their time, glad to share their work and explain the fascinating research they were pursuing, and the conference organizers went out of their way to make us feel welcome by providing us spaces to record. I found encouragement at ASEEEES; really, it was the first time I felt that my sharp career change had been the right choice.

ASEEEES made it clear that there's room in this field; room for our podcast crew, and certainly room for a questioning dual-degree graduate student to come to the table, though perhaps not necessarily to rub elbows – need to keep room for the microphones, after all.

*Katya Yegorov-Crate:* I attended the 2018 ASEEEES Convention during a rather uncertain time in my academic career and my life in general. I had just graduated with my bachelor's degree in May of that year and was still unsure what I wanted to do in the future, so I went to the conference on a whim with hopes it would provide me some kind of direction. I visited with many of my old colleagues and former professors, and I found the panels and roundtables (although a little daunting) to be incredibly illuminating and motivating. A year later, I went to the 2019 ASEEEES Conference as a new graduate student in a master's program, and felt inspired to continue on in academia, although it remained daunting, to some extent. My biggest take-away from our miniseries project at this year's conference was how enthusiastic people were to invest their time and energy in a project with four students at its helm, and how encouraging our guests were of our aims to synthesize research into compact segments for listeners who come from a range of backgrounds. I would also add that I enjoyed the opportunity to attend panels that in one way or another touched on a great deal of my personal interests – Indigenous peoples of Russia and climate change.

In continuing this project, we at *The Slavic Connexion* aim to bring a level of joy and pleasure to academic work, to demonstrate that no barrier to entry exists in podcasting (nor should it in academia), and to carry on creating content that is both intellectual and public-facing. This means adapting to new, digital means of collaborating, which foster solidarity within academia, as well as with those who are excluded from academia altogether. This also means holding ourselves accountable to include communities and issues in our regions of study that are often obscured by the unquestioned whiteness of Eastern Europe and Eurasia, and working to make our field more equitable for Black, Indigenous, POC, and queer scholars and students among

us. *The Slavic Connexion* is determined to remain true to its principles of facilitating dynamic dialogues, making real connections, and embodying the University of Texas' motto: "What starts here changes the world." We are excited about what we do, and if you are too, we are just an email away. Listen to episodes of *The Slavic Connexion* on Apple Podcasts, Stitcher, Spotify, or on our website at <https://www.slavxradio.com/episodes>.

*Thanks and recognition: Podcasting is an inherently collaborative effort and so we have many to thank for the successes of The Slavic Connexion. We would first like to thank ASEEEES for allowing us to record at the conference, and we are especially grateful to Lynda Park and Margaret Manges for their immeasurable help in realizing our ASEEEES miniseries. A special thanks to all the guests who agreed to be on the show and who graciously took time out of their busy conference schedules to speak with us. Thank you to the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies for the financial support necessary to attend ASEEEES and for the Center's constant enthusiasm for our work. Thanks to Dr. Craig Campbell for inspiring the miniseries project, and Michelle Daniel for being an extremely supportive executive producer.*

*Samantha Farmer (Associate Producer, Host) is a graduate student at the University of Texas specializing in BCMS and literary translation.*

*Lera Toropin (Associate Producer, Host) is a dual degree Global Policy Studies/Russian Studies graduate student with a research focus on U.S.-Russia relations and Track II/III diplomacy programming.*

*Cullan Bendig (Associate Producer, Host) is a graduate student at the University of Texas-Austin interested in the use of digital consumer media as a tool for public history with a focus on media produced in the SEEEES region.*

*Katya Yegorov-Crate (Supervising Producer, Host, Audio Engineer) began her graduate studies at the University of Texas-Austin in the fall of 2019 and has primarily worked on topics related to Indigenous peoples of Russia and native language revitalization in practice.*

## **ASEEEES Announces the Results of the 2020 Board of Directors Elections**

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These new board members will begin their work on January 1, 2021.



*The National Council for Eurasian and East European Research invites proposals for the*  
**2021 NATIONAL RESEARCH COMPETITION &**

**2021 DISSERTATION COMPLETION GRANT**

DEADLINE: DECEMBER 31, 2020

**ABOUT THE NATIONAL RESEARCH COMPETITION**

The National Research Competition\* provides funds for both collaborative and individual research projects. **Research Contracts** support collaborative projects involving multiple scholars or researchers who are U.S. citizens and hold the PhD. **Research Grants** support research projects conducted by individual scholars or researchers who are U.S. citizens and hold the PhD. The maximum award for collaborative Research Contracts is \$40,000 and for individual Research Grants is \$20,000. Please visit [www.nceeer.org](http://www.nceeer.org) to view countries eligible for research.

Research activity supported by a Contract or Grant may begin as early as March 1, 2021. Scholars and researchers should schedule their research activities so as to complete and submit all project requirements to NCEEER by September 30, 2023. Successful applicants will be required to submit a final report to NCEEER and may be asked to present the results of research and other programmatic experiences in a public forum sponsored by NCEEER. In addition, research reports submitted to NCEEER may be considered for publication in the journal *Problems of Post-Communism*, published by Taylor & Francis.

**ABOUT THE DISSERTATION COMPLETION GRANT**

The NCEEER Dissertation Completion Grant supports U.S. citizens who are in an advanced stage (fifth year and above) of a doctoral program at a U.S. institution and will have no more than one year of dissertation work outstanding. Projects will concern topics that are relevant to *current U.S. foreign policy* on Eurasia and Eastern Europe that have the potential to make a significant contribution to the state of the field. Awardees will work within an approved research plan that includes measurable quarterly milestones for chapter and dissertation completion, and which is approved by the candidate's dissertation committee. The maximum award is \$25,000 and the award period is 9-12 months, beginning as early as March 1, 2021.

\*FUNDS FOR BOTH PROGRAMS ARE PROVIDED UNDER THE TITLE VIII PROGRAM FOR RESEARCH AND TRAINING ON EASTERN EUROPE AND THE INDEPENDENT STATES OF THE FORMER SOVIET UNION ADMINISTERED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE - BUREAU OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

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# Beyond Diversity: Integrating Racial Justice into REECA Studies

## Emily Couch, Independent Scholar

*Disclaimer: The views expressed here are solely those of the author and do not reflect those of the National Endowment for Democracy. She writes purely in a personal capacity.*

It has been almost two years since I began my foray into diversity advocacy in the REECA (Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia) field. During this short span of time, I have been extremely lucky to make meaningful connections with people such as Howard University's Amarilis Lugo de Fabritz, who dedicate an extraordinary amount of time and energy to advancing dialogue on the issue. On an individual level, I have created a Twitter list called POC in Eurasia Studies, spoken at conferences, and recently gave an interview to [Pushkin House](#) on the topic.<sup>1</sup> Appreciation of the urgency of this issue has increased exponentially – in no small part due to the radical rethinking and self-reflection prompted throughout society by the recent Black Lives Matter protests. What the movement has so powerfully demonstrated is that “diversity” is not enough; we must have racial justice. While diversity focuses on who is in the room, racial justice deconstructs the oppressive social structures that exclude people of color in the first place, and ensures that their voices are heard and valued. Rather than rehashing my previous statements on the topic, in this piece I offer concrete suggestions, based on the experiences of myself and other REECA students of color, of steps that institutions of education and policy can take to integrate racial justice into the teaching and study of the region.

### Re-assess Methodologies and Marking Criteria

Interviews are a staple of sociological and political research. They may be used qualitatively, if semi-structured, or quantitatively if standardized and viewed statistically. If a REECA student is writing a paper or dissertation, the chances are that they will be expected to use this method while they are abroad. However, in the same way that the interviewer's identity can impact a respondent's answers, so too can a respondent's perception impact their experience in, or even their ability to set up, an interview. Conducting interviews is a nerve-wracking experience at the best of times, but the prospect can be even more daunting if you are anxious about the racist comments you may receive. While I was lucky to have a relatively smooth experience with academic interviewing, I encountered several uncomfortable situations when conducting interviews for my work at *The Moscow Times*.

An example, which I also cited in my recent *Pushkin House* interview, is when I spoke to a drama teacher at one of Russia's most prestigious acting schools about renowned theatre practitioner Konstantin Stanislavsky. The teacher's inappropriate comments regarding my race made it very difficult for me to do my job, and to maintain a professional demeanor. When departments teach methodology, they should do so with an awareness that it may be more difficult for a student of color to conduct this kind of research. It follows, then, that marking criteria should also take this into account. If a dissertation by a white student contains an interview, but one by a student of color does not, markers should consider the social and emotional context of the latter before automatically assigning a lower grade.

### Normalize the Discussion of Race in the Classroom

Coming from an undergraduate degree in Literature, the boundaries of acceptable discourse in REECA studies were markedly different when I began my MA. While the former field is *very* far from perfect, it does embrace critical theoretical perspectives – such as feminism and postcolonialism – to an extent that REECA studies generally does not.

The nature of regional studies is inherently interdisciplinary, bringing together political science, international relations, sociology, history, and cultural studies. It is, however, usually the first two that dominate. This is the inevitable result when a field is forged in the fires of the Cold War. The problem is that perspectives born of this era at best ignore, and at worst erase, the experiences of people of color both in the West and in the region itself. They valorize concepts like “great power politics,” “containment,” and “national interests,” which privilege the perspectives of elites above those of marginalized communities. These theoretical confines have ramifications in the classroom. Since they are presented as orthodoxy, or taken for granted as the “normal” lens through which to analyze the region, in class discussions it can be difficult to present perspectives that question these frameworks.

It has become commonplace to highlight that the Russian Federation contains over 180 different ethnicities, yet the country's indigenous peoples are all too often overlooked in conventional Russia studies courses. Dana Brouillard, an undergraduate student of Inseño Chumash heritage

majoring in Russian and Slavic Studies at the University of Arizona, suggests that a greater emphasis upon these marginalized groups could draw more students of Native American heritage to the field, stating that “highlighting issues of indigenous peoples in the Eurasia region could be a good way to help indigenous students connect with the area.” As Brouillard notes, for many Native Americans students, “the transition from reservation life to college life can be difficult.” Mainstreaming discussions of indigenous histories and experiences would create more open environment for these students.

