

DEPARTMENT OF SLAVIC LANGUAGES & LITERATURES



Dear colleagues, students, alumni, and friends of the Slavic Department,

When we were last in touch with many of you, in a spring 2021 e-newsletter, we were just beginning to see our way out of the global pandemic with a glimmer of hope. The intervening years have sent many additional unforeseen challenges our way, from the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the momentum that produced for decolonizing the field and decentering Russia, to the increasingly uncertain environment for higher ed under a new administration. But we are excited to reconnect with many more of you now with a print newsletter, to let you know how the department has been responding to these challenges and is emerging even stronger.

Illinois has a long history of support for Ukrainian studies, and we are fortunate to have had the opportunity to build further in this area through a new faculty hire and generous donations to the department in memory of professor Dmytro Shtohryn. You can read in this newsletter about professor Olha Khometa, our new faculty member, and about the many initiatives on campus and in our department for supporting Ukrainian scholars and Ukrainian studies. We have renewed professor Shtohryn's tradition of hosting Ukrainian studies conferences on

campus with a major international conference in the fall of 2023 and another planned for this coming fall. The Shtohryn endowment enabled a rich program this year with visits by Ukrainian and Ukrainian-American poets and translators Olga Livshin, Halyna Kruk, and Oksana Maksymchuk, novelist Volodymyr Rafeyenko, and a lecture on "Ecocide in Ukraine" by



Ukrainian-American poet Oksana Maksymchuk responding to a question from the audience during her lecture. (Photo by David Cooper)

Darya Tsymbalyuk. The department also hosted the annual Czech and Slovak Studies Workshop in spring 2023.

We continue to offer a full program of study of Russian language, literature, and culture, though how that is approached has been changing, with new course content and titles that recontextualize the material in response to the broader

field's endeavors to decolonize. Study abroad for Russian is one area that had to quickly adjust to the new circumstances,

and I recommend the articles by two of our graduate students about their experiences as a student in Armenia and as an instructor in Kyrgyzstan for Russian-

language programs. Our faculty have won recognition for their teaching and their research, as detailed in another article, and have continued to publish actively, even as our faculty ranks have experienced some shifts: Lilya Kaganovsky and Roman Ivashkiv departed and this December, Harriet Murav, our bedrock who rebuilt the department in the 2000s, retired. Professor Khometa and our new language program coordinator, Tetyana Dzyadevych, have brought us new energy and, with professor Dzyadevych, some fun new ways to engage our language students and a renewal of the Slavic Talent Show.

We would love to reconnect with more of our department alumni. Please do drop us a line and let us know where you are and what you have been doing. Until next time.

With all best wishes,

David Cooper



George Gasyna inducting Rebecca Lee into the Dobro Slovo National Slavic Honor Society in 2024. (Photo by David Cooper)

Developments in studying Russian abroad:

My reflections on studying in Armenia

By Mack Noxon

Since the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Russian language programs have faced new challenges in providing Russian-language study abroad experiences for students.

Not only did traditional study abroad locations become suddenly unavailable, but attitudes toward Russia and the Russian language in post-Soviet countries have changed. Although some may view these changes as a hindrance to Russian-language study abroad programs, it may be more beneficial to view these shifts as positive developments for the diversification of Russian language study. What opportunities do they provide students, and how do they deepen students’ knowledge of the region more broadly?

First, there is the problem of Russocentrism in Russian language curriculums. Traditionally, Russian language classes place little focus on non-Slavic areas of the former Russian Empire and Soviet Union. When I studied in Armenia, we had a weekly class dedicated to Armenian history and culture, but our other classes were otherwise heavily focused on Russian culture, literature, and history. This came across a bit ironic to me; we were students studying in Armenia and taught by Armenian professors, but the curriculum was taught as if it were occurring in Russia. As a result, a lot of my cultural learning happened outside the classroom and at optional extracurricular events. Students could choose their level of involvement with Armenian culture, which was both a benefit and disadvantage of the curriculum. Yet, by studying abroad, students learned about the *byt* of Armenia, whether that was on the crowded marshrutkas, among the bustling crowds on Northern Avenue, or by walking past the various fruit vendors along Yerevan’s main streets. Even if the classroom was largely focused on Russia, the outside world was not.

