

The image shows a highly decorative building facade in a style reminiscent of Art Nouveau or Jugendstil. The facade is primarily white with intricate blue and gold-colored architectural details. There are large, arched windows and doorways, some with ornate ironwork. The roof is blue with gold accents. A prominent feature is a large, arched entranceway with a balcony above it. The overall aesthetic is highly detailed and colorful.

the
slavic scene

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Serbia, by Tatjana Aleksić

letter from the chair



Dear friends,

It is a distinct honor to greet readers of *Slavic Scene* for the first time as department chair, having assumed this role from Professor Mikhail Krutikov over the summer. Professor Krutikov shepherded our programs through six years that were—avoiding many of the descriptors that leap to the tongue—quite eventful. We are enormously grateful to him for his level-headed leadership in turbulent times.

Perhaps the greatest testament to that stewardship is how readily our faculty and students have thrown themselves into research and teaching in the last six months. This past summer saw most of us scattered around the world, from Czechia to Turkey, from Poland to Kazakhstan, volunteering, interning, digging through archives, conducting interviews, writing, advancing our language skills—and often doing a combination of these. At several Friday afternoon colloquia for faculty and graduate students this fall, we learned about and took inspiration

from each other's recent work. When global challenges show no sign of abating, it is heartening to see that this community's commitment to producing new insights and training future generations of regional specialists remains just as steady. A small sampling of that activity—including Professor Krutikov's new edited volume on the Belarusian shtetl; our ongoing efforts to evolve our approaches to graduate education; and Samantha Farmer's accomplishments in literary translation, which were recently honored with a Momentum Grant from *Words Without Borders* magazine—is profiled in the following pages.

Once the new semester got underway, and in partnership with research centers and programs across campus, we enjoyed the opportunity to meet and share ideas with a wide range of visitors, including alumni Ewa Wampuszyc (Ph.D., 2004), content review manager at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and Paulina Duda (Ph.D., 2017), visiting assistant professor at Brown University. Reflecting our long-term commitment to both Ukrainian Studies and to understanding the multiculturalism of the entire region, we were delighted to welcome back DakhaBrakha, purveyors of self-described “ethno-chaos,” for a rousing concert in Hill Auditorium; to hear scholar and translator Alex Averbuch discuss contemporary poetry in Ukrainian and Hebrew; and to offer several popular mini-courses on topics of current interest and taught by colleagues who have been displaced from their home institutions in Ukraine.

In short, we have been keeping very busy, and this issue of *Slavic Scene* provides only a small taste of everything that we have been up to. It is our earnest hope that you will want to learn more by becoming involved. Write to us to let us know how you are taking what you learned at Michigan out into the world (and tell us if you might be interested in sharing your perspective with our current students). Attend our sponsored events, many of which are now streamed live online. And consider making a donation. We are a small program, but we are doing vital work. Please join us.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Paloff

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Paloff'.

Professor and Chair, Department of
Slavic Languages & Literatures

highlights

Poetry, Translation, and Solidarity during War(s): Alex Averbuch on Relations between Ukrainians and Jews

Mikhail Krutikov, Professor of Slavic Languages & Literatures



Dr. Alex Averbuch

On Wednesday, November 8, poet, translator, and scholar Alex Averbuch discussed his work at the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies. He holds a Ph.D. in Slavic Languages and Literatures and Jewish Studies from the University of Toronto and is presently serving as a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University's Davis Center.

An active promoter of Ukrainian-Jewish relations, Averbuch discussed the centuries-long complexity of Jewish-Ukrainian relationships as it is reflected in his current translation project, an anthology of contemporary Ukrainian poetry in Hebrew, featuring works of over thirty contemporary Ukrainian poets. His Hebrew translations have appeared in top-tier Israeli literary and political periodicals.

The conversation also touched on contemporary issues like cultural collaboration and solidarity, and the potential of literature to address shame, guilt, and reconciliation during wartime. Averbuch

read his poetry in Ukrainian and Hebrew and elaborated on his approach to the issues of translation, representation, and canon formation. He noted that some Ukrainian poems, originally written as a response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, have found renewed relevance in Israel, where they are sometimes read as a response to the recent brutal attack by Hamas on Israeli citizens.