Despite excellent scholarship on Central Asia by academics from the region, REECA reading lists are also overwhelmingly white. In the creation of syllabi, departments should commit to including work by scholars of color on their reading lists and – in the rare cases where there are no relevant articles or books available – should make this a point of discussion in the classroom: What research forms our approach to the region? Whose perspectives have been ignored? This kind of critical approach would both help us move away from limiting Cold War paradigms and create a learning environment that valorizes the lived experiences of students of color.

### Offer Dedicated Psychological Support

Every student of color who studies abroad in the region experiences racism, whether in the form of outright abuse or microaggressions. While REECA programs may prepare students for the general experience of living outside their home country, there is little to preparation offered specifically to students of color, despite the fact that they will undoubtedly face challenges that their white peers do not. Former Middlebury student Toni Cross, who majored in International Global Studies focused on Russia and Eastern Europe, also found this to be a glaring omission in her college’s study abroad preparation, stating: “I asked them to put me in touch with other people of color [who had studied in the region] but they could only find four, only two of whom responded.” Instead of putting the onus on students, departments should actively facilitate the creation of these connections. Since REECA faculties are predominantly white, such networks would offer students of color a point of contact who has a direct understanding of the challenges they may face.

A distinction should be made here between people of color who are or are not the ethnic majority in their home countries. In my MA program, for example, a substantial number of students were from China. I am ethnically East Asian, but have lived my whole life in the United Kingdom. My experience in Russia was markedly different from that of my Chinese counterparts, since I came to the

predominantly white city of Moscow already having lived in a country where my right to belong has been questioned.

Psychological support requires not only faculty, but also white students to understand the emotional strain that students of color experience. From one student telling me that I “asked for racism by choosing to study in Russia,” to another saying that he did not want to be seen with me in public on a certain day “in case extreme Russian nationalists attack,” it was clear that this understanding was totally absent from my cohort in Moscow. The psychological strain resulting from daily micro-aggressions, as well as explicit abuse, from the local population, is only made worse by a lack of empathy from one’s peers. Prior to students going abroad, REECA departments should hold compulsory sessions that make white students and faculty aware of this issue. In addition, they should also work with the university’s counselling service to offer sessions specifically for students of color while they are abroad. Without dedicated mental health support, students of color face isolation and emotional trauma that may discourage them from building a career in the field. UPenn PhD student Kimberly St. Julian-Varnon’s experience with her advisor Serhii Plokyh, which she recounted in the August 2020 *NewsNet*, confirms this point.



### Study Abroad

- Russian as a Second Language (Moscow, St. Petersburg, Irkutsk, Vladivostok, Bishkek, Kyiv)
- Language and Environment (Irkutsk)
- Language and Society (St. Petersburg)
- Policy and Conflict in the Post-Soviet Space (Kyiv)
- Central Asian Studies (Bishkek)
- Diplomacy & International Relations at MGIMO (Moscow)
- Semester at HSE (Moscow)
- Russia and the Asia-Pacific (Vladivostok)
- Spring Break: Introduction to Russia (Moscow and St. Petersburg)
- The Cuba-Russia Connection: Studies in Cultural Diplomacy (Havana and St. Petersburg)
- St. Petersburg Summer School (media, energy, museum studies)
- Security and Society in the Information Age (Warsaw)

### Custom (Faculty-Led) Programs

- Logistics (visas, housing, transportation)
- Academics (lectures, seminars, roundtables)
- Experiential learning (service learning, travel, workshops)
- Cultural programming (excursions, performances)
- Program development and promotion

### Archive Assistance

- Visas
- Translation
- Archive orientation
- Remote research services

### SRAS Family of Sites

- Folkways.today
- GeoHistory.today
- PopKult.org
- MuseumStudiesAbroad.org
- SRASStudents.org



## **Institute Robust Reporting and Accounting Mechanisms**

Psychological support can only exist in conjunction with robust reporting and accountability mechanisms. While the former will provide students with coping mechanisms and emotional support, only the latter can ensure the gradual elimination of the toxic environment that make such support necessary. My own experience with trying to report this kind of incident highlights the importance of such a system. In the first year of my Master's degree, I experienced racial profiling in class from my Russian language teacher. When I reported this to the Russian language director, they themselves racially profiled me, automatically taking the teacher's side. The Student Union, in turn, did not reply to any emails about the issue. The development of robust reporting and accountability mechanisms would require REECA departments to work with their university's student union and counselling services to ensure that there is a clear system to which students can turn to confidentially report instances of racial abuse.

## **Implement Affirmative Action in Panel Selection**

As the President of the NAACP Sherrilyn A. Ifill wrote in a [2017 New York Times op-ed](#), "affirmative action has proved to be one of the most effective tools for expanding opportunity and promoting diversity for students of color."<sup>2</sup> In my experience of the DC policy world, the main questions that occur in the panel assembling process are: Who knows the most about this topic? Who do we as an organization already have a relationship with that we can invite? Who is the most prestigious expert who could plausibly participate? These questions may seem reasonable – after all, what is the point in having a panel discussion if the participants are ill-informed? – but they in fact perpetuate entrenched racial hierarchies. Knowledge is the product of privilege, since it requires time and money to acquire – resources which, statistically, white people are more likely to have. So too is insider access to a think tank or university's "go-to" speaker list. Too often – whether in relation to gender or racial representation – I have met the attitude of "We would like to have more women / people of color on the panel, but we have to choose the most qualified participants." Ultimately, if an institution truly believes in racial justice, and not just lip service, it must make the conscious decision to include people of color – even if they appear less qualified on paper than their white counterparts. In terms of effort and dedication, a degree from a community college achieved by a person of color who grew up with socioeconomic challenges could well be the equivalent of an Ivy League degree achieved by a middle-class white student from an affluent background.

This suggestion will likely be met with indignation or claims that such a move would dilute the 'quality' of events. While tokenism is a danger, ultimately the only way to show young people of color that there is a place for them in this field is spotlighting people who look like them. Institutions should be required to disclose their thought processes in the selection of participants so that, if there is truly not a person of color who is an expert in the panel topic (highly unlikely), others can check whether they have undertaken due diligence in coming to this conclusion.

## **Conclusion**

It is clearer now more than ever that REECA departments – like higher education as a whole – must integrate racial justice into their practice and philosophy or risk an ever-shrinking student pool and intellectual stagnation. The points presented here are far from exhaustive. It was beyond the scope of this short piece, for example, to do justice to Central Asian studies, in which many scholars and experts are already deconstructing the theoretical and methodological assumptions that center whiteness and western expertise. My hope is that this short piece will prompt discussion and action by those with greater practical knowledge of the workings of higher education. One thing, however, is clear: there can be no progress in REECA studies – or in any other field – unless departments, whether in universities or think tanks, prioritize racial justice above short-term reputational fallout.



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*European Studies at University College London and the Higher School of Economics (Moscow).*

## **Endnotes**

1 "Diversity (or Lack of It) in Eurasia Studies: An Interview with Emily Couch," Pushkin House (3 July 2020), <https://www.pushkinhouse.org/blog/2020/7/2/diversity-or-the-lack-of-it-in-eurasian-studies-an-interview-with-emily-couch>.

2 Sherrilyn A. Ifill, "Racial Justice Demands Affirmative Action," *New York Times*, August 2, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/02/opinion/college-discrimination-whites-donald-trump-.html?smid=tw-nytopinion&smtyp=cur>



## NEW FROM SLAVICA PUBLISHERS

**Heather R. Perry, Emre Sencer, and John Deak, eds.** *The Central Powers in Russia's Great War and Revolution, 1914–22: Enemy Visions and Encounters*, xx + 354 p., 2020 (ISBN 978-0-89357-435-2), \$44.95.

This multiauthor collection of essays analyzes Russia's Great War and Revolution from the perspective of the Central Powers and their encounters with Russia and the Revolution. The peoples of the Central Powers, from elites to civilians, understood the violent clash of armies in a variety of ways. Essays highlight the kaleidoscope of military and civilian experiences and deal with topics of how soldiers, civilians, and intellectuals perceived Russia, and how these understandings translated into security goals, utopian plans for conquered territories, and interethnic violence.

**Charles J. Halperin.** *Ivan IV and Muscovy*, viii + 409 p., 2020 (ISBN 978-0-89357-501-4), \$44.95.

In many ways Ivan the Terrible's personality and reign remain mysteries. This anthology will attempt to shed new light on a variety of issues related to Ivan's person and 16th-century Muscovy, including accounts of the *oprichnina* written by Germans in his service, intrafamilial strife and foreign slaves in Muscovite society, the role of clergy in the documentary life of the Muscovite laity, the Muscovite perception of the political culture of the Crimean Khanate, diplomatic relations between Ivan IV's Muscovy and Lithuania, coinage, Ivan and the *russkaia zemlia*, Ivan as a charismatic ruler, and a historiographical analysis of Ruslan Skrynnikov's *Tsarstvo terrora* and *Reign of Terror*.



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Vol. 21, no. 4 (Fall 2020)

*Forum: War and Diplomacy in the Black Sea Region*

KAHRAMAN ŞAKUL  
From *Mare Clausum* to *Mare Liberum*  
ONUR İŞÇİ  
Yardstick of Friendship

*Forum: Myths of Empire and Faith*

LOUISE McREYNOLDS  
Excavating Byzantium  
ELENA ASTAFIEVA  
The "Russian Jesuit Myth"

*Review Forum: The Black Sea as a Microcosm of Empire*

SARA DICKINSON  
The Enchantment of an Earlier Black Sea, 1768–1856

MICHEL ABESSER  
A Window to the South

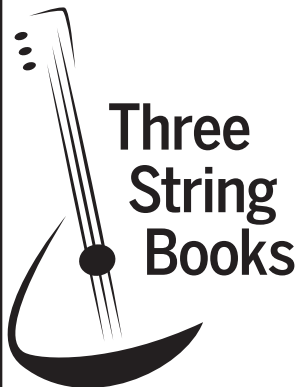
*Review Essays*

ALEXANDER M. MARTIN  
The Alienated Russian Nobility?  
KATHERINE PICKERING ANTONOVA  
Discovering Russian Regions

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.

