

Connections

UNC
GLOBAL

Center for Slavic, Eurasian, and East European Studies at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill



Photo by Anabella Palacios

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

In the February 17, 2017, issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, writer Steve Kolowich published an essay, "Russia Scholars Hope for an End to Their Field's Bear Market." Peppering his narrative with quotes from academics in the field, Kolowich noted the shrinkage since the 1990s in the number of Russian specialists in the social sciences and the dwindling government and private funds that both accompanied and helped bring about this trend. But then came claims of Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential elections and of cyberattacks against Hillary Clinton's campaign.

Will Russia's newsworthiness, resurgence on the world stage, and purported meddling in U.S. politics put an end to dwindling resources for Russian (and East European) studies? It would be disingenuous for those of us who train future specialists to claim we hope otherwise, especially in view of consequential cutbacks during the 2014 Title VI competition, which deprived us of the Center's federal funding. The prudent thing to do is to be poised to take

advantage of all pertinent new opportunities that come our way, and, to the extent that it's possible, to create some of our own. As much as we might regret the symbiotic relationship between available funding, student interest, and the extent to which Russia is perceived as a threat (to both us and to the Eastern European countries), it remains a fact of life with which we will have to live.

But equally noteworthy, and reassuring, is something that those of us who teach Slavic studies intuitively know: it's often more than the news that inspires students to dedicate themselves to studying Russian and other Slavic languages and to make it a defining feature of their careers. They do so to satisfy a deeper interest, even passion, which often has little to do with political considerations. It's this that has been and will remain the lifeblood of our profession. It's this that elevates understanding of the human dilemma to empathy. I find this comforting as we prepare to graduate a strong cohort of MA students and to recruit next year's class.

-Donald J. Raleigh

CHAD BRYANT (Associate Professor, History) has been invited to be a visiting scholar at the University of Bremen's Institute for History this summer. His forthcoming article "War as Revolution of the Self: The Diaries of Vojtěch Berger" will appear in the spring 2017 issue of *Střed, Centre. Časopis pro mezioborová studia Střední Evropy 19. a 20. století*.

LOUISE McREYNOLDS (Distinguished Professor, History) published "Nikolai Marr: Reconstructing Ani as the Imperial Ideal," in *Ab Imperio*. In September 2016, she presented at the European Association of Archeologists Conference in Vilnius and in October gave a paper in Vancouver at the "Crime and Punishment at 150" Conference. In January 2017, she spoke on "The Vilnius Archaeological Congress of 1893" at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association and in March at the University of Texas at Austin about: "Hit 'Refresh' Before 'Retire': How Digital Humanities Renewed My Pedagogy and Research."

DONALD J. RALEIGH (Distinguished Professor, History) published "'Soviet' Man of Peace: Leonid Il'ich Brezhnev and His Diaries" in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian*



and Eurasian History. He also presented at the annual ASEES meeting a paper on Brezhnev's personal relationship with Richard M. Nixon.

DAKOTA IRVIN (PhD Candidate, History) presented a paper in November 2016 at Ural Federal University entitled "Liberal 'Order' and Social 'Disorder': Power in Ekaterinburg during the February Revolution," which was published along with the conference presentations by Ural University Press in December 2016.

STEVE ROSEFIELD (Professor,

Economics) published *Kremlin Strikes Back: Russia and the West after Crimea's Annexation* (Cambridge University Press, 2017). He published articles in *Acta Oeconomica*, *Singapore Economic Review*, and *Asian Politics & Policy*.

OLEH WOLOWYNA (CSEES Fellow) published a chapter and three articles on the 1932-33 famine in the Soviet Union and continues to work on collaborative research with the Institute of Demography and Social Studies of the Ukrainian National Academy of Sciences and the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute.

DIMITAR BECHEV (Center Fellow) will publish his forthcoming book *Rival Power: Russia's Influence in Southeast Europe* with Yale University Press. It will appear in August 2017.

