



the
slavic scene

volume 25, fall 2016

Photo by Ashley Bigham

lsa.umich.edu/slavic

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letter from the chair



Mikhail Krutikov

Dear friends,

It was a busy summer for us at the Department, with many of our faculty and students traveling, doing research, and presenting their work in Poland, Russia, Ukraine, Czech Republic, Croatia, and Serbia. Three faculty members presented papers in June at the ASEES-MAG Convention in Lviv, Ukraine. Back in Ann Arbor, we had a record number of four dissertation defenses between May and August, and one more defense scheduled for the winter. Two of our summer graduates already have jobs: Meghan Forbes accepted a lecturer position in Czech at the University of Texas at Austin, and Jodi Greig teaches in our Department at U-M, offering an advanced-level undergraduate course on gender, feminism, and women writers in Eastern Europe.

The Fall semester brought impressive student enrollments in our classes, defying the general downward trend in the Humanities across the country. As usual, we offered a broad range of classes at all levels, from first-year seminars to advanced graduate courses, covering our five linguistic areas. Professor Olga Maiorova is teaching a newly revised introductory survey of Russian culture

and we are refocusing our traditional monograph courses to make them more attractive for diverse student constituencies.

We are fortunate to have two visitors this fall: Dr. Mariana Burak, a Fulbright Fellow from Lviv and Professor Tatjana Rosić Ilić, a Weiser Center Fellow from Belgrade, who graciously offered to work with our graduate and undergraduate students in Ukrainian and BCS. In September, Professor Rosić Ilić shared her current research at our graduate colloquium, presenting a paper titled, "Revolutionary Melancholy, Narratives of Paternity and the Project of a 'Perfect Biography' in the Work of Danilo Kiš," and discussed various theater interpretations of Kiš's famous novel *A Tomb for Boris Davidovich*.

The beginning of the school year was marked by the exhibition *Invisible Women: Portrait of Aging in Ukraine* (see pages 4-5). The heartfelt talks by the artists about their work and experience in Ukraine attracted a significant audience and generated a lively discussion.

In October, we had two distinguished visitors. In her talk, "Visionary Poetry

after the Fall: Khersonsky, Kruglov, Sedakova, and Shvarts," Professor Stephanie Sandler, Chair of the Slavic Department at Harvard University, spoke about her forthcoming book on contemporary Russian poetry. Professor Karen Evans-Romaine, from the University of Wisconsin – Madison, conducted a language pedagogy workshop on the highly important topic of attracting students to Slavic languages and enabling them to succeed. This will be one in a series of events on teaching languages organized by Svitlana Rogovyk, our Director of Language Studies.

In March, we will be hosting Sarah Lewis, Assistant Professor of History of Art and Architecture and African American Studies at Harvard University and acclaimed author and exhibition curator. In her talk, "From Frederick Douglass to Leo Tolstoy: Race and the Thought Pictures of the Caucasus," she will discuss how the emerging technology of photography was used to develop myths of Caucasian racial identity (and by extension racial purity) in the nineteenth century.

Best Wishes and Happy Holidays,

feature





Above image
Watercolor by Grace Mahoney

Invisible Women: Portraits of Aging in Ukraine

By Annie Varner, Grace Mahoney, and Ashley Bigham

“It was a wonderful experience to have our exhibit at the International Institute at U-M. This topic resonates in different ways with many people, and I enjoyed sharing stories with many of our visitors.”

*~Grace Mahoney,
SLL PhD student*

From August 22 through September 30, Grace Mahoney, a PhD student in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, and Ashley Bigham, a lecturer and the 2015-2016 Walter B. Sanders Fellow at the University of Michigan Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning, displayed watercolors and photographs in an exhibition titled, *Invisible Women: Portraits of Aging in Ukraine*. U-M's International Institute hosted the exhibit, which was sponsored by the Slavic department, the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies, the A. Alfred Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning, and the Department of Women's Studies.

In this exhibition, artists Bigham and Mahoney investigated the visibility and social role of Ukraine's older generation of women—

embodied in a figure both iconic and ubiquitous, the babusya. Seen in public transport, in the market, and on the street, each babusya has a story to tell. Each has something to say, something to gossip about, and something to complain about. The current generation of Ukrainian grandmothers survived World War II, the Holodomor, and multiple repressions. They are also active in the present—although civic activism is often thought to be the province of the young, many babusya joined in the actions of Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity in Kyiv and throughout the country. Now they witness the war in Eastern Ukraine. Many of them have lost their homes and some of them have lost their children or grandchildren. The generation called, “The Children of War” are now seniors of war.