**Anna Starobinets.** *Look at Him*, trans. **Katherine E. Young**, xii + 151 p., 2020 (ISBN 978-089357-503-8), \$19.95.

In this groundbreaking memoir, Anna Starobinets chronicles the devastating loss of her unborn son to a fatal birth defect. A finalist for the 2018 National Bestseller Prize, *Look at Him* ignited a firestorm in Russia, prompting both high praise and severe condemnation for the author's willingness to discuss long-taboo issues of women's agency over their own bodies, the aftereffects of abortion and miscarriage on marriage and family life, and the callousness and ignorance displayed by many in Russia in situations like hers.



**Alexander Rojavin, trans. and ed.** *The Predictability of the Past: Three Contemporary Russian Plays*, viii + 234 p., 2019 (ISBN 978-089357-476-5), \$29.95.

A bear self-begets in an ordinary Russian family's bathroom, Pushkin accidentally survives his duel with d'Anthès, and the ill-fated family of a small boy born in prerevolutionary Russia stumbles through the 20th century all the way into the 21st, where the not-so-distant past is faded in the minds of the newest generations. But does that make the past irrelevant? Three plays accurately portray a Russia that is constant—constantly in flux, with both its present and its past changing from day to day. With time flowing forward, backward, and even sideways, the three plays in this book serve up an unflinching reflection of Russia's tumultuous timeline.



## Is There Room for Early Modern Slavic Studies in the US and Canada? Ievgeniia (Zhenya) Sakal, Yale University

Thirty years ago, the question of whether there is room for early modern Slavic studies would have seemed absurd. The field was booming. Path-breaking studies emerged on a regular basis. In a turn away from institutional history, a new generation of scholars was producing research on culture, religion, and kinship in the early modern period. In the United States, the works of Paul Bushkovitch (1992), Valerie Kivelson (1996), Robert Crummey (1983), and Nancy Kollmann (1987) shed light on questions of religion and learning, authority, law, and tradition, and the role of “informal” ties such as marriages, kinships, and political alliances in gluing the Russian early modern society together. This research was fundamental for questioning and arguing against the Soviet historical paradigm that focused on class-struggle.

Today the field of early modern Slavic studies is on the verge of disappearing due to a dearth of job opportunities for early modernists. If this continues, the field may disappear in the next twenty years. In the 1990s, the early modern field was not limited exclusively to the experiences of Russia. The works of David Frick (1995), Frank Sysyn (1986), and Zenon Kohut (1989) explored Ukrainian and Polish culture, religion, and identities in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Hetmanate. Their research shows the dynamic nature of political loyalties that often did not overlap with cultural, religious, or linguistic loyalties. The North American studies of Ukraine were particularly important because they escaped the Soviet historical narrative that interpreted early modern Russo-Ukrainian interactions through the lens of “reunification” (“vossoedinenie”).

Once the Soviet Union fell, studies by North American historians became an etalon for the next generation of Ukrainian historians of the early modern period. From their North American colleagues, Ukrainian historians learned to write history beyond the confines of class struggle or romanticized ideas of “the oppressed folk” (*narod*). The early works of Natalia Yakovenko (1993) and Serhii Plokhyy (2001) drew inspiration from early modern studies that were produced in North America. This was of paramount importance for Ukrainian historical research. Yakovenko’s call to resist contorting the analysis of historical sources to fit class-based national frameworks used in the Soviet Academia, caused a paradigmatic shift in the study of Ukrainian history, and had a profound influence on the Russian historians of early modern period. Yakovenko

created a school of historians who approached the past with the scrutiny of researchers rather than propagandists. As a ripple effect, what began as new standards for writing the history of the early modern period spread and became the new norm among Ukrainian historians of the modern and contemporary period. For example, Ola Hnatiuk (1994), a pupil of Yakovenko, began her career as an early modern historian before becoming a renowned intellectual historian of modern Ukraine. Coming from studies of early modern history, Hnatiuk speaks about her gratitude towards Yakovenko, the mentor that taught her the necessary rigor and sensitivity to properly analyze sources.

The liberating power of early modern studies came from their attention to languages that were not standardized in premodern societies. As such early modernists drew attention to the communities and individuals who used multiple languages and switched between them depending on context. This attention to diverse communities such as nobility, churchmen and scholars, merchants, and mercenaries allowed historians to overcome the confines of national histories as well as histories grounded in class struggle. The works of researchers primarily trained as Slavic linguists, such as Riccardo Picchio (1991), David Frick (1995), Michael Flier, and Harvey Goldblatt, were trailblazers for new inquiries and historical sensitivity for the research conducted in the areas of early modern Ukrainian, Polish, and Russian history.

So, what does it take to become an early modern historian? I will share my own experience. I am a native speaker of Ukrainian and Russian, but when I began working on early modern sources, I realized that most of them were not written in either of these languages. I had to pick up Polish as it was the dominant language of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and hone my intuition with Church Slavonic. I realized that I needed other European languages to understand the historiography, so I took up German and French. This was still not enough because the educated figures in my research knew more languages, which meant I needed to learn Latin and Ancient Greek. I also became curious about Yiddish and studied it for a couple of semesters. All this learning took years. In my head, I was doing everything right to become a “good historian.” I never questioned the path, nor my methods, trusting that hard work would culminate in job opportunities.

I began to question my assumptions about merit only

when I started seeking research funding and found that most of the grants available were targeted for the study of the modern and contemporary period. For instance, the Cohen-Tucker Dissertation Research funds, Fulbright-Hays DDRA, and SSRC IDRF are rarely granted to the scholars who work on early modern history. ASEES does not have a single scholarship that is specifically designed for people who work on premodern history, whereas there are many fellowships that are specifically designed for the scholars of modern period.

In theory, scholars of the early modern period may turn to “Western European societies” such as the Sixteenth Century Society or the Renaissance and Reformation Society. But because there is little cooperation between scholars in Slavic studies and those in early modern studies, the chance of getting such funding is slim. Things get worse when one goes on the job market. For several years, the vast majority of job openings for tenure-track positions in Russian history call for candidates who work on the nineteenth-century or later. Some jobs advertise that the time period is open, but the preference will be given to candidates who work on modern or contemporary history. The jobs offered on the track of early modern European history, Renaissance, and Reformation studies explicitly exclude job seekers who are coming from Eastern European or Russian studies. Thus, the researcher of early modern Eastern Europe falls through the cracks, being too early in the timeline for Slavic jobs and too eastern in geography for early modern Europe jobs.

The situation is identical with postdoctoral fellowships at the research centers in the United States and Canada: the Davis Center at Harvard, the Melikian Center at the ASU, the Harriman Institute at Columbia University, and Canadian Institute for Ukrainian Studies at the University of Alberta limit their postdoctoral positions to scholars of modern period. These exclude early modernists from even a chance of getting either a postdoctoral position or a tenure-track job.

Training an early modernist is a long and arduous process. It took me seventeen years to learn the languages, paleography, conventions, and practices of early modern history. Admittedly, some of these skills could be learned and honed after one gets tenure, but I have frontloaded my training only to realize that the path to becoming a “master” is closed. For those like me who are not independently wealthy, academic scholarship is impossible without institutional support.

The fact that many early modernists trained in the 1980s and ‘90s are still producing solid research and teaching does not mean that the field can be sustained into the future without

hiring and supporting young scholars. Slavic departments at major universities are not teaching Church Slavonic anymore, which precludes graduate students from gaining the necessary familiarity with pre-modern Slavic culture. At North American conferences, I am often one among only two or three history graduate students in the early modern Slavic field. There are none in the field of medieval history. The succession between generations of scholars will not happen automatically, and there must be a strategy taken up by ASEES if the field is to survive.

These days in classical studies, we can revise our readings of Homer and discard misogynistic nineteenth-century interpretations. This is only possible because there are scholars trained in reading Homeric Greek with a critical eye and attention to theory. In the field of early modern Slavic studies, if nobody reads Church Slavonic, who will go back to the original sources and revise outdated interpretations? How many historians of the contemporary period can read Church Slavonic, Old Polish, Ruthenian, Latin, and Ancient Greek? Without the transfer of this knowledge, my field will disappear. We are already on this trajectory.

While studies of the modern and contemporary period are urgent and necessary, they cannot and should not replace research on earlier epochs. Thirty years ago, the early modernists were reassessing Slavic culture, breathing fresh life into post-Soviet studies, and energizing new standards of research beyond their timeframe. By focusing on the diversity of languages, on microhistories and biographies, the early modernists challenged the narrow confines of national and class analysis and resisted the anachronistic urge to assign modern identities to premodern societies. Yet theories and interpretations are always changing and need revising. Writing modern history without a new and critical history of the early modern period is like building a castle on sand. Last but not least, as we know, ideas matter. What we teach at universities shapes the minds and informs the decisions of future leaders and policymakers. Reflective and unbiased history without restriction to time period is the only meaningful standard for our profession.