Of course, Armenia is not Russia, nor should it be treated as such. Studying in Armenia, Kazakhstan, and other countries should not be viewed as a mere replacement for the study abroad experiences that can no longer take place in Russia. These countries are not surrogates for Russia itself, no matter how many Russian speakers live there or how much shared culture the country has with Russia. Moreover, studying Russian in these countries also means accepting the varied attitudes toward Russian itself. Russian language learners must be ready to accept different attitudes toward speaking Russian in

a given country. To study Russian in these spaces is to acknowledge the language as a guest, specifically one that must be welcomed in instead of expected entry. In Armenia, my own experiences with speaking Russian varied. Many of my interactions were neutral to positive, as it was obvious that I was not Armenian and Russia was the main shared language between me and Armenians. Other times, it was clear that Russian was not viewed positively by my interlocutor, and it was not uncommon to not be understood, whether that was due to my accent, my interlocutor not speaking Russian, or them refusing to speak it altogether. These experiences come with the terrain of studying Russian outside of Russia, and it can serve a didactic purpose for Russian language students.

To conclude, diversifying the locations of Russian study abroad programs is a positive, and one that I hope doesn’t vanish when or if travel to Russia becomes safe once more. Reverting to a Russia-centered abroad experience ignores all the wonderful opportunities that traveling beyond Russia entails. Additionally, it reinforces a narrative that these countries’ main value derives from being a stand-in for Russia when necessary. Overall, study abroad programs in non-Russian countries reflect a much-needed diversification of Russian language studies and curriculum that we should embrace and cultivate further.



Yerevan cityscape. (Photo by Mack Noxon)

Teaching Russian in Kyrgyzstan

By Maria Glukhova



(Photo by Maria Glukhova)

This summer will mark my fourth time teaching Russian at Bard College’s Russian in Central Asia Summer Program at the American University of Central Asia (AUCA) in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan—and I’m genuinely looking forward to going back.

In 2015, I worked as a Russian language tutor at my alma mater, Smolny College (the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences at St. Petersburg State University), which had a long-standing partnership with Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York. That exchange—one of the most vibrant and successful cultural bridges between the U.S. and Russia—was officially shut down in 2021, after Bard was declared an “undesirable organization” by the Russian Federation. Many other programs like it were dismantled as well. As an alumna of that very exchange (through Bard’s English Language Program), the loss felt personal.

Then, in 2022, while I was already teaching Russian at Colorado College, my former professor from Bard reached out with a question: “We’re trying to bring the Bard-Smolny Russian Summer Program to Bishkek. Would you like to teach there?” I had never been to Central Asia, but I said yes

immediately. Three summers later, I still think it was one of the best decisions I’ve ever made.

That first summer was chaotic—in the best possible way. I was the only language instructor, and Bard accepted students at different proficiency levels—from beginners to advanced speakers—and placed them in one group. We had to build a new curriculum from scratch, since we couldn’t reuse the St. Petersburg materials. Host families weren’t yet familiar with our expectations, and cultural programming was still taking shape. But somehow, it all came together. Despite the improvisation, it turned out to be one of the most memorable summers of my life—and, I hope, for the students as well. Half of that first cohort enrolled in the semester-long American University of Central Asia (AUCA) program afterward, and some are now returning for a higher-level Russian summer course. The program has since expanded to include three levels: beginning, intermediate (which I teach), and advanced.

Bishkek is a multilingual, multicultural city with a rich and complex history. Our partners at AUCA have been incredible, supporting both the academic and cultural elements of the program—helping us coordinate courses, excursions, student housing, and immersive experiences. A typical weekday includes a three-hour Russian language class, followed by a course on Central Asian history, politics, and cultures taught by AUCA faculty. Students also study Kyrgyz, take part in traditional arts and crafts workshops, and enjoy a packed cultural program throughout the week.

They stay with local host families for the full eight weeks, and just like at Smolny, they work closely with Russian-language tutors on homework and conversation. Outside the classroom, we’ve taken students to Lake Issyk-Kul, Lake Song-Kul, Ala-Archa National Park, the National History Museum, the Kyrgyz National Museum of Fine Arts, and many other places. Kyrgyzstan is also home to an incredibly rich food culture—and some of the most hospitable people I’ve ever met. I’ve had to teach every cohort how to say “Thank you, I’m full” in Russian. Unsurprisingly, it never works on Kyrgyz grandmothers.

I’m incredibly grateful for the chance to continue teaching Russian through this program, especially at a time when exchange opportunities with Russia remain closed. Bishkek has become an unexpected but inspiring new home for Russian-language learning, and I hope more students choose to discover this remarkable country, its cultures, and its languages for themselves.

