

# NewsNet

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**Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEES)**

203C Bellefield Hall, 315 S. Bellefield Ave  
Pittsburgh, PA 15260-6424

tel.: 412-648-9911 • fax: 412-648-9815

[www.aseees.org](http://www.aseees.org)

### ASEES Staff

**Executive Director: Lynda Park**

412-648-9788, [lypark@pitt.edu](mailto:lypark@pitt.edu)

**Communications Coordinator: Mary Arnstein**

412-648-9809, [newsnet@pitt.edu](mailto:newsnet@pitt.edu)

**NewsNet Editor & Program Coordinator:**

**Trevor Erlacher**

412-648-7403, [aseees.grants@pitt.edu](mailto:aseees.grants@pitt.edu)

**Membership Coordinator: Sean Caulfield**

412-648-9911, [aseees@pitt.edu](mailto:aseees@pitt.edu)

**Financial Support: Roxana L. Espinoza**

412-648-4049, [aseeesfn@pitt.edu](mailto:aseeesfn@pitt.edu)

**Convention Manager: Margaret Manges**

412-648-4049, [aseeescn@pitt.edu](mailto:aseeescn@pitt.edu)



"Jacques Rossi, Prisoner of Norilsk"

## Conferences, Coronavirus, and the KGB THE WEBINAR SERIES ON "THE POLITICAL POLICE AND THE SOVIET SYSTEM: INSIGHTS FROM NEWLY OPENED KGB ARCHIVES IN THE FORMER SOVIET STATES"

MICHAEL DAVID-FOX, GEORGETOWN U

When the coronavirus pandemic hit in March 2020, I had been working for well over a year to organize an international conference in early April at Georgetown University on the "Political Police and the Soviet System: Insights from Newly Opened KGB Archives in the Former Soviet States." I had applied for grants, raising a total of \$45,000 from six sources. In late spring 2019, a call for papers went out to scholars working "on the Soviet secret police, the penal system, forced labor, and intelligence history" in archives "including the SBU (former KGB) archive in Kyiv and repositories in the Baltics, Georgia, Moldova, and other former Soviet republics." The proposal struck a chord among historians and other scholars. The "opportunity to showcase and explore how the hitherto classified materials change our understandings of Soviet system, its operations, and its place in the broader world" generated almost a hundred paper proposals.

With two Georgetown colleagues, Phil Kiffer and Mikhail Nemtsev, I worked in the summer of 2019 to craft panels. There were far more excellent proposals than could be accommodated. By September 2019, we had invited 25 visitors from 12 countries to the Georgetown campus. Plane tickets were bought, hotel rooms reserved. After weeks of uncertainty and growing epidemiological calamity in

February 2020, the email to cancel the event finally went out to participants on March 11. "No one," I wrote, "regrets this more than I do."

Regret, however, turned into sentiments of hope, determination, relief, and, finally, a degree of pride. One colleague who had helped disseminate the call for papers was ASEEEES Communications Coordinator Mary Arnstein. During a chance encounter at the ASEEEES annual convention in San Francisco in November 2019, Mary and I had discussed a possible podcast of the conference proceedings. With the conference canceled, we moved together to organize five webinars, each with three or four paper-givers and a commentator, drawn from the six panels originally planned.

The following webinars took place between April 15 and April 20:

- Webinar I: Culture, Non-Conformism, Normativity
- Webinar II: Entering and Exiting the Gulag
- Webinar III: Identifying Enemies: Surveillance, Classification, and Information
- Webinar IV: The Secret Police as an Institution: Internal History and Practices
- Webinar V: Operations Abroad and Foreign Intelligence

Recordings can be accessed on the [ASEEEES webinar page](#). Several additional papers recorded individually outside the webinars can be accessed at the website of the conference's main sponsor, the [Jacques Rossi Memorial Gulag Research Fund at Georgetown University](#).

The secret police, as opposed to the party and the state, is the one pillar

of Soviet power which we know least about. The reason for that, of course, is chiefly because of inaccessible archives. True, many secret police documents have shown up in other repositories. Moreover, the archival publications sanctioned in Moscow in the "roaring 1990s" opened a significant window into the history of the secret police. Generations of experts have deduced a great deal. Nevertheless, compared to other areas, that knowledge was fragmentary and lacking depth. Above all, it did not allow integration—with all the texture and nuance that internal primary sources allow—into broader treatments on a large array of topics now beginning to be addressed.

That project of integrating a key part of the Soviet system into our grand narratives is precisely what newly accessible repositories in places such as Ukraine and Estonia (and, as the conference made clear, East European archives such as those of the Securitate and the Stasi) allow us to begin to do. It makes the opening of these repositories, arguably, into the last phase of the "archival revolution" begun in the 1990s. This idea of integration was the primary motivation behind the conference.

In the remarks that follow, I am not going to discuss each webinar in turn. Relating the individual papers within each panel to one another was already the task of five commentators, whose incisive commentaries can be heard on the recordings. Instead, I am going to survey the entire set of 17 presentations, each based on a written text, taking into account the five commentaries. I will distill five thematic areas to which the conference taken as a whole contributed. That discussion will be

followed by some lessons learned about online conferences and webinars. It is not merely conditions of the current global pandemic preventing conventional scholarly gatherings that may make these remarks useful to others thinking about such events, but also the advantages and drawbacks of the webinar format itself as a vehicle for future conferences in the post-vaccine world of the future.

The "organs" of state security built up a fearsome reputation that was deliberately bolstered by extensive image-making in the public sphere. At the same time, they were beset by perennial problems of funding, personnel, qualifications, technology, and the same local-level chaos that went hand in hand with centralization in other parts of the party-state. A red thread running through many of the conference papers, providing a new wrinkle on venerable debates, concerns the effectiveness of the political police.

For example, Molly Pucci (Trinity College Dublin), in "The Soviets Abroad: Intelligence, State-Building, and the Security Forces in East Europe, 1948-1953," emphasized how the Soviet informational ecosystem in East Europe was distorted by "its agents' assumptions about ideology, loyalty, and state-building." By incentivizing locals to hide damaging information, Moscow suppressed "spontaneous channels of communication" in its new outer empire. In another paper on the Moscow-East European relationship, Corina Snitar (Glasgow) discussed how Stalinist terror, the ultimate source of the secret police's fearsome image, in fact produced poor intelligence for the Securitate. A typically Soviet insistence on quantitative over qualitative metrics of policing was only turned

around after the protests of 1956, when new methods of surveillance were put in place.

By contrast, Douglas Selvage (Humboldt University, Berlin), in his investigation of KGB “active measures” on the basis of the Stasi archives (“Operation ‘Wedge’: KGB Active Measures, U.S. Journalists, and the Suppression of Soviet ‘Helsinki’ Activism, 1976-78”) explored the motivations behind a KGB disinformation campaign by excavating all the concrete actions and effects accompanying it. This prompted the commentator on Webinar V, Greg Afinogenov (Georgetown), to ask about seeming disagreements on whether the postwar state-socialist security state was effective in fighting internal or external enemies (which, of course, it played a major role in defining and creating in the first place). How, he asked, can studying the postwar context reframe the perennial debate about whether state socialism was a brutally efficient totalitarian apparatus or a ramshackle arrangement of *ad hoc* power relationships?

A second theme, closely connected to these issues of institutional efficacy and capacity in the transition from Stalinism to post-Stalinism, concerns reconstructing the internal history of the secret police—perhaps the single topic most facilitated by newly opened archives. In “Delegated Repression: The MGB’s Mass Informant Network and its Collapse,” Phil Kiffer (Georgetown) took a close look at several regions of the Ukrainian SSR in which often coerced “agent” and “resident” informants outside the ranks of MGB operatives supervised a secret informant network far larger than the MGB itself could handle. Kiffer called this a “partial



Photo provided by Sherzod Muminov as part of “Transnational Gulag: Jacques Rossi, Uchimura Gōsuke, and Researching the ‘Gulagians of the World,’ 1937-1956.

deputization” model of policing. By 1950, this led to to a comprehensive internal critique of the flaws of “mass informing” and a drastic purge of Ukraine’s agent-informant networks in 1951.

Two different papers in two separate webinars—Edward Cohn (Grinnell College), “Recidivism, Prophylaxis, and the KGB,” and Tomas Sniegon (Lund University), “Researching the Roots of Soviet Dissent in the Era of Vladimir Semichastnyi”—explored the Thaw-era innovation of *profilaktika*, or prophylaxis. This involved warning potential or minor offenders through “conversations” and other interventions rather arresting them. Cohn, drawing on Baltic KGB repositories and especially those in Lithuania, showed that prophylaxis often did not change the beliefs or behavior of those warned, except to make them more secretive. Sniegon’s interest in the new archival treasures is unique: he taped 130 hours of interviews with KGB chairman Vladimir Semichastnyi in 1993-99. He is now not just fact-checking that oral history but leveraging interviews and archives together synergistically. While Semichastnyi presented himself in a positive light as committed to moving

away from Stalinist-style terror, Sniegon interprets the policy of prophylaxis as applied to intellectuals as contributing to the creation of dissidents *avant la lettre* in the early 1960s.

A third group of papers integrated secret police archival materials into broader topics in cultural history. Angelina Lucento (HSE Moscow), in “The NKVD and the Political Origins of Socialist Realism: The Persecution of the *Boichukisty* in Ukraine as Case Study,” used two sets of secret police documents from circa 1931 and circa 1937 on prominent Ukrainian painter Mykhailo Boichuk and his disciples. In her hands, the documents illuminate broader party-state agendas in the rise of Socialist Realism. Here the NKVD figures as a neglected but key player in defining and implementing the new doctrine in the visual arts.

Another novel take on cultural history came from Sherzod Muminov (University of East Anglia). In his “Transnational Gulag: Jacques Rossi, Uchimura Gōsuke, and Researching the ‘Gulagians of the World,’ 1937-1956,” he built on the chance 1949 encounter between the Japanese POW and literary scholar Gōsuke and the Franco-Polish Comintern intellectual and future author of the *Gulag Handbook*, Rossi. Excavating their longstanding relationship, he argued, illuminates a little-known dimension of the Soviet camp system—a transnational world of cross-cultural encounters among overlapping groups and hierarchies of foreign inmates.

Two other papers can be connected to the conference’s cultural thread. Erik Scott (University of Kansas), in “The Black Sea Coast as a Landscape of Cold War Intelligence,” explored

how the KGB saw the region as a unified border zone “landscape” to be developed and surveilled as part of Cold War intelligence. He argued that this border area was not only a bridge for transnational flows, but a regulated zone of crossings that filtered and channeled “the movement of people, goods, and culture in increasingly sophisticated ways in response to globalization.”

A different kind of cultural insight came from Aigi Rahi-Tamm (Tartu University) in her re-examination of the nature of Sovietization, “Fueling and Prolonging Conflicts: The Example of the Tallinn State Conservatory.” Using interrogation records in conjunction with many other sources on the conservatory and Estonian choral composers, she examines tactics of splintering of the “creative” intelligentsia along with the long-lasting trauma and stigma resulting from Stalinist practices of criticism and self-criticism. As discussed in the webinar, this raises the notion of a secret police role in establishing new behavioral and ethical norms, or “normativity.” This is a challenge for a next-generation cultural history in the broadest sense of that term.