*Ievgeniia (Zhenya) Sakal is a PhD Candidate at Yale University. She works on the religious and intellectual history of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russia. Her dissertation, “The Imported Church: European Ideas and Russian Religion in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century,” argues that the Russian Orthodox Church followed European post-Reformation trends in implementing religious reforms.*



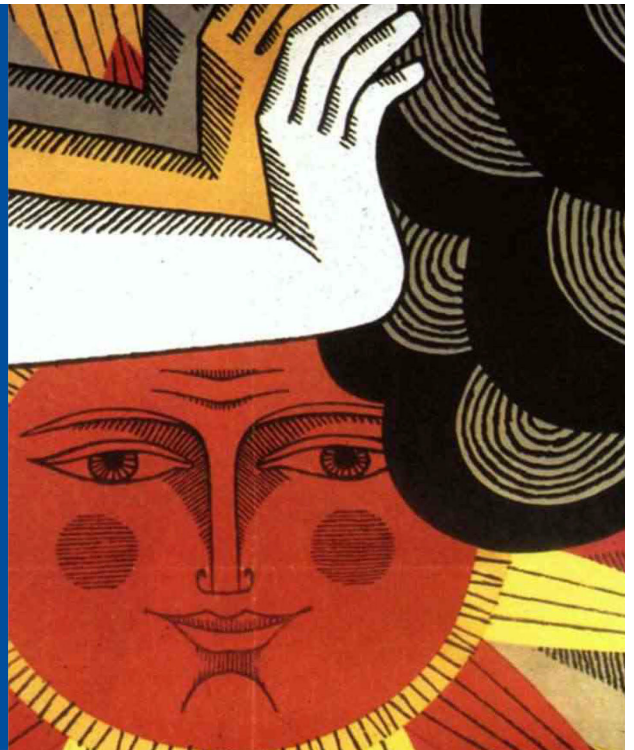
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This series is designed to elevate conversations about teaching on race and continued disparities in our field while also bringing research by scholars and/or on communities of color to the center stage.

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[ucis.pitt.edu/crees/race-in-focus](https://ucis.pitt.edu/crees/race-in-focus)



## PART I: CRITICAL PEDAGOGIES

OCTOBER 2 2-3:30 pm (ET)

Teaching About Race and Racism: Your Syllabus 2.0

MODERATOR: Anindita Banerjee (Cornell University)

SPEAKERS: B. Amarilis Lugo de Fabritz (Howard University) and Sunnie Rucker-Chang (University of Cincinnati)

OCTOBER 9 2-3:30 pm

Engaging with Race and Racism in the Classroom

MODERATOR: Joy Gleason Carew (University of Louisville, retired)

SPEAKERS: Raquel Greene (Grinnell College) and Chelsi West Ohueri (University of Texas at Austin)

## PART II: UNCOMFORTABLE CONVERSATIONS

OCTOBER 16 2-3:30 pm (ET)

Emerging Scholars of Color Abroad

MODERATOR: Kimberly St. Julian-Varnon (University of Pennsylvania)

SPEAKERS: Ioanida Costache (Stanford University), Alicia Hernandez-Strong (Yale University), Rafael Pablo Labanino (University of Konstanz / Ludwigsburg University of Education / University of Bern), and Alexa Tignall (UC Berkeley)

OCTOBER 23 2-3:30 pm (ET)

Moving Beyond Exclusionary Practices in SEES

MODERATOR: Choi Chatterjee (Cal State University, Los Angeles)

SPEAKERS: Morgan Liu (OSU), Colleen Lucey (University of Arizona), Kimberly St. Julian-Varnon (University of Pennsylvania), and Marius Taba (Corvinus University)

Future sessions forthcoming in Spring 2021

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## An Interview with Oleh Kotsyuba about the New Books Website of the Ukrainian Research Institute at Harvard

**Tell us about HURI's new book website. What makes it unique?**

I have to start first with the vision for the Ukrainian Research Institute at Harvard (HURI) when it was founded in 1973. As Omeljan Pritsak saw it, the Ukrainian project is anticolonial at its core. HURI was thus conceived as an independent outpost to study Ukrainian language, literature, and history, so as to provide vital support to the Ukrainian project. The three chairs that were endowed in the respective disciplines in the humanities as well as the autonomous research facility were meant to establish the field of Ukrainian studies on a par with other fields in Slavic studies and allow for stellar research, instruction, and publications in Ukrainian studies.

This was a monumental task and it was largely accomplished, reclaiming much of Ukrainian history and culture from the imperial projects of Russia and the Soviet Union. However, the field of Slavic studies remains to this day largely Russian-centric and embraces Russian imperialism as legitimate, with no new professorships and only limited publications in Ukrainian studies, thus significantly limiting available career paths to those interested in studying and teaching Ukraine.

Following the Great Recession and due to the current pandemic, as well as a number of other social and economic factors, the arts and humanities are losing the battle to professional education. Across the globe, evidence-based approaches to reality are under attack and political demagoguery is on the rise.

Taken together, these conditions present new and greater challenges to scholarship in general and Ukrainian studies in particular. The new HURI Books website is unique in that it was created specifically to respond to these emerging challenges and to expand the tent of Ukrainian studies by inviting scholars and students interested in the exceptional opportunity for dissent that Ukrainian studies offer. We do that by speaking directly to our readers, both scholars and the general audience, and by structuring all content by overarching thematic categories, including content of the journal *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, to provide the reader with immediate access to all relevant publications on the topic of their interest in all available formats.

**How can the platform serve scholars, teachers, students, and the general public? What does it offer to readers that traditional academic publishing doesn't?**

Publishing in general has radically changed with the advent of the Internet, but scholarly publishing has been extremely slow in responding to that change. For all the hype around digital humanities, for instance, digital projects are not considered for such career-defining moments in academia as the initial hiring or tenure. With the new website, HURI publications is at the forefront of embracing the opportunities offered by technology today, while at the same time maintaining the high quality of publishing that is traditionally associated with academic publishing.

Of course, we cannot singlehandedly change the culture of producing and distributing knowledge at institutions that are defined by certain inertia in their long-held views and internal processes, and the profit-oriented business-like approach to managing educational organizations.

Just like the educational initiatives that promote affordable access to education, such as edX and Coursera, to name but a few, we offer to scholars more impact and a wider reach, while teachers, students, and the general public can take advantage of unprecedented access to world-class content. We achieve this through a combination of various formats in which the books are directly and immediately available on the website: as plain HTML text, as PDF versions of the typeset books, and as eBooks that can be read on a smartphone app, a computer, or an eBook reader.

**Why do you think a digital humanities resource like this important in 2020?**

2020 has, of course, presented all of us with new challenges and we don't know yet what the long-term impact of the pandemic and the isolation and disruption of the processes that it brought along will be. However, we do see the first signs of what's to come: faced with falling enrollments and diminishing income, colleges that act as for-profit businesses are laying off tenured faculty and closing whole departments in disciplines where the benefit (and profit, more importantly) is not immediately evident—that is, in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. Simultaneously, a college degree's promise of prosperity is weighed by students and their families against the reality of staggering debt that education at American colleges has come to mean for most graduates. Absent state subventions and coupled with the overall falling numbers of students in incoming classes, higher education in the US is heading for a major overhaul.

Online instruction will be an important part in

solving the puzzle of the new system of education, and it is not possible without content available online. This is precisely where a resource like the new HURI Books website comes in, as it has the main tools to allow for convenient access to the content online, including such lower-cost options as renting a book online or buying an eBook.

The launch of the HURI Books website also creates a platform for other digital projects, such as the forthcoming *Ukrainica: The Primary Database of Ukrainian Studies*, which will host a catalog of high-quality English-language translations of documents, literature, and films, and allow the teachers and scholars to build syllabi based on several sets of taxonomy categories that reflect periods, tropes, and topoi across all the genres and media available. Full texts of comprehensive histories of literature and art are another possibility here in creating a complete ecosystem for teaching and learning.

Of course, online education will never be able to fully replace in-person education, because education is not only about content but also—crucially—about socialization. It is in a social context that students can develop critical thinking, and we want to provide all the tools for teachers and scholars to do that, despite a growing atmosphere of anti-intellectualism and authoritarianism, by making content as easily available and as attractively presented as we possibly can.

**What does the future of academic publishing look like to you? How can people in our field (SEEEES) adapt?**

It is difficult to foresee where the current several crises are going to take us. It is obvious, however, that the trend to publish content with a broader appeal and in a more accessible format will continue. Most university presses are fully separate from—though usually affiliated with—universities, so they will continue to be under great pressure to generate profit.

For some, this may mean reduction or even complete abandonment of narrowly-specialized and meticulously edited publications in favor of projects that tell stories with wider appeal. Smaller publishers have already started this process, thus transferring more responsibility for the quality of their text to the authors. As before in the news and journal publishing industry, the falling book sales and university library orders may lead to the increase in books published in the digital format only, as that would allow to preserve the high quality of editing and a narrower focus.

One big hurdle to that at the moment is the way that the hiring and tenure review processes work at many universities, but the pressure will increase as the crisis deepens. University administrators and faculty should seize the moment right now and create conditions to fully integrate digital publishing and content distribution into their instruction, hiring, and promotion. Although there are limits to what technology can do in education, it offers radical improvements to accessibility that human society has never experienced before. We definitely should take advantage of that.

**Forthcoming in *Slavic Review*  
Vol. 79 No. 3 • Fall 2020**

ARTICLES

- “Kurapaty: Belarus’ Continuing Debates” by David R. Marples and Veranika Laputska
- “Soviet Entrepreneurs in the Late Socialist Shadow Economy: The Case of the Kyrgyz Affair” by James Heinzen
- “A Tower of Tangled Histories: The Upper Silesia Tower in Poznań and the Making of an Unromantic Poland, 1911–1955” by Patryk Babiracki
- “Historicist Architecture and Stalinist Futurity” by Antony Kalashnikov
- “The Bestseller, or The Cultural Logic of Postsocialism” by Bradley A. Gorski

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# 2020 ASEES VIRTUAL CONVENTION

NOV. 5-8 & 14-15, 2020  
#ASEES20

## SPECIAL EVENTS

### Thursday, November 5

- Slavic DH Workshop: "Shredding the Map: Poetic Geographies of Revolutionary Russia 1914-1922"
- Annual Meeting of Members
- Presidential Plenary: "Anxiety and Rebellion in the Post-communist World"
- Opening Reception

### Friday, November 6

- Roundtable: "Toward More Relevant and Inclusive SEES Pedagogies: Strategies, Experiment, Questions"
- Film: "Women of the Gulag," dir. Marianna Yarovskaya

### Saturday, November 7

- Film: "Nemtsov," a film by Vladimir Kara-Murza
- ASEES Awards Ceremony & President's Address: "Rightward Populist Rebellion in East Central Europe: Anxieties, Proselytization, and the Rebirth of Mythical Thinking"
- Contemporary Ukrainian Poetry Reading

### Sunday, November 8

- Inaugural Diversity and Inclusion in SEES Film: "I'm a Negro - I'm an American," dir. Kurt Tezlaff

### Saturday, November 14

- Presidential Roundtable: "Polish Solidarity: A Glorious Revolution and its Unexpectedly Tortuous Aftermath"
- Vice President Designated Roundtable: "Bringing the Environment into the Curriculum"
- Film: "Warsaw: a City Divided," dir. Eric Bednarski

### Sunday, November 15

- Film: "National Museum," dir. Andrei Zagdansky

### PLUS: Panel Series, including

- Teaching Russian through Film
- #thelong19thc
- Anxiety of Translation
- Environment & Contemporary Culture

### AND NETWORKING EVENTS AND A VIRTUAL EXHIBIT HALL

## SESSION SCHEDULE

### Thursday, Nov. 5

- 12-1:30P
- 2-3:30P
- 4-5:30P

### Friday, Nov. 6-Sunday, Nov. 8 and Saturday, Nov. 14

- 8-9:30A
- 10-11:30A
- 12-1:30P
- 2-3:30P
- 4-5:30 PM

### Sunday, Nov. 15

- 8-9:30A
- 10-11:30A
- 12-1:30 PM

## LETTER FROM ASEES BOARD PRESIDENT, JAN KUBIK

In less than a month we will have our 2020 Convention. We had to change the format to accommodate the new situation and this took a lot of planning and organizational work. The reorganization has gone smoothly, due to the enormously effective effort of our staff led by indefatigable Lynda Park, our Executive Director. Many thanks for their hard work!