Support for Ukraine, Ukrainian scholars, and Ukrainian studies



Cast and crew for the dramatic sketch from Lesia Ukrainka’s “The Forest Song” at the 2024 Slavic Awards Ceremony.

The Slavic Department made it a priority after the war to expand our engagement in Ukrainian studies by proposing a hire for a tenure-track professor specialist in Ukrainian literature.

The University of Illinois has a long history of engagement with Ukrainian studies. The late professor Dmytro Shtohryn supported Ukrainian instruction in Slavic, helped to build the outstanding library collection of Ukrainian materials, and for many years hosted, through the Summer Research Lab, an international Ukrainian studies conference that brought scholars to Illinois from all over the world. Slavic now has a small endowment fund in his name, thanks to the generosity of his family and friends, that we use to promote Ukrainian studies. In collaboration with the Slavic Reference Service, we have renewed the tradition of major Ukrainian studies conferences on campus. The October 2023 conference, “Ukrainian Studies Today: History, Memory, Representations, and Collections,” featured the work of over 50 scholars in 16 online and in-person panels. The 2025 conference promises a similarly robust program.

The department’s request to hire was approved, and Olha Khometa joined our faculty this fall, teaching the Intro to Ukrainian Culture course and an advanced course on War and Resistance in her first semester. Tetyana Dzyadevych also joined us as our new language program coordinator. She is a native speaker of Ukrainian and Russian and taught both languages for us in the fall semester; she is also teaching Polish this spring. Expanded course offerings in Ukrainian studies also include professor Valeria Sobol’s new course entitled “Kyiv: A Biography of a City” for Fall 2025.

Students wanting to major or minor in Ukrainian studies have the option of the Slavic Studies major or minor with a Ukrainian Studies Concentration, through Slavic, or the Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies major and minor through the Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center for a more multi-disciplinary approach. Ukrainian studies is further supported by other faculty and staff at the U of I: Markian Dobczansky is associate director of REEEC and a specialist in Ukrainian history; Anastasiia Strakhova is

associate director of Jewish studies; and Tatyana Deryugina is an associate professor of finance.

Last summer, the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science and Olena Zelenska, the first lady of Ukraine, announced the formation of a new Global Coalition of Ukrainian Studies. Illinois has been invited to participate, and we expect to be a founding member of the coalition with a high level of engagement. This promises to make available more international scholars for lecture visits, opportunities for study abroad and student and faculty exchanges, curricular support, and more.

In short, Ukrainian studies is growing and thriving in Slavic and on campus.

The U of I is also involved in supporting Ukrainian scholars in other ways. Illinois has been active in the Scholars at Risk program (<https://scholarsatrisk.illinois.edu/>). This program hosts scholars from conflict regions and areas where scholarship is under threat, and it has hosted several Ukrainian scholars in the past few years. These include Pavlo Dziuba, visiting professor of economics, and Elena Kopteva, visiting research scientist in physics, both of whom gave lectures on campus related to their experiences and research.

In fall 2024, REEEC coordinated the hosting of three Ukrainian professors for a month-long stay, Sept. 15 to Oct. 15, through the BridgeUSA program. Natalya Faryna, a specialist in Ukrainian language pedagogy from Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, was hosted by the Slavic Department. She visited language classes (Ukrainian, Polish, Russian, Czech), attended lectures, and consulted with faculty in Slavic and linguistics. The visit has resulted in a valuable research collaboration: She is working with professor Dzyadevych in Slavic on some intermediate Ukrainian language instructional materials to test in our classes as a part of developing a much needed second-year Ukrainian textbook. The other two faculty guests were specialists in computer science and special education.

This spring REEEC also welcomed two new nonresidential fellows from Ukraine: Oleh Bahmet (National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine) and Vladyslava Moskalets (Ukrainian Catholic University). They join our community as part of the IU-Ukraine Nonresidential Scholar Program, which was pioneered by Indiana University in 2022 and expanded with support from the Big Ten Academic Alliance. In addition to Illinois, the other host institutions include The Pennsylvania State University, The Ohio State University, Michigan State University, the University of Michigan, the University of Wisconsin–Madison, the University of Washington, and the University of Maryland.

