

The image shows a window with a view of a lush green landscape. Several open books are scattered on the windowsill in the foreground. The scene is bathed in warm, golden light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The window frame is visible, and the books are open to various pages, some showing text and others showing illustrations. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and scholarly.

the **slavic scene**

volume 28, spring 2018

Books by window, Lviv, Ukraine. Photo by John-Mark Smith on Unsplash.

lsa.umich.edu/slavic

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letter from the chair

Dear friends,

This spring we congratulated our class of 2018 on their achievements. We had a great cohort of 21 excellent students graduating with majors and minors in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian. Many of them graduated with dual majors and minors from across LSA.

Over the course of the Winter semester, our language students took part in exciting activities such as our traditional annual Ukrainian *Pysanki* workshop, Czech and Polish Easter Monday event, Balkan food celebration, and two plays, *Office Romance* and the puppet show *Teremok*, performed enthusiastically and to great acclaim by students in second-third-and fourth-year Russian language courses. Our dedicated team of language instructors is currently developing a new “hybrid” pedagogical approach to language teaching that would integrate class instruction with web-based exercises. The pilot has demonstrated that using digital technologies greatly helps students master the intricacies of Slavic pronunciation. See page 5 for details on this approach.

This past winter, we hosted several distinguished international guest lecturers from Georgia, Germany, Russia, and the US, who

presented their research on a broad variety of topics. At the beginning of January our faculty and students had an engaging conversation with the St. Petersburg-based Russian sculptor Sergei Alipov on his work and the state of the art of sculpture in Russia. Dr. Jennifer Wilson from the University of Pennsylvania gave a public lecture titled “Saint-Domingue by Way of Saint-Petersburg: Imagining the Haitian Revolution in Imperial Russia” and discussed her current research on film in our Slavic colloquium, in a presentation titled “Black Skin, White Snow: Sissako’s Soviet Films and the Queer Contours of the Friendship of Peoples.” Dr. Nancy Perloff (Getty Institute) presented her new study *Explodity: Sound, Image, and Word in Russian Futurist Book Art*, and at the very end of the semester Professor Steffen Höhne (Institute of Musicology, Weimar-Jena) gave a lecture “Kafka’s Babylonian Homeland: Intellectual Traditions in Bohemian History and the Problem of Recognition.” These events drew wide and diverse audiences of faculty, graduate and undergraduate students from various departments and programs, as well as members of the general public.

We are happy to congratulate our doctoral student, Natasha McCauley, on two remarkable achievements: winning a Rackham Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award and obtaining a Visiting Assistant Professor position at the University of Richmond, Virginia.

We are also delighted to welcome Michigan Society Fellow, Ania Aizman, to our Department in the fall. Her interests lie at the intersection of theater, literature, and politics. She will teach a first-year seminar on “Manifesto Culture: Radical Art and Thought from Russia” in the Fall 2018. Congratulations to our faculty members on their book publications: Jindrich Toman on his edition of Roman Jakobson’s anthology in Czech, and Benjamin Paloff on the translation of Božena Keff’s novel *On Mother and Fatherland*.

Sincerely,

Misha Krutikov



Mikhail Krutikov

highlights

Winter 2018 Events

By Zaineb Al-Kalby

The Slavic Department had the fortunate opportunity to host distinguished guest lecturers from Russia, U.S., and Germany to discuss a wide spectrum of topics. These speakers had the opportunity to share their research on topics from sculpture to race in Russian media. These lectures attracted a diverse audience from many departments, programs, and the general public.



JANUARY:

Sergei Alipov:
Monument Wars
St. Petersburg, Sculptor

Alipov's talk reflected on the highly contentious erection of new and removal of old public statues across the former Soviet Union—a process which has, in the last two decades, been one of the most visible signs of the ongoing disputes about history, responsibility, nationality, and identity. His talk provided the opportunity not only to reflect on these processes in the post-Soviet space, but also on somewhat analogous issues that are proving to be very contentious in the United States today.

MARCH:

Jennifer Wilson: *Saint-Domingue by Way of Saint-Petersburg: Imagining the Haitian Revolution in Imperial Russia*
University of Pennsylvania

This talk was an exploration of how the Haitian Revolution was covered in the Russian presses from 1802-1804. The primary focus was on how the presence of Polish forces in Haiti (who were sent by Napoleon to put down the slave rebellion ostensibly in exchange for the repatriation of Polish territory from Russia) contributed to Russia's favorable coverage of the Black insurgency. Wilson also directed attention on how the then emerging discourse of romantic nationalism was used to portray Russia's imperial practices in neighboring Slavic territories (like Poland) as somehow physiologically distinct from the French colonial presence in the West Indies.

