The Copernicus Center for Polish Studies (CCPS) at the University of Michigan was established in 2019 after more than 40 years of activity and programs offered by the Nicolaus Copernicus Endowment. The endowment and a Polish program were launched in 1973 in cooperation with students, faculty, and the Polish Americans of Michigan who contributed generously with their time, energy, and financial assistance. CCPS continues the tradition today by supporting faculty, programs, and student fellowships in Polish studies. It also organizes the Annual Copernicus Lecture—established in 1980—which brings prominent academic, cultural, and political figures to campus to advance a deeper understanding of Poland’s people, culture, and history, as well as its growing influence in world academics, arts, and affairs.

Geneviève Zubrzycki, Program Director
Marysia Ostafin
Piotr Michalowski, Acting Director Winter 2021
Benjamin Paloff, Acting Director Fall 2020
Ewa Pasek
Brian Porter-Szűcs
Kate Wroblewski
Despite a year of profound loss and unprecedented challenges, the Copernicus Center for Polish Studies managed to offer a robust program of events and guest speakers. It was our great pleasure to welcome alumni and current and past faculty to share their research and observations. Highlights included the Annual Copernicus Lecture by acclaimed international film director Agnieszka Holland, and speakers from Warsaw, Barcelona, and London. The subject matter covered a wide range of interests: gender politics and populism, Polish avant-garde jazz movements (complete with a jazz concert), Polish attitudes towards European integration, and an overview of the multifaceted artistic accomplishments of Franciszka and Stefan Themerson. We are thrilled to announce that Ewa Pasek and Megan Thomas received the 2021 Found in Translation award and that returning director of CCPS, Geneviève Zubrzycki, was selected as a Guggenheim Fellow.

If there is one theme that tied the year’s program together, it is “community”—the voluntary community of those who engage with CCPS to develop a stronger understanding of Poland and the world around it, as well as faculty, staff, guest speakers, donors, and students who make our programs possible.

Benjamin Paloff
Piotr Michałowski
Acting CCPS Directors 2020-21


Oct 28 Lecture. “Music and Resilience in Early Postwar Poland.” Mackenzie Pierce, assistant professor of musicology, U-M.

Nov 6-8 Annual Copernicus Lecture. “An Interview with Agnieszka Holland.” Agnieszka Holland, film director; Johannes von Moltke, professor of Germanic languages and literatures and film, television and media, U-M; Benjamin Paloff, associate professor of Slavic languages & literatures and comparative literature, U-M.

Nov 18 Lecture. “Someone Else’s Problems: The Dissident Author Post-Dissidence.” Benjamin Paloff, associate professor of Slavic languages and literatures and comparative literature, U-M.

Feb 1 Lecture. “Gender Politics and the Populist Moment: Will the East Save the West?” Agnieszka Graff, associate professor at the American Studies Center, University of Warsaw.
Fall 2021 Events


**Fri, Nov 5–Sun, Nov 7 28th Ann Arbor Polish Film Festival.** For films and times, see [annarborpolishfilmfestival.com](https://www.annarborpolishfilmfestival.com). Organizer: Polish Cultural Fund-Ann Arbor.

**Wed, Nov 17 Roundtable.** “Is a Polexit on the Horizon? Poland’s Domestic Politics, Law, and the EU.” [Marcin Menkes](https://www.umich.edu/), associate professor, Warsaw School of Economics, and visiting professor of law, U-M; [Sławomir Sierakowski](https://www.kopynka.com/), political analyst and co-founder, Krytyka Polityczna; [Jarosław Szczepański](https://www.kopynka.com/), assistant professor of political science and international relations, University of Warsaw, and Academy of Justice, Institute of Law (Warsaw). Moderator: [Geneviève Zubrzycki](https://www.umich.edu/), professor of sociology and CCPS/WCEE director, U-M.

Visit [ii.umich.edu/polish/events](https://ii.umich.edu/polish/events) see video of past lectures and register for upcoming events.
Faculty News

Anna Muller (History, UM-Dearborn) guest edited and co-authored the introduction titled, “Husbands Who Do Not Beat,” in a special issue of Polish American Studies (Vol. 78/ 2021).

Ewa Pasek (Slavic) received the 2021 Found in Translation award (jointly with Megan Thomas) for the translation of Tadeusz Dołęga-Mostowicz’s The Career of Nicodemus Dyzma (Northwestern University Press, 2020). She also presented at NAATPI on Open-Book/Open-Note Oral Quizzes for Intermediate Polish Learners.