Fourth, a series of papers put secret police use of technologies—photography, film, computers—into considerations of policing and power. In “KGB Photography: Turning Religion into Crime,” Tatiana Vagramenko (University of Cork) examined methodologies of curating photographs in practices such as photomontage and albums. Her paper suggested how visual material played a special role in shaping the image of the enemy and in prosecuting the notion that “organized political subversion lurked behind the mask of religion.” In a related and equally fascinating

paper by Cristina Vatulescu (NYU), “The Mug Shot and the Close-Up: Visual Identification in Secret Police Film and Photography,” a never-screened 1960 Securitate propaganda film about a bank heist was interpreted in light of 27 archival volumes about the case and its reenactment. Vatulescu called this cache “quite simply the richest multimedia case I’ve encountered in over 15 years of researching in these archives.”

Joshua Sanborn (Lafayette College) addressed a topic almost completely untreated in previous scholarship. In “Cybernetics and Surveillance: The Secret Police Enter the Computer Age,” he told a tale of “haranguing and foot-dragging” in a first phase of secret police computerization before around 1985, when databases were “largely directed toward using computers to do tasks that these agencies had done before, just (ideally) more quickly and efficiently.” This was followed by a “hacking” era of computer-based espionage and, he argued, our current age of “cybernetic control,” in which humans can be enticed “to start carrying out computer directions in addition to the other way round.”

A final, fifth group of papers revisited classic preoccupations in the study of Stalinism—the Great Terror, the GULAG, and the political organization of the party-state—in light of archival research into the secret police.

This category included the wide-ranging paper by Timothy Blauvelt (Ilia State University and American Councils, Tbilisi) and Davit Jishkariani (Soviet Past Research Lab [SOVLAB], Tbilisi), “Contextualizing the Stalinist Perpetrators: The Case of Georgian NKVD Investigators Khazan, Savitsky and Krimyan.” Examining Beria’s

patronage network in the Georgian NKVD during the Great Terror, they showed that among the motivations for two of these three later-indicted figures to “excel” at torture was that they were concealing dubious pasts. In “Below the Radar of Legal Code: The Birth of a Specific Soviet Extra-Judicial State Body and the Great Terror,” Marc Junge (University of Erlangen) used Ukrainian militia files to look at the TsIK “special assembly” formed in 1922. In practice under the heavy influence of the secret police, this body operated outside the boundaries of the criminal code to prosecute “socially dangerous elements” such as “hooligans.” Junge argued that the longstanding secret police preoccupation with social deviants, as it morphed into securing the results of collectivization and “combating epidemic social problems” in the 1930s, challenges the dominant explanation for the Great Terror as a prophylactic strike against a “fifth column” in an upcoming war.

Two additional papers revisited other major issues in the literature. Igor Cașu (State University of Modova), in “The Interplay between Party-State Institutions and Political-Civil Police during Late Stalinism in Soviet Moldavia, 1944-1953,” examined the dominant role of the political police inside party-state structures in the postwar Moldavian SSR, which contrasted, notably, with the newly sovietized Baltic republics. Mikhail Nakonechnyi (Oxford), in “‘Dead Souls’: Mortality, Disability and Early Release on Medical Grounds from GULAG, 1930-1955,” addressed the growing conviction in GULAG studies that official mortality rates were significantly lowered by the practice of releasing prisoners on the verge of death. The paper compared local

and central data on mortality rates, first and foremost empirically to “prove the reality of released invalids’ mortality as a historical phenomenon with statistical evidence.”

Webinars will never replace the adventures and conversations, the socializing and debates of in-person conferences. These are, after all, among the greatest joys of academic life. As a practical matter, the webinar platform used by ASEEEES, GoToWebinar, much like Zoom, does allow for paper presentations only slightly more cumbersome than non-virtual conference papers. The questions, written in the “chat” function by members of the audience, need to be read and gathered by a commentator or facilitator. Whatever the skill of that person in scanning the written questions and, for example, gathering similar questions together, participants cannot easily build on or respond to one another as in a live discussion.

Many of the factors leading to the success of a webinar conference—framing a topic that commands broad interest, presenting a line-up of compelling speakers, incentivizing paper-givers to present their best work with the expectation of publication, not to mention the other mundane, time-consuming tasks of good organization—are the very same ones that make for a successful conventional conference. Webinars will benefit specifically from advance training sessions and technical support from an organizer; we were fortunate to have Mary Arnstein of ASEEEES, without whom this series would never have happened. In addition, the co-sponsors of this conference—the Kennan Institute, Georgetown CEERES, and the Russian History Seminar of Washington, DC—all advertised these

webinars on their lists and social media, as did ASEEEES and the participants themselves.

Webinars do have two major advantages over conventional conferences. First, the potential audiences are considerably larger than the biggest conference panels. Some of these webinars attracted almost 400 registered participants; the number of those who will click on links to the recordings will make their audiences even larger. Second, these webinars required technical and institutional support, as opposed to funding. While this might be attractive at a time when academia faces budget deficits as far as the eye can see, virtual conferences in the end cannot replace face-to-face gatherings. But they are also more than merely a viable replacement for events that cannot take place during a pandemic. For certain events, such as those that need to be done without large amounts of funding and those that can garner significant audiences, they represent a genuinely valuable alternative.

*Michael David-Fox is a Professor of History at Georgetown University. His current book project, “Crucibles of Power: Smolensk Under Nazi and Soviet Rule,” is under contract with Harvard University Press.*

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## 2020 ASEEEES BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTIONS

We are pleased to announce the slate of candidates for the 2020 election for positions on the ASEEEES Board of Directors: Vice President/President-Elect and two Members-at-Large, serve three-year terms from January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2023. We thank them for their willingness to stand as candidates to serve on the ASEEEES Board.

Candidates for Vice President / President Elect

- **Adeeb Khalid**, Carleton College
- **Joan Neuberger**, University of Texas, Austin

Candidates for Members-at-Large

- **Katherine Bowers**, University of British Columbia (Canada)
- **Theodora Dragostinova**, Ohio State University
- **Paul Goode**, University of Bath (UK)
- **Sunnie Rucker-Chang**, University of Cincinnati

For more information on the election including the candidate bios, visit [our website](#). Information on how to vote will be distributed by email to current members of ASEEEES by late June.



## The Screens of Academe

ELIOT BORENSTEIN, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

*“Our country has endured serious trials many times: the Pechenegs tormented it, and so did the Polovtsy. Russia has dealt with everything, and we will defeat this coronavirus infection.”—Vladimir Putin*

*“Eliot, together, we’ll work through these tough times.”—Email from Toyota Motor Sales*

*“If a person stays positive, they will be healthy.”—Alexander Lukashenko*

*“You again! You again!”—Masyanya*

*“I’m sure it will come as no surprise that we are postponing your lecture.”—Email from a colleague at X University.*

*“The Wahl Color Pro Cordless Rechargeable Hair Clipper and Trimmer is Temporarily Out of Stock.”—Amazon.com*

*Author’s note: Please note that this essay was written before the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent protests and police violence, and does not reflect the pain and turmoil that have come to the fore.*

A few weeks ago, I was invited to write this essay for the June issue of *NewsNet*. This was flattering (I'm easily flattered), so I agreed. My travel schedule had just gone from biweekly assaults on the global climate to the occasional, but thrilling, jaunt to the grocery store down the street. Talking asynchronously to a large group of possibly imaginary people separated by vast distances is the highpoint of my day.

The suggested topic was something along the lines of "Doing Slavic Studies During a Global Pandemic," but it's hard to claim any particular expertise. If you're a Slavist, and if you're either working or fretting about not working, you're doing it during a pandemic. We are all in the same boat, even if it is a pestilent cruise liner with many of us in steerage.

I was asked because of some of the public activities I've been involved in since we all moved online, but describing them, while possibly helpful, feels a bit like the egregious calls for increased productivity that have managed to make sheltering in place even more stressful ("Learn

a language! Discover gravity! Write *King Lear!*"). I have been productive, but I'm also middle-aged, tenured, pathologically regimented about my workflow, and embarrassingly bourgeois. My children are mostly grown (or, in the case of my intellectually disabled younger son, as grown as he's going to get). And I'm taking a remarkably effective cocktail of antidepressants, paid for by my insurance. Yes, I'm oversharing, but if there are two things that a global crisis should teach us, it's that we must remove the stigma surrounding mental health, and that walling off our personal life from our work life is a pointless exercise.

In my lifelong compulsion to be what Thomas the Tank Engine refers to as a "very useful engine," I trained my New York colleagues to use Zoom the week before we were all sent home, set up a Facebook group (jointly with Shannon Donnally Spasova) for academics adjusting to remote instruction ("[Online Teaching Tips for the Plague Averse](#)"), established an asynchronous book club on the Discord platform ("[Plague-Averse](#)

[Online Book Club](#)") [1], and conducted a solo weekly online lecture series for the Jordan Center for the Advanced Study of Russia ("[Russian Internet Memes: The Short Course](#)"). [2]

I didn't do this because I'm hugely ambitious, or insufferably vain; my ambition and vanity are both, I hope, sufferable enough. I did it as a coping mechanism. Frenzied activity (combined with the aforementioned meds) is what keeps me from lying immobilized on the couch, contemplating a viral apocalypse cheered on by a presidential death cult. So many of us have spent years entertaining fantasies of the end of the world; certainly, Russian and Slavic cultures provide no shortage of grist for that particular mill. [3]

In any case, I want to stress that some of my preoccupations here are dependent on dumb luck (getting a job as opposed to not getting one) and undeniable privilege (the cushy life of a professor at an R1 university). By no means do they represent the most pressing concerns of the majority of academics, but they do have ramifications for how the field sees itself.

Two weeks before everything ground to a halt, I walked up and down the grocery aisles to stock up on essentials (Text to my wife: "Do we need the apocalypse cheese today, or can it wait until Friday?"). I was overcome with a despair that I can only call uncanny: I've seen this movie so many times, and now it's actually happening. Things were going to get grim. Even if I survived, people I knew were probably going to die. And they did: a retired senior colleague with a COVID diagnosis, and my 37-year-old

niece (we will wait for months for a report from the overworked medical examiner). In a country devastated by lack of planning, at least my grief showed foresight.

Contemplating the pandemic, I can't be the only one who is surprised and not surprised at the same time. Sheltering in place has fostered a notorious sense of timelessness not just because of the disruption of weekly schedules, but because of the shock of a horrific fantasy that has become real. There are too many familiar narratives that all this resembles, and we're afraid to commit to any of them.

I'm writing these words in the second week of May; by the time you read them, we could still be in the thick of it (my pessimistic guess), or we could all be tired of first-wave pandemic postmortems. In the best-case scenario, any ideas I might offer for continuing our teaching and research during the COVID outbreak will be too late. But even so, it's an exercise worth doing. One of the lessons of two months of timelessness should involve thinking about the recent past in order to rebuild our near future.

In Don DeLillo's magnificent 1985 novel *White Noise*, an unprecedented environmental disaster is a godsend to one of the bureaucrats supposedly helping victims: just think how useful this data will be for their next simulation! We don't need to get quite that cynical, but it is highly unlikely that this is the last time public life will be suspended thanks to a pandemic. So what can we do better? How can we avoid being surprised by what we've been expecting all along?

On Facebook (my only home away from home), there have been a number of legitimately appalled reactions to tone-deaf emails from university administrations suggesting or requiring that departments have a back-up plan for when instructors fall ill (or worse). The message seems to be: "sorry you might die, but please make sure someone turns in your grades."