Nancy Perloff: *Explodity: Sound, Image, and Word in Russian Futurist Book Art*
Getty Institute

The product of close collaborations between poets and painters, the Russian artists' books created between 1910 and 1915 are like no others. In reference to "Explodity", Perloff argued that Futurist books were meant to be read, looked at, and listened to. The advanced abstraction of Kazimir Malevich offers a crucial context for manifestos by avant-garde poets Velimir Khlebnikov and Alexei Kruchenykh that dismissed referentiality and advocated the new poetic and phonic language of zaum (beyond the mind). Futurist and Formalist theory provide the basis for close readings of word-image-sound interplay in several Futurist books, including *Pomada* (*Pomade*) and *Mirskontsa* (*Worldbackwards*). The talk concluded by considering the wide-ranging legacy of these works in the midcentury global movement of sound and concrete poetry.

APRIL:

Steffen Hohne: *Kafka's Babylonian Homeland: Intellectual Traditions in Bohemian History and the Problem of Recognition*
Institute of Musicology,
Weimar-Jena

Kafka's local as well as regional and national life was characterized by multilingual, multid denominational and multicultural experiences that dominated the political, journalistic and cultural-literary discourse since the mid-19th century. The lecture aimed to reconstruct an universalist concept that was determined by a late-Josephinian reform catholicism or Bohemism (Bernard Bolzano, Adalbert Stifter) inspired by Leibniz and which was able to develop its effects into the 20th century. This effect on the history of ideas were examined using examples from Prague's German, Jewish and Czech modernism (including Max Brod, Emanuel Rádl) and then investigating the extent to which Kafka's work could be read in the context of universalist positions.

in the classroom

Blended Components in the Classroom

By Eugene Bondarenko

For the past few years I have had a gnawing feeling that my Ukrainian curriculum felt stale. No matter how many modern topics I included, how many innovative classroom activities I implemented, it felt like when my students were going home they were still interacting with their homework in a traditional way. They did exercises from the book, supplemented by assignments I developed on my own. However, during the 2017-18 academic year I was finally able to break from this somewhat outdated model. This year in my Ukrainian 151/251 classes, I experimented with introducing blended components to my classroom.

A blended component is a web based assignment which forces students to work with authentic target language materials to the fullest extent of their abilities. It may be as simple as watching an episode of a Ukrainian show and completing supplementary activities, or as involved as working through a custom-made module on how Ukrainians sometimes shun grammatical conventions in speech. These types of materials present a major

advantage, but also have one drawback which I will address later. The advantage is that students are inherently more interested in authentic materials than grammar textbooks. The blended assignments present a guided path to comprehending authentic content that may otherwise seem daunting to the students. For example, it is difficult for a second-year student to just sit down and watch a show in Ukrainian. However, given some cultural background, a list of vocabulary, and methods for how to deal with

“ It may be as simple as watching an episode of a Ukrainian show and completing supplementary activities, or as involved as working through a custom-made module on how Ukrainians sometimes shun grammatical conventions in speech. ”

segments that are beyond the students' level, the students happily engage with authentic material. Unlike in the classroom where time is limited, students can work through these assignments at their own pace since they are given ample time to complete the work.

The only major disadvantage is how much time goes into preparing these types of assignments. Compared to traditional homework assignments, blended modules can take almost three or four times as long

to prepare. Therefore, they are almost impossible to design “on the fly” during a busy semester; they must instead be written during the summer. Once the course is developed, it does not take significantly more time to run or grade, but the up-front workload is heavy. For this reason, given the relatively low pay of lecturers, additional funding to develop the course is indispensable to developing these courses. Our pilot program was funded through CRLT (Center for Research on Language and Teaching), which we glowingly recommend as a resource for anybody at the University of Michigan who is interested in developing their curriculum.

It is my professional opinion that blended components greatly increase the value of a foreign language course, particularly for intermediate and advanced students. This year's cohort of Ukrainian students advanced significantly further in their mastery of the language than in previous years. I would be overjoyed to be able to bring blended components into all of my foreign language classes.

faculty focus

Toman Edits Anthology of Roman Jakobson



Top Image
Angažovaná čítanka Romana Jakobsona cover

Professor Jindřich Toman edited an anthology of the work of Roman Jakobson, *Angažovaná čítanka Romana Jakobsona*, which was published in November 2017 by Karolinum. From the publisher's website:

"This anthology presents the famous literary research and linguist, Roman Jakobson (1896–1982) as an active participant and co-creator of the media environment in interwar Czechoslovakia and wartime emigration. Jakobson systematically sought to create a dialogue with the public, was involved in many critiques, discussions and arguments, while reflecting on the interconnection of

science and politics. In his texts, written primarily for non-scholarly readers, he also outlines the agenda of new "avant-garde" Slavic studies, discusses the role of the heritage of St. Konstantin and St. Methodius in Czech history, and from his emigration in New York, he stresses the responsibility intellectuals have in the fight for occupied Czechoslovakia. The selection thus presents Roman Jakobson in the role of a public intellectual. The book contains a number of little known and in some cases even hitherto unpublished texts."