Brian Porter-Szücs (History) published Calkiem zwyczajny kraj: historia Polski bez martyrologii (Wydawnictwo Filtry, 2021), a heavily revised version of Poland in the Modern World: Beyond Martyrdom (Wiley, 2014), which has become a bestseller in Poland and an audiobook. A comedy club in Warsaw (Klub Komediowy) launched a series of acts in which they satirized Polish history, using his book as a foundation.

Endi Poskovic (Art & Design) had works selected for the Main Exhibition at the 2021 Krakow International Print Triennial “Dissonant Futures” at the Nowa Huta Centrum Kultury in Poland.


Student Awards

Copernicus Master’s Fellowships (2021–22):

- Arina Vlasova is a student in the Masters in International and Regional Studies (MIRS) program with a specialization in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies. She holds a BA in sociology from Saint Petersburg State University in Russia. Her research examines Polish and Russian secondary school teachers’ attitudes towards sex education.

- Christopher Chorzepa is a JD candidate at the Law School and holds a BA in political economy and history from Williams College. His research on Poland focuses on antitrust/competition laws and the current government’s latest attempt to “repolonize” the media by pushing out foreign-owned media companies.

Excellence in Polish Language Award (2020–21): Minh-Quan Nguyen, BSE Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering

Copernicus/Slavic Polish Language Scholarships (2020–21):

- Margaret Dominic, BA Biopsychology, Cognition, & Neuroscience;
- Anna Fifelski, BA Creative Writing-Literature;
- Caroline Free, BA Creative Writing-Literature;
- Sarah Gondek, BA LSA;
- Robert Grasinski, BSE Computer Science;
- Julia Janeski, BA LSA;
- Tessa Krajewski, BA LSA;
Minh-Quan Nguyen, BSE Naval Architecture & Marine Engineering; Emma Peplinski, BA Film, Television, & Media; Michelle Ptak, BA Psychology; Patrick Pullis, BA Political Science; Jonah Sobczak, BA Film, Television, & Media; Maxwell Wadley, BS Biochemistry

2021 Summer Internships in Poland: Emily Anfang, BA Judaic Studies, Galicia Jewish Museum; Claire Brady, BA International Studies/Political Science, Culture.pl; Olivia Evans, BA Creative Writing-Literature/Russian, Tatra Museum; Emily Kopp, BA History/International Studies, Tatra Museum; Colleen Sharkey, BA History/Political Science, Galicia Jewish Museum; Brooke Weichel, BA International Studies/Political Science, Culture.pl

Kudos to Joseph Blattert and Madeline Topor, who graduated with majors in Polish from the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures!

Congratulations to Anthony Cichocki, Emily Litynski, Shannon Murphy, Karolina Rak, Laura Scerbak, and Emily Webber, who graduated with minors in Polish from the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures!

Alumni News

Alena Aniskiewicz (PhD Slavic ’19) presented her research on Polish hip-hop at the Polish Studies Association Conference and the International Association for the Study of Popular Music-US Conference. In addition, she contributed writing on Polish literary culture to Culture.pl.

Paulina Duda (PhD Slavic ’16) accepted a position as a visiting assistant professor at Brown University to teach courses on Polish language and culture, and Central European cinema. She published an academic review of Ewa Mazierska’s book, Polish Popular Music on Screen, in Studies in Eastern European Cinema. She continues to teach and conduct research at the Polish-Japanese Academy of Information Technology in Warsaw.

Erica Lehrer (PhD Anthropology ’04) will be exploring decolonizing approaches to museum practice in the specific historical context of Eastern Europe with the Polish-focused research cluster National Heritage and Traumatic Memory. She will bring minority voices (Jewish, Roma, Ukrainian, Vietnamese, African-diaspora, and LGBT) and refugee perspectives to bear on Polish museum collections.

Jessica Robbins (PhD Anthropology ’13) published Aging Nationally in Contemporary Poland: Memory, Kinship, and Personhood (Rutgers University Press, 2020) and was promoted to associate professor with tenure at Wayne State University.
Devoted friend and CCPS supporter, **Dr. Josef Blass**, died on October 2, 2020. After leaving Poland in 1968, he came to the University of Michigan to earn a Ph.D. in mathematics. In 1981, he founded Pension Research Institute (PRI) with the mission of bringing academic-level research to the financial marketplace and contributing pension plans to businesses, individuals, cities, universities, and states. His involvement in the dissident movement in Poland was legendary and he became highly supportive of the Solidarity movement and its leadership during the difficult period of Martial Law. From 1989 on, Josef worked with nearly every Polish government offering advice and support on issues of pension reform and privatization. His role in organizing the historic 1999 conference, “Communism's Negotiated Collapse: The Polish Round Table, Ten Years Later,” and encouraging the University of Michigan to recognize Adam Michnik with an honorary doctorate, is well known.