Still, let's imagine an almost unimaginable world, where faculty and the administration are working together to achieve common goals while expressing empathy and avoiding corporate doublespeak. The issues are not so binary. It's not simply a matter of finding someone to soldier on after you lay down your life on some higher educational hill: what if you're just sick? Or grieving? At the beginning of each Zoom class, I always checked in to see how my students were doing. One of them said that another of her professors was sick, and she was worried. But she also didn't know how to express her concern or get information, so she simply worried on her own.

There are legitimate reasons not to grant outsiders access to your class's LMS (Learning Management System). But why not have a departmental buddy system, where each of us adds one trusted colleague to the system so that they can facilitate communication when we can't? If we are the ones arranging it, we can opt for solidarity and collaboration rather than surveillance.

Now that we have had a glimpse of how bad things can get, departments and programs should institute structures that facilitate the move

online when the next wave or next pandemic hits. We need crisis plans, perhaps a crisis point person, and we need to know what we're doing and how we're doing it before we lose the straightforwardness of in-person communication. And, like it or not, we need to insist that our colleagues get trained and remain up-to-date on whatever LMS our institution adopts, as well as the platform that eventually succeeds Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or whatever we're using now. There are plenty of reasons to distrust educational technology, and if I were at an underfunded state school, I'd be very concerned about a push to turn the crisis into the norm. But being a Luddite is no longer simply a matter of personal choice; collective responsibility demands a basic level of proficiency, even if we choose not to use any of these tools under non-crisis conditions.

We also need to recognize that most colleges and universities have a much stronger infrastructure for supporting undergraduate students than for graduates. Undergrads on a residential campus, in addition to being the college's *raison d'être*, are treated as part of a community from the moment of matriculation, while grad students are atomized. Grad students are much more dependent on faculty for advising and guidance, even as they are also more likely to be fully established (rather than emerging) adults. Faculty must be careful not to reproduce the very dynamics we dislike in the communications we receive from the administration.

In the first few weeks of the pandemic, I saw that some Slavic graduate students were organizing

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themselves online into a dissertation support group, and I asked if there was any way that concerned faculty could be helpful, and if departments could be doing something different. The responses were very polite and appreciative, but the main takeaway was: could you faculty please stop overwhelming us with pointless emails expressing support but lacking in content? I was immediately reminded of all the vapid messages I've received from nearly every corporate entity I've ever interacted with (the most mystifying: rubberstamps.com). The lines of communication need to be kept open, but we have to make sure we aren't simply fulfilling our own need to feel helpful rather than providing actual help.

Most of the public attention and concern about higher education under pandemic conditions has rightly centered around questions of teaching. After all, whatever our individual priorities might be, teaching is the reason that most of us have jobs (if we have jobs at all). Very few faculty are being paid only to Think Great Thoughts.

Moreover, the switch to remote instruction has been so time-consuming and nerve-wracking that few of us have the leisure to think about our research beyond the constant anxiety over not getting any of it done. For tenure-track faculty, this is a life-or-death question, and those institutions that have automatically delayed the tenure clock are displaying a level of basic humanity that should not come as a surprise (but often does).

I can only speak for the humanists, since I am fortunate in being able

to steer clear of empirical data, wet labs, and (shudder) human subjects. Theoretically, we have it easier than many of our colleagues, since a lot of us can do our research without leaving the house (or are lucky enough to have gathered sufficient archival materials to last awhile). It's a great profession for introverts and misanthropes. And yet...

And yet it turns out that, for all our erudition, we are still hominids who value face-to-face, in-person interaction, and who sense that something is missing without it. When it comes to connecting with people beyond our home institutions, this type of contact has already come under threat. Budgets were shrinking long before our world started to resemble the first 100 pages of Stephen King's *The Stand*. More and more job interviews have moved from conferences to Skype, in recognition of the scant resources available to job seekers and the unwillingness of university administration to cough up money for travel and hotels. There was one bright side, though: if, in the early days of remote interviewing, Skype sessions were often awkward disasters, once the practice got more standard, more and more people learned to adapt to the strictures of teleconferencing.

Is this the future of conferences and symposia? In the short term, perhaps, and it's unfortunate. Pathetic as it sounds, conventions are the social highlight of my year, and most of the intellectual and professional benefit accrued is from interactions in the hallways and restaurants, rather than at panels. This would clearly be a great loss.

But just as we have learned to conduct

job interviews on Skype, we might benefit from figuring out how best to take advantage of the opportunities offered by Zoom and its competitors. This is one of the reasons I did the Russian Internet Memes lecture series. NYU's Jordan Center for the Advanced Study of Russia has, from the beginning, tried to combine the benefits of in-person events with an on-line presence that was meant to be more than an afterthought. The Jordan Center lives in both worlds; with one of them "on pause," why not see what we could do in the other?

It turns out that we can do a lot, but it continues to be awkward. By humanist standards I'm a techie, but I've spent an embarrassing amount of lecture time searching for the right window to open when I share a screen, or talking over a YouTube video only to discover that no one can hear me. Even worse, I've finally resorted to that terrible cliché of asking my college-age son for help.

On the other hand, the lectures have had a much bigger audience than they would have if they'd been delivered in person (over 100 people for the first one, between 50 and 70 for the next five). I see this as a measure of success not so much because of sheer numbers, but because it means that we are all seeing each other's faces and reminding ourselves that there's a larger world out there that shares our scholarly interests. I hope that the lectures have had sufficient intellectual content (after all, they're part of my preparation for a book on the same subject), but their purpose is as much therapeutic as academic. When I run out of topics, I'm tempted to see if people just want to meet every Friday,

drink coffee "together," and simply chat. It sounds ridiculous, but after a few more months of coronavirus, it might even be appealing.

The lectures are also archived online, which I think is great. But they're also their own genre. I would never have considered presenting any of them in their present form if I were invited to give an on-campus talk; they're provisional, slight, and veer a bit too much in the direction of entertainment. If they haven't matured by the time they make their way into my upcoming Russian memes book, then the book does not deserve to be published.

But what about replacing on-campus talks with Zoom lectures? Then we're back to the same problem we have with Zoom conferences, compounded by the fact that the relative intimacy of an on-campus visit provides opportunities for real intellectual exchanges with faculty and students that would not happen otherwise. And if we preserve them on the Internet, we run into another problem.

By the time this essay comes out, I will probably have given a Zoom talk at Northwestern University to replace a visit scheduled back in the days when social distancing just looked like being antisocial. No one has asked to put it online (yet), and if they did, I'd probably say yes. But it's a book talk, related to my 2019 monograph *Plots against Russia*. For me, that represents research that is long behind me. But what if this were one of my current projects? Then I would have some qualms. I worry that Zoom and YouTube could do to visiting lectures what Craigslist did to personal ads: who needs multiple, local venues

when you have a single, global outlet just one mouse click away?

None of these questions can be easily addressed, but address them we must. 2020 has shown that circumstances have a tendency to overtake us. I say this not as the gadget-obsessed screen junkie that I am, but as someone sympathetic to fears that technology can be adopted too quickly and too enthusiastically for our own good. If we avoid these questions, they will be answered for us by others. And I can all but guarantee

that whatever those answers are, we will not like them.

### Notes

[1] We're reading *The Magic Mountain*, and you can join at any time.

[2] It's possible that the series will still be a going concern by the time you get this newsletter; in any case, the lectures are archived on the Jordan Center's YouTube channel.

[3] If you haven't read Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's 1990 short story "Hygiene" yet, or Yana Wagner's *To the Lake (Vongozero)*, then you probably shouldn't.

*Eliot Borenstein is a professor of Russian & Slavic Studies at New York University.*

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## LETTER FROM PRESIDENT JAN KUBIK

Dear Colleagues,

When I created the theme for our 2020 Convention, Anxiety and Rebellion, not in my wildest dreams had I expected that these words would acquire, so dramatically, new relevance. Our anxiety has grown due to the twin cataclysms of the horrific pandemic and systemic racism laid bare. On the other hand, the rebellious wave we are experiencing in the United States at the moment carries with it the promise of a perfected union.

Feelings of anxiety and rebellion aside, we still have to navigate through this truly momentous period in our history and do our work with resolve. This holds true also for ASEEEES. Our wonderful Pittsburgh Office, and our two elected bodies – the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee – together with a host of other committees, are busy at work steering the Association through this unprecedented moment. We are reviewing the situation and planning strategies for the near and more distant future.

Most importantly, we are working hard to make sure that we have an excellent 2020 Convention. I want to assure you that we will hold a convention, although it may look quite different from our traditional ones. We have formed a committee to explore all options and to plan for contingencies. We are studying the paths taken by other scholarly societies and developing our own strategy. To assist the committee in its work, we are asking you to complete this short **convention planning survey**. We are also conduct a **brief survey on the impact of the pandemic on your professional life** and asks for your input on what ASEEEES could do to assist our members in these challenging times. One thing we are already doing is to provide online platforms for members to meet and share information and resources with each other, for example, a **Humanities Commons group** for adjunct/non-tenured faculty in SEEE Studies. We will soon be announcing webinars and zoom meetings for our members to gather online.

I am happy to report that the state of the Association is excellent, our membership is strong, and the success of the Future of the Field fundraising campaign has led to a dramatic increase in our ability to support our younger members. Even as the pandemic spread and our work life was turned upside down, ASEEEES has been able to award over \$340,000 in grants for dissertation research and writing and for internships. It has been all possible only because of your commitment and unwavering support for ASEEEES and the creative energy you invest so generously in realizing our mission. All of this affirms that a steady commitment to mutual support and a common pursuit of excellence in research and teaching can carry us through these times of anxiety and rebellion.

Please stay in touch, as we want to hear from you about your needs and concerns. Stay well and safe and take care of yourselves and your loved ones.

With my warmest regards,

Jan Kubik

President, Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies

Professor of Political Science, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Professor of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London

[2020 Convention Planning Survey](#) | [COVID-19 Impact Survey](#)



Photo credit: Ryan McGrady "Coronavirus sign in Brooklyn" taken March 26, 2020

## A Pandemic Dispatch from Brooklyn

BRIGID O'KEEFFE, BROOKLYN COLLEGE (CUNY)

"The wail of the sirens. My god."

As I typed these words into what I have been calling my pandemic journal on April 3, 2020, I thought back to another catastrophe I lived through in New York City in September 2001. Back then I was but a very young and very green newcomer, three weeks into what has since become half a lifetime spent in this inimitable city that is now the epicenter of the Covid-19 pandemic—the inimitable city that is—for better and for worse—my home. "Sometimes it reminds me of 9/11," I wrote about those sirens on April 3. Yet a crucial difference—at least in terms of the aural experience of living through these two palpably cataclysmic histories in NYC—is that at a certain point in September 2001, the lament of the city's ambulance sirens seemed to settle quickly into a still more terrifying quiet.

Here in Brooklyn, inside the walls of my tiny but beloved apartment, the screeching of ambulance sirens has been the unrelenting soundtrack of these past six weeks of horror, these weeks of the new banality of everyday life under quarantine. For me and for so many others trying to live through this pandemic as humanely as possible, those sirens have become the barometer of the city's desperation. The siren songs are more telling and far more haunting than Governor Cuomo's daily PowerPoints, his routine recitation of those benchmark tabulations onto which pin our hopes and fears—the previous day's deaths, intubations, and new hospital beds occupied.

At all hours, those sirens reliably tear through my window and muscle their way into my brain and clamp down on my heart. They remind me of the students, the colleagues, the strangers whom I used to see on the subway, on campus, in my classrooms, in the parks, in my neighborhood yoga studio, in my neighborhood Trader Joe's. Those sirens, in their grim horror, are in many ways the only immediate connection I have left to the topography of my life as I once lived it, to the communities I shared physical spaces with until—suddenly—I no longer did.