New faculty Olha Khometa, assistant professor

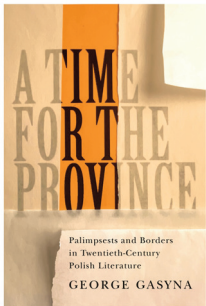


I am a scholar of Soviet and post-Soviet East European literatures and cultures with a focus on Ukraine. I joined the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures in Fall 2024. I defended my PhD thesis, entitled “The Politics of Style: Vestiges of Modernism in Ukrainian and Jewish Writing in the 1930s,” at the University of Toronto, Canada. I earned both my BA and MA degrees at the University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy in Kyiv, Ukraine, and completed a program in Ukrainian studies at the Harvard Ukrainian Summer Institute.

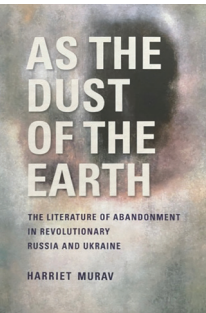
At the U of I, I oversee the Ukrainian program and teach courses on Ukrainian and Russian literatures and cultures as well as comparative courses on a variety of East European literatures, such as “War and Resistance in Contemporary Eastern Europe” and “Exilic and Diasporic Writing.” This year, I organized four on-campus events with prominent contemporary Ukrainian authors, advised on REEEC’s Ukrainian film program, and moderated Ukraine-related events on campus. I am participating in the organization of both the biennial Dmytro Shtohryn International Conference in Ukrainian Studies at the U of I in October 2025, as well as an exciting new initiative that the Slavic Department has joined this year, the Global Coalition of Ukrainian Studies.

This summer, I will work in archives in Ukraine toward my first book on Pavlo Tychyna, the leading modernist Ukrainian poet. My second book will focus on Ukrainian Jewish Russophone authors from my hometown, Odesa.

Recent faculty books

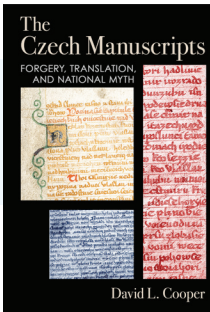
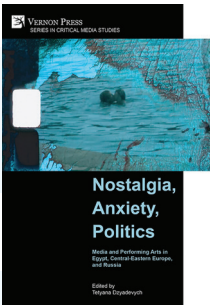


“A Time for the Province: Palimpsests and Borders in Twentieth-Century Polish Literature,”
by George Gasyna



“As the Dust of the Earth: The Literature of Abandonment in Revolutionary Russia and Ukraine,”
by Harriet Murav

“The Czech Manuscripts: Forgery, Translation, and National Myth,”
by David L. Cooper





Professor Valeria Sobol receiving her teaching award from College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Dean Venetria Patton.

Recent faculty awards

Slavic Department faculty have been recognized for their teaching and research in recent years with prestigious prizes and awards.

the multivalent potentials in the concept of hefker as she examines poetry and documentary reports conducted by aid workers enlisted to record the destruction and identify the potential for recovery.”

Professor Peter Wright was selected as a 2023-24 Fulbright Scholar for Croatia. He conducted research there in the Fall 2023 semester for his book project, “The Business of Solidarity: Development Aid and Anti-colonial Commerce in the Non-Aligned World.” The study examines the intertwined worlds of socialist Yugoslav anticolonial solidarity and its international business interests during the Cold War. Fulbright Scholar Awards are prestigious and competitive fellowships that provide unique opportunities for scholars to teach and conduct research abroad. Alumni include 62 Nobel Laureates, 89 Pulitzer Prize winners, 78 MacArthur Fellows, and thousands of leaders and world-renowned experts in academia and many other fields across the private, public, and non-profit sectors.

In an emphatic double, **professor Valeria Sobol** was awarded both the U of I campus and LAS Dean’s Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching in spring 2023. The award citation observes that Sobol “has an infectious enthusiasm for the material she teaches and creates an open and inclusive atmosphere in which her students both feel welcome to contribute their perspectives and knowledge and are challenged to think creatively and critically. A former student who was inspired to change her major after one of Sobol’s courses wrote that ‘the passion and dedication that Dr. Sobol shows when teaching reignited my love for and interest in literature.’ In addition to regular instruction of core departmental courses, Sobol has contributed innovative courses that expand the curriculum, such as a course focusing on the Caucasus in the Russian cultural imagination.”