The Averbuchs' hometown of Dashiv, in Podillia, courtesy of the Jewish Religious Community of Zhmerinka website

Averbuch is the author of three books of poetry and a broad array of literary translations spanning Hebrew, Ukrainian, English, and Russian. English translations of his poems have appeared in numerous prestigious publications, while his latest collection of Ukrainian poems, *Zhydivs'kyi korol'* (The Jewish King), was a finalist for the Shevchenko National Prize, Ukraine's highest award for culture and literature.

An excerpt from one of the author's poems:

*I forgave myself for my Ukrainian great-grandfather who went on a pogrom against my Jewish great-grandfather
I forgave my Polish great-grandmother who tore off my Jewish great-grandmother's braids
I forgave myself for my Muscovite great-grandfather who took the last scrap from my Ukrainian great-grandmother
I forgave my Jewish great-grandmother who wrote a denunciation against my Ukrainian great-grandfather*

faculty focus

The Belarusian Shtetl: History and Memory

Mikhail Krutikov, Professor of Slavic Languages & Literatures



Mikhail Krutikov

Presented in English for the first time, this collected volume provides an in-depth exploration of the vibrant histories, impactful lives, and poignant tales of community losses of the Jewish shtetls. Over six centuries, these small urban communities held significant roles in Belarusian economy, culture, and society, until they were wiped out in the Holocaust.

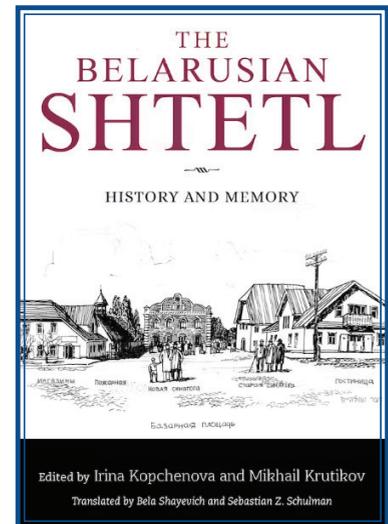
Since 2012, under the stewardship of the Moscow Sefer Center for University Teaching of Jewish Civilization, multidisciplinary teams of academics and students have embarked on a journey back in time to the sites where Jewish life once flourished in Belarus. Through engaging dialogues with Jewish and non-Jewish residents, recording fragments of local history, exploring community memories, and seeking out surviving symbols of identity and cultural affinities, researchers have gathered a rich archive of ethnographic, historical, and folklore materials. In the process, they have also unearthed evidence from old cemeteries and prewar houses and the stories behind memorials erected for Holocaust victims.

Drawing on the information gathered during the expeditions, *The Belarusian Shtetl* offers a compilation of these discoveries, recreating intimate portrayals of the shtetls' past and their impact on everyday lives. These narratives aim to return Jewish shtetls to their deserving spotlight within Belarusian history and legacy, for both academic interest and public awareness.

The four chapters in the first section provide a broader overview of the history of Belarusian shtetls under the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Russian Empire, and the Soviet Union, and include two case studies of the afterlife of the Jewish past in today's local folklore and customs. The second part centers on the Jewish experience in the town of Hlybokaye (Głębokie in Polish, Glubokoye in Russian, Glubok in Yiddish), today in the Vitebsk region. Three chapters in this section reconstruct and analyze the tragic history of the Hlybokaye ghetto during the Nazi occupation from 1941 to 1943, based on the testimonies of survivors who were

teenagers at that time.

Their story is illustrated by rare archival photographs of ghetto laborers that were taken by a Nazi officer. The concluding chapter in this section examines the formation of local memories surrounding Hlybokaye's Jewish community by considering an assortment of local and external influences, based on historical data and ethnographic research. As an appendix, the volume includes a lively and informative memoir about prewar Jewish life in the small town of Zhaludok by its former resident Miron Mordukhovich, illustrated by his personal drawings.