On Mother and Fatherland

Associate Professor Benjamin Paloff's translation of *On Mother and Fatherland* by Božena Keff was published by Mad Hat Press. Here's the description of *On Mother and Fatherland* from Mad Hat Press' website:

"[W]e may regard this as the Polish version of Art Spiegelman's *Maus*—in its form, an excellent and utterly unexpected version.

Such a comparison is not about imitation, nor about formal similarity, but about something essential for both authors: the child-artist's struggle with the historical experience represented by the parent. A struggle for one's own identity, for the right to one's own life, for a way out of the mausoleum of the Holocaust. A struggle played out in the arena of art." —Przemysław Czapliński

Translation Prize

Professor Michael Makin's translation of Mikhail Starodub's tale "The Mark of Her Excellency the Firebird" was shortlisted in the translation category of the competition at the Open Eurasian Literature Festival 2017, held in Stockholm.

There were over 1200 entries across all categories. See Makin's translation at <http://www.17.ocabookforum.com/michael-makin/>, where there is also a link to the Russian original.



Westwalewicz TEDxUofM Speaker

• • • • •

“ **PROTEST**
was the
PERFECT EXCUSE
for **FUN** ”

• • • • •

Piotr Westwalewicz, Polish lecturer and undergraduate advisor, was a speaker at the TEDx 2018 event on Friday, February 9, 2018. TEDxUofM borrows the template from the world-renowned TED conference, to bring a TED-like experience to the University of Michigan. Their vision is to showcase the most fascinating thinkers and doers—the “leaders and best” in Michigan terms—for a stimulating day of presentations, discussions, entertainment, and art that will spark new ideas and opportunities across all disciplines.

For his TEDx presentation, Westwalewicz discussed the environment he encountered as a teenager in Soviet Poland, which had extreme censorship rules and regular curfews. Westwalewicz shared that he became attracted to how music allowed him to express himself and rebel against the societal rules of Soviet Poland. “Protest was the perfect excuse for fun,” as he described.

Watch his talk here:
myumi.ch/JmrBg

Elitism, Populism, and Intellectualism

“Isn’t this a selective institution where one advances through classes to attain degrees, where even the faculty have ranks reflecting experience and expertise? Aren’t you part of an elite simply by being here, and aren’t you here in order to join an even more exclusive elite?” Benjamin Paloff asks students in his article in *The Chronicle Review*.

Paloff, an associate professor of comparative literature and Slavic languages and literatures, discusses elitism, populism, and intellectualism in “*Populists and the Perversion of Academic Expertise*.” Read the article here: www.chronicle.com/article/populists-the-perversion/242775.



Check-out Mikhail Krutikov’s Russian lecture at the Jewish Museum in Moscow!

Yiddish: Where Came From, How It Was Preserved, And Where It Goes.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=LkPDLeplnYY

undergraduate focus



Russian Majors

Beatrice Fingerhut
Mark Kennedy
Haley Larson
Jason Rumsey
Yimeng Zhao

Russian Language, Literature and Culture Minors:

Daniel Borsuk
David Burke IV
Josephine Dykstra
Isabel Englehart
Noah Greco
Mariam Haidar
Michael Kinoyan
Connor McLean
Dmitri Mihaliov
Ellito Miller
Olivia Wiese



Top Image

Russian Majors: Beatrice Fingerhut, Mark Kennedy, Jason Rumsey, and Yimeng Zhao with Professor Michael Makin.

Left Image

Russian Minors: Daniel Borsuk, Josephine Dykstra, Noah Greco, Michael Kinoyan, Mariam Haidar, Elliot Miller, Dmitri Mihaliov, and Olivia Wiese with Professor Michael Makin.

CONGRATS

GRADS!

Top Image
BCS Minor Katarina Vickovic
with Instructor Marija Rosic.

Middle Image
Ukrainian Minor Nicholas Tolksdorf
with Instructor Svitlana Rogovyk.

Bottom Image
Polish Majors David Cichocki and
Adrianna Ryba with Instructors Piotr
Westwalewicz and Ewa Pasek.



*Bosnian/Croatian/
Serbian Language,
Literature and
Culture Minors:*

Katarina Vickovic
Katarina Subotic



*Ukrainian
Language,
Literature and
Culture Minor:*

Nicholas Tolksdorf



Polish Majors:

David Cichocki
Adrianna Ryba



graduate focus

McCauley Wins Rackham Outstanding GSI Award

By Annie Varner

Slavic PhD candidate Natalie McCauley was selected by Rackham Graduate School to receive an Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award for 2018. She was chosen from an impressive group of nominees representing schools and colleges across U-M. McCauley received praise from students for her teaching of Russian classes and discussion sections of lecture courses:

"I was amazed by our instructors' great ability to present, explain, and make comprehensible

such foreign ideas and concepts to our class."