Emerita professor Harriet Murav was awarded the 2024 Heldt Prize for best book introducing new, innovative, and/or underrepresented perspectives into any area of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian studies for her book, “As the Dust of the Earth: The Literature of Abandonment in Revolutionary Russia and Ukraine” (Indiana University Press, 2024). The award was presented at the annual ASEES Convention in November in Boston and is awarded by the Association of Women in Slavic Studies.

In giving the award, the prize committee remarked, “This astute analysis of literature written during the Russian Civil War examines responses to pogroms by the Jewish writers who experienced, witnessed, poetically reimagined, and investigated them in their immediate aftermath. At the center of this study is the Yiddish term *hefker*, which translates imperfectly to the English term, ‘abandon’ and, like the latter, can refer to being left vulnerable and without rights, or to a breaking free of norms and a scenario of lawlessness. Murav brilliantly shows how various writers drew on

Student award winners

Vekich Scholarship

Isidora Kostic
David Mock

Maltby Scholarship

Daria Ponomareva

Dobro Slovo National Slavic Honor Society Initiates

Gabriel Kedziora
Lisette Tokarskiy
David Mock



Peter Wright with 2024 Vekich Scholar Alma Zirojevic
(Photo by David Cooper)

Faculty news

Current faculty

Laura Davies Brenier published the encyclopedia entry “Sign Languages” for “The International Encyclopedia of Linguistic Anthropology” (Wiley Blackwell Publishers, 2020) and, along with professor Brenda Farnell (Anthropology), the entry “Sign Language” for “Oxford Bibliographies in Anthropology,” (Oxford University Press, 2023). She is interested in West Slavic languages, particularly Czech, Polish, and Sorbian, and in 2022 traveled to Bautzen, Germany, where she met with linguists and archivists from the Sorbian Institute. She is interested in historical phonological and morphological changes that occurred in Sorbian compared to Czech and Polish, and she looks forward to publishing on this soon.

David Cooper was promoted to the rank of professor in 2024. His book, “The Czech Manuscripts: Forgery, Translation, and National Myth,” was published in 2023, and he had the pleasure of discussing it on four podcasts, “The Slavic Connexion,” “Radio Prague International,” “History of Literature,” and “The Slavic Literature Pod.” He is completing his third year as department head.

Over the last year, **George Gasyna** gave talks at the universities of Birmingham (UK), Florida, and Madison-Wisconsin, a lecture at the Rubenstein Rare Book Library at Duke University for the opening of an exhibit of Polish-British author Joseph Conrad’s family photography archive, and another lecture on the Polish classic war film “Ashes and Diamonds” (Dir. Andrzej

Wajda) at the Siskel Film Center of the Art Institute of Chicago. His new book, “A Time for the Province: Palimpsests and Borders in Twentieth-Century Polish Literature,” was published in April with McGill-Queen’s University Press. He is starting new research on Polish and Polish-Jewish avant-garde production during the interwar period. He continues to teach courses on Polish 20th century literature and cinema as well as seminars on modernism and exile and travel literature for his other department, Comparative and World Literature, where he also serves as director of graduate studies.

In 2023, **Valeria Sobol’s** book “Haunted Empire: Gothic and the Russian Imperial Uncanny” (Northern Illinois University Press, 2020) came out as paperback, and she was interviewed on three podcasts in connection to the book: “History of Literature,” “Russian Rulers History,” and “The Slavic Connexion.” In 2025, she became the associate director of the School of Literatures, Cultures & Linguistics and is a guest editor for the special thematic issue of the journal Pushkin Review dedicated to the topic of Pushkin and Ukraine (Fall 2025). She also received the BRIDGE grant for the “Russophone Literary Diversity and Peripheries” project (in collaboration with the University of Birmingham, UK, 2024-25) and is organizing a junior scholar workshop on this topic for July 2025.

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In 2023, **Richard Tempest** edited the publication “Short Story Criticism: One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn” (Layman Poupard Publishing) and was an invited lecturer for the eight-part series “War in the Twenty-First Century” at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) in Champaign. In 2024, he was an invited lecturer for an eight-part series called “Russia and Black America” once again at OLLI, as well as at Senior Professionals, Illinois State University, for a four-part series, “The World After Covid: Prospects, Dangers, Temptations.” In 2025, he was interviewed for the Bulgarian journal Biograf (no. 162) in an article called “Tramp se vrushta v Belia dom” [Trump Returns to the White House]. Finally, he has two forthcoming projects planned for 2026, authoring a “Companion to Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn” (Academic Studies Press) and editing “Essays on Russian Literature” by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, translated by Leo Shtutin (Academic Studies Press).