It is hard to imagine a more demanding and emotionally draining year, so I am looking forward to this annual celebration of our profession; a sentiment I am sure you share. We are going to be meeting almost immediately after the election and I hope that by then an unchallengeable result will be known, so we will be able to focus on sharing our work and celebrating new and old friendships.

When I came up with this year's theme and wrote its description, I had no idea that in 2020 "Anxiety and Rebellion" was going to become an even more accurate description of our reality.

The region is again on fire. In Belarus and Kyrgyzstan people rose against rigged elections. Hungary and Poland continue on the path of democratic backsliding, and the world witnessed another poisoning of a prominent critic of the Kremlin. Many panels address these issues and engage with the annual theme and we are looking to many memorable presentations and vigorous debates.

I want to invite you to my presidential address on "Rightward Populist Rebellion in East Central Europe: Anxieties, Proselytization, and the Rebirth of Mythical Thinking" that will follow the ASEES Award's Ceremony

on Saturday, November 7 at 6:00 pm EST.

The Presidential Plenary (Thursday, November 5 at 6:00 pm), organized around the theme of "Anxiety and Rebellion in the Post-Communist World," brings together three outstanding scholars who have done cutting-edge work on that theme. Timothy Snyder will provide a broad, historical overview of the dynamics of movement and countermovement between what he calls the politics of inevitability (of capitalist and democratic progress) and the politics of eternity practiced by the enemies of liberal democracy. Gwendolyn Sasse will reflect on a link between anxiety/uncertainty and different patterns of mobilization, including the escalation of mobilization into rebellion. Her main case will be Belarus. Graeme Robertson will discuss a link between emotions and mobilization/rebellion also in the context of the Covid pandemic. He will also share some thoughts on the psychological and emotional impacts of the pandemic on political action and support for leaders and their opponents in Russia and Ukraine.

I have also organized a special roundtable to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Polish Solidarity movement, that was one of the causes of the collapse of state socialism in the region. It is entitled "Polish Solidarity: A Glorious Revolution and Its Unexpectedly Tortuous Aftermath" (Saturday, November 14, 12:00 - 1:30 (EST)). The panel gathers the authors of major books on Solidarity, that was created in August 1980 in the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk. I will chair and ask Timothy Garton Ash, Ireneusz Krzemiński, David Ost, and Shana Penn to reflect on the significance of the movement then and its fate after the fall of state socialism.



**Communist and Post-Communist Studies**



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## REGISTRATION

We are offering registration rates at 50% of the in-person convention registration rates. All registrants will have access to recorded sessions after the convention.

Participants will be able to register until November 15.

<https://www.aseees.org/convention/registration>

## ENTERTAINMENT BREAKS

Help us liven up our convention by showing off your talents during breaks and/or a talent show! You can Play a musical instrument, read a poem, host a book reading, do a cooking demonstration, lead a group in singing folk songs or a yoga practice...We're open to your ideas. If interested, please complete this form

<https://bit.ly/3jLvW8Z>





# Publications

Sören Urbansky's book, *Beyond the Steppe Frontier: A History of the Sino-Russian Border*, was published by Princeton University Press in January 2020.

This book explores the demarcation's remarkable transformation—from a vaguely marked frontier in the seventeenth century to its twentieth-century incarnation as a tightly patrolled barrier girded by watchtowers, barbed wire, and border guards. Through the perspectives of locals, Urbansky explores the daily life of communities and their entanglements with transnational and global flows of people, commodities, and ideas. The author demonstrates how states succeeded in suppressing traditional borderland cultures by cutting connections across the state perimeter, through laws, physical force, deportation, reeducation, forced assimilation, and propaganda. *Beyond the Steppe Frontier* sheds light on a pivotal geographical periphery and expands our understanding of how borders are determined.

*Dostoevsky and the Realists: Dickens, Flaubert, Tolstoy*, by Slobodanka M. Vladiv-Glover, was published by Peter Lang in March 2019.

This book redefines Realism as a historical phenomenon, grounded in the literary manifestoes of the 1840s in three national literary canons (English, French and Russian) which issue a call to writers to record the manners and mores of their societies for posterity and thus to become "local historians." Dickens, Flaubert and Tolstoy are brought into relation with Dostoevsky via a shared poetics as well as through a deconstructive and/or psychoanalytic analysis of their respective novels. The portrait of Dostoevsky that emerges is that of a European writer with a radically modern aesthetics and with a progressivist political orientation which is in consonance with his pre-exile affiliation with utopian socialism.

*The Englishman from Lebedian: A Life of Evgeny Zamiatin*, by Julie Curtis, was published by Academic Studies Press in June 2020.

After Evgeny Zamiatin emigrated from the USSR in 1931, he was systematically airbrushed out of Soviet literary history, despite the central role he had played in the cultural life of Russia's northern capital for nearly twenty years. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, his writings have gradually been rediscovered in Russia, but with his archives scattered between Russia, France, and the USA, the project of reconstructing the story of his life has been a complex task. This book, the first full biography of Zamiatin in any language, provides an account of his life which explores his intimate preoccupations and uncovers the political and cultural background to many of his works.

Academic Studies Press published *The Filmmaker's Philosopher: Merab Mamardashvili and Russian Cinema* by Alyssa DeBlasio in May 2020.

Known as the "Georgian Socrates" of Soviet philosophy, Merab Mamardashvili was a defining personality of the late-Soviet intelligentsia. In the 1970s and 1980s, he taught courses in philosophy at Russia's two leading film schools, helping to educate a generation of internationally prolific directors. Exploring Mamardashvili's extensive philosophical output, as well as a range of recent Russian films, DeBlasio reveals the intellectual affinities amongst directors of the Mamardashvili generation – including Alexander Sokurov, Andrey Zvyagintsev, and Alexei Balabanov. This multidisciplinary study offers an innovative way to think about film, philosophy, and the philosophical potential of the moving image.

*From Cotton and Smoke: Łódź – Industrial City and Discourses of Asynchronous Modernity, 1897–1994*, by Agata Zysiak, Kamil Śmiechowski, Kamil Piskała, Wiktor Marzec, Kaja Kaźmierska, and Jacek Burski, was published by Jagiellonian University Press in May 2019.

This book considers Łódź as the capital of the Polish nineteenth century, and the history of this former textile hub, which now finds itself in central Poland, as one of struggle with modern change in Eastern Europe. The authors challenge the romantic and noble-based Polish cultural imaginary, offering instead an alternative way to understand confrontation with modernity in the region. *From Cotton and Smoke* examines local press debates during four periods, each of which stimulated self-reflection on the idea of the modern city: Rapid industrial growth in the tsarist borderlands; State crafting after World War I; Socialist restructuring after 1945; Transition and deindustrialization after 1989. These insights constitute a multifaceted portrait of twentieth-century urban experience beyond the metropolis, in different historical contexts. The book also addresses core intellectual debates within urban studies, modernity studies, and historical discourse analysis worldwide.

*From Peoples into Nations: A History of Eastern Europe*, by John Connelly, was published by Princeton University Press in January 2020.

In the 1780s, the Habsburg monarch Joseph II decreed that German would be the language of his realm. His intention was to forge a unified state, but his action catalyzed the emergence of competing nationalisms. Connelly traces the rise of nationalism in Polish, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman lands; the creation of new states after the First World War and their later absorption by the Nazi Reich and the Soviet Bloc; the reemergence of democracy and separatist movements after the collapse of communism; and the recent surge of populist politics throughout the region.

*Magda Nachman: An Artist in Exile*, by Lina Bernstein, was published by Academic Studies Press in June 2020.

The political and social turmoil of the twentieth century

took Nachman from a privileged childhood in St. Petersburg at the close of the nineteenth century, artistic studies with Léon Bakst and Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin at the Zvantseva Art Academy, and participation in the dynamic symbolist/modernist artistic ferment in pre-Revolutionary Russia to a refugee existence in the Russian countryside during the Russian Civil War followed by marriage to a prominent Indian nationalist, then with her husband to the hardships of émigré Berlin in the 1920s and 1930s, and finally to Bombay, where she established herself as an important artist and a mentor to a new generation of modern Indian artists.

Maya Nadkarni's *Remains of Socialism: Memory and the Futures of the Past in Postsocialist Hungary* (Cornell University Press, July 2020) investigates the changing fates of the socialist past in postsocialist Hungary. Spanning more than two decades of postsocialist transformation, it follows Hungary from the optimism of the early years of transition to its recent right-wing turn toward illiberal democracy. Nadkarni introduces the concept of "remains"—both physical objects and cultural remainders—to analyze all that Hungarians sought to leave behind after the end of state socialism. From exiled statues of Lenin to the socialist-era "Bambi" soda, and from discredited official histories to communist regime's informers' secrets, remains were far more than simply the leftovers of an unwanted past. Instead, the struggles to define remains of socialism and settle their fates would represent attempts to determine the future and to mourn futures that never materialized.