CSEES graduate student travel subventions were awarded to Bilyana Petrova (PhD Candidate in Political Science) who will attend a workshop in St. Petersburg, Russia, and to Natalie Ornat (MA Student in Library and Information Science), Michael Skalski (PhD Candidate in History), and Ashley McDermott (MA Student in Global Studies, REEES track) who will attend the Southern Conference on Slavic Studies on April 6-8 in Alexandria.



Photo by Eli Hornstein

BUSING WHILE BLACK IN RUSSIA

By LEONA AMOSAH '17
Germanic and Slavic; Global Studies

I traveled to Nizhny Novgorod, Russia, in the summer of 2016 on a Critical Language Scholarship to improve my Russian-language skills. The CLS program is a fully funded summer program for undergraduate and graduate students that encourages the study of critical languages through immersion abroad. I spent eight weeks in Nizhny attending intensive classes Monday through Friday at Lobachevsky State University. Given my Russian heritage, I wanted to speak Russian like a Russian, using the language to navigate the country while exploring my own history and identity. I come from a very rich ethnic background—I am Russian, Armenian, Ghanaian, and Ivorian. I was born in Ghana to a black father and a white mother, both of whom speak Russian. Although Russian was my first language, English became my dominant language since I grew up in the southeastern United States.

Nizhny Novgorod, formerly known as Gorky, was a “closed city” after WWII until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, meaning that foreigners were restricted from traveling to it. For this reason, and not surprisingly, I saw very few people of color, except at the universities and in places closer to the center of town. In order to get to class every morning, I had to walk about ten minutes to the bus stop and spend another thirty to forty minutes in transit on the *marshrutka*, a Russian minibus. Each day while riding on the bus, I felt like an outsider. One day, as I stood in the stifling heat on the *marshrutka*, I noticed a little girl staring up at me from her seat. She turned to her father and whispered something while pointing at me, taking care not to accidentally touch me. Her



Photos by Leona Amosah

father whispered back to her and pulled her closer to him. In that moment, and countless others like it, I was reminded that I was not seen as a Russian, despite the fact that I could speak Russian almost like a native.

While riding the *marshrutka* another day, I found myself sandwiched between two women. I felt sweat trickle down my nose and back as I gathered up the courage to ask if I could pass through. I cleared my throat a little and asked the woman in front of me, “*Vy vykhodite?*” (Are you getting off?). The woman’s face immediately lit up when I spoke to her in Russian. She stepped to the side and indicated to the other passengers that I needed to get through. When I inquired as to which stop to use for Lobachevsky University, two passengers eagerly spoke up, telling me that my stop was next. People were ready and willing to help whenever I asked – the fact that locals were always willing to help me was the best part of traveling by *marshrutka* in Nizhny.



Busing while black in Nizhny was both the most nerve-wracking and rewarding experience of my time in Russia. It was in this space that I was able to explore my dual identity as both a black American and a Russian. On the *marshrutka*, I found my voice and learned to navigate Russia’s roads and customs. So, for those of you considering studying abroad in or travelling to Russia, don’t be afraid to go out and explore. Russia is teeming with rich history and culture from its beautiful churches and mosques to its vibrant public transit systems like the buses and metros. *Udachi rebyata!*

FEATURE

As the first U.S. recipient of a University Studies Grant from the International Visegrad Fund, CSEES has had a successful inaugural year of implementing the program that reached hundreds of students through class lectures, campus talks, and related events. To date, five of the eighteen scholars from the Visegrad countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia) have visited campus and delivered talks that reflected both historical and contemporary issues pertinent to the region. The scholars gave lectures in five undergraduate and three graduate courses, in addition to interacting with students during social hours and individual consultations. This was the first time all of the guests visited UNC, and the connections they made with the center's core faculty promise to foster future professional and academic collaboration.