Peter Q. Wright has dedicated this academic year to finishing his book, tentatively titled, “The Business of Solidarity: Development Aid and Anti-colonial Commerce in the Non-Aligned World.” This manuscript examines the intertwined worlds of socialist Yugoslav anticolonial solidarity and its international business interests during the Cold War. He has received two generous awards this past year to support this book project. Last November, he was awarded the LAS Covid Revitalization Fellowship. This fellowship will provide funding to finish edits on his manuscript and also facilitate field research in Belgrade, Serbia. He is really looking forward to visiting Belgrade after six years away caused by Covid and family obligations. In Fall 2025, he will be on teaching leave to continue putting the final touches on the manuscript and work on a journal article manuscript about the transatlantic history of racialized honeybee breeding. This released time comes as part of a Humanities Teaching Release Time awarded by the Campus Research Board.

Emeriti faculty

Dmitry Bobyshev has remained active in researching, writing, and publishing works on Russian literature and poetry. As an author and poet, he has multiple publications in book form, as well as in journals

and other periodicals. In 2020, he was honored with the “Pushkin and XXI century” award in London. A significant part of “Leningrad Poetry 1953–1975: The Thaw Generation” by Emily Lygo was dedicated to his poetry, as was the dissertation by Margaret Rosen. Recently, Asya Pekurovskaya published her book “Quest for Glory and Quest for Word: Case of Bro and Case of Bo” and published several chapters of the book in English in the magazine Modern Literature. The main topic of the book is a comparative analysis of the poetry of Brodsky and Bobyshev. In 2024, he participated in the international conference Akhmatova’s Orphans at Princeton University and delivered a paper on the main topic. It was later published in The New Review no 316. He was interviewed by the Russian magazine Snob (Moscow) on Nov. 28, 2024.

Michael Finke recently published the book “Flight” (Cahiers Series, no. 40, 2024, Sylph Editions) and the article “Экранизации Чехова, с примечанием о маленькой трилогии,” in “Путь к Чехову. К 85-летию профессора Владимира Борисовича Катаева,” ed. L. E. Bushkanets (Iaroslavl’: Kantsler, 2024), 408–19. The past three summers he has taught classes at the Chautauqua Institution, NY; this summer’s offering will borrow from his course on Russian literature and medicine at the U of I. As a certified flight instructor, he has also been providing flight instruction through a local aeroclub.

Frank Y. Gladney and his wife Barbara have been living for the last dozen years in Pasadena, California, where they are close to their children and their families. Gladney is still making contributions to Slavic linguistics. He is awaiting the appearance of the Cambridge University Press’s “Handbook of Slavic Linguistics” and a similarly titled volume from the Oxford University Press, in both of which he has a chapter. He is recovering from two spinal operations in 2024.

Since retiring at the end of the Fall 2024 semester, **Harriet Murav** has been working on new and old projects. She’s doing some ESL tutoring for immigrants at a community center in Chicago. This is new, but also old, because she once was a resettlement counselor for Russian-Jewish immigrants in Chicago. “In the Shadow of the Holocaust: Short Fiction by Jewish Writers from the Soviet Union,” a book that she’s translated together with Sasha

Senderovich, will be published by Stanford University Press in 2026. This project was supported by an NEH Scholarly Editions and Translations Grant. She’s working on a new book project, “Living Out of Time,” a study of time, waiting, and wartime in contemporary Ukrainian poetry. She is also co-editing a volume on the wonderful modernist Yiddish poet David Hofshetyn with Gennady Estraiikh.

Mark Steinberg retired from teaching in the summer of 2021 and relocated to Brooklyn and Italy (in 2020, he married Daniela Steila, a historian of Russian philosophy at the University of Turin). Retiring has meant the opportunity to do research and write almost every day. His work continues to blend social and cultural histories, including literary histories. A major research project was completed at the beginning of 2025: “Moral Storytelling in 1920s New York, Odessa, and Bombay: Sex, Crime, Violence, and Nightlife in the Modern City,” to be published by Bloomsbury in the coming year. He also completed an extensively revised tenth edition of “A History of Russia” for Oxford, which will appear later this year.