In addition to their historic significance as a generation, these women are present in the spheres of daily life throughout the country. Possibly overlooked in society, these women are vibrant and active in the public spaces of contemporary Ukraine. Working in the open-air bazaars, resting on public park benches, or strolling through cemeteries, these women stake their claim on the urban space—blending, coalescing, disappearing. This exhibit endeavored to tell the stories of these grannies. It was an invitation to look closer, to see the stories which are written on their faces – they are old and tired, but not invisible.

Left image
Photo by Ashley Bigham

in the classroom

Slavic 290 - Eastern European Animation: From Propaganda to Revolution

By Svitlana Rogovyk, Language Director



This winter, Piotr Westwalewicz, Herb Eagle, Misha Krutikov, Jindra Toman, and I will co-teach a new mini-course on Slavic animation. Animation is one of the best examples of what the magic of cinema can accomplish and it is an excellent communicator of different concepts to a broad audience. While watching animated film, we tend to focus less on the look, attire, and race of its characters and more on the message delivered. This course will introduce students to Serbian, Czech, Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian animated films of different genres and periods. We look forward to teaching this new course and introducing U-M students to the world of Slavic animation.

Left Photo
Illustration of Dostoyevsky's
"The Dream of a Ridiculous Man"

Russian 333: Sport in Russia

By Professor Michael Makin



Above Photo
Maria Sharapova, Winner of the
2006 Acura Classic

In the last fifty years Russian sport has risen to world domination, especially in the Olympic Games, where Soviet athletes were preeminent in so many areas (and where the Cold-War rivalry of the USSR and the USA effectively made the Olympic Games the global spectacle they are today), then fallen into apparently terminal decline, and, after that, risen again. Thus, following a decade of decline and failure, Russian professional sports and Russian athletes are again prominent and successful (Russia hosted the Olympic Games two years ago and will host the World Cup in 2018). Yet Russia continues to play by its own rules, as this year's massive scandal over what appears to be government-supported doping in Olympic sports reveals. So what is the story of sport in Russia; what was there before the word спорт entered the Russian vocabulary; what was the role of foreign influence (as indicated by the introduction of that word); what was the relationship between the Soviet state and sport; what is the role of spectator sport and what of participant sports today; do sports in Russia simply reflect social processes

or do they contribute to determining them; indeed, what can sport tell us about Russia today? These and many other questions will be addressed by a new course, Russian 333—Sport in Russia—to be taught in the Winter Term.

It emerges from a one-credit mini-course I have taught several times to large enrollments. That mini-course seemed generally popular with students and produced some excellent written work, but I was often struck by responses such as “I’d never thought about looking at sport and society before” or “I never thought you could learn so much about a country from sport”. Personally, as a life-long sports fan (and wretchedly poor athlete...), I’ve always been intrigued by how much sport tells us about nations and cultures – American sports culture, so different from everywhere else, is an excellent example, and one I will use repeatedly in this new course. No wonder it is said that to understand a people you should look at the games they play. And that is exactly what we will be doing in Russian 333 next term.

graduate focus



Congratulations Graduate!

Sarah Moncada successfully defended her dissertation, "Kuban Cossack Performance and Identity Negotiation in the Russian-Ukrainian Borderlands," August 8, 2016.

Degree conferral date:
December 18, 2016



Mahoney Awarded Senkowsky Prize

Slavic doctoral student **Grace Mahoney** attended this summer's Harvard Ukrainian Summer Institute (HUSI) where she won the Theodosius and Irene Senkowsky Prize for Achievement in Ukrainian Studies. Mahoney was awarded this prize for outstanding progress and academic excellence in the summer program during HUSI's farewell reception.

More information about the Senkowsky Prize:
www.huri.harvard.edu/husi/senkowsky-prize.html

Welcome New Students!



McKenna Marko holds a B.A. in Germanic and Slavic Languages & Literatures from the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill with a focus on comparative Hungarian and Russian studies. She comes to the department after a year in Michigan's CREES program. Her current research interests include 20th-century Russian, Hungarian and Balkan literatures, narratives of witness, and translation theory. In her spare time she enjoys making variants of shakshouka and ice cream.



