



the
slavic scene

volume 27, winter 2017/18

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letter from the chair

Dear friends,

We have started the new academic year at full steam, with our classes filled with energetic students. We are happy to report that we continue to offer five Slavic languages, as well as a variety of classes on literatures, cultures, and film from Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia. Students' interest in Slavic languages and cultures is not fading. As we witnessed at our Slavic languages student welcome party the first week of classes, our conference room could barely accommodate all our guests. An exciting addition to our offerings is the new interdisciplinary course on migrations and human trafficking in the Mediterranean by Professor Tatjana Aleksic. Our mini-courses on Jewish Prague, Czech literature and Slavic animation are filled to capacity.

Over the summer, our graduate students and faculty engaged in their research projects and visited Bosnia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, France, Hungary, Israel, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Serbia, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan, where they also presented their work at academic conferences, seminars, and colloquia. Our graduate students continue running their own groups on Russian language conversation and

dissertation writing, and for undergraduate students we are offering a Russian table, a Russian conversation group, and Russian tea.

Our Slavic Colloquium series started with a highly interesting and engaging presentation by Dagmar Kročánová, professor of Slovak literature at Comenius University in Bratislava, who shared her research on the writings of Gejza Vámoš, a remarkably mysterious interwar Slovak author of Hungarian-Jewish origin whose work has generated a great deal of controversy during his lifetime and after. In October, our own Professor Jindrich Toman presented his research on the old Jewish town in Prague during the 1820s-1830s. And throughout October, in collaboration with the Language Resource Center and the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies, we hosted our Slavic October Film Festival.

In addition, we are happy to congratulate our graduate student Grace Mahoney on the publication of her book of translations from the Ukrainian poet Iryna Starovoyt, *A Field of Foundlings*.

The highlight of the season is the Sneak Peek recruitment event, which we are

organizing this semester for the first time. We received an overwhelming response from our colleagues at other institutions to our invitation to nominate their brightest juniors and seniors who may want to consider graduate study in Slavic languages and literatures. We are bringing a select group of eleven students to Ann Arbor for a weekend to give them a taste of what it is to be in a graduate school. The program includes presentations and discussions by our faculty and graduate students about their research, as well as a special viewing of Moscow's Vakhtangov Theatre production of Alexander Pushkin's perennial classic, *Eugene Onegin*. And, of course, there will be plenty of socializing.

Our future plans include expanding our collaboration networks in Europe and Eurasia. One of our future partners is the Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration in Moscow, one of Russia's leading centers of research and teaching in the Humanities (more on this endeavor in a future issue of *The Slavic Scene*).

Sincerely,



MISNA KRUTIKOV



Mikhail Krutikov

faculty focus

Right image

Dust jacket of J. A. Bata's *Flying for Business Around the World*, Zlín 1937

Below image

Professor Jindřich Toman



Happiness in Zlín: Another Face of Czech Modernism

By Jindřich Toman, Professor

Taking a research trip to Zlín in the Czech Republic is perhaps not the most obvious thing to do. And yet, I would argue, there are good reasons for going to Zlín. During the 1910s-1930s Zlín changed dramatically from a small provincial town to one of the largest industrial complexes of interwar Czechoslovakia, thanks to the Tomáš Bat'a shoe factory. By the end of the 1930s it was a unique conglomerate of modernist factory architecture, advanced employee housing, and company schools—with a new airport just behind the town. Visitors felt they were entering an enclave of America—in Le Corbusier's words, "Zlín is one of the blazing places of the new world!" (1935).

As a major example of Czechoslovakia's modernization between the wars, Zlín has

generated some interest that mainly highlights the place as an architectural and urbanistic accomplishment. Scholarly interest in economic and managerial aspects of Zlín is available, too. It is polarized: admirers see in Bat'a a managerial genius, while critics portray him as a rapacious entrepreneur imposing a military-like discipline on his workers, while smartly hiding behind his patriarchal authority. Much of this has been researched but much has also been completely neglected. Zlín was a civilization in and of itself—the factory was not only about shoes.

And here are some "modernist" reasons to revisit Zlín. The company exploited a broad range of modern media and techniques. It constructed its own visual space, it documented the employee's

collection in photography, it produced its own internal periodicals, and it even commissioned children's literature to advocate—or better propagandize—company values to kids. Imagine your kids, reading a book which depicts the career of two young men who gradually make their way up in the system, traveling all over the world to conduct business; one as a specialist in leather tanning, the other as an aviator. And imagine company publications repeatedly bringing photographs related to aviation so that leafing through them gives one the impression the company was mainly about flying all over the world. And imagine, finally, a seamless visual space in which the factory and the town are in a constant flux. I was amazed to see a picture archive that reveals

Zlín as a "lettered" city, i.e., a space systematically and professionally filled with banners displaying dozens of company-produced slogans. Slogans extended from the production space to building walls and billboards in public space, thus creating a total "lettered" environment. A lexicon of this peculiar language is underway!