"Natalie is absolutely fantastic. She is an organized, engaging, and knowledgeable teacher. She was sometimes really funny in class, understood what students were struggling with and needed to know, and her teaching style was clear and succinct. I learned so much in discussions because of her!"

Apart from McCauley's teaching in the classroom, the Slavic department appreciates her willingness to share her experience with

other GSIs in the department by recently serving as the Graduate Student Mentor.

Language Program Coordinator Svitlana Rogovyk calls McCauley "a skillful pedagogue" who "presents new concepts in an organized, logical manner that allows students to easily understand the lesson." Rogovyk praises her for her "amazing ability to infuse culture, current affairs, and games" into her Russian instruction. Rogovyk says, "McCauley possesses all three core qualities of a great teacher: knowledge of the subject, the ability

to convey to students an understanding of that knowledge, and the ability to make the material interesting and relevant to students."

McCauley accepted a Visiting Assistant Professor position at the University of Richmond Virginia. The position, which begins August 1, 2018, entails teaching six courses per year. She plans to defend her dissertation in the Spring/Summer 2018 term.

Congratulations Natalie!

Sneak Peek event: What Is It Like Being a Ph. D. Student?

By Mikhail Krutikov

Last November we invited thirteen college students from across the country to spend a weekend in our Department to learn about the Ph.D. Program in Slavic Languages and Literatures. Our faculty and graduate students presented their current research projects, discussed their work as translators, and shared their experience as language instructors. The cultural highlight of the event was the public screening of the video recording of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* performed by the famous Moscow Vakhtangov Theater.



Our visitors came from diverse backgrounds and had a wide range of interests. We were very much impressed with their knowledge, dedication to study, and social engagement. And while they learned from us about our work, we learned

from them about the future of our field. Over the past ten years, our Department has been consistently moving toward interdisciplinary and cross-cultural approaches to research and teaching, and our conversations with these remarkable young men and

Left Image
Students from the Sneak Peek event.

women reassured us that this is the future of our field. A focus on Slavic languages and literatures serves as a point of departure for the investigation of a whole range of issues related to the major concerns of today's world: security, environment, social justice, diversity. Our research and teaching cover a wide range of countries and cultures, which offer incredibly rich and diverse materials for education and research for the future generation of scholars.

staying connected

Looking Back in Verse

By Benjamin Rifkin (Ph.D., Slavic Languages & Literatures, University of Michigan, 1990), Professor of Russian, Dean of Hofstra College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, Hofstra University



Left Image
Dean Benjamin Rifkin

As a liberal arts dean looking back on my career, I am profoundly grateful to my faculty at the University of Michigan's Slavic Department.

While studying at Michigan, I had the opportunity to work with terrific faculty who shared with me their love for Russian poetry, especially Drs. Asya Humesky, Michael Makin, and Omry Ronen. They inspired me, as did faculty who introduced me to semiotic models of analysis of Russian poetry, especially

Dr. Herb Eagle (who became my dissertation advisor). It was also in Ann Arbor that I studied Polish and fell in love with Polish poetry, thanks to Dr. Bogdana Carpenter.

Over the course of the nearly 30 years since I defended my dissertation, I have had the honor of teaching at the University of Wisconsin (where I first climbed the tenure ladder) and then Temple University, the College of New Jersey, Ithaca College, and Hofstra University

(where I have held leadership positions). At each of these institutions, I have shared my love for Russian poetry with students, faculty and staff. At Temple University I helped to organize a multilingual poetry festival, with students in each of the language programs reciting a poem in the language they study while the English translation was projected in the background. I have given periodic poetry readings of Russian poetry at The College of New Jersey and Ithaca College and am planning to do the same at Hofstra next semester. I have included Russian poems in the textbooks I've written or co-authored, especially *Grammatika v kontekste* (1998, now out of print) and *Panorama* (2017), because I am certain that our students will find these poems moving and motivating.

When I ask Americans about poetry, I typically find that they are uninterested in it and they cannot name many

poets. When I ask Russians about poetry, I often find that they have favorite poets and that they often can recite favorite poems from memory. When I ask Americans about Russian literature, they typically can name (even if they haven't read) great 19th century prose writers such as Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, but rarely do they name poets. I have taken up the challenge to help Americans discover Russian poetry and in doing so, I remember with profound gratitude the Ann Arbor Slavic faculty who helped me discover not only Pushkin and Akhmatova, but also Bal'mont, Gippius, Tsvetaeva, and Sedakova among my favorites from the Russian tradition, and Herbert, Rozewicz, and Tuwim among my favorites from the Polish tradition. My life has so much more beauty in it because of Russian and Polish poetry, and for that I will always be grateful to the University of Michigan Slavic Department.

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