As I write this, it has been 32 days since I last exited the front doors of my apartment building and walked into Brooklyn, into the world. The sentence just drools with privilege—it does us no good to deny it. I am acutely aware of that privilege, and embarrassed by it. I can almost feel it slipping down my bourgeois chin.

This retreat from the world has been made possible by the doormen who still report to work and manage somehow to cheerfully deal with the grocery deliveries and Amazon packages ordered by the many privileged occupants of my apartment building on the edge of pampered Brooklyn Heights. I haven't had to venture into the scary world of the supermarket because this city's least privileged are working the cash registers of the stores, stocking the shelves with cans of garbanzo beans, and delivering red lentils and organic milk to those of us who can afford not to leave our homes in order to survive. They are packing and delivering the Amazon boxes. They are managing the package rooms of doormen



Photo credit: Andrew Henkelman "Brooklyn Bridge No People" taken March 20, 2020

buildings. Until they get sick and no longer can.

I can afford to not venture out into the world because New York City's least privileged cannot afford to not venture out into the world. Another way of thinking about this is to say: I haven't had to venture out into the world because so many of the students at my school and its wider university—Brooklyn College of the City University of New York—cannot afford not to venture out into the city and make it run. They need the paychecks to survive more than I need those red lentils – unavailable for delivery for five weeks straight -- that now sit in my pantry like a lottery prize.

Many of my students are working in New York City's supermarkets and laboring to provide other "essential

services." One student—an immigrant who lost his job at a hotel in March and knew he would not receive a stimulus check in April—now drives to a neighboring state to work at an Amazon fulfillment center. Earlier in the semester, when we still had class in person on campus, I had delighted every time this student raised his hand to share with the class his thoughts on the reading for the day—Wollstonecraft, Condorcet, Smith. What I wouldn't give to be back in that classroom, to hear my students' voices resound over our decrepit, underfunded campus and to watch their ideas illuminate Brooklyn

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- Russia and the Asia-Pacific (Vladivostok)
- Spring Break: Introduction to Russia (Moscow and St. Petersburg)
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- Folkways.today
- GeoHistory.today
- PopKult.org
- MuseumStudiesAbroad.org
- SRASStudents.org





College's austerity-painted walls. My student—the one who now works at an Amazon warehouse—recently sent me a primary source photograph of a makeshift morgue located outside the Brooklyn Hospital Center. In early February I had excitedly told my colleague, "I hope to recruit him to the major!" These days, my hopes are of a different kind. I hope that he and his family live through this. That they can afford groceries. That they don't lose their home.

Just the other day, I received a package of aromatherapy hand soaps I had ordered from Amazon. My doorman signed for the package and sent me an email from the front desk to tell me that this package of sweet-smelling at-home handwashing had arrived. I thought again about my brilliant student—the one who now has to drive to another state and subtract the cost of tolls and gas in order to make a living at an Amazon fulfillment center. He hasn't missed an assignment since we stumbled panic-stricken into the bleary and depressing world of emergency online coursework.

My students are amazing. They deserve so much more. Many of them are suffering. I hear it in the sirens, I hear it in the pandemic journals that they are now writing for my history courses. Thanks to Governor Cuomo's budgets, the CUNY Board of Trustees is considering a tuition hike for the coming year, or so I'm told. It's a sick, sick world and I'm not talking about the pandemic.

My fellow historians and pundits galore have been dutifully providing

commentary on how we might imagine a post-pandemic future that looks better than the present we are all trying to survive. I'm far more interested in what my students have to say. They have hopes and dreams aplenty. After "this," they write to me, maybe the anti-vax movement and climate change denial will die out at long last. After "this," maybe we can make sure that all Americans—better yet, all human beings—have access to quality healthcare. After "this," maybe something can be done about the vast wealth inequality that they don't need to learn about in my history courses because they know more about it from lived experience than I myself ever will.

What will come after "this"—no one knows. As I write this in late April 2020, I am happy to say that I haven't heard as many sirens today. I am happy to say that I and my family are safe and well. This morning, my students posted some incredibly smart things to the blackboard discussion boards that now serve as poor substitutes for class meetings. Reading their thoughts and ideas, I felt something like the joy I can still remember feeling in my classroom—that dopamine hit that only teaching incredible students can provide. Next week I'll zoom into a department meeting and I'll zoom into a committee meeting and I'll zoom into the yoga classes that help to keep me sane. The banality of everyday academic life continues. Today, tomorrow, and every weekday for the foreseeable future, I'll likely have to email a colleague begging shamefacedly for a PDF of an article or chapter that I need in order to meet my writing deadlines. My college's

library operated on a shoestring budget (thanks, Cuomo!) before all of this. Now I'm trying to finish a book manuscript without access to the books in my campus office and the books that the heroes of Brooklyn College interlibrary loan used to hunt down on my behalf.

Before I start to feel too sorry for myself, I think about my aromatherapy soap and I think about my students reporting to their supermarket shifts and I think about the student who fell ill with the coronavirus a few weeks back and whom I haven't heard from since.

Please consider donating to [The Brooklyn College Student Emergency Fund](#) and [The Food Bank for New York City](#)

*Brigid O'Keeffe is Associate Professor of History at Brooklyn College. O'Keeffe is also at work completing a second book, [Esperanto and Languages of Internationalism in Revolutionary Russia](#), under contract with Bloomsbury.*

*Editor's note: This article was written before the death of George Floyd.*

#### CALL FOR ARTICLES

Please consider submitting articles to be published in future NewsNets. Articles are typically brief essays on contemporary issues or matters of broad professional interest. They can include discussions of new research, institutions, resources etc. NewsNet is not a venue for extensive research essays; most cover articles are 2,500 words in length. We encourage members, including graduate students, who are interested in proposing an article to contact the NewsNet Editor, Trevor Erlacher (aseees.grants@pitt.edu).

*The views expressed in NewsNet articles are solely the views of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of ASEES or its staff.*



Photo Credit: John Vsetecka, "Lviv Book Market" taken June 2018

## The Fate of Graduate Research IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC

JOHN VSETECKA, MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

In April 2020 I was thrilled to learn that I had won a Fulbright award to Ukraine. The good news meant that I would be fully-funded to conduct dissertation research in Kyiv for the 2020-2021 academic year. The nine-month process of completing the application, writing fellowship essays, and interviewing with the Fulbright commission finally seemed to bear fruit. My sense of fulfillment quickly diminished when I learned that the 2019-2020 Fulbright recipients were returning home due to COVID-19. I could not help but feel insecure about my recently acquired funding as the thought of not being able to go to Ukraine became increasingly possible.

The initial letter informing me of my award did not speculate on what might happen in the next year. I followed the Fulbright announcements closely, and I learned that some countries were delaying their awards while others were considering cancelling them altogether. Fulbright sent another letter to 2020 grant recipients several days later confirming our worst suspicions: all grants would be delayed until at least January 2021. The letter also indicated that it would not be possible to extend our grant period and that we should make plans to spend less time in-country than our originally promised nine-months. This meant that I was looking at getting five months of research in Kyiv rather than nine, which is a severe cut for any graduate student needing adequate time to work in their respective fields. However, because I had been able to spend the past couple of summers in Ukraine gathering materials

I remained hopeful that I could hit the ground running in January and make the most of my time in Ukraine. I am one of the fortunate ones; many others will not have this valuable time to conduct pre-dissertation research.

Unfortunately, my story of COVID-19 disruptions is familiar to many graduate students, and the diminished prospect of conducting research abroad is only one of the hurdles that we face amid the pandemic. The delay or cancellation of research funding is but one drop in a large pool of ripple effects and “hidden” costs. Many students who were scheduled to go abroad for research now have to navigate an uncertain future of funding, housing, and time to degree. Others will face the reality of whether or not they can even complete their current dissertation projects without dramatically adjusting their project’s scope, content, and premise. Inevitably, many will not be able to finish their dissertations unless they are able to extend their years in a graduate program and find financial security, which is already a near-impossible task when the world is not sheltering-in-place. This prospect will be made harder still by a collapsed job market, which remains atrocious for humanities PhDs.

The precarity of housing is another problem that many graduate students are facing. This problem existed well before the pandemic but has worsened because of it. I had planned to be gone in Ukraine during the whole 2020-2021 academic year, and my partner was set to leave her job for a year to travel with me. We gave up our lease on the house we were renting as we prepared to

move abroad thinking we wouldn’t need a place in the U.S. for at least a year. Luckily, our landlord was understanding and agreed to let us keep renting our place until December. Others have not been so fortunate. Finding six-month leases can be tricky, as most landlords want tenants to sign leases for a full year. Many Fulbrighters will sign twelve-month leases that they will have to break so they can travel to conduct research. Breaking a lease often incurs costs that many simply cannot afford. This also forces graduate students to find short-term leases in their research countries in midwinter.

Perhaps the biggest threat to graduate students is time. While we face delayed research start dates, the clock on our funding packages keeps ticking. I was looking forward to the pause on my five-year package while I took my Fulbright year. If students in my department win an outside fellowship, then their department package is paused so they can use that money upon their return to the university. Since my Fulbright grant is now delayed until at least January, I must use some of my department funding for the Fall 2020 semester. The DGS and other faculty in my department are working hard to secure an extra year of funding for graduate students, but there are no guarantees. With university budget cuts decimating entire departments, it is hard to see how our history department, which is already underfunded when compared to other programs across campus, will be allotted extra funds. Even if students are able to leave the university to get their research done, they may come back to a department with empty

pockets. Without adequate funds to write the dissertation, students will be forced to take jobs outside of the university. This inevitably leads to less time spent on writing, research, and productivity. All schools must do what they can to support time extensions for their graduate students.

Finally, something must be said about the type of work that will be produced given the current circumstances. Scholars in our field typically make use of multiple languages, archives, and institutions. Once abroad, it is relatively easy to move between countries and visit libraries and archives that house material related to your work. This may no longer be possible due to entry bans on foreign citizens. The pandemic may also permanently close institutions that were already hanging on by a thread. Certain materials may become inaccessible. Before COVID-19, I started conducting interviews with survivors of the 1946-47 famine in Soviet Ukraine. This type of work relies on personal connections that are built out of informal, in-person discussions. One may contend that this type of work could continue over Zoom or Skype, but I disagree. The people I work with in Ukraine live in remote villages and towns that do not have regular internet access. Moreover, many of these folks would have no interest in speaking to scholars over this medium. It is a reminder that our research is a luxury that often relies on the intellectual labor of the people we study, though our names don the covers of books and dissertations. The least we can do is visit their country, speak their language, and spend time in their

world. Without access to travel, funding, and time, the foundations of our work will be undermined.

The problems mentioned above reflect my own difficulties as a graduate student, and I do not pretend that these are the only issues that exist. Many graduate students are undoubtedly facing worse circumstances and different problems. My heart sinks for those going on the job market next year. I hope departments, such as mine, fight for their graduate students

to receive extra time and funding. For those departments that have remained silent thus far, reach out to your graduate students and check in on them. In addition to navigating professional uncertainties, many are grappling with depression, anxiety, and family difficulties as a result of the pandemic. As murmurs of extended tenure clocks start to be part of regular conversation, remember that current graduate students are future faculty, and they, too, will need more time to complete their work. The fate of graduate research

remains uncertain, but our response to the problem does not have to be. I hope universities, departments, and academic organizations will reaffirm and expand their support of graduate students so they can complete their degrees and move forward, despite the crisis.