Wiktor Marzec's *Rising Subjects: The 1905 Revolution and the Origins of Modern Polish Politics* (University of Pittsburgh Press, May 2020) explores the change of the public sphere in Russian Poland during the 1905 Revolution, which was one of the few bottom-up political transformations and general democratizations in Polish history. It was a popular rebellion fostering political participation of the working class. The infringement of previously carefully guarded limits of the public sphere triggered a powerful conservative reaction among the commercial and landed elites, and frightened the intelligentsia. Polish nationalists promised to eliminate the revolutionary "anarchy" and gave meaning to the sense of disappointment after the revolution. This study addresses the question of Polish socialism, nationalism, and antisemitism. It demonstrates the difficulties in using the class cleavage for democratic politics in a conflict-ridden, multiethnic polity striving for an irredentist self-assertion against the imperial power.

Therese Garstenauer's German-language monograph on Russia-related Gender Studies *Russlandbezogene Gender Studies. Lokale, globale und transnationale Praxis* was published by Vandenhoeck- & Ruprecht Verlage.

When conducting research on gender

relations in Russia it makes a difference whether one is located in Saratov, Moscow, Vienna, or New York. The author tackles questions of the global division of labor within the social sciences and humanities: Where are theories developed, where do they get applied? Who delivers – or even becomes – the empirical data for research? What is the status of Russia-based scholars within this constellation? The limits and possibilities of transnational Russia-related Gender Studies are expounded, based on the analysis of interviews with Russian, American, Austrian, German, and English protagonists in this field. Furthermore, the reader is provided with insights into the current state of affairs of Gender Studies in Russia.

*Without the Banya We Would Perish: A History of the Russian Bathhouse*, by Ethan Pollock, was published by Oxford University Press in September 2019.

For over one thousand years Russians of every economic class, political party, and social strata have treated bathing as a communal activity integrating personal hygiene and public health with rituals, relaxation, conversations, drinking, political intrigue, business, and sex. Here, Pollock explores the bathhouse's role in Russian identity, following public figures (from Catherine the Great to Rasputin to Putin), writers (such as Chekhov and Dostoevsky), foreigners (including Mark Twain and Casanova), and countless others. The story comes up to the present, exploring the continued importance of banyas in Russia and their newfound popularity in cities across the globe. Pollock shows how the banya has persisted, adapted, and flourished in the everyday lives of Russians throughout wars, political ruptures, modernization, and urbanization.

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



# Institutional Member News

## THE KENNAN INSTITUTE AT THE WILSON CENTER

George F. Kennan Fellows will be based at the Wilson Center in Washington, D.C. for three-month residencies. Fellows will receive access to the Library of Congress, National Archives, and policy research centers in Washington, D.C., as well as the opportunity to meet with key experts and officials. While conducting research, the George F. Kennan Fellows are expected to actively participate in discussions with the policy and academic communities, including speaking engagements at the Wilson Center as well as potentially outside of D.C., and attending meetings, conferences, and other activities organized by the Kennan Institute and Wilson Center. Upon completion of the fellowships, the grantees become alumni, for whom Kennan will continue to offer opportunities for collaboration and engagement. There are no citizenship requirements for this grant.

Applicants have an option to apply for the fellowship as individuals or as part of a team. If applying as a team of two (or three) applicants, the applicants must be citizens of at least two different countries. The goal of such joint fellowships is to promote collaborative research projects among U.S., Russian, and Ukrainian experts. George F. Kennan Fellowship Teams will: Produce joint paper(s) for policy-relevant publications; Present work at D.C., Russia, and/or Ukraine events; Conduct meetings and engage with policymakers in D.C.. Competitions for the fellowships will be held twice yearly. Please see the website for the application: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/opportunity/george-f-kennan-fellowship>.

The Kennan Institute is pleased to announce that its proposal for funding was selected by the U.S. Department of State Title VIII program. Please look for announcements of forthcoming competitions for the Research, Summer Research, and Short-Term fellowships. The Research and Summer Research deadlines will be in early 2021. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/fellowship-opportunities-and-internships>.

The Kennan Institute welcomes its current and incoming scholars:

James Billington Fellow

- Yasha Klots, Assistant Professor of Russian, Hunter College (CUNY), “Tamizdat, the Cold War, and Contraband Russian Literature (1956-1991)”

## THE POLISH INSTITUTE OF ARTS & SCIENCES OF AMERICA NEWS

CfP: The Polish Institute of Arts & Sciences of America

The Polish Institute of Arts & Sciences of America invites proposals for its 8th World Congress to be held at the University of Białystok, Poland, June 10-13, 2021. Proposals are solicited for complete sessions or individual papers in any of the disciplines in the liberal arts, sciences, or business/economics. The general theme of the conference is “Borderlands (Pogranicza),” for which Białystok, a city on Poland’s present-day eastern frontier adjacent

to Poland’s historic borderlands (kresy), with its own distinctive multicultural past, is a most appropriate setting. Therefore, we particularly welcome proposals that address the multiethnic and contested nature of borderlands, realms where the mixing and unmixing of populations and cultures have occurred. They have been zones of peaceful coexistence and brutalizing violence. At the same time, borderlands have also been places of national indifference and identity-formation. The borderland region known as the kresy has long inspired outstanding literary works and other cultural products, both national and transnational. Since the organization values comparative sessions that place the Polish and East Central European experience in context, papers need not focus specifically on Poland or Polish themes. Similarly, sessions including presenters from more than one country are encouraged.

The conference language is English. All conference rooms will be equipped with A/V. Presenters are invited to submit their conference papers to be considered for possible publication in *The Polish Review* after the conference. To submit a proposal, send the name, e-mail address, institutional affiliation, tentative paper title and brief one-paragraph abstract for each presenter to program chair Patrice Dabrowski at [pmd639\[at\]g.harvard.edu](mailto:pmd639[at]g.harvard.edu). The deadline for proposals is March 15, 2021.

CfN: PIASA Waclaw Lednicki Award in the Humanities: Named after the first director of the Literature and Arts Section of the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America, the Waclaw Lednicki Award recognizes the most outstanding book or creative work published, produced or presented in any of the fields encompassed within the Humanities as defined by the National Endowment for the Humanities, to include fine arts, history, languages, literature, philosophy, religion, etc. However, since Polish history has its own PIASA award, works in this field are ineligible. Email requested materials to Anna Frajlich-Zajac at [af38@columbia.edu](mailto:af38@columbia.edu) by November 15, 2020.

CfN: PIASA Bronisław Malinowski Award in the Social Sciences: Named for an eminent social scientist and founding member and first president of the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America, the Bronisław Malinowski Award recognizes a scholar in one of the fields of the social sciences who has written a book or seminal publication of particular value and significance dealing with an aspect of the Polish experience. In past instances, the Malinowski Award has also recognized a scholar’s outstanding body of published work. The book, outstanding publication or body of work should represent exemplary scholarly research published in the fields encompassed by the social sciences, including anthropology, economics, political science, and sociology, according to standards recognized by those disciplines. Email the requested materials to Michael Bernhard at [bernhard@ufl.edu](mailto:bernhard@ufl.edu) by November 15, 2020.

CfN: PIASA Oskar Halecki Polish and East-Central European History Award: Named for an eminent historian and PIASA founding member, the Oskar Halecki Award recognizes a

scholar in the field of Polish and East-Central European history who has written a book of particular value and significance dealing with the Polish experience or including the Polish experience within a larger East-Central European context. In past instances, the Halecki Award has also recognized a scholar's outstanding body of published work. The book or body of work should represent exemplary historical research and writing. Email the requested materials to Neal Pease at [pease@uwm.edu](mailto:pease@uwm.edu) by November 15, 2020.

The recipients of these three awards will be recognized at the 8th World Congress of PIASA in Białystok, Poland, June 10-13, 2021. Criteria for all of the above prizes:

- The book, publication, or body of work must be written in the English language.
- The author must be a scholar living and working in North America.
- The book or publication must have appeared during the 2019 calendar year. If the nomination is based on a body of work, it must include a significant publication within the last five calendar years.
- Publications containing original research or new, original syntheses are eligible for consideration; edited collections are ineligible.

Nominations, including self-nominations, should include:

- A letter of justification why the particular candidate is deserving of the award;
- Nominee's CV that includes a bibliography of significant publications and a list of accomplishments;
- Any additionally relevant materials such as book reviews, citation indices, and letters of support

#### UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH DIGITAL CURATOR RECEIVES CCNY GRANT

The University of Pittsburgh Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies (REEES) is proud to announce that REEES Digital Curator Sean Guillory has been awarded a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York to expand programming, including a broadcast series and two audio documentaries. The speakers' series, "Distant Friends and Intimate Enemies," examines US-Russian relations from the early 19th century onward. The Carnegie grant will also support two audio documentaries. The first, *Teddy Roe Goes to the USSR*, tells the story of a former staff member of Montana Senator Mike Mansfield during his three-month trip across the Soviet Union in 1968. The second documentary, *The Reddest of the Blacks*, is a twelve-part series that examines African American relations with the Soviet Union and communism in the 1920s and 1930s through the life of Lovett Fort-Whiteman, the only known African American victim of Stalin's terror.

#### CfA USHMM FACULTY SEMINAR: LGBTQ+ HISTORIES OF THE HOLOCAUST

The 2021 Jack and Anita Hess Faculty Seminar focuses on the history of LGBTQ+ people during the Holocaust, as well as the continued relevance of this history to understanding the

discrimination that queer and trans people face today. The seminar will explore how the Nazi state persecuted, incarcerated, and interned men in concentration camps for the supposed crime of consensual sex with other men under §175 of the criminal code, with at least 5,000 perishing at the hands of Nazi state agents. At the same time, the seminar will highlight that there is so much more to the history of LGBTQ+ experiences during the Holocaust. Drawing on new research, seminar leaders will stimulate discussions about the many facets of queer and trans histories under Nazism, including: To what extent were queer women targets of state violence? How did racialization affect queer Jews and queer Poles? When did gender transgression and queerness not necessarily aggravate the Nazi state? And what lasting lessons can we learn from the under-researched history of trans people and gender non-conformity during the Holocaust? The seminar will further address how the German law against sodomy and the Austrian law concerning "crimes against nature" were similar to laws on the books in the United States and elsewhere at the time.