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in the classroom

Navigating Cultural Narratives: The Role of Slavic 290 Mini-courses in Shaping Perspectives on Ukraine

Svitlana Rogovyk, Slavic Languages & Literatures Teaching Professor



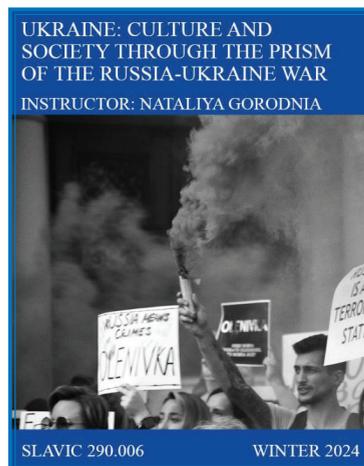
Natalia Gorodnia

Since 2010, Studies in Eastern European Culture mini-courses, Slavic 290, have played a pivotal role in shaping our students' learning experience. In 2014, I taught my first mini-course with a focus on Ukraine titled "Let My People Go: Taras Shevchenko, the Artist, Poet, and Prophet of Modern Ukraine." The content reflected

the 2013 Maidan Uprising in Kyiv, followed by the 2014 Revolution of Dignity, or Ukrainian Revolution.

Fourteen years later, the Slavic 290 mini-courses continue to be very popular among students. In the fall, 114 students were enrolled in three sections of Slavic 290 with content on Ukraine. Natalia Gorodnia, Professor of History from Taras Shevchenko National University, taught Slavic 290 "Ukraine: Culture and Society through the Prism of the 2014-2022 Russia-Ukraine War" directly from Kyiv, Ukraine. "I am an insider, and I know a lot about the issues being taught both from academic sources and my personal experience," Gorodnia says. "Students acquire

new knowledge or develop their previous knowledge on Ukraine, its people and culture, its history and, nowadays, on the reasons for Russia's aggression against Ukraine, Russia's domestic transformations and foreign policy, and implications of the Russia-Ukraine war not only for Ukraine but also for the United States and the international order."



widespread colonial narrative about Ukraine that Russia used to present to the world, to show the world that if Ukraine had been heard in 2014, the full-scale invasion could have been prevented."



Professor Mariana Burak

Ukrainian poet and translator Vasyl Lozynskyi taught a mini-course titled "The Unconquered Ukrainian Spirit: From the Avant-Garde to the Underground," explores Ukraine's writers, musicians, artists, and dissidents from the 20th century to the present, seeking to comprehend the roles of creativity, humor, and reinvented traditions in Ukrainians' resilience. In the course, students explore how diverse cultures

within this concept have navigated and created methods of thriving together amidst periods of communist repression and war. It also delves into the significance of Ukraine's independence on a global scale today, prompting students to reflect on the broader implications and importance of this independence in the contemporary world.



Vasyl Lozynskyi

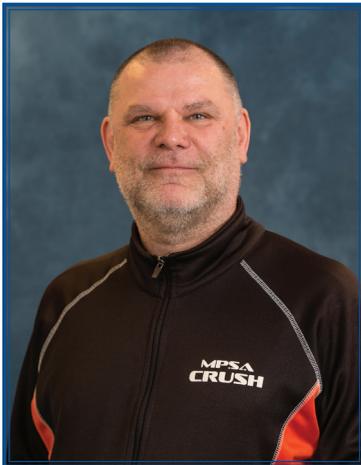
The popularity and impact of the Slavic 290 mini-courses underscore the importance of exploring and understanding diverse cultural narratives, especially in the context of global events. The Slavic 290 mini-courses serve as a vital platform for students to engage with the complexities of Eastern European culture and history. As we witness the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian War, these mini-courses continue to offer students unique perspectives and valuable insights. In Winter 2024, Slavic 290 will offer two new topical sections on Ukraine titled "Resistance and Seek for Freedom: Seven Topics on Ukrainian Contemporary Art" and "Women's Art and Feminism in 21st Century Ukraine."

University of Toronto Visiting Professor Mariana Burak taught another section of Slavic 290 titled "Let Ukraine Speak." As Professor Burak says: "Teaching the remote course at U-M was a chance to finally let Ukraine speak and be heard by the international public, to provide students with a story that was different from the

staying connected

Making a Positive Impact: Alumni Reflect on One of their Beloved Polish Lecturers

Patricia Kalosa, Executive Assistant to the Chair



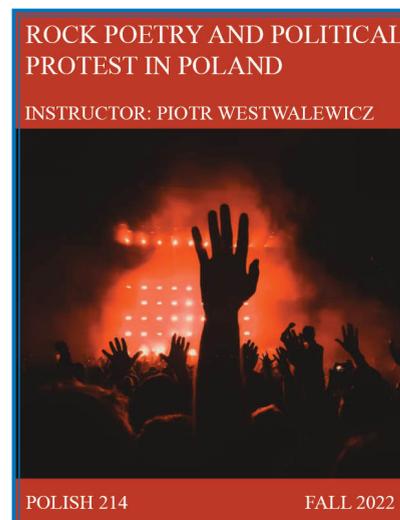
Piotr Westwalewicz

Teaching can be rich and rewarding and also challenging, especially during difficult and trying times. From time to time, it's important to reflect on the positive impact we can have on our students. We regularly receive messages from recent alumni sharing their job experiences as recent graduates, or sharing their most loved classes or professors at the