*John Vsetecka is a PhD candidate in Soviet/East European History at Michigan State University. His dissertation is entitled “In the Aftermath of Hunger: Recovery, Relief, and Retribution in Soviet Ukraine, 1933-1947.” He is also the founder and co-editor of H-Ukraine.*

## ASEEES STATEMENT CONDEMNING SYSTEMIC RACISM AND POLICE BRUTALITY

The Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES) condemns the brutal killing of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Darnesha Harris, Tamir Rice and many others. We further condemn the decision of local police to resort to coercion in response to the protests and the inflammatory actions by the US administration. We stand in solidarity with Black and other marginalized communities in this moment of collective action against systemic violence directed at people of color by police. We recognize that the dehumanization directed against Black people in the US is a legacy of our history of slavery and a horrifying consequence of racism.

As scholars and students of Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasian history and society, we have gained intimate knowledge of the atrocities committed by authoritarian regimes, which have deployed military and secret police to deprive people of their rights of association and expression. But we also study people who engage in courageous individual and collective acts against such regimes, in some cases leading to revolution. Crucially, we are familiar with rulers who declare that protestors deserve the coercion used against them and squash the protests, leading to more authoritarianism. This should never happen in a democracy.

As our democracy is in crisis, we declare that it is more important than ever to engage in reflection and meaningful action to bring more diversity, and to create spaces where scholars of color in our field, and beyond, feel empowered to center marginalized perspectives and can thrive as researchers and educators. This is a time to reflect on the history of our Association, work to undo systemic inequalities, become more inclusive and protect our colleagues whose race or economic situation makes them vulnerable in our society.

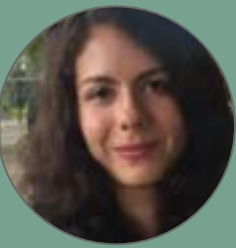
As an association based in the US, a proclaimed democracy, we have the freedom and the moral responsibility to stand up for justice. As researchers and educators, we are committed to dialogue, reflection, and public engagement. We call upon our members to use their expertise both in the classroom and in public forums to engage in discussions on race and racial justice. Scholarship and creative work can be powerful tools in the struggle against racism and racialized violence, and today we must use them in this way. We also affirm that we will redouble our efforts to create a safe, equitable and just community in every place where we live, study, teach and work, beginning in our own organization and field.

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The Executive Committee and the Committee for the Advocacy of Diversity and Inclusion are working on programs and actions to address race and racism our field. More information is forthcoming.

Click here for [relevant resources](#) and for [this statement translated into multiple languages](#)

## 2020 ASEES DISSERTATION GRANT & INTERNSHIP GRANT RECIPIENTS



### SUMMER DISSERTATION WRITING GRANT

- Anna Amramina, U of Minnesota, History of Science, Technology and Medicine, "A Common Language of the Earth: U.S.-Soviet Collaboration in the Earth Sciences"
- Jamie Blake, UNC at Chapel Hill, Music, "Architects of Russian America: Transnational Musical Networks in the Early Twentieth Century"
- Zhanna Budenkova, U of Pittsburgh, Slavic Languages and Literatures / Film studies, "War and Nostalgia in the Soviet Imaginary of Outer Space: A Study of Science Fiction"
- LeiAnnaHamel, U of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Slavic Languages and Literatures, "Undisciplined Bodies: Deviant Female Sexuality in Russian and Yiddish Literatures, 1877-1929"
- Alexandra Novitskaya, Stony Brook U, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, "More than Safety from Persecution: Russian-speaking LGBTQ Migrants in New York City"
- Ievgeniia Sakal, Yale U, History, "Old Books, New Books: Rethinking Religion in Early Modern Russia and Ukraine"
- Anton Shirikov, U of Wisconsin-Madison, Political Science, "Who Trusts Untrustworthy Media: Partisanship, News Consumption, and Information Credibility in Non-Democracies"
- Georgiy Syunyaev, Columbia U, Political Science, "Controlled Confusion: Manipulation of Public Attribution of Responsibilities in Decentralized Autocracies"

### DISSERTATION RESEARCH GRANT

- Oskar Czendze, UNC at Chapel Hill, History, "From Loss to Invention: Galician Jews Between New York and East Central Europe, 1890-1938"
- Roman Gilmintinov, Duke U, History, "Socialist Economization of Nature: Environmental Regulation and the Development of Political Economy in the Soviet Union, 1965-91"
- Roman Hlatky, U of Texas at Austin, Government, "Losing Control: International Actors and Nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe"
- Karolina Koziura, The New School U, Sociology, "The Making of Holodomor in State Archives. Narratives of Famine and their Afterlives in Contemporary Ukraine"
- Mariana Irby, U of Pennsylvania, Anthropology, "Fabricating the Nation: The Political Matter of Tajik Dressmaking"
- Gheorghe Pacurar, Indiana U, Bloomington, Religious Studies, "Incarnate Ecclesiology and the Making of Democratic Law in Interwar Romania"
- Jonathan Raspe, Princeton U, History, "Empire of Industry: The Soviet Economy and the National Republics, 1940-1990"
- Emily Roche, Brown U, History, "No Second Troy: Traumatic Past and Ideological Futures in the Recreation of Warsaw, 1943-56"
- Sohee Ryuk, Columbia U, History, "Weaving 'Oriental Carpets' into the Soviet Union: Handicraft and Folk Art at the Intersections of Nations, Commodity, and Labor, 1928-1982"
- Richard Tate, U of Florida, Natural Resources and Environment,

"Contemporary Patterns of Plant Use Knowledge in Ach'ara, Georgia (Caucasus)"

- Zofia Wlodarczyk, UC Davis, Sociology, "Female Chechen Refugees Fleeing Domestic Violence: The Escape, Integration Process and Transnational Ties"

### DISSERTATION RESEARCH GRANT IN WOMEN AND GENDER STUDIES

- Megan Armknecht, Princeton U, History, "Diplomatic Households and the Foundations of U.S.-Russian Relations, 1781-1870"

### DISSERTATION RESEARCH GRANT IN LGBTQ STUDIES

- Maya Garcia, Harvard U, Slavic Languages and Literatures, "Ivan the Terrible's Queer Legacy in the Arts"

### JOSEPH BRADLEY AND CHRISTINE RUANE DISSERTATION RESEARCH GRANT IN RUSSIAN STUDIES

- Ji Soo Hong, Brown U, Department of History, "Siberia for Development:

Carbon Energies, Processed Nutrients, and Transnational Ventures in Eastern Siberia, 1945-2005"

### UNDERSTANDING MODERN RUSSIA GRANT

- Rusana Cieply, UC Berkeley, Anthropology, "Going Back to the Land: Romanticism, Memory, and Imagination in the Russian Far East"
- Stas Gorelik, The George Washington U, Political Science, "What Makes Final Straws Final for Restive Masses?"
- Grigory Hakimov, U of Massachusetts Amherst, Political Science and Legal Studies, "'Civil Society Engagement in Elections under Hybrid Regimes: Domestic Election-Monitoring Groups in Russia'"
- Dina Shvetsov, The New School, Politics/Social Research, "Property Relations in The Condition of Legal Pluralism in Chechnya: Preliminary Research"

### INTERNSHIP GRANT

- Megan Burnham, Indiana U, Russian and East European Studies Institute
- Olivia Crough, Harvard U, Art, Film, and Visual Studies
- Clare Angeroth Franks, Indiana U, Russian and East European Institute
- Zahra Ghannadian, U of Pittsburgh, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs
- Ryan Gourley, UC Berkeley, Music
- Amanda Hardy, U of Michigan - Ann Arbor, Center for Russian, Eurasian, and East European Studies, School of Information
- Devon Harris, Georgetown U, School of Foreign Service
- David Hayter, Virginia Commonwealth U, History
- Claudia Lonkin, U of Alberta, History
- Sasha Razor, UCLA, Slavic, East European & Eurasian Languages & Cultures
- Anne Redmond, U of St. Thomas, Opus College of Business
- Alexa Tignall, U of Pittsburgh, Anthropology

Thanks to individual and institutional donors who have given generously to our fundraising campaigns, we were able to award over \$340,000 in grants to graduate students this spring.

Please consider giving to one of these important grant programs. Donations can be made in honor or in memory of a mentor, a scholar, or a colleague who made your success possible.

**Give Today!**

*Cinemasaurus: Russian Film in Contemporary Context*, edited by Nancy Condee, Alexander Prokhorov, and Elena Prokhorova (Academic Studies Press, April 2020) examines contemporary Russian cinema as a new visual economy, emerging over three decades after the Soviet collapse. Focusing on debates and films exhibited at Russian and US public festivals where the films have premiered, the volume's contributors examine four issues of Russia's transition: (1) its imperial legacy, (2) the emergence of a film market and its new genres, (3) Russia's uneven integration into European values and hierarchies, and (4) the renegotiation of state power vis-à-vis arthouse and independent cinemas. The editors have created two sample syllabi using *Cinemasaurus* as a guide, complete with suggested readings, film trailers and clips, and links to where the films can be found legally online.

*Colonial Fantasies, Imperial Realities: Race Science and the Making of Polishness on the Fringes of the German Empire, 1840–1920*, by Lenny A. Ureña Valerio, was published by Ohio University Press in 2019.

Ureña Valerio investigates cultural dynamics in the history of medicine, colonialism, and migration that bring Germany and Prussian Poland closer to the colonial and postcolonial worlds in Africa and Latin America. Ureña Valerio also studies the medical projects and scientific ideas that traveled between the colonies and the German metropole, which were influential in racializing Slavic populations and in bringing scientific conceptions of race to the every day German Empire. By studying these scientific and political debates, Ureña Valerio uncovers novel ways to connect medicine, migration, and colonialism and provides a model for the analysis of Polish history from a global perspective.

*Gaia, Queen of Ants*, by Hamid Ismailov, was translated from the Uzbek by Shelley Fairweather-Vega and published by Syracuse University Press, February 2020.

*Enterprising Empires: Russia and Britain in Eighteenth-Century Eurasia*, by Matthew P. Romaniello, was published by Cambridge University Press in February 2019.

Commercial competition between Britain and Russia became entangled during the eighteenth century in Iran, the Middle East, and China, and disputes emerged over control of the North Pacific. Focusing on the British Russia Company, Romaniello charts the ways in which the company navigated these commercial and diplomatic frontiers. He reveals how geopolitical developments affected trade far more than commercial regulations, while also challenging depictions of this period as a straightforward era of Russian economic decline.

*Interwar East Central Europe, 1918–1941: The Failure of Democracy-building, the Fate of Minorities*, ed. by Sabrina P. Ramet, was published by Routledge in May 2020. The book includes the following contributors: Mieczysław Biskupski on Poland; Sabrina Ramet and Carol Skalnik Leff on Czechoslovakia; Béla Bodó on Hungary; Roland Clark on Romania; Christian Promitzer on Bulgaria; Stipica Grgić on Yugoslavia; Bernd J. Fischer on Albania; Robert Bideleux on Peasant Parties; and Stefano Bianchini with an Afterword.

Matthew Lee Miller edited *John R. Mott, the American YMCA, and Revolutionary Russia* (Slavica Publishers, 2020). This book presents a collection of public addresses and letters created during Mott's participation in a US diplomatic mission to Russia from May to August 1917. These documents offer perspectives on several momentous events and leaders of the era: World War I, the February Revolution, officials of the Provisional Government, and clergy of the Orthodox Church. Together, these writings illustrate the assumptions, convictions, and relationships that contributed to a very significant episode of Russian-American interaction.