Seminar applicants can be at any career stage but must be teaching or anticipate teaching relevant courses at accredited institutions in North America. This seminar will occur entirely online from January 4–8, 2021. The application deadline: November 1, 2020. <https://www.ushmm.org/research/opportunities-for-academics/faculty-seminars/hess/2021>. Email Katharine White at [kwhite@ushmm.org](mailto:kwhite@ushmm.org) with questions.

#### ZIMMERLI AT HOME LAUNCHES AS HUB FOR VIRTUAL MUSEUM OFFERINGS

[Zimmerli at Home](#) invites you to experience the museum, wherever you are. Search more than 7,000 images of artwork from the institution's collections on eMuseum. Make Art at Home features activities and coloring pages for all ages. Explore videos of past events, including talks and behind-the-scenes tours. Expand your personal playlists with Art + Music, a compilation of songs inspired by student guards' favorite artwork. Miss being inside the museum? Select one of our galleries to appear as your virtual background during online meetings and visit online exhibitions.

Zimmerli will host virtual tours and guest speakers at their signature monthly program, Art After Hours, which returns October 6 with the addition of Art Before Hours, a new partnership with Rutgers Global. The Zimmerli and [Rutgers Global](#) also team up to present Friendship Fridays, a new series of artist-led activities, which kicks off October 9. Later in the month, museum members are invited to a curatorial conversation about the exhibition *Everyday Soviet: Soviet Industrial Design and Nonconformist Art (1959-1989)*. In addition, the Zimmerli offers a public screening of the film Political Advertisement X, co-sponsored by the Byrne Seminars, Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, and Mason Gross School of the Arts.





# Personages

**Christian Hilchey** and **Marina Alexandrova** were awarded the Leslie Waggenger Centennial Teaching Fellowship and the Raymond Dickson Centennial Endowed Teaching Fellowship, respectively from the University of Texas at Austin.

**Rosalind Polly Blakesley** has been awarded a Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship for the project “Russia, Empire and the Baltic Imagination.” This will examine Russia’s artistic engagement in the Baltic region throughout the imperial period, and the role of the Baltic Sea as a unique membrane for Russia’s transcultural exchange.

**Victoria Donovan** was awarded an AHRC Early Career Leadership Fellowship for her project “Donbas in Focus: Visions of Industry in the Ukrainian East.” This fellowship provides time for research leaders to undertake focused individual research alongside collaborative activities that have the potential to generate a transformative impact on their subject area and beyond.

The NEH awarded \$30 million in grants for 238 humanities projects across the country. Among the recipients is **Page Herrlinger** for “Teaching the Holocaust through Visual Culture,” a seminar for high school educators on the visual culture of the Holocaust. Also, **Natalia Ermolaev** and **Andrew Janco** (Princeton University) were awarded funding for “New Languages for NLP: Building Linguistic Diversity in the Digital Humanities,” which is an institute to help humanities scholars learn how to create linguistic data and apply statistical models to new languages.

**Thomas Garza** received a Global Virtual Exchange award for his Advanced Russian through Global Debate course.

**Paul Geraci** is now a Research Associate Professor in the International and Area Studies Library, with affiliations in the Department of History, the Graduate College, and the Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

**Anastasiia Gordiienko** is now an Assistant Professor in the Russian and Slavic Studies Department of the University of Arizona.

**Natalie Kononenko** received the Marius Barbeau medal from the Folklore Studies Association of Canada for service to the study of Canadian Folklore

**James Loeffler**’s book *Rooted Cosmopolitans: Jews and Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (Yale, 2018) was awarded the AHA Dorothy Rosenberg Award for Best Book in Jewish History and the Association for Jewish Studies Jordan Schnitzer Award for Best Book in Modern Jewish History.

**Oksana Lutsyshyn**’s book *Ivan and Vet* (Old Lion Publishing House) was long-listed for The Lviv Prize, which is the largest

literary prize awarded by the city authorities in Ukraine.

An NEH Inaugural Open Book Award, which will turn NEH-funded scholarly publications into freely available ebooks, was awarded to **Julia L. Mickenberg**’s book, *American Girls in Red Russia: Chasing the Soviet Dream* (University of Chicago Press, 2017).

**Erika Monahan** was awarded an American Fellows in Russia fellowship from American Councils to do archival research for her second book. She was also named the 2021 Aspinall Lecturer at Colorado Mesa University.

The Center for Advanced Study appointed **Harriet Murav** to its permanent faculty. CAS professors are selected based on their outstanding scholarship, and the appointments are one of the highest forms of campus recognition at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

**Amber N. Nickell** was awarded a [2020-2021 Claims Conference Saul Kagan Fellowship in Advanced Shoah Studies](#) to finish writing her dissertation, tentatively titled: “Brotherlands to ‘Bloodlands’: Ethnic Germans and Jews in Southern Ukraine, Late Tsarist to Postwar.”

**Donald J. Raleigh** received the 2020 University of North Carolina Women’s Leadership Council Graduate Mentoring Award for his mentoring of graduate students.

In fall 2020, **Carolyn F. Roeder** will be the István Deák Visiting Assistant Professor in East Central European Studies at Columbia University.

**Jelena Subotić**’s book *Yellow Star, Red Star. Holocaust Remembrance after Communism* (Cornell University Press, 2019) received the 2020 Joseph Rothschild Prize in Nationalism and Ethnic Studies (ASN), the 2020 APSA European Politics and Society Book Prize (co-winner), and was named co-winner of APSA’s 2020 Robert L. Jervis and Paul W. Schroeder Prize for the Best Book in International History and Politics.

The 2020 Canadian Association of Slavists/Taylor and Francis Book Prize in Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies has been awarded to **Jeff Sahadeo**’s *Voices from the Soviet Edge* (Cornell University Press, 2019).

**Sergei Zhuk** was recently awarded a Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program award. He will lecture at Guangzhou University of Foreign Studies in the People’s Republic of China as part of a project called “[Teaching Chinese Students of American Colonial History and Cultural Cold War in Comparative Historical Perspective.](#)”



# Affiliate Group News

INTRODUCING WORKING GROUP FOR SOLIDARITY IN REEES  
The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented challenges for scholars; it has also exacerbated ongoing crises in higher education, and the field of Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies specifically. The job market, already precarious, has seen widespread hiring freezes and will likely contract still more. Many contingent faculty and graduate students have access to even fewer resources necessary for their housing, medical, and other basic needs, while even those with full-time positions may find their jobs at risk. For many, continuing to teach and produce scholarship in this situation will prove untenable, and this will spell a tremendous loss — for individuals impacted by the crisis, and for our entire professional field.

The Working Group for Solidarity in REEES launched in May 2020 as a response to these and future challenges. We remain committed to discussions of equity in academic labor; the creation of support networks across disciplines; advocacy for institutional transparency in matters of funding and austerity; and coordination with our departments and regional studies centers to support our colleagues in need. We intend to create a broad coalition that will utilize the knowledge, skills, and resources of scholars across ranks and career stages. Our goal is to promote the long-term sustainability of our field; in place of a reactive approach to economic uncertainty, we propose to unite forces in concerted action. The working group's efforts are directed toward those most affected by the current crisis. We have surveyed graduate students and contingent faculty on their experiences and concerns, and we circulated best practices for institutional support of contingent academics. Additionally, we have met with directors of major research centers to compile

information and recommendations for supporting research and intellectual activity under tightened budgets and travel freezes. We have also reached out to professional organizations and affiliate groups in order to understand the challenges facing all parts of the academy. In addition to advocacy and research, we have undertaken mutual aid projects to mitigate the impact of the pandemic crisis on those who are economically vulnerable. We have initiated a housing network, coordinating housing offers and needs in our scholarly community. We have also organized an online library, intended to support research during this period of physical distancing and reduced library access. The working group maintains an email list for scholars to exchange materials, and a compendium of links to online resources and institutions, both available on our website.

The working group is eager to collaborate with colleagues across the profession. We welcome everyone to attend the group's meeting during this year's ASEES Convention and biweekly planning meetings via Zoom. The initiatives outlined above are ongoing, while we continue to develop new projects, including a mentoring network for job market candidates, and the organization of Slavic Graduate Student Associations at universities. The working group is also developing a forthcoming critical discussion forum in *Slavic Review* on the pandemic crisis; we will be circulating a call for papers shortly, and we welcome abstracts for paper proposals. For information on our initiatives, including the schedule and links for meetings, visit: <https://sites.google.com/view/working-group-for-solidarity/>. The leaders of the [Working Group for Solidarity in REEES](#) are [Jason Cieply](#), Chair, [Robyn Jensen](#), Communications & Contingent Subcommittee Chair, [Tom Roberts](#), Communications,, and [Zachary Hicks](#), Graduate Subcommittee Chair.

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#### CfP: 25th ANNUAL WORLD CONVENTION OF ASN

The Association for the Study of Nationalities announces the return of its Annual Convention, which will take place online on 6-8 May 2021. Applicants whose paper or panel proposal was accepted in 2020 can resubmit their application (or a revised version), using the updated application forms. The Convention will look favorably at these applications but cannot guarantee that applicants will be on the program. Proposal submission forms can be found at <https://www.asnconvention.com/proposals> and must be emailed to [darel@uottawa.ca](mailto:darel@uottawa.ca) and [darelasn2021@gmail.com](mailto:darelasn2021@gmail.com) by November 11.