University. Recently, we received the following message from a U-M alum, Lydia Arnosky, about one of our beloved Polish lecturers, Piotr Westwalewicz: "The courses I took with Professor Westwalewicz were truly my favorite classes at the University of Michigan. An amazing instructor, with well-planned lessons and methods of teaching, he provided such a unique and enjoyable education on Polish language and culture. I was enrolled in First-Year Polish my freshman year, and Professor Westwalewicz, "Pan Piotr," as we called him, taught with certain elements that helped me so much over typical, larger courses. My courses had truly interesting and engaging lessons and assignments, help with the material was always available and accessible, and there was so much good humor!"



The student continued, "As my first year ended, I was excited to register for his Rock Poetry and Political Protest in Poland course. This was undoubtedly the most 'me' class I took during my time at U-M! It was such a valuable course; learning the culture and content of Polish history through the context of music and creative expression gave me a greater, and much more enjoyable, understanding than a textbook or large lecture ever could. I truly enjoyed the project where I wrote about the music I loved, following the themes of the class. Classes with Professor Westwalewicz were the perfect combination of great fun and deep understanding of the material; he was such a joy to have as an instructor!"



Another U-M alum reflected on Professor Westwalewicz's class, "I recently watched your Ted Talk from TEDxUofM in 2018, and it reminded me of the messages you'd send about what we had learned in class. Your talks and class lectures were unbelievably impactful and inspiring ... I really appreciated your ideas and the Polish ideals you taught us through art and humor, as well as your contagious joy! My goal is to get a Ph.D. and become a professor of psychology ... and professors like you really motivate me to move forward and work hard to inspire future generations of learners. Thank you for allowing us to learn from you!" Thank you for your excellence in teaching, Professor Westwalewicz!

graduate focus

Changes and the Reimagined Slavic Proseminar

Tatjana Aleksić, Associate Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures and Comparative Literature



Tatjana Aleksić

This fall, the department saw several changes; to begin with, we introduced a new administrative team: Professor Benjamin Paloff as the new Department Chair, while the Graduate Studies Director role is handled by Professor Tatjana Aleksić. In addition to changes in administration, we also revamped our approach to the Slavic Proseminar 549.

The Graduate Proseminar, whose content has steadily changed through the years and with variable degrees of success, was initially set up to provide more structure for the graduate program. We have been spending time focusing on rebuilding our sense of community, which has eroded over time, in part due to the effects of COVID-19 along with the war, and varying and unpredictable schedules. While we see each other almost daily, we rarely have time to talk in any depth about things unrelated to work so, at times, it can feel like we share a floor but are alone in our offices: a floor full of friendly strangers.

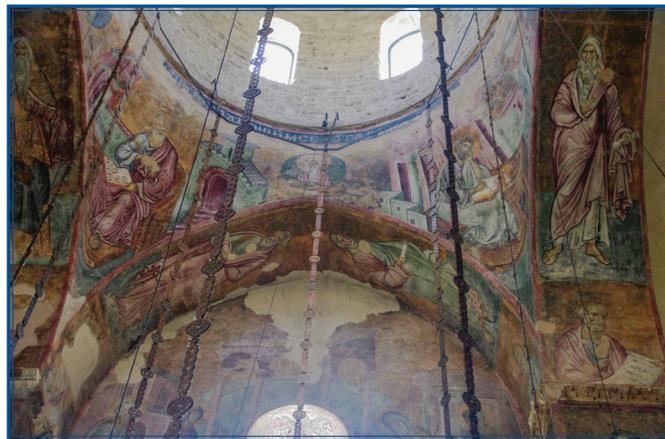
So, the revamped Proseminar 549 has taken a lot upon itself: it continues to be focused on providing support and guidance to graduate students, through discussing expectations, milestones, and opportunities, but with an idea of fostering a sense of community among all our Slavic people, while intentionally not adding more work to our overflowing schedules. Proseminar 549 meets Friday afternoons from 3-5 pm; each week is centered around a different graduate-focused activity and accompanied by good food. Sometimes we use the time for a departmental meeting when the need arises. During