*Lewis Milestone: Life and Films*, by Harlow Robinson, was published by University Press of Kentucky in November 2019.

This biography presents Milestone's life in full and explores his many films from the silent to the sound era. Born in Ukraine, Milestone came to America as a tough, resourceful Russian-speaking teenager and learned about film by editing footage from the front as a member of the Signal Corps of the US Army during World War I. During the course of his film career, which spanned more than 40 years, this work also examines Milestone's experience during the Hollywood Blacklist period, when he was one of the first prominent Hollywood figures to fall under suspicion for his alleged Communist sympathies.

*Making Martyrs: The Language of Sacrifice in Russian Culture from Stalin to Putin*, by Yuliya Minkova (Boydell & Brewer, April 2018), examines the language of canonization and vilification in Soviet and post-Soviet media, official literature, and popular culture. Sacrificial mythology continues to maintain a hold in contemporary culture, as evidenced by the Russian intelligentsia's fascination with the former oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the Russian media coverage of the war in Ukraine, laws against US adoption of Russian children and against the alleged propaganda of homosexuality aimed at minors, renewed national pride in wartime heroes, and the current usage of the words "sacred victim" in public discourse. In examining these cases, the book traces the trajectory of sacrificial language from individual identity construction to its later function of lending personality and authority to the Soviet and post-Soviet state.

*Poetic Canons, Cultural Memory and Russian National Identity after 1991*, by Katharine Hodgson and Alexandra Smith, was published by Oxford University Press in early 2020.

This book explores changes to the poetry canon to show how cultural memory has informed the evolution of post-Soviet Russian identity. It examines how concerns over identity are shaping the canon, and

interrelationship between national identity and attempts to revise the canon. This study situates the discussion of national identity within the cultural field and in the context of canon formation as a complex expression of aesthetic, political, and institutional factors.

*The Post-Chornobyl Library: Ukrainian Postmodernism of the 1990s*, by Tamara Hundorova, was published by Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute and Academic Studies Press in early 2020.

Having exploded on the margins of Europe, Chornobyl marked the end of the Soviet Union and tied the era of postmodernism in Western Europe with nuclear consciousness. The Post-Chornobyl Library in Tamara Hundorova's book becomes a metaphor of a new Ukrainian literature of the 1990s, which emerges out of the Chornobyl nuclear trauma of April 26, 1986. Ukrainian postmodernism turns into a writing of trauma and reflects the collisions of the post-Soviet era as well as the processes of decolonizing the national culture. A carnivalization of the apocalypse is the main paradigm of the post-Chornobyl text, which appeals to "homelessness" and the repetition of "the end of histories."

*Selling the Story: Transaction and Narrative Value in Balzac, Dostoevsky, and Zola*, by Jonathan Paine, was published by Harvard University Press in August 2019.

Paine, a literary scholar and investment banker, applies economic criticism to canonical novels, changing the way we read these classics and proposing a new model for how economics can inform literary analysis. *Selling the Story* shows how the business of literature affects even literary devices such as genre, plot, and repetition. Paine argues that no book can be properly understood without reference to its point of sale: the author's knowledge of the market, of reader expectations, and of his or her own efforts to define and achieve literary value.

# 2020 STEPHEN F. COHEN ROBERT C. TUCKER DISSERTATION FELLOWS

The CTFD Program for Russian Historical Studies supports the next generation of US scholars to conduct their doctoral dissertation research in Russia. This program is sponsored by the KAT Charitable Foundation, which we thank for its generous support.

## DISSERTATION RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS

### Elizabeth Abosch

History, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
"The 'Outcry from the Criminal Soul': The Social Imaginary of Song, Community, and State Power in the Soviet Union, 1920-1980"

Abosch's dissertation will examine the social imaginary of the criminal underworld in Soviet history from 1920 to 1980, from the jazz performer Leonid Utesov's first years in the Soviet limelight as a performer of *blatnaia pesnia*—criminal, underground, and prison songs—to the songs of Arkadiy Severny, the "king of underground music." Her research will reveal the history of a seldom studied but dynamic genre of Soviet music. She investigates the paradox of the popularity—or perhaps, necessity—of this social imaginary of a criminal society that had no right to exist in the Soviet project. Her dissertation will examine the ways that people engaged with it to negotiate what it meant to be a Soviet citizen, and their

relationship with state authority, interrogating the effects of twentieth-century audiovisual technologies on popular and mass culture.

### Samuel Finkelman

History, University of Pennsylvania  
"Ghetto, Gulag, Geulah: Jewish Nationalism, Inter-ethnic Encounters, and Collective Memory of Catastrophe in the Post-Stalin Soviet Union, 1953-1982"

This project explores the encounter between Jewish and Russian nationalist intellectuals and activists in the post-Stalin Soviet Union, focusing on their mutual efforts to construct collective memories of national catastrophe. Soviet-Jewish national activists' exchanges, tensions, and affinities with their Russian counterparts—particularly over the topics of nationally experienced suffering, incarceration, and political violence—motivated new Jewish thinking about nationhood, political community and homeland. Exploring the common ideas and interactions between Jewish and Russian national movements, this dissertation shows why forces traditionally thought of as anti-Jewish nonetheless significantly influenced Soviet Jews in their formulation of a politics rooted in national redemption. This reassessment of late-Soviet Jewish nationalism will stimulate further

research on how inter-ethnic exchange paradoxically invigorated nationalist politics throughout the Soviet Union in the post-Stalin era.

### Kamal Kariem

Anthropology, Princeton University  
"Believing Conservation: Altering Land Relations and Indigeneity on the Bikin River"

Kariem's dissertation broadly investigates environmental governance in the Russian Far East (RFE) through the lens of the recently founded Bikin National Park. Founded in 2015, this National Park is located in the Pozharskii District of Primorskii Krai with offices in Luchegorsk and Krasnyi Yar. Research for the project would primarily occur in Krasnyi Yar and on the Park's territory and in Vladivostok. This Park is the only protected area in Russia, which has goals not only for the protection of biodiversity but also for the preservation of indigenous culture and traditional ways of life. The largest indigenous group in the region of the Park is the Udege, a small-numbered indigenous people. From exploratory research conducted during winter 2018, many Udege are happy with the arrangement and the protection of their traditional lands. This satisfaction with the National Park stimulates his research interest in the Bikin National Park

as a potential model for how protected areas and indigenous people could relate. Through his project, Kariem aims to understand Post-Soviet transformations in nature, identity, and property triggered by conservation, with an eye toward how conservation work protects biodiversity and preserves cultural practices and ways of life.

### Harrison King

History, University of California, Berkeley  
"From Porous Frontier to Cold War Boundary: A Biography of the Russian-Ottoman and Soviet-Turkish Border, 1878-1991"

King's dissertation explores the entangled histories of the Soviet Union and the Turkish Republic through the prism of state- and nation-building campaigns in the former Russian-Ottoman borderlands. Focusing on the provinces of Batum, Kars, and Ardahan, he traces the remaking of this multiethnic frontier as it was divided between two revolutionary states after the First World War. Through a bottom-up comparison of Soviet and Turkish modernization drives in Batumi in Soviet Georgia and Kars in eastern Turkey, King juxtaposes the process of building a multinational socialist state in Transcaucasia with the equally transformative drive to construct a homogeneous Turkish nation-state, underscoring the affinities between two utopian political projects. Grounding his research in the experiences of predominately Muslim populations as they encountered and contested Sovietization and secularizing Kemalist reforms at the local level, King demonstrates how similar post-

imperial trajectories unfolded across the Soviet-Turkish border. Lastly, as both states became increasingly concerned with securing their borderlands and forging "ideal" citizens, he shows how fruitful cooperation and anti-imperialist solidarity during the interwar period descended into a Cold War rivalry that persisted until 1991.

## DISSERTATION COMPLETION FELLOWSHIPS

### Matthew Honegger

Music, Princeton University  
"Stalinist Cultural Diplomacy and the Origins of Soviet-U.S. Musical Exchange, 1925-1960"

Honegger's research recovers an early history of Soviet efforts to forge musical ties with the United States. Drawing on institutional records, correspondence, scores, recordings, memoirs, and published and unpublished music criticism gathered through archival work in the United States and Russia, Matthew Honegger reassesses this contact's extent and legacy. He traces its beginnings in the interwar period, its culmination during the Second World War, and its demise and transformation during the first years of the Cold War. Honegger's work tells an institutional story of how and why the intimate model of Stalinist cultural diplomacy was replaced by the formal and highly publicized reciprocity of Cold War cultural diplomacy and a microhistorical story about the ways in which the idiosyncrasies of state-backed exchange shaped personal relationships, memory, emotions, and self-fashioning. By emphasizing continuity between the interwar and postwar periods, he demonstrates that the "beginning" of Cold War

exchange in the late 1950s was less a beginning than a reset, reconfiguration, and reimagining.

### Matthew Klopfenstein

History, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

"Performing Death, Embodying Modernity: Media Spectacle, Public Emotion, and Modern Selves in the Celebrity Funerals of Russian Female Performers, 1859-1919"

In this dissertation, Klopfenstein studies the public funerals of famous women opera stars, actors of the stage and screen, and popular singers as a social phenomenon in late imperial Russia. While scholars have recognized major public funerals as important social events in the Russian Empire, attention has focused almost exclusively on the deaths of male writers, thinkers, and political figures. Through five in-depth case studies, Klopfenstein demonstrates that female performers were the subject of some of the largest and most-discussed public events in Russian history at the time. He analyzes the empire-wide press coverage of the deaths and funerals of these performers to argue that emotion, gender, and mass media were interrelated elements central to the history of the prerevolutionary Russian public sphere. He argues that these funerals and the enormous press attention they generated show that these women were among the era's most socially-resonant figures; their lives provided influential new models of modern identity, and their deaths were public spectacles prompting debate on pressing issues of cultural and social boundaries, health and the body, and the state of society.



## NEW FROM SLAVICA PUBLISHERS

Alexander Marshall, John W. Steinberg, and Steven Sabol, eds. *The Global Impacts of Russia's Great War and Revolution, Book 1: The Arc of Revolution*, xix + 569 p., 2019 (ISBN 978-0-89357-432-1), \$44.95.

Choi Chatterjee, Steven G. Marks, Mary Neuburger, and Steven Sabol, eds. *The Global Impacts of Russia's Great War and Revolution, Book 2, The Wider Arc of Revolution, Part 1*: xvi + 452 p.; *Part 2*: xvi + 380 p., 2019 (ISBN 978-0-89357-433-8; 978-0-89357-434-5), \$44.95.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 was quickly perceived by both contemporaries and subsequent scholars as not merely a domestic event within the Russian Empire, but as a systemic crisis that fundamentally challenged the assumptions underpinning the existing international system. There were

few political developments anywhere in the world in 1917–24 not directly or indirectly influenced by the revolution. *The Arc of Revolution*, the first book, examines the reverberations of the revolution in the geographically contiguous imperial borderlands traditionally contested between imperial Russia and its geopolitical rivals: the terrain stretching from Finland, through Central Europe to the Transcaucasus and Central Asia. *The Wider Arc of Revolution*, the second and third books, examine the revolution's broader impact in regions of the world noncontiguous with Russia itself, from North and South America to Asia, Australia, and various parts of Europe. The emphasis in *The Wider Arc* is on the complex emotional appeal and ideological legacies of Russian communism, including anticommunism, evidenced well into the 20th century.