Clay Dibble comes to the department with a B.A. in Slavic Studies from Boston College. Upon graduation, he spent a year in Prague teaching English and three semesters studying Yugoslav film and Linguistics in the Graduate Foundations Program at Columbia University. His research is focused primarily on the cultural production of Yugoslav cinema during the 60s and early 70s. He is especially interested in a comparative study between Yugoslav New Film and Czech New Wave.

Fulbright in Uzbekistan

By Christopher Fort, SLL PhD student



Top Photo
Chris Fort, left, with his sister, Sara Fort (AB '12), and friend Shohruh Matjon in Samarqand-Registan

I spent the 2015-16 academic year in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on a Fulbright Study/Research Grant. I was the first to win this grant in ten years because of the difficulty of receiving approval from an Uzbek delegation increasingly suspicious of American intentions. Over the course of ten months, I conducted research for my dissertation in the central state archive and various libraries, while also consulting with local professors. My PhD thesis focuses on Russian and Uzbek literature of the twentieth

centuries with the goal of demonstrating the existence of a supranational canon of Soviet literature within which authors, in various languages, wrote on similar themes and conducted literary debates with one another.

While in Uzbekistan, I had the opportunity to participate in multiple conferences around Europe and Asia, publish in the local Uzbek press, and speak on national television. I also met with renowned writers and travelled the country to see Uzbekistan's

historic cities, Samarqand and Bukhara. In between research projects, I taught English at the Academy of Sciences for three months and gave presentations on graduate study in the United States.

undergraduate student focus

Ukraine: Where Everyday is a Good Day

By Tara Bayer, Russian & International Studies Major, Ukrainian Minor ('17)



Above Photo
Tara Bayer (2nd from the left)
with roommates

Lviv has often been said to be a “miniature Paris,” a replica of what could arguably be the world’s cultural hub. While Lviv may not be the cultural center of Europe, the culture that thrives there speaks to the rich traditions of Eastern Europe and a unique blend of Western and Eastern society.

Staying at the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv and attending their summer school for Ukrainian language was enlightening in many ways. The people, food, classes, and excursions into the city and surrounding areas provided a way to experience Ukraine as a

Ukrainian would want me to see it. The after-hours activities really shaped my experience in Ukraine, however. Spending time with other students from all different parts of the world—Australia, Ukraine, America, France and various other countries—and watching the Eurocup, climbing mountains, and drinking tea in the city center everyday were the experiences that showed me the kindest people, the thriving familial bonds stretching generations and continents, and, of course, let me experience the best food.

I am grateful for the Slavic department’s financial support, which helped make my summer experience possible. I went to Ukraine expecting to learn the language and perhaps get a glimpse into Ukrainian lifestyle, but instead I learned that language is so much more than simple words: it is a gateway into a culture, a family, and a friendship that will last decades and give experiences that last a lifetime.

Scholarship Enables Summer Polish Study

By Gabrielle Wasilewski, Women's Studies Major, Medical Anthropology Minor ('17)



Above Photo
Gabrielle Wasilewski (on the left)
with a friend from Turkey at an
entrance to the Stary Rynek of
Poznań (Ratusz building
in background)

College is said to be a time of many new experiences. I always hoped that one of my new experiences would include my first time travelling abroad. Last winter as a transfer student finishing up my junior year, I had nearly given up hope, until my Polish teacher encouraged me to apply to the Copernicus Program's Summer Scholarship. In what felt like a second later, I was on a plane landing in Warsaw in a state of disbelief.

After spending two weeks with my family in Warsaw and Gdańsk, I travelled to Poznań where I began my Polish language program at Adam Mickiewicz University. I was riddled with anxiety wondering how I would navigate through my time in Poznań with only a beginner's knowledge of Polish. However, I soon realized I was going to learn the most on my trip from being out of my comfort zone, so I began to embrace it. After being nervous upon learning my course would be conducted exclusively in Polish, I quickly found the course to be a great learning environment that ended up preparing me well for my current third-year Polish course.

As one of the few native English speakers in the program, I also found myself out of my comfort zone when trying to communicate with other students in the program. However, this too became a great learning opportunity as we had to use our common language, Polish. Additionally, I returned home having made many new friends who expressed that if I visited their home cities of Berlin, Istanbul, etc., that I would have someone waiting there to welcome me.