#### CENTRAL SLAVIC CONFERENCE

The Central Slavic Conference's Annual Meeting will take place in St. Louis, Missouri, March 12-14, 2021. The original plan, which called for the CSC to take place October 16-18, 2020, had to be modified due to the evolving challenge of the pandemic. As in previous years, the conference will be held at the historic Missouri Athletic Club under the sponsorship of Saint Louis University Research Program. CSC will provide additional information about the timing/format of the rescheduled conference ASAP.

#### POLISH STUDIES ASSOCIATION RESEARCH AWARD

PSA is now accepting applications for research award (or awards) intended to support active, graduate-level research on projects pertaining to Polish topics. In light of the difficulty of transatlantic travel, the committee may award two grants for local European travel or to cover the cost of digitizing sources in Polish collections rather than a single grant. Applications are due October 16, 2020 and require a two-page description of the project, a schedule of

the research plan (including the location of relevant documents), and a budget. Include contingency plans to take into account any COVID-related restrictions on materials or opening times. Applications for funds to support digitizing or scanning of materials in Polish collections must specify how/by whom the work will be done. Awards will be announced at the PSA annual meeting to be held during the virtual ASEES Convention. Email submissions to: Kate Wroblewski ([mwroblew@umich.edu](mailto:mwroblew@umich.edu)) and Michał Wilczewski ([mwilcz@uic.edu](mailto:mwilcz@uic.edu)).

#### Cfs: SHERA GRANT/PRIZE

The Society of Historians of Eastern European, Eurasian, and Russian Art and Architecture announces the SHERA Publication Grant, which supports the realization of publications in the field of Russian, Eastern European, and Eurasian art and architecture. The grant is intended to offset the production expenses associated with publishing an art-historical monograph, edited volume, or exhibition catalogue. Book projects must have been accepted by a publisher in order to be considered. Funds will not cover research, writing, or editorial labor. Applicants must join SHERA in order to accept the award. Apply by October 15 at <http://www.shera-art.org/grants/publication-grant.php>.

SHERA also invites applications for the 2020 Emerging Scholar Prize. Applicants must have published an English-language article in a scholarly journal or museum publication within the twelve-month period preceding the application deadline. Applicants must have received their PhD within the last 5 years and be current members of SHERA. To apply by October 15, 2020, see <http://www.shera-art.org/grants/emerging-scholar-prize.php>.

### UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN HIRING ASSOCIATE/FULL PROFESSOR FOCUSED ON CULTURAL STUDIES OR HISTORY

The Department of Slavic and Eurasian Studies (DSES) in collaboration with the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies at the University of Texas at Austin invites applications for the position of tenured associate or full professor. The anticipated start date is fall semester 2021, and the position is contingent upon budget availability. We seek applications from scholars whose research focuses on the Poland or the non-Russian peoples and cultures of the former Soviet republics, though transnational research might also include Russians. Our preference is for a research specialization in Cultural (including literary) Studies or History, though interdisciplinary work that crosses into these fields will be considered. All candidates must have an outstanding and active research and publication record consistent with achievement at the intended rank at a leading research university. Teaching duties will include a two course per semester load. The selected candidate will be expected to exhibit an interest in and commitment to departmental and center administration and service and be qualified to teach undergraduate and graduate courses, as well as direct independent research. Candidates who are currently or will potentially make outstanding contributions to diversity in their scholarly fields and/or institutions of higher education, or have experience mentoring a diverse student body, are especially encouraged to apply. Salary is based upon qualifications and experience.

Qualifications: Ph.D. in a relevant field and teaching experience is required.

Applicants should submit a letter of application, a curriculum vitae, three letters of reference, a scholarly writing sample of no more than 30 pages, and a one to two-page statement that addresses your experience with or commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion through scholarship, pedagogy, mentoring, and service and engagement. Submit to Professor Mary Neuburger, Chair, Department of Slavic and Eurasian Studies, via Interfolio <http://apply.interfolio.com>. Deadline for applications is December 11, 2020. Finalists will be interviewed via zoom in late January. The University of Texas at Austin is an AA/EEO employer, and requires all expected hires to undergo a criminal background check.

#### Equal Employment Opportunity Statement

The University of Texas at Austin, as an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer, complies with all applicable federal and state laws regarding nondiscrimination and affirmative action. The University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, religion, or veteran status in employment, educational programs and activities, and admissions.

<https://faculty.utexas.edu/career/65090>





## In Memoriam

**Robert James Douglas Bird**, scholar of Russian literature and cinema and a professor at the University of Chicago, died on September 7, 2020, after a nine-month battle with colon cancer.

Bird was respected for his erudition, but he was also joyful in his intellect, endlessly curious, and willing to be engaged by new ways of thinking. He published works across a wide range of topics and approaches. His first book, *The Russian Prospero: The Creative Universe of Viacheslav Ivanov*, was followed by two books on Tarkovsky, including *Andrei Tarkovsky: Elements of Cinema*, which has been translated into Chinese, Farsi, and Portuguese, and will be published in Russian this year in Moscow in Bird's own translation (Тарковский: Стихии кино). He also wrote a critical biography of Dostoevsky and edited numerous volumes and journal issues in both Russian and English. Just days before his death he completed work toward a volume of his collected essays in Russian, which will be published next year. His work in recent years had turned toward problems of aesthetics, socialism and revolution: he was completing the book *Soul Machine: How Soviet Film Modeled Socialism*, which will be published posthumously.

He was known for his collaborative efforts, both in organizing conferences and in his work at the intersection of art, exhibition and politics. He began to publish essays and reviews in art journals such as *e-flux* and *Art Agenda*, memoir essays in *The Point* ("1989") and *Portable Gray* ("Moscow Diary"), and, in the last months, two personal essays on his illness, "Illness in a Plague Year" (*The Point*, April 15), and "The Omens: Tarkovsky, Sacrifice, Cancer," which appeared two days after his death, September 9, in *Apparatus*.

[Excerpted from Dignity Memorial obituary.](#)

**Stephen F. Cohen** passed away on September 18, 2020 at the age of 81.

Professor Emeritus of Russian studies at Princeton University and New York University, Cohen was an eminent historian of the Soviet Union, a public intellectual on Soviet and post-Soviet politics, and a fierce critic of US policies towards Russia.

A prolific writer, he wrote and edited 10 books, including *Rethinking the Soviet Experience: Politics and History Since 1917* (1985), *Why Cold War Again: How America Lost Post-Soviet Russia* (2016), and *Voices of Glasnost: Interviews with Gorbachev's Reformers* (1989), with his wife Katrina vanden Heuvel, publisher of *The Nation*. He also published many articles for *The Nation*, *The New York Times*, and other publications as well as serving as a commentator on CBS in the 1980s.

His first book, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888-1938* (1973), was a ground-breaking work that influenced Mikhail Gorbachev as he was formulating perestroika. Steve and Katrina became life-long friends with

the Gorbachevs and were guests at the 1987 Gorbachev-Reagan summit.

Born in Indianapolis, Cohen received his BA from Indiana University, where he studied with Robert C. Tucker, and then received his PhD from Columbia University in 1969. He taught at Princeton from 1968 to 1998, and then at NYU until his retirement in 2011.

Cohen cared deeply about the younger generation of specialists on Russia. His legacy at ASEES will carry on through the Robert C. Tucker/Stephen F. Cohen Dissertation Prize, awarded annually for an outstanding English-language doctoral dissertation in Soviet or Post-Soviet politics and history, as well as the Cohen-Tucker Dissertation Fellowships, both generously funded by vanden Heuvel's KAT Foundation.

To read Cohen's obituary written by Katrina vanden Heuvel in *The Nation*: <https://www.thenation.com/article/world/stephen-cohen-obituary-russia/>

**Milan Fryšćák**, longtime professor of Russian and Slavic Studies at NYU, passed away on April 16, 2020.

Fryšćák was born in Dobra near Frydek-Mistek on June 27, 1932. He received his BA from Palacky University in 1956. In 1957, he escaped from Czechoslovakia to Italy, where he spent the next 18 months as a refugee. before emigrating to Wisconsin. Fryšćák received his MA in Slavic Languages and Linguistics from UC Berkeley in 1962 and his PhD in Slavic Linguistics from OSU in 1969. From 1971 until his retirement in 2008, Fryšćák taught at New York University, where he served regularly as a graduate advisor. From the 1970s through the 1990s he spent most summers directing and teaching at the Russian School of Norwich University.

In 1988 Fryšćák was selected by IREX for an academic exchange between the US and Czechoslovakia. After 31 years in exile, he was able to reunite with his family. Following the Velvet Revolution in 1989, Fryšćák established some of the first scholarly exchanges between Charles University and NYU. He served as Director of NYU's Summer Program in Prague, lectured at Charles University, and taught in their Summer School of Slavonic Studies. In recognition of his efforts, he was honored with the Charles University Memorial Medal ("Nummum Memorialem").

Fryšćák held leadership roles in several Czech cultural and émigré organizations, including the New York chapter of the Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences, the Czech and Slovak Solidarity Council, and the American Fund for Czech and Slovak Relief.

*Excerpted from text provided by Anne Lounsbery, NYU*

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Association for Slavic, East European and 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.

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# ASEEES 53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Convention

November 18-21, 2021

New Orleans, LA • Hilton New Orleans Riverside

Convention Theme: Diversity, Intersectionality, Interdisciplinarity

2021 ASEEES President: Sibelan Forrester

Professor of Russian, Russian Section Head, Coordinator for Interpretation Theory at Swarthmore

The 2021 ASEEES convention invites a diversity of approaches to diverse topics in the field and celebrates our various backgrounds, disciplines, and ways we create and propagate knowledge. Our studies of Eastern Europe and Eurasia have tended to be highly informed about class and economic questions, thanks largely to socialist scholars before and after the revolution, but these societies, their inhabitants and their discourses also bring other kinds of diversity: ethnicity, gender, language, race, religion, and sexuality. These are often perceived differently in Eastern Europe and Eurasia than in the Americas or Western Europe, which itself suggests possible approaches for study.

**Proposals from all disciplines and historical periods are welcome, and encouraged.**

**Deadline for ALL Submissions (panels, papers, roundtables, lightning rounds) is February 15, 2021.**