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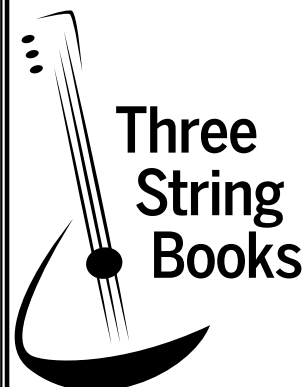
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Three String Books is an imprint of Slavica Publishers devoted to translations of literary works and belles-lettres from Central and Eastern Europe, including Russia and the other successor states of the former Soviet Union.

Talasebek Asemkulov. *A Life at Noon*, trans. Shelley Fairweather-Vega, xii + 210 p., 2019 (ISBN 978-089357-500-7), \$29.95.

Azhigerei is growing up in Soviet Kazakhstan, learning the ancient art of the kuy from his musician father. But with the music comes knowledge about his country, his family, and the past that is at times difficult to bear. Based on the author's own family history, *A Life at Noon* provides us a glimpse into a time and place Western literature has rarely seen as the first post-Soviet novel from Kazakhstan to appear in English.



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.

## INSTITUTIONAL MEMBER NEWS

### BARD COLLEGE

Bard College announces the appointment of award-winning author Masha Gessen as Distinguished Writer in Residence in the Division of Languages and Literature.

Also of note, Bard Abroad will extend a free online Russian language cafe with St. Petersburg-based RSL faculty members and Russian student peers. Those interested in the language cafe should contact Caroline Clark at [caclark@bard.edu](mailto:caclark@bard.edu). Bard's summer language program at Smolny College is cancelled this year.

### THE JORDAN CENTER AT NYU

Congratulations to the winners of the NYU Jordan Center's first-ever [Graduate Student Essay Competition](#). All seven prize-winners — four runners-up plus holders of third, second, and first place — have now been published on *All the Russias*, the Jordan Center blog.

- Zinaida Osipova, Miami University (runner-up): ["All the 'Pravda' about International Women's Day"](#)
- Isabelle DeSisto, Harvard University (runner-up): ["Remembering the Children of Chernobyl: How HBO's 'Chernobyl' Series Revived the Cuba-Chernobyl Connection"](#)
- Daniel Bromberg, Yale University (runner-up): ["Go Back to Your Homeland If You Want to Live: Russian Policy Toward HIV-Positive Central Asians"](#)
- Raymond DeLuca, Harvard University (runner-up): ["Re-Imagining Women at War: Kantemir Balagov's 'Beanpole' \(2019\)"](#)
- Oksana Husieva, University of Kansas (third prize): ["Entirely Different:](#)

[When Feminist, LGBTQIA+, Inclusive, and Environmental Activism Meets Science Fiction"](#)

- Mie Mortensen, Columbia University (second prize): ["The Yogis of the Arbat"](#)
- Julian Waller, George Washington University (first prize): ["Parliamentary Daydreams in Belarus: When the Rubber-Stamp Really is Just a Rubber-Stamp"](#)

### 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 Washington 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.

Please note 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 DC.

Competitions for the fellowships will be held twice yearly with the following application deadlines: March 1 and September 1.

Applicants must submit a completed application – please see the website for more details: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/opportunity/george-f-kennan-fellowship>.

### Title VIII Short Term Scholarships

The next competition is for Title VIII-Supported Short-Term Grants, which allow U.S. citizens whose policy-relevant research in the social sciences or humanities focused on the countries of Eurasia, to spend up to one month using the library, archival, and other specialized resources of the Washington, D.C. area, while in residence at the Kennan Institute. The deadline for these grants is September 15, 2019.

Please see the website for more details on the Title VIII Short Term Grants: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/opportunity/kennan-institute-short-term-grant>.

Scholars in Residence  
The Kennan Institute welcomes its current and incoming scholars:

### Title VIII Short Term Scholars

- Anara Tabyshalieva, Associate Professor, Marshall University, ["Rethinking cooperation and conflict between Russia and the Central Asian countries"](#)



Vol. 21, no. 2 (Spring 2020)

*Forum: Political and Social Concepts in the Russian Enlightenment*

Articles by SERGEY POLSKOY, KONSTANTIN D. BUGROV, and MAYA LAVRINOVICH  
Reaction by VLADISLAV RJEÛTSKI

*Articles*

IRINA VOLKOVA

Spanish Republicans' Struggle and Its Impact on the Soviet Wartime Generation

RACHEL APPLEBAUM

The Rise of Russian in the Cold War

*Review Article*

JULIA HERZBERG

Faith on the Menu

*Review Essays*

FRANCES SADDINGTON

Treasures on the Bookshelf

NARI SHELEKPAYEV

Capital Cities, Politics, and Urban Life in Central Asia, 1955–2017

*Kritika* is dedicated to critical inquiry into the history of Russia and Eurasia. The quarterly journal features research articles as well as analytical review essays and extensive book reviews, especially of works in languages other than English. Subscriptions and previously published volumes available from Slavica—including, as of 16, no. 1, e-book editions (ePub, MOBI). Contact our business manager at [slavica@indiana.com](mailto:slavica@indiana.com) for all questions regarding subscriptions and eligibility for discounts.

## THE PUSHKIN HOUSE

The jury overseeing the Pushkin House Russian Book Prize 2020 has shortlisted finalists for the best non-fiction writing published for the first time during 2019 in English on the Russian-speaking world.

The six 2020 shortlisted titles are:

- *Stalin's Scribe: The Life of Mikhail Sholokhov* by Brian Boeck
- *Manual for Survival: A Chernobyl Guide to the Future* by Kate Brown
- *Floating Coast: An Environmental History of the Bering Strait* by Bathsheba Demuth
- *An Impeccable Spy: Richard Sorge, Stalin's Master Agent* by Owen Matthews
- *The Return of the Russian Leviathan* by Sergei Medvedev
- *This Thing of Darkness: Eisenstein's Ivan the Terrible in Stalin's Russia* by Joan Neuberger

## UNC AT CHAPEL HILL

The Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages (GSL) and the Center for Slavic, Eurasian and East European Studies (CSEES) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill have been awarded a \$1.2 million grant to jointly launch an Undergraduate Russian Flagship Program, the first of its kind in the UNC System and one of only eight in the United States.

The Language Flagship is a federally funded, national initiative by the National Security Education Program (NSEP) and the Institute of International Education (IIE). It supports university language programs with demonstrated experience delivering high-quality undergraduate language instruction to students of all majors. The initiative's goal is to foster professional levels of linguo-cultural competency in languages the U.S. government defines as critical to U.S. national security and economic

competitiveness. Through a combination of intensive language courses, study abroad and internships, Flagship programs prepare students to take their place among the next generation of global professionals.

Stanislav Shvabrin, associate professor of Russian, will serve as the director of the Undergraduate Russian Flagship Program, which will become an integral part of Carolina's already established Russian Program. The Undergraduate Russian Flagship Program will serve students of all academic backgrounds, including ROTC cadets, by offering a variety of pathways to attain professional proficiency in Russian.

The long-term goals of the UNC Russian Flagship align with Carolina's goal of infusing the campus with a global mindset.

## UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

The University of Pittsburgh's Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies (REEES) is proud to announce over one million downloads (since February 2015) of the podcast Sean's Russia Blog (SRB). SRB is one of the top five podcast and website resources in the US, covering issues of Eurasian culture, history, and politics. For a two-part interview with Sean Guillory on NYU Jordan Center's site, see Maya Vinokur's posts ([Part I](#) and [Part II](#)). Sean's Russia Blog participates in an ongoing collaboration with two partners: [Kennan Institute's Russia File](#) and [Harvard University's Russia Matters](#). For Sean's recent podcasts on Eurasian culture, history, and politics, please visit <https://srbpodcast.org/>.



## PERSONAGES

The Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowships program awards 65 fellowships annually. The fellowships support a year of research and writing to help advanced graduate students in the humanities and social sciences in the last year of Ph.D. dissertation writing. Among this year's winners is **Tyler Benjamin Adkins**, for his work "The Life of Forms and Forms of Life in Post-Soviet Siberia."

*Ab Imperio Quarterly* announced the winners of the annual Ab Imperio Award for the best study in new imperial history and history of diversity in Northern Eurasia, up to the late twentieth century for 2019.

**Heather Coleman** received Special Mention for Best article in a peer-reviewed academic journal or chapter in a scholarly collection for "From Kiev across All Russia: The 900th Anniversary of the Christianization of Rus' and the Making of a National Saint in the Imperial Borderlands," *Ab Imperio*, Volume 19, Issue 4 (2018): 95–129 (March 2019).

The American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) announces the [2020 cohort of ACLS Fellows](#). The ACLS Fellowship program honors scholars in the humanities and humanistic social sciences who have the potential to make significant contributions to knowledge in their fields.

- **Lindsay M. Ceballos** for "Dostoevsky's Disciples: Religion and National Ideology in Russian Culture, 1881–1913"
- **Kelsey Rubin-Detlev** for "The Bible in Enlightenment Russia"
- **David L. Hoffmann** for "War, Gender, and Memory"
- **Douglas Northrop** for "Four Days that Shook the World: Earthquakes and Empire Along the Eurasian Frontier"
- **David Shneer** for "Art is My Weapon: Anti-Fascist Music, Yiddish Performance, and Holocaust Memory (1933-1989)"

- **Emily Wang** for "Pushkin, the Decembrists, and Civic Sentimentalism,"

[NEH announces \\$22.2 million for 224 humanities projects](#) that support the preservation of historical collections, humanities exhibitions and documentaries, scholarly research, and curriculum projects. Among this year's funded projects are:

- **Steven Harris** for "Flying Aeroflot: A History of the Soviet Union in the Jet Age"
- **Scott Kenworthy** for "Patriarch Tikhon Bellavin and the Orthodox Church in Revolutionary Russia"
- **Yakov Klots** for "Contraband Russian Literature and the Cold War (1956–1991)"
- **Thomas Ort** for "Heydrich's Shadow: The History, Memory, and Meaning of an Assassination"

[Amarilis Lugo de Fabritz](#) was named Howard University's Faculty recipient of the 2020 Bunche Center International Award.

National Humanities Center announces 2020–21 Fellows, including **Joan Neuberger**, (Carl and Lily Pforzheimer Foundation Fellowship) whose project is entitled "Global Eisenstein: Immersion in Nature, Art, and the World."

Carnegie Corporation of New York announced the 2020 class of Andrew Carnegie Fellows, who will each receive a grant of \$200,000 in philanthropic support for high-caliber scholarly research in the humanities and social sciences that addresses important and enduring issues confronting our society. Among this year's winners is ASEEES member **Bathsheba Demuth**. Her project will examine the interaction of legal rights and ecology in the Yukon watershed over the past 300 years.

Winners of the Annual ACTR National Post-Secondary Russian Essay Contest. Topic: "Who or what changed your life?"