Clearly, Zlín absorbed interwar modernity across the board—in architecture, economy, and culture—and as such it is a worthwhile destination for someone who works on interwar culture. There is still a room for a fresh look—and if you page through Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* at the same time—you will not waste your time.



Dagmar Kročanová

Weiser Professional Development Fellow: Dagmar Kročanová

In September, Dagmar Kročanová was a Weiser Professional Development Fellow working on her project, "Modernism in Slovak Literature between 1900 and 1948," in cooperation with Benjamin Paloff, associate professor of Slavic languages

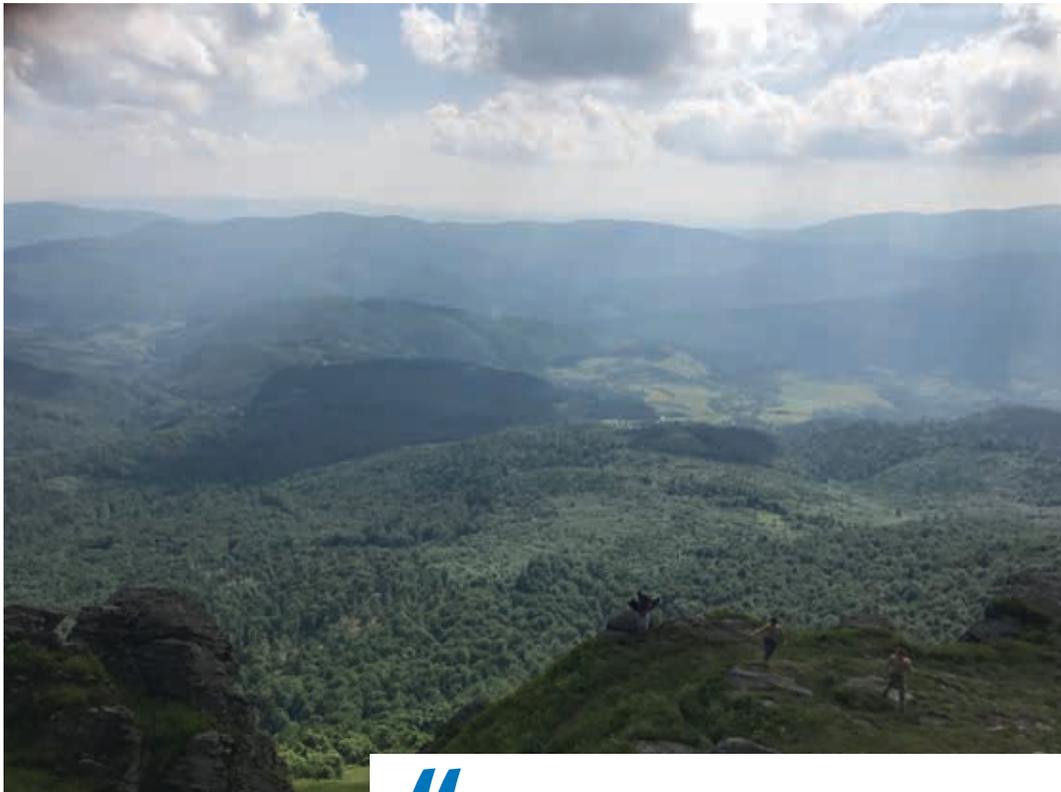
and literatures and comparative literature. She presented her project to the department during a colloquium on September 28. Dagmar Kročanová is associate professor of Slovak literature at Comenius University

in Bratislava, Slovak Republic, where she also earned her PhD in theory and history of Slovak literature. She is currently working on an anthology of Slovak modernist and avant-garde drama.

graduate focus

Where My Summer Research Took Me...

By Haley Laurila, Slavic languages and literatures Graduate Student



“ I hope that my research contributes in some way to changing our relationship to nuclear power. ”



My summer began in Victoria, British Columbia, at the Digital Humanities Summer Institute, where I participated in a week-long “Fundamentals of Digitization” workshop. I learned new skills and software associated with digitizing sound, video, and images, as well as some basic coding used to build websites. Currently, I am working on curating a digital archive on nuclear power and memory, one that would integrate various media artifacts that I have collected surrounding Chernobyl and other nuclear catastrophes. This archive will eventually include a textual analysis project of the coverage of Chernobyl in newspapers that will consist of visual representations of how information about the disaster was disseminated to the public. Additionally, I have started to “map” Chernobyl memory through its monuments and memorials across the world using GIS software. In this regard, the technologies and skill sets acquired through my work in the digital humanities has proven invaluable to my research, and this digital archive has become a cornerstone of my dissertation.