the fall semester, we discussed balancing teaching and research, while trying to have a life, too; preparing for conferences; and dealing with curricular or other pressing issues. However, I think the most interesting and engaging sessions were those in which graduate students and faculty presented the latest developments in their professional and private lives. In those sessions, we had the opportunity to learn what everyone did over the past summer break: new research, and dissertation progress, but also what fun and unusual things people did, or what life-changing events happened to them. In some of the most memorable moments of the semester, we learned about summer language programs, dissertation writing woes, library discoveries, research twists, a publisher extravaganza, exciting new translations coming out, new articles, books in the making, a just-minted marriage, some budding book collecting passion; we shared jokes, food, enjoyed visual essays, and welcomed a wonderful new baby with the sweetest smile. Thinking ahead, this winter term's Proseminar continues with workshops on finding one's way in the job market, academic and non-academic alike, on language teaching; discovering

funding sources, understanding publication landscapes, as well as on preparing next summer's research. We took time to speak, in some depth, about things unrelated to work and are moving toward becoming a floor of friends and colleagues again.

While acknowledging that some of us are facing challenging life situations, our Friday meetings are focused on more positive

developments, our shared enthusiasm for our field, and our dedication to students. To overcome the multiple challenges we have been dealing with both as individuals and as a collective, it is important to cultivate relationships based on our shared goals as colleagues, educators, thinkers, and public intellectuals.



Medieval Monastery in Serbia, Photo by Tatjana Aleksić

graduate focus

Samantha Farmer Awarded Momentum Grant for Early-Career Translators

Patricia Kalosa, Executive Assistant to the Chair



Samantha Farmer

In September, Samantha Farmer was recognized for their translation of a subversive queer Croatian novel. Sam received the inaugural Momentum Grant for Early-Career Translators from *Words Without Borders* for their translation from Croatian of the novel *My Dear You* (Moja ti) by Jasna Jasna Žmak. The novel revolves around gender, language, and love, as the protagonist and

her girlfriend challenge and subvert binary categorizations and gendered language. Acclaimed translator and author Anton Hur judged the awards.

"Samantha Farmer, through their translation of *My Dear You* (Moja ti) by Jasna Jasna Žmak, delivered a sample that

is compulsively readable and aesthetically rich, but it is also clear they see the road ahead, both for themselves as a translator and for the traditions they work with," said Hur. "I hope the *Words Without Borders* Momentum Grant adds speed to their great journey."

Farmer added, "I am thankful for the material support the Momentum Grant will provide me in the process of finding a publisher for *My Dear You* that will appreciate its singular style, charm, and significance in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian-language literature. It is also gratifying to have my interpretation of *My Dear You* appreciated by Anton Hur, whose work as a translator of queer literature inspires mine. I look forward to being able to share Žmak's work with even more readers in the future."

An excerpt of Farmer's winning sample translation will be published in *Words Without Borders*, and they will receive a \$3,000 grant, funded by the Malecha Family Foundation.

New Graduate Student: Fall 2023

Welcome to Arthur Mengozzi



Arthur Mengozzi

Arthur Mengozzi is an Ann Arbor native who has received two degrees from the University of Michigan: a BA in International and Comparative Studies and in Russian Language and Literature (2020); and an MA in International and Regional Studies with a specialization in Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia (2022). He speaks Italian, Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, Mandarin Chinese, French, Spanish, Swedish, and German, with varying levels of fluency, and is currently working on adding several more languages to that list!

Arthur's academic interests center on diaspora and migration, particularly the role of religious institutions in influencing diasporic memory and émigré contributions to political and cultural programs in their native country. Outside studying and reading, Arthur enjoys foreign language study; translation; spending time outdoors; cooking; and choral singing, especially in the University of Michigan Men's Glee Club, of which he has been a proud member for eight years, and the UMS Choral Union.

We are extremely happy to welcome Arthur to the department and look forward to seeing his progress towards a Ph.D. in Russian and Slavic studies.

undergraduate focus

New Course — Ukrainian 316: Revolutions in Ukrainian Cinema

Herbert Eagle, Associate Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures



Herbert Eagle

In Winter 2024, Professor Herb Eagle is teaching a new course, Ukrainian 316: Revolutions in Ukrainian Cinema, designed to highlight the contributions to world cinema made by filmmakers from Ukraine, from the mid-1920s to the present.