Associate Professor of History Chad Bryant hosted several of the visitors in his graduate colloquium on Russian and East European history and in the core course of the Central European Studies major, "East Central Europe from the 18th Century to the Present." He considers the program an important addition to his teaching efforts that has made a

significant impression on the students: "Visiting scholars have not only offered a unique perspective on issues discussed in class, they have made the issues relevant. Our discussion with Ferenc Hörcher about the meaning of Central Europe revealed a number of insights into Hungarian politics today, as did Andrea Pető's presentation on political battles over memorials in Budapest. Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska's talk on Jews in interwar Poland brought home not only the sense of loss that many in Poland still feel after the Holocaust, but also how battles over the meaning of what it means to be Polish still reverberate today." For Professor Bryant, these scholars "have brought deep knowledge, intellectual curiosity, and a sense of immediacy to the classroom."

Lili Zay, a first-year Morehead-Cain Scholar, welcomed the experience of hearing firsthand from the Visegrad scholars such as Andera Pető, Professor of Gender Studies at Central European University, who gave a guest lecture in the FY Honors Seminar on Gender and Fiction in Central and East Europe. "The perspectives of these professors and speakers have reinforced my belief

UNC-VISEGRAD YEAR

By Adnan Džumhur (CS)



Ferenc Hörcher speaks on the construction

that the narratives history routinely neglects are vivid and resilient—we have so much to learn from them. On a personal note, these experiences have also shown me that my home, Hungary, is an interesting and essential piece of this region's history," she said.

Hailey Altena, an MA student in the REEES track of Global Studies, who consulted with several of the visitors on her thesis project, sees the program as an added asset to her graduate studies of Polish and Hungarian politics at UNC. "As an American student studying to understand the nuances of V4 politics, it has been both enlightening and useful to learn from scholars who have their ear to the ground in the region. Both Dr. Bartosz



Andrea Pető speaks on women's history in Central Europe

GRAD STUDIES YEAR ONE

(SEES Associate Director)



tion of Central European identities

Rydliński's and Dr. Lucia Najšlová's talks on the topics of illiberal backsliding and responsibilities of EU membership, respectively, have aided my understanding of V4 politics and have shaped my research questions. Additionally, the opportunities to meet individually with visiting scholars have allowed me to network and pursue new avenues of research in this field."

Similarly, the visitors' experience interacting with UNC students reaffirms the university's long tradition and investment in supporting language instruction in Polish, Czech, and Hungarian, in addition to many area studies courses. Andrea Pető was eager to point out the language skills and wide-ranging academic and personal

backgrounds of Carolina students. As she puts it, "nearly all of them have spent some time in the region gaining firsthand experience about issues and questions there. The confidence of making well-elaborated comparative points about the difficult and controversial 20th-century history of Central Europe was an important takeaway of my lecture on sexual violence during WWII to undergraduates. As far as their thesis topics are concerned, the students are brave enough to choose difficult and controversial topics, which at the same time would qualify them to be hired on the job market."

Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, Professor of Comparative Literature at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, Poland, also believes that it is critical for students to have contacts with international scholars. In light of increased isolationist politics both in Poland and the U.S., she sees "interpersonal relationships and a grassroots context" driven by today's generations of students and academics as critical in creating a transatlantic dialogue and promoting international understanding. One of the possible steps in that direction would be to build

on the collaborative opportunities that the Visegrad program presents in the form of on-line instruction between UNC and schools in the region, study abroad opportunities, and summer internships.

This University Studies Grant also funded the purchase of films from the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and a collection of rare publications by the Czechoslovak Legion, produced along the Trans-Siberian Railway during the Russian Civil War and on Allied ships following the Legion's evacuation from Siberia. These constitute a boost to one of the largest holdings of Czech materials in the country, one which will no doubt attract the interest of this year's participants in the Czech Studies Workshop at UNC (April 20-22). Petr Roubal of the Czech Academy of Sciences, who is our last Visegrad scholar for the academic year, will deliver the keynote address at the workshop on "Central European Cities in Transition: The Case of Prague." We couldn't have asked for a better finale to a very successful first year of the UNC-Visegrad Studies program. Many thanks to our faculty, students, and guests who made it all possible.