Affiliate faculty

In addition to continuing to direct the Program in Jewish Culture & Society, **Eugene Avrutin** serves as editor of Slavic Review. He completed an updated edition of “Racism in Modern Russia: From the Romanovs to Putin” forthcoming with Bloomsbury Publishing. The updated book will also be published in Russian with Academic Studies Press. A chapter on antisemitism in the Russian Empire is forthcoming in the “Cambridge History of Antisemitism.” Together with Elissa Bemporad, he is working on “Pogroms: A Very Short Introduction” for Oxford University Press.

Valleri Robinson is department head and professor of Illinois Theatre. Her recent publications range from topics on protesting authoritarianism, theatrical propaganda, and staging precarity. In 2024, she published “Belarusian Theatre and the 2020 Pro-Democracy Protests: Documenting the Resistance.” This year she published the articles “Staging Stalingrad: Building a Wartime Alliance, Pro-Soviet Propaganda, and the Trope of the Two Americas, 1942–1947” in Theatre Survey and “Staging Vulnerability: Precarity, Dispossession, and the Limits of Despair,” focusing on the work of Bulgarian theatre director Javor Gardev, in

Contemporary Theatre Review. She’s currently writing the book “Directing in Context: Javor Gardev’s Theatre of Vulnerability, 1994–2024” and has written many performance reviews and essays for a public audience.

Aida Talić’s paper “Telugu modifiers and the structure of the nominal phrase” appeared in the International Journal of Dravidian Linguistics in January 2025. This work was borne out of some of her earlier work on adjectival forms in Bosnian and cross-linguistic variation in the structure of the nominal phrases. It is also the first publication within a broader project on modifier-stranding nominal ellipsis and pronominalization that she is currently working on. She has recently joined the editorial team of The Linguistics Review, as an associate editor. Within this role, she will participate in shaping the future directions of the journal.

Grad student news

In 2024, **Shannyn Bald** was awarded the Scott K. Maltby Memorial Fund Fellowship. In the summer of 2024, she was a visiting scholar at the Hilandar Research Library at The Ohio State University, as part of their biennial Medieval Slavic Summer Institute under the supervision of curator Mary-Allen “Pasha” Johnson and professor Bojan Belić (University of Washington). There she studied Old Church Slavonic language and manuscripts, completing a final project on an 18th-century miscellany of offices to Russian feast days, primarily to the icons of the Most Holy Theotokos (SPEC.OSU.HRL.SMS.13). In the 2024–25 academic year, she continues in her second year as the president of the Slavic Graduate Student Association.

Sergei Motov received a dissertation travel grant from the Graduate College to conduct research toward his dissertation, entitled “Petty Bureaucrats in Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature and Soviet Film.” For the Fall 2024 semester he was included in the List of Teachers Ranked as Excellent, based on the evaluations of his students in Fourth-year Russian.

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Mack Noxon has been continuing her studies of Russian language and literature. This academic year she began studying Armenian through the University of Chicago, which she will continue doing next year. She presented her paper, “Playing Circassian: Imitation and Ambivalence in ‘A Hero of Our Time’” at the Midwest Slavic Conference in Columbus, Ohio, on April 6, 2025. Lastly, she has been selected as a fellow for the Monterey Summer Symposium on Russia through Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey and will be traveling to Georgia and Armenia.

Brian Yang recently published a commentary article in the journal *Museum Anthropology* titled “Thinking about Colonial Institutions through a Framework of Hoarding.” Yang’s essay is the introduction to a cluster of commentary articles in the Spring 2025 issue that is developed from a roundtable he organized for the American Anthropological Association and Canadian Anthropology Society 2023 joint meeting around the phenomenon of what he calls “colonial hoarding disorder” that exists within colonial institutions. Yang’s contribution argues that the practices of collecting and storing Indigenous and non-Indigenous ancestors and belongings by institutions that maintain ethnographic collections possesses an uncanny resemblance to how the American Psychiatric Association defines hoarding disorder in the DSM-5. This essay explores how an abstracted concept of hoarding disorder that is applied to colonial institutions could be developed into a framework to not only better understand colonial institutions but also create pathways that would be conducive to repatriation efforts.

Alumni news

Irina Avkhimovich (PhD 2017) is a professor of Russian at the University of North Georgia where she has worked on a teaching track since 2018. She received her tenure and promotion in 2024. Irina teaches all levels of the Russian language, as well as several upper-level content courses in Russian, such as literature surveys, culture, and media. She was recognized with the Teaching Excellence Award at her University in 2023. Irina conducts her research in the

area of second-language acquisition: content-based instruction, motivation, teaching literature in L2, and building language skills from intermediate to advanced and superior levels. Her article “Reading Leo Tolstoy in Russian: Motivation, Hybrid Approaches, and Cultural Contexts” was recently published in *Connections*, the journal of the Foreign Languages Association of North California (Volume 11, Fall 2023).