Angel of Music

For him we saved the roaring armors
And there with sword he stood above the crowd.
The horns in horror heaped the road markers,
So without sign or road a hall would fall behind them.

We all believe in the same thing; We don't need
Midnight oaths on the hilt of our swords,
But under the executioner's iron gaze,
The gaze we'll not avoid before Music's face.

Ангел Музыки

Мы сберегли ему гремящие доспехи,
И вот с мечом он над толпой восстал.
И трубы в ужасе уж громоздили вежи,
чтоб без дорог и вех за ними рвался зал.

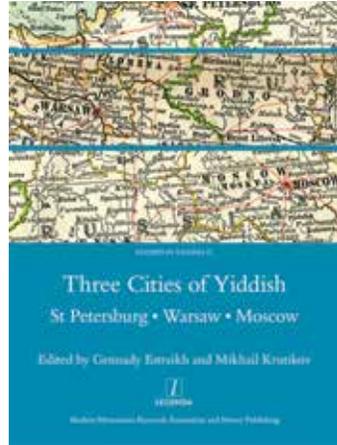
Мы здесь единовѣрцы,-- нам не надо
Полночных клятв на рукоять меча,
но под железным взглядом палача
перед ликом Музыки мы не опустим взгляда.

Left image and poem: Poetry translations by Slavic PhD student Jason Wagner were included in *Written in the Dark: Five Poets in the Siege of Leningrad*, an anthology of poems by Gennady Gor, Dmitry Maksimov, Sergey Rudakov, Vladimir Sterligov, and Pavel Zaltsman (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2016, edited by Polina Barskova). Here is a poem by Maksimov, “Angel of Music,” Wagner translated which was not included in the book.

Photo by Rudolf Gilbert, from Michigan Slavic Publications book *Photography Sees the Surface*.

Three Cities of Yiddish *St. Petersburg, Warsaw and Moscow*

By Professor Mikhail Krutikov

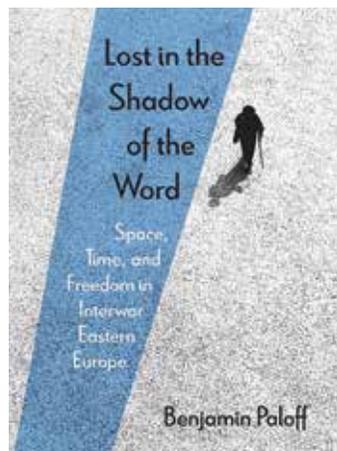


The idea of the collection of articles, *Three Cities of Yiddish: St. Petersburg, Warsaw and Moscow* (Oxford: Legenda, 2016), co-edited by Gennady Estraikh and Mikhail Krutikov, was inspired by Sholem Asch’s epic novel trilogy, *Farn mabl* (Before the Deluge, entitled in English *Three Cities*, 1927–32), which presented a panorama of Jewish life in the Russian Empire during the tumultuous period of the First World War and the Revolution. The eleven contributors explore different aspects of Yiddish-related activities in the three cities at different moments

of the turbulent twentieth century. But unlike Asch’s novel, most of the chapters in this volume do not focus on one particular city but rather examine various forms of cultural contacts and interactions between spaces, genres, identities, cultures, and languages across geographical borders and political boundaries. They interpret Yiddish in a broad sense, reaching beyond the spheres of language and literature into the areas of theatre, music, and visual arts.

Lost in the Shadow of the World

By Professor Benjamin Paloff



Scholars of modernism have long addressed how literature, painting, and music reflected the radical reconceptualization of space and time in the early twentieth century—a veritable revolution in both physics and philosophy that has been characterized as precipitating an “epistemic trauma” around the world. In this wide-ranging study, Benjamin Paloff contends that writers in Central and Eastern Europe felt this impact quite distinctly from their counterparts in Western Europe. For the latter, the destabilization of traditional notions of space and time

inspired works that saw in it a new kind of freedom. However, for many Central and Eastern European authors, who were writing from within public discourses about how to construct new social realities, the need for escape met the realization that there was both nowhere to escape to and no stable delineation of what to escape from. In reading the prose and poetry of Czech, Polish, and Russian writers, Paloff imbues the term “Kafkaesque” with a complexity so far missing from our understanding of this moment in literary history.