The word “revolutions” in the course title is meant in two senses—important innovations in film style and structure, as well as the dramatic political circumstances that gave rise to these artistic developments. The first of these was the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the subsequent formation of the Soviet Union, which initially led to the further invigoration of Ukrainian language and culture, in line with Marxism’s vision of the liberation of colonized peoples as part of an international working class. The Soviet regime set up film production units in its constituent republics and the All-Ukrainian Photo-Cinema Administration (known by its acronym VUFKU) was the most important of these non-Russian production units.

By the late 1920s two of the major creators of what became known as Soviet “montage” cinema were at work there: Alexander Dovzhenko and Dziga Vertov. Vertov

became the celebrated champion of a new approach to documentary film: the idea that films should be composed out of footage of actual life “caught in its flow” rather than fictional recreations. His most radical films, in terms of the poetic organization of documentary material, including *Man with a Movie Camera*, were made at VUFKU. Dovzhenko, of peasant origin, was the originator of an imaginative approach to narration and a striking visual style that had its roots in Ukrainian folklore. His early films, *Zvenihora* and *Earth*, inspired what later became known as Ukrainian poetic cinema.

In the 1960s a “new wave” of filmmakers, including Serhii Parajanov, Yurii Illienko, and Leonid Osyka, gained international recognition during the period of post-Stalinist “Thaw,” with their respective experiments with “poetic cinema” that foregrounded Ukrainian cultural values and the historical struggles to maintain them and achieve independence.

The political revolution in Ukraine in 2014, spawned by massive demonstrations on the Maidan in Kyiv, the Russian invasion that followed and intensified in 2022, and the continuing fighting have inspired further innovations in documentary film and documentary-narrative hybrids, as filmmakers seek to preserve a record of the suffering and courage of the people of Ukraine despite the obvious difficulties of filming during a war. These are the “revolutions” which anchor the course.

The word “revolutions” in the course title is meant in two senses— important innovations in film style and structure, as well as the dramatic political circumstances that gave rise to these artistic developments.

undergraduate focus

Sharing Food from the Balkans

Marija Rosic, Lecturer of Slavic Languages and Literatures



BCS students enjoying a variety of foods from the Balkans

In order to create rich and varied educational experiences for undergraduates, our instructors often hold social and cultural events during each term. Like so many other languages, our Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian (BCS) language instruction goes well beyond teaching vocabulary and grammar. Comprehensive language instruction also involves teaching students about the many elements of a culture, and understanding culture can make communication easier and more engaging.

An area rich in all aspects of traditional culture, the Balkans has a mix of people and cultures that is exceptionally varied, which is evident in the variety of musical and culinary traditions throughout the region. Our instructors orchestrate a unique food-related fall BCS social event to foster enriching educational experiences that enable our students to dig in and enjoy the region's foods.

In the spirit of connecting students with the food, culture, and language of a region, our students enjoy a day focused on food from the Balkans.

As Jovana Marčeta at the University of Novi Sad so aptly stated, "Food culture does not only include the ways of preparing food and the eating habits of a nation, but also reflects the cultural values of man and shapes civilizational and historical trends. Since language and culture are in constant interaction, and that idioms are linguistic units that express different cultural contents and reconstruct the image of the spirit and culture of a people, it is expected that food, which represents an indispensable element of man's non-linguistic reality, also serves as a source for phraseological expression."

In the spirit of connecting students with the food, culture, and language of a region, our students enjoy a day focused on food from the Balkans. Marija Rosic, one of our much-admired BCS lecturers, spends the day before the event preparing delicious traditional foods from the entire Balkan region for the students in BCS courses. Some of the items prepared are *ćevapčići*, a Balkan sausage, a special bun to serve with the sausage, *Ajvar*, a pepper and eggplant spread, and delicious *Kajmak*, which is a spread similar to sour cream.

Students enjoy recognizing new flavors of food and listening to music from all parts of the Balkans (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, and Montenegro). Those attending this wonderful cultural event will often see students taking photos of the event and sending them to parents and friends so they can share, in some small way, this very special day in language class.



Delicious ćevapčići or Balkan sausages

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