Bartosz Rydliński speaks on illiberalism in Central Europe

A POSTCARD FROM THE URALS

By Dakota Irvin, PhD Candidate in History

Since September 2016, I have been in Ekaterinburg, Russia, conducting research on my dissertation, which focuses on the history of the city during the Russian Revolution and Civil War. Thanks to funding from a Cohen-Tucker Dissertation Research Fellowship (administered by ASEEES) and a Fulbright-Hays DDRA grant, I will be spending a total of 16 months in Russia, splitting my time in the archives between the Urals region and Moscow. In particular, I am interested in the transformations of institutions of local government in a period of tremendous upheaval, and how power on the local level attempted to establish a manageable social, political, and economic “order,” while simultaneously struggling against the pressures of “disorder,” such as crime and violence, decreasing sanitary conditions, the food crisis, and a general breakdown of municipal services.

In order to complete this project, I am spending the majority of my time in Russia’s fourth largest city, Ekaterinburg, a place best known as the site of the execution of Tsar Nicholas II and his family by the Bolsheviks. The local archives here are rich, although unlike Moscow, they are not used to receiving foreigners. I have faced many bureaucratic hurdles to receiving materials that I order in the archives, although with the help of local friends and contacts I have been able to navigate the maze of the Russian bureaucracy. As always, and despite continuing tensions in international politics, I have found Russians here to be friendly, warm, and genuinely interested in helping me. The experience of conducting research in Russia would not be complete without the hours spent with friends and colleagues, over vodka and “Ural” pelmeni (a kind of dumpling), discussing Russian history, life, and culture.

For writing an urban history, I think the physical connection that living in the city affords not only helps conceptualize the events I study more clearly, but also brings the historian closer to his sources and subjects, and transforms the abstract into the concrete. Unlike many cities in European Russia that were destroyed by the Second World War, Ekaterinburg has preserved much of its pre-revolutionary architecture, and perhaps even more surprisingly, the city government maintains and restores these buildings, some of which date to the first half of the nineteenth century. Across from Ural Federal University stands the former New City Theater, where the first revolutionary gatherings after the February Revolution were held, and which became a kind of headquarters for rowdy socialists and soldiers. A few



Photo by Dakota Irvin

blocks away is the Poklevskikh-Kozell House, where the City Duma (a local, semirepresentative legislature) met from the late 19th century until October 1917, after which it was taken over by the Ekaterinburg Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies. The city’s geography has changed remarkably little over the past one hundred years, and when I read archival documents from 1917 and 1918, I am reading about places that I walk by almost every day.

While the hustle and bustle of the Moscow Metro and the grandeur of Red Square are essentials for any visitor to Russia, I would encourage anyone thinking of traveling there to go outside of the two capitals, Moscow and St. Petersburg, and explore, as many locals like to say, the “real Russia.” Cities like Ekaterinburg combine aspects of a modern metropolis and rural village life, with new skyscrapers towering over wooden peasant homes built over one hundred years ago. Ekaterinburg residents are proud of their city and distinctly regional culture, which they see as firmly between “bourgeois” Moscow and “wild Siberia,” shaped by harsh winters and the rugged yet beautiful environment of the Urals region. Getting out into the Russian provinces also provides an unfiltered view into the complex and contradictory nature of Russian life and culture, outside of the ubiquitous stereotypes of oligarchs, bears, vodka, and frowns (although in fairness, one may encounter all of those from time to time).

US-RUSSIA COLLABORATIVE EXHIBIT COMING TO UNC

Associate Professor of Anthropology Michele Rivkin-Fish has received a grant from the U.S. Department of State through the U.S. Embassy in Moscow for her project “Increasing Awareness about the Effects of Inequality on Children’s Lives.” The primary goal of the U.S.-Russia Peer-to-Peer Dialog Program, which made the grant, is to increase opportunities for interaction between Russian and American professionals in order to raise awareness about common social issues in Russia and the United States.

As the relationship between the United States and Russia has deteriorated in recent years, the importance of what Rivkin-Fish calls “citizen-to-citizen exchanges” has dramatically increased. This project will feature American and Russian scholars and students presenting exhibits to their respective publics that address four areas of inequality in children’s lives: immigration, poverty, violence, and the effects of consumer society.