faculty focus

Herscher Named Stanford Arts Initiative Fellow

Herscher will study the role the arts play in major urban areas through Stanford's Creative Cities Fellowship



Associate Professor Andrew Herscher is away from U-M this academic year to serve as a Stanford Arts Initiative fellow. Herscher will work with the Stanford Program on Urban Studies and teach one undergraduate course, "How to be Governed Otherwise: Art, Activism, and the City." Herscher will bring a group of Stanford students to Detroit on a spring break trip for

an immersive experience in Detroit's contemporary art, focusing on the intersections between art, activism, race, and austerity politics. While at Stanford, Herscher will work on his book, *Creative Class Conflict*, which explores the role of art in both the neoliberal restructuring of post-bankruptcy Detroit and activist resistance to that so-called renewal.

Toman Receives LSA Michigan Humanities Award

Toman will spend the 2016-17 academic year working on "Happiness in Zlín" project



Professor Jindrich Toman is a 2016-17 LSA Michigan Humanities Award winner. These awards provide a term off with salary for those working on projects in the humanities and qualitative social sciences. Professor Toman will use his award to work on his project, *Happiness in Zlín*. He provides the following description of his project: "During the 1910s-1930s the East Moravian city of Zlín changed dramatically from a small provincial town to a major factory town that

housed one of the largest industrial complexes of interwar Czechoslovakia, the Tomáš Bat'a shoe factory. By the end of the 1930s visitors felt that they were entering an enclave of America in Czechoslovakia rather than a Moravian town. The project focuses on Zlín highlighting this factory town as a cultural project that was distinguished by a distinct visual space, developed a print culture of its own and used modern media, such as film, to promote its corporate identity."

staying connected

Working with Russian Literature in Publishing

By Paige Rasmussen, Comparative Literature and Russian Major ('08)



When I started at U-M, I hesitated over whether to sign up for Ancient Greek or Russian. I choose Russian because I figured that in addition to the prospect of reading Dostoevsky in the original someday, it would also help me find work after college. Russian has been important to my professional life, but the language, literature, culture, and the political reality of Russia has colored many other parts of my life in the decade plus since I took Russian 101 at U-M.

I graduated with concentrations in both Russian and Comparative Literature in 2008, spending my last semester of college studying abroad at the Russian State University for the Humanities in Moscow. After my time in Moscow, I longed to return to Eastern Europe, but I moved to Chicago to teach English as a Second Language to immigrants and refugees first.

Then I found a job teaching English in Kyiv, Ukraine, a city I loved. I picked up a little bit of Ukrainian, but I found it all too easy to get along in Kyiv with Russian. Not satisfied with teaching ESL in the long term, I began working as a freelance editor and translator and found a job working remotely as an editor of Russian-to-English translations for the now-defunct Russian news agency RIA Novosti.

After a few years of working as an editor and writer, I decided it was time to apply to graduate school and consider seriously the possibility of becoming a professor. Ultimately I decided not to pursue a PhD and an academic career, but I earned an M.A. in the Department of Comparative Literature at Indiana University and my time there was rewarding. I continued to be engaged in the world of Russian and Eastern European Studies, especially in Russian literature and Soviet cinema.

I was awarded a Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship so I could continue studying Russian. My graduate work in Comparative Literature was varied, but included more than one paper about the films of Andrei Tarkovsky, as well as translations of short stories by Andrei Platonov.

After finishing my M.A., I found a position as an assistant editor in acquisitions at the Indiana University Press. One attraction of IU Press was its history with Russian and Eastern European Studies, and I realized, only after working at the press for a while, that Indiana had published a collection of Russian short stories that was part of my initial exposure to the world of Russian literature. I'm hopeful that I'll continue translating from Russian, and that my career in publishing may afford me more opportunities to work with Russian literature and literature in translation more generally.

We'd love to hear from you!

If you're an alumnus or friend of the department, email slavic@umich.edu or complete our online form: <https://lsa.umich.edu/slavic/alumni-and-friends.html>

And also,



us on Facebook!

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M
VICTORS FOR
MICHIGAN

On November 29, go to
<http://myumi.ch/givetosll> and
give on-line to help transform
the future of our world!

Your day to
be a victor.

Mark your calendars. Giving Blueday is
Tuesday, November 29, 2016. No matter
where you are, or the time of day, you can
support what you love about Michigan.

What will you be a victor for?

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