**Jan Lityński**, Polish politician, journalist, and opposition activist, died on February 21, 2021. He was co-founder of the anti-government Workers’ Defense Committee (KOr), a participant of the Round Table negotiations in Poland, and from 1989 to 2021, he was a deputy to the Sejm. We were thrilled to host him, along with many of his Round Table colleagues at the 10th anniversary conference, “Communism's Negotiated Collapse.”

**Eugenia Staszewski** (1916–2020) was born to Polish parents in Detroit, Michigan where her musical talents were nurtured in small orchestras and settlement houses which provided educational and cultural opportunities to aspiring students. From there she went on to earn a seat with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra where she played the viola. After her retirement, she and her sister Wanda moved to Las Cruces, New Mexico where she continued to support musical activities and musicians. Eugenia and Wanda left a sizeable bequest gift to the Copernicus Center for Polish Studies and we are touched and grateful for their foresight, loyalty to all things Polish, and their generosity.

**Adam Zagajewski**, former dissident in exile, died in Krakow on March 21, 2021. He was one of the leading voices of Poland’s *Nowa Fala*, also known as the Generation of ’68, a group of poets who opposed the corruption of language imposed by communism and promoted simplicity and honesty into their native tongue. Among Zagajewski’s numerous awards were the *Prix de la Liberté* (1987); the Neustadt International Prize for Literature (2004); and the Princess of Asturias Award, the Spanish-speaking world’s highest humanities award (2017). In 2005, we had the honor to host him for the Annual Copernicus Lecture, “Without End: A Poetry Reading by Adam Zagajewski.”

Adam Zagajewski pondered the concept of liberty, as in his poem *Freedom*:

> But even when I am at a loss to define the essence of freedom I know full well the meaning of captivity.
Polish-Jewish Fellowships

Destroyed by the Nazis and suppressed by the communists, Jewish life in Poland was revived in the 1990s. It is again threatened by a new wave of anti-Semitism and legislation that restrict research and speech on the Holocaust. Given the urgent need to protect and encourage research in the history of Polish Jewry and the Holocaust in Poland, CCPS seeks to host researchers, NGO leaders, and Jewish activists whose activities are curtailed by the current government and the overall socio-political climate. CCPS has a strong program that captures Polish-Jewish culture; history; and problems of populism, nationalism, and anti-Semitism; as well as partnerships with institutions such as U-M’s Frankel Center for Judaic Studies, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, and the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. We hope to fund one- to three-month research visits to U-M by Polish scholars, journalists, and artists whose work is targeted by the “Holocaust law.” Visiting fellows will share their work with U-M faculty and students as well as with local communities and take advantage of our extensive library resources, writing workshops, and networking opportunities.

U-M Polish Student Association

The University of Michigan Polish Student Association (PSA) is a student-run organization with the mission to promote Polish culture on campus. During the pandemic year they hosted fundraisers for Ann Arbor Meals on Wheels and Suicide Prevention at U-M and organized virtual events such as alumni game night, baking kołaczki, and decorating pisanki and bombki. As in past years, the PSA co-sponsored the Ann Arbor Polish Film Festival.

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To Our Donors

Following new guidelines from the Office of University Development, we no longer include donor honor rolls in our publications. Your donations remain critical to support our public programming as well as our students’ language training and research.

CCPS is pleased to be the recipient of a sizable gift from the estate of Eugenia Staszewski.

The estate of Edward Vandenberg made a generous gift to CCPS in support of Polish studies at U-M.

In the past year, gifts to CCPS were made in memory of Gladys Bobak, Zielinski and Teresa DeMonte Bobak, Władysław Hodakowski, Frieda Jardim, Cass S. and Marjorie Jaros, Peter A. and Eleanor H. Ostafin, Edward Vandenberg, and Helen Stephanie Zaleski.

A gift to the Amelia Kulesa Konopka Endowment was made in memory of Amelia E. Konopka Merry. The family of Amelia Kulesa Konopka established this endowment in 2001 to improve knowledge of Poland’s culture and history among U-M students and memorialize her quest for knowledge and her Polish heritage.

Estate Planning
Create your own Polish legacy at U-M by learning about the different giving options available to you. The university will work with you to find a charitable plan that lets you provide for your family and the future of CCPS. For more information, visit plannedgiving.umich.edu.

To make a donation online, please visit ii.umich.edu/polish/donate