

Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies

(CREES) is dedicated to advancing and disseminating interdisciplinary knowledge about the peoples, nations, and cultures of Russia, Central and Eastern Europe, and Eurasia, past and present. Through its own academic programs and its support of area-focused training and scholarship across U-M's schools and colleges, CREES helps meet the nation's ongoing need for experts with deep contextual knowledge who are proficient in the region's languages. By hosting public lectures, conferences, and other events, CREES serves as a local, state, Midwest, and national resource on the region.

FROM THE DIRECTOR Reflecting on the 2025-2026 academic year, I am reminded of the continued importance of our Center's mission and of the strength of the scholarly community that sustains it. At a time when political challenges in the region continue to evolve, and when international education faces new pressures in our country, the scholarship and teaching supported by CREES remain as important as ever.

As highlighted throughout the report, we had a full year of thought-provoking CREES lectures and co-sponsored events. Our programming reflected the breadth and complexity of our region, with events covering Bosnia, Bulgaria, Russia, Serbia, and Ukraine as well as transnational perspectives. We were pleased to welcome speakers from a wide range of disciplines and professional backgrounds, including anthropology, history, literature, regional studies, journalism, literature, and art. Their visits created opportunities for students, faculty, and community members to think critically about the region's past and present. We started off the year welcoming CNN contributor and U-M alumna, Jill Dougherty, for a CREES Distinguished Lecture, in which she shared details about her recent book *My Russia: What I Saw Inside the Kremlin*. Another highlight of the year was our annual Borka Tomljenović Lecture, delivered by Dr. Gazela Pudar Draško on the widespread student protests across

Serbia. The talk was an inspiration for what direct democracy in hybrid regimes can look like in action. More details from our speaker series and events can be seen throughout this report.

As always, CREES was very proud of our students this year. The Masters in International and Regional Studies - Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies (MIRS-REEES) students, graduate student associates, and REES BA students pursued rigorous coursework, language study, research, and internships. More details about our students' and alumni's achievements can be found in the following pages. We congratulate our MA and BA 2026 graduates and look forward to welcoming six new MIRS-REEES students this Fall.

The Department of Education's Title VI Foreign Language and Area Studies program was abruptly stopped in September, which canceled our grant for its final year in the cycle. Nonetheless, CREES was able to award one graduate academic year fellowship with the remaining funds. While the future is uncertain in regard to Title VI, we remain committed to advocating for sustained federal support for language and area studies, which is essential to training the next generation of regional specialists. We are also working hard to develop more scholarships for graduate study and summer research, practicum, and language experiences. These are made



possible in large part because of our generous donors, for whom CREES is extremely appreciative.

It has been an honor to continue serving as Director of CREES. I am thankful to Professor Valerie Kivelson who served as Associate Director this year, and Liz Malinkin, Assistant Director of Programs and Operations. On behalf of CREES, I extend our appreciation to the WCEE staff who help ensure our programs, events, and communications run smoothly. As in past years, I am grateful for what we have accomplished and deeply appreciative of the students, faculty, alumni, and community members whose engagement advances the educational and scholarly mission of CREES.

Elizabeth J. King

CREES Director

Associate Professor of Health Behavior & Health Equity

Associate Professor of Global Public Health



CREES Graduates

Winter 2026 | Masters in International and Regional Studies (MIRS)-REEES

Ayaulym Saduakas
Sama Totah
Jack Wynn

Winter 2026 | REES BA
Eliot Schlaack

CREES Incoming Student Award, 2025-26

Awarded to an incoming MIRS-REEES student in recognition of excellent academic achievement and scholarly potential.

Tyler Berndt

Graduate Academic Year Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship (FLAS)

Maximilian Hauffe, MIRS-REEES (Russian)

Graduate Student Instructors for REEES Undergraduate Courses

REEES 395: Russia and the Soviet Union: Reform, Revolution, and the Socialist Experiment (fall)

Isabelle Kinney, MIRS-REEES

CREES Research, Internship & Fellowship Awards

Awarded to students in REES-related undergraduate and graduate degree programs for summer or semester-long research projects or internships at institutions and businesses in Eastern Europe or the former Soviet Union.