Category A Level 1

- Karolina Partyga, Columbia University
- Meghana Bharadwaj, Smith College
- Jasmine Ding, Vanderbilt University
- Isaac Parlin, Columbia University
- Alexander Lee, Harvard University

Category A Level 2

- Stanley Kanevsky, DLIFLC
- Nadia Matin, Vanderbilt University
- Shannon Wersh, DLIFLC
- Daniel Aguda, DLIFLC
- Benjamin Struve, DLIFLC

Category A Level 3

- Evan Thieme, Brigham Young University
- Martha Hamilton McCafferty, U of Mississippi
- Colby Peterson, BYU
- Nathan McGhie, BYU
- Anna Carlson, BYU

Category A Level 4

- Cambry Slight, BYU
- David Jun Lee, Georgetown University
- Charlie Robinson, University of Utah
- Emily Herring, Harvard University
- Rebecca Ann Deitsch, Harvard University

Category B Level 1

- Iryna Mykhaylivna Zyma, NYU

Category B Level 2

- Ilona Letran, DLIFLC

Category B Level 3

- Aziz Tashpulat, DLIFLC

Category B Level 4

- Katarina Nestic, Dartmouth College

Category C Level 1

- Anna Temchenko, Columbia University
- Maximilian Ozerov, Columbia University
- Sergey Komzyuk, UCLA
- Anthony Ozerov, Columbia University
- Sophia Model, Portland State University

Category C Level 2

- Maria Guseva, Purdue University
- Ruth Rosenblum, Brandeis University

Category C Level 3

- Boris Ardemasov, Bowdoin College

Category C Level 4

- Filipp Bochkov, DLIFLC

CfS: ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN IN SLAVIC STUDIES AWARDS

The Association for Women in Slavic Studies (AWSS) is pleased to announce the call for nominations for the [Mary Zirin Prize](#) in recognition of an independent scholar in the field of Slavic Studies. The award of \$500 is named for Mary Zirin, the founder of Women East-West.

The Prize aims to recognize the achievements of independent scholars of any gender identity and to encourage their continued scholarship and service in the fields of Slavic, Eastern European, and Eurasian Studies. The committee encourages applications from those working in the field of women's or gender studies in disciplines such as the humanities and the social sciences.

The Committee encourages the nomination of candidates at all career stages. For the purpose of this award, an independent scholar is defined as a scholar who is not employed at an institution of higher learning, or an employee of a university or college who is not eligible to compete for institutional support for research (for example, those teaching under short-term contracts or working in administrative posts). We welcome nominations from CIS and Central and Eastern Europe.

The Zirin Prize Committee will accept nominations (including self-nominations) until September 1, 2020. Nominations must include: (1) a nomination letter, no more than two pages long, double-spaced; (2) the nominee's current curriculum vitae; and (3) a sample publication (e.g., article or book chapter). The nomination letter should describe the scholar's contribution to the field, as well as work in progress.

Nominations should be sent to prize committee chair [Ellen Elias-Bursac](#).

The Outstanding Achievement Award recognizes the work of a scholar in the field of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies who has also served as a mentor in this field to students/colleagues who identify as female. To submit a nomination, please

write a letter detailing what your candidate for this award has achieved in Slavic Studies in terms of scholarship or other professional accomplishments, as well as mentoring of female students/colleagues. In addition, please provide a short list of references with accompanying email addresses so that the committee can contact these referees directly for further information. The committee recommends that this list include both peers and students/staff.

Email nominations to [Paula Michaels](#).

The AWSS Graduate Research Prize is awarded annually to fund promising graduate-level research in any field of Slavic/East European/Central Asian studies by a woman or on a topic in Women's or Gender Studies related to Slavic Studies/Eastern Europe/Central Asia by a scholar of any gender. Graduate students who are at any stage of master's or doctoral-level research are eligible. Only current graduate students are eligible for this prize. The grant can be used to support expenses related to completion of a thesis or dissertation, as well as travel, services, and/or materials. The award carries a cash prize of \$1000.00. Nominations and self-nominations are welcome.

A completed application consists of 1) a 2-3 page proposal that explains the project, how the funds will be used, and why this funding is necessary for continued progress on the project; 2) a CV; 3) a detailed budget and timeline; and 4) two letters of recommendation. Please submit application materials in MS Word or PDF. Recipients must be or become members of AWSS.

Applications are due by September 1, 2020. Letters of recommendation should be forwarded to the AWSS Graduate Prize Committee Chair directly. Email applications to [Sharon.Kowalsky@tamuc.edu](#)

The AWSS Undergraduate Essay Prize will be awarded to the best undergraduate essay on Slavic, East European, and Eurasian women's and gender studies.

For consideration, essays, from any discipline, must:

- relate to Slavic, East European, or Eurasian women's or gender studies
- have been written while the author was a degree-seeking undergraduate at a tertiary institution
- have been submitted and assessed for an undergraduate class between 1 August 2019 and 30 July 2020.
- be in English
- be 5,000-8,000 words long

Submissions must be accompanied by a nominating letter from the professor who taught the course for which the essay was written. Nominating faculty must be current members of AWSS. Please include the permanent mailing address and email contact information for the student.

Please email an electronic copy of the essay and the letter of nomination (as two separate documents—either WORD or PDF) to EACH of the following four members of the prize committee ([Siobhán Hearne](#), [Barbara Allen](#), [Katherine Bowers](#), and [Igor Fedyukin](#)) by July 31, 2020.

The essay file should be named (NOMINEE'S NAME\_Essay). The letter of nomination file should be named (NOMINEE'S NAME\_Letter).

CfS: MARC RAEFF PRIZE IN 18TH CENTURY RUSSIAN STUDIES

The Eighteenth-Century Russian Studies Association is now accepting submissions for the 2020 Marc Raëff Book Prize, which is awarded for a publication that is of exceptional merit and lasting significance for understanding Imperial Russia during the long 18th century. The recipient of the award will be recognized with a cash prize, which will be presented in November 2020 at the ASEES annual convention in Washington. The award is sponsored by the ECRSA and named in honor of Marc Raëff (1923-2008), historian, teacher, and dix-huitième par excellence.

Submissions are due June 15, 2020. 2020 ECRSA Prize Selection Committee

- [Elena Marasinova](#), Ulitsa Dmitriia Ulianova 19, Institute of Russian History

RAN, Moscow 117292, Russia, (Россия, Москва 117292, Улица Дмитрия Ульянова 19, Институт российской истории РАН),

- [Alexander Martin](#), Dept. of History, 434 Decio Hall, Notre Dame, IN 46556
- [Derek Offord](#), 23 Canynge Square, Bristol BS8 3LA, UK
- [Ilya Vinitsky](#), 17 Springdale Road, Princeton NJ 08540

NORTH AMERICAN DOSTOEVSKY SOCIETY STUDENT ESSAY CONTEST

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the North American Dostoevsky Society (NADS) has extended its student essay competition to encompass 2019-21. The new submission deadline is June 1 2021 (submissions are welcome on a rolling basis).

The North American Dostoevsky Society (NADS) invites its members in good standing to nominate outstanding student essays on Dostoevsky-related topics. Students are also welcome to nominate their own work, in which case NADS membership is not required. The topic is open; however, Dostoevsky and his works should be the main focus of the essay.

To nominate an undergraduate-student essay, please send an email containing the student's name, email address, institutional affiliation, and the title and level/number of the course for which the essay was written (e.g. BIOL 322 "Dostoevsky and Spiders") to [Vladimir Ivantsov](#). Please attach the essay to the email as a .pdf file containing no identifying information about the author. The essay should be no more than 4000 words; 12 font size, double-spaced; it should consistently follow either MLA or Chicago style and contain full bibliographical information on the used source.

To nominate a graduate-student essay, please send an email containing the student's name, email address, and institutional affiliation to [Greta Matzner-Gore](#). Please attach the essay to the email as a .pdf file containing no identifying information about the author. The essay

should be no more than 8000 words; 12 font size, double-spaced; and it should consistently follow either MLA or Chicago style and contain full bibliographical information on the used sources.

SOCIETY FOR ROMANIAN STUDIES 12TH ANNUAL GRADUATE STUDENT ESSAY PRIZE

The Society for Romanian Studies (SRS) is pleased to announce the [Twelfth Annual Graduate Student Essay Prize](#) competition for an outstanding unpublished essay or thesis chapter. The submitted single-author work must be written in English by a graduate student in any social science or humanities discipline on a Romanian or Moldovan subject, broadly and inclusively understood.

The competition is open to current MA and doctoral students or to those who defended dissertations in the academic year 2019–2020. The submitted work should have been completed during the 2018–19 academic year. If the essay is a dissertation chapter, it should be accompanied by the dissertation abstract and table of contents. Expanded versions of conference papers are also acceptable if accompanied by a description of the panel and the candidate's conference paper proposal. Candidates should clearly indicate the format of the essay submitted. Essays/chapters should be up to 10,000 words double-spaced, including citations.

Candidates should clearly indicate their institutional affiliation. Include as well your current e-mail and postal addresses so that you may be contacted. Please send a copy of the essay, any accompanying documentation (as both Word and PDF please) and an updated CV to Gerard. Weber@bcc.cuny.edu

Applicants are not required to be members of SRS in order to apply. Deadline for submissions is 15 July 2020.

SRS Essay Prize Committee Members: [Gerard Weber](#) (Chair), [Alexandra Chiriac](#), [Rodica Milena Zaharia](#).

Upcoming Articles in *Slavic Review* Summer 2020

CRITICAL DISCUSSION FORUM: KATE BROWN, *A MANUAL FOR SURVIVAL: CHERNOBYL GUIDE TO THE FUTURE*

Introduction by Choi Chatterjee

"The Shadow of the Soviet Legacy on the World's Nuclear Future," by Kate Brown

"Manual for a Better Medicine," by Christopher Burton

"Review of Kate Brown, *Manual for Survival*," by Paul Josephson

"Chernobyl and the Production of Ignorance: Review of Kate Brown's *Manual for Survival*," Olga Kuchinskaya

"The Soviet Meltdown," by Serhii Plokhyy

ARTICLES

"Building Yugoslavia in the Sand? Dalmatian Refugees in Egypt, 1944-1946," by Florian Bieber

"Slam in the Name of Country: Nationalism in Contemporary Azerbaijani Meykhana," by Aneta Strzemzalska

"Ideological Complementarity or Competition? The Kremlin, the Church, and the Monarchist Idea in Today's Russia," Marlene Laruelle

"Global Cities versus Rustbelt Realities: The Dilemmas of Urban Development in Russia," by Stephen Crowley

"Patriotism without Patriots? Perm-36 and Patriotic Legitimation in Russia," by J. Paul Goode



# 52nd Annual ASEEES Convention

**Nov. 5-8, 2020**

Marriott Wardman Park • Washington, DC

- **Registration Information**
- **Program Information**
- **Diversity & Inclusion Travel Grant**

We at ASEEES are closely monitoring the developments of the COVID-19 pandemic as we move toward our convention in November. We are planning for a variety of options, including an in-person convention, and we will make changes as necessary to ensure the health and well-being of our community. For updates please check our [COVID-19](#) updates page.

## ASEEES Membership

Join the 3,300 individual members and receive:

- Discounted convention registration fees
- *Slavic Review* and NewsNet
- Access to ASEEES Commons, job, fellowship/grant announcements
- Eligibility for travel grants, research funding, and first book subventions
- Access to mentoring, networking and professional development opportunities

Dues structured at several levels, including Reduced Dues for low-income scholars living and working in Eastern Europe/Eurasia

Courtesy of washington.org

### **EXHIBIT & ADVERTISING INFO**

Each year 60-70 publishers, universities, and non-profit organizations exhibit during the annual ASEEES Convention. We also offer advertising space in the Program distributed to all Convention attendees.

**We hope that you will participate as an Exhibitor or Advertiser**

### **BECOME A SPONSOR**

Consider sponsoring the ASEEES Convention. This is a great opportunity to show support for the Slavic, East European and Eurasian studies and be recognized online and at the convention by all attendees.