Marina Filipovic (PhD 2019) was appointed, following completion of her doctoral studies, as a visiting professor at William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, where she taught Russian literature, film, and language courses from 2019 to 2021. In 2021, Marina joined the faculty at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine, where she is currently appointed as a visiting lecturer in Russian in the Department of German & Russian Studies. Her teaching and research interests are interdisciplinary, encompassing Russian, Soviet, and post-Soviet literature and film, technology, gender, the Russian avant-garde, socialist realism, and the history of Soviet science. She also focuses on Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav cultures, literatures, and film. Her most recent research project examines the emergence of neo-noir cinema in the post-Yugoslav context, exploring how this style has evolved in response to the region’s complex historical and cultural shifts.

LeiAnna X. Hamel (PhD 2024) compared representations of women’s eroticism and sexuality across literary, medical, and journalistic texts in Yiddish and Russian for her dissertation, titled “Undisciplined Bodies: Deviant Female Sexuality in Russian and Yiddish Literatures, 1877-1929.” She works as Yiddish lecturer and the director of the Yiddish and Ashkenazic Studies program in The Ohio State University’s Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures. During the 2024-2025 academic year, Hamel taught introductory classes about Yiddish culture and introduction to Jewish culture, practice, and thought, first-year Yiddish, and a large undergraduate research class about the Holocaust in Yiddish writing and film. She also presented her research, collaborated with OSU’s Germanic faculty to organize roundtables by professors Harriet Murav and Sasha Senderovich, and helped organize a film screening of *SHTTL* (2022).

Serenity Stanton Orengo (PhD 2023) joined, shortly before graduating, the Slavic Reference Service at the

U of I as a senior library specialist. Beyond reference inquiries, she helps organize programming, such as the SRS regional Research Forums, and professionalization workshops, including the Dissertation Research Workshop. She serves as an organizer of the Writing Across Boundaries program and also oversees the Publishing Consultation Service at SRS, which provides one-on-one guidance to first-time authors. Serenity has been the editorial associate for the *Slavic and East European Journal* since 2023, and, in 2024, she also became managing editor of the *American Bibliography of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies* (ABSEES). She has continued working on her own research, presenting at Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEES), American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages (AATSEEL), and the Biennial Conference of the Association of Women in Slavic Studies, of which she was also an organizing committee member. This summer, she will present at the International Council for Central and East European Studies Congress as part of the panel “Deviant Motherhood: The Maternal Figure as an Instrument of Control, Disruption, and Empowerment.”

Diana Sacilowski (PhD 2021) is a professor at The Ohio State University, where she teaches Polish language courses and a number of Slavic culture courses. In 2024, she received a Polish Studies Initiative grant from Ohio State and conducted research in Poland, exploring traces of the country’s Jewish past in Warsaw, Lublin, and Zamość. She was able to use what she learned to finish an article, “Attending to the Imprint: Space, Community, and the Work of Memory in Piotr Szewc’s ‘Zagłada,’” which will appear in volume 39 of *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*. She is also working on her first book project, which examines the aesthetics and implications of various modes of silence in Polish cultural texts of the last 40 years that deal with Poland’s Jewish history.

Jasmina Savic (PhD 2019) has been maintaining her strong passion for teaching Russian/Slavic literature and culture and Russian language at both public and private universities. She is a professor of Russian studies at George Mason University, where

she has been teaching since Fall 2024. Previously she worked as a lecturer in Russian studies at Dartmouth College (2021–2024) and the University of Arizona (2019/20 AY). Her research interests include sexuality and taboo discourses in the late- and post-Soviet periods. She was granted The Leslie Center of Humanities’ Faculty Research Award at Dartmouth College in 2022, for her research project concerning taboos and censorship in modern Russia.

Since graduating, **Daria Semenova** (PhD 2023) has been a postdoctoral fellow at the Centre for Studies in Comparative Literature at Vilnius University, Lithuania. Her current research project revolves around the ways in which post-independence Ukrainian children’s and young adult literature constructs collective memory and structures space. Publications on various aspects of this broader topic are forthcoming.





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