Baktygul Chynybaeva, MIRS-REEES, "The Impact of Stalin's Great Terror on the Central Asian Intelligentsia: A Case Study of Kyrgyzstan" [Kyrgyzstan, remote]

Maximilian Hauffe, MIRS-REEES, Helsinki Citizens' Assembly (HSA) [Armenia]

Andryusha Kuznetsov, PhD Comparative Literature, "Ukrainian Language Study with Ukrainian Catholic University, Lviv" [Ukraine, remote]

Julian Schultz, PhD Anthropology/Archaeology, "Neolithic Albanian Archaeofaunal Analysis Project (NAAAP)" [Albania]



From left: Artist Ira Bondarenko, CREES Director Elizabeth King, MIRS-REEES student Ayaulym Saduakas, and MIRS-REEES student Baktygul Chynybaeva at the CREES-supported art exhibit "Between Voice and Silence." Bondarenko's ceramics were featured along textiles by Katya Lisova and prints by Matvii Vaisberg (both members of the Ukrainian Union of Artists BZH-ART)



Longtime CNN Moscow Bureau Chief and U-M alumna Jill Dougherty (middle) with CREES faculty, staff, and students after her CREES Distinguished Lecture "Putin's Eternal War"

Alfred G. Meyer Prize

Awarded at the end of each academic year in recognition of distinguished undergraduate research and writing in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies.

Robert Cameron Amiot, History, “The Unplanned Body in a Planned Economy”

Olga Yatsenka, Comparative Literature, “What’s Language Got to Do with It? Reimagining Language Ambiguity from Janka Kupala’s *Tuteijshyya* to Alhierd Baharevich’s *Alindarka’s Children*”

CREES Alumni

Graduates from CREES and other U-M academic programs have gone on to distinguished careers — here are some updates from the past year. Alumni are encouraged to send news of their achievements to crees@umich.edu.

Alena Aniskiewicz (PhD Slavic ‘19) was a 2025–2026 fellow in the Adams Academy for Instructional Excellence and Innovation at Michigan State University, where she also teaches courses on East European culture as an assistant professor in the Center for Integrative Studies in the Arts and Humanities.

Katherine Klaric (BA REES ‘12) is Europe Director at the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation.

David J. Kostelancik (MA REES ‘88) retired with the rank of Minister-Counselor from the U.S. Foreign Service in 2025. Since, he has published articles through CEPA and Georgetown University, lectured at Northwestern, George Washington, and George Mason universities, and given public talks on Hungary.

Aleksandra Marciniak (PhD Slavic ‘25) defended her dissertation “Whence Came I: On Oxxxymiron and Persona in the Digital Age” in August 2025, after which she started a full time position as a learning experience designer at U-M’s Center for Academic Innovation.



Alexander J. McConnell (PhD History ‘23) recently published an article entitled “Dissenting Views: Secular Liberals, Soviet Christians, and Socialist Humanism in the Brezhnev Era” in the *Northwestern University Studies in Russian Philosophy, Literature, and Religious Thought* (vol. 2, December 2025).

Eoin Power (MA REES ‘15) works in Boston doing M&A advisory in the aerospace and defense sector. His first solo-authored paper, on the politics of defense spending in Europe during and after the Cold War, was just published in *Political Studies*.



Elana Resnick (PhD Anthropology ‘16) published *Refusing Sustainability: Race and Environmentalism in a Changing Europe* (Stanford University Press) in 2025.

Monica Sendor (BS REES ‘09), after three years working on political-military affairs in the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw, returned to Washington, D.C. in August 2025 for a two-year assignment contributing to conventional arms control policy in Europe and Eurasia for the U.S. Department of State.

CREES Reception at ASEES

CREES hosted a reception this Fall at the Association of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEES) convention in Washington, DC. We were delighted to connect with over 50 attendees, including alumni, faculty, current and prospective students, as well as past speakers in the CREES event series. CREES Director Elizabeth King gave welcoming remarks and shared the latest updates from the Center before leading a drawing for CREES t-shirts and other branded swag.



CREES Director Elizabeth King with students in CREES and Cyrillic Michigan t-shirts