Through her course on “Anthropology and the Public Interest,” Rivkin-Fish and twenty-two of her students will draw on existing social science literature about how these four experiences impact children’s lives in Russia and the United States. The students will help design the American side of the exhibit that will be on display at UNC in May. The Russian team will open their exhibit in St. Petersburg during the last week of April. Throughout the process, Russian and American peers will be able to share their experiences via a video conference with simultaneous



Photo by Michele Rivkin-Fish

translation. Teachers and social workers in North Carolina will be invited to the exhibit and the video conference.

Through this experience, Rivkin-Fish seeks to “break the barrier that often exists between the public and academia” by presenting these critical issues in a way that appeals to broad audiences. She hopes that her students and the audiences that interact with the exhibit will come away with a sense of the similarities and differences between how inequality effects children’s lives in Russia and the United States and the common problems that these societies face. She hopes her students will gain the ability to “learn, think, and find creative ways to communicate” critical and complex ideas.



Photo by Mila Korobkina

According to junior Ryan Haughney, the chance to work on the exhibit has been a fascinating intellectual challenge. “One of the most intriguing parts of this class will definitely be comparing and contrasting our resulting exhibition with those created by a peer-group in St. Petersburg, Russia,” said Haughney.

Alice Keyes, a graduate student in UNC’s School of Social Work and the project manager for the coming exhibit at UNC, notes that working on the project has allowed her to “share insight gained from working in the community with families” and has given her the opportunity to merge her graduate work and on-the-ground experience into a final product for public consumption.

We invite you to visit the exhibit at UNC, which is set to open in May in Alumni Building. For details, please visit our website (cseees.unc.edu).

Interview with Jingjing Lou, MA '03

Describe your current work.

I am currently Chair and Associate Professor in the Department of Education and Youth Studies at Beloit College, Wisconsin. My research training is in international and comparative education studies. My primary research focuses on Chinese education. I also studied Russian higher education and the internationalization of US public schools. I have done research and published on the financing and privatization of higher education, girls' education, migrant children's education, and rural youth education. In addition to teaching and research, I have served as a research consultant for a few international and domestic NGOs including Plan International.

Why Russia and Eastern Europe? What drew you to the study of the region?

My interest in this region started about twenty years ago when I was pursuing a degree in Russian language and literature at Peking University in China. After college, it became clear to me that I would not pursue literature as a career but rather keep it as a lifetime interest. But I continued being fascinated by area studies and its integral interdisciplinary approach, especially when examining complicated issues. This is why I declined a full fellowship to study Russian literature in a Ph.D. program at the University of Illinois and, instead, chose UNC's masters program in Russian and East European studies.

How does your background in Russian, Eurasian, and East European studies inform and shape your work?

As I mentioned above, I am fascinated by the interdisciplinary nature of area studies. While at UNC, I debated between writing a thesis from an economic perspective, my training in college, or focusing the project on education studies, a passion I developed in high school, uni-

versity, and at UNC. With the encouragement of Professor Bob Jenkins, director of the Center at the time, I chose the latter and wrote my master's thesis on Russian higher education reforms. Bob gave me lots of help as he had done research on higher education in Hungary. After that I followed this interest to Indiana University, Bloomington, for a Ph.D. program in international and comparative education studies.



Photo by Jingjing Lou

Which courses or experiences at UNC were most helpful for you career wise?

There are many classes that I really enjoyed when I was at UNC, though my favorite would have to be Professor Donald Raleigh's history seminar – we read 14 books and wrote 14 book reviews. Wow! It was definitely not an easy class for me at that time since it was my first semester as an international student. But I ended up having such a wonderful time in that class and walked such an intellectual path. When I think back, my interest in pursuing a career in academia started right there. Professor Raleigh's seminar introduced me to some of the best teaching practices in American higher education and I still benefit from that experience even today, now that I am a teacher myself in a college.

What advice would you give to undergraduate and graduate students seeking to enter area studies oriented careers?

Follow your passion. The very interdisciplinary nature of area studies allows us to pursue any possible interest and career.