Top Image

Scene from the Carpathian Mountains.

Bottom Image

Notebook found at Chernobyl.

After the Digital Humanities Summer Institute, I spent several weeks in Ukraine, where I studied Ukrainian in the Carpathian Mountains through the Ukrainian Catholic University. I was placed in a challenging and rewarding advanced class. We spent four hours a day studying the language and went on cultural excursions in the afternoon. I toured the tunnels of WWII bunkers, went wine tasting, and hiked some of the most beautiful mountains. Once the program ended, feeling confident in my Ukrainian language skills, I spent some time in Ukraine on my own working on my dissertation. I have several audio interviews with Chernobyl liquidators that I am transcribing, as well as photographs of the exclusion zone that I am organizing as part of my archive project. My motivation comes from the need to make the human and environmental consequences of nuclear power and the supporting power structures visible, because the effects of radiation are often invisible, which only makes it easier to forget.

The final part of my research took me across Russia on the Trans-Siberian Railway to Japan. Japan's Hiroshima Peace Park and Peace Museum are models for how to commemorate nuclear disasters. Although my research and dissertation focus heavily on Chernobyl, I have expanded its scope to include all nuclear power incidents, as they are not mutually exclusive. The same impulses and power structures that created the first nuclear bomb also produced the first nuclear power plants, even if we do not always make that connection. My visit to Hiroshima only underscores this fundamental disconnect - that we treat nuclear weapons and nuclear energy very differently, even though they are both born of the same destructive power and are both capable of violence on bodies and spaces. This is why I am compelled to collect photographs, interview witnesses, and document these nuclear memories—because we try to compartmentalize and contain nuclear catastrophes even as any spatial or temporal containment is fundamentally impossible.

Welcome New Students!

Michael holds a BA from Grand Valley State University, where he majored in Russian Studies and Economics. In 2013 he was awarded a Boren



Michael Martin

Sara graduated in 2015 with a BA in Slavic Languages and Literatures from the University of Chicago. Her primary research is in Soviet history, particularly the history of ethnic Ukrainians living in the Soviet Union during and after World War II. In addition to her focus on national and ethnic identities, Sara is interested in Soviet conceptions of history, narratives of revolution, and state violence. When not studying war and violence, Sara lightens the mood by criticizing

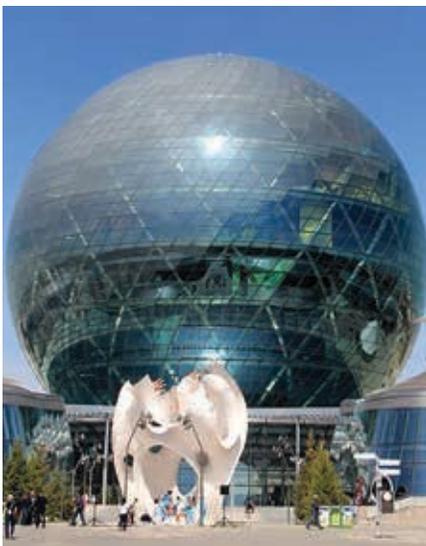
scholarship and spent an academic year in Irkutsk studying Russian at Irkutsk State Linguistic University. After returning from the shores of Lake Baikal, he completed his MA at the University of Michigan's Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies. His research interests are widespread, but he is particularly interested in the use of travel in Russian literature and contemporary Russian pop culture. When not mumbling to himself in Russian, he enjoys playing with his pet cat, listening to ska music, and watching the latest Russian rap battles.

Sara Ruiz



bad Russian spoken in American movies, knitting, and hanging out with her three pet tortoises.

undergraduate focus



Living and Learning as Student Ambassadors

By Mark Dovich, REEES and Political Science Major and Jonathan Poser, REEES MA

Every 2–3 years, over 100 countries from around the world gather in a new location to explore concepts of global significance at an event called World Expo. This year's theme was future energy. Representatives from 115 countries met in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan, to present their country's interpretation of that theme. The USA Pavilion, a nonprofit group representing the United States at Expo 2017, selected 40 ambassadors to come to Kazakhstan, run the pavilion, interact with guests while speaking Russian, and perform a variety of public relations tasks for the State Department.

The Expo 2017 site was at the southern end of Kazakhstan's futuristic capital, right where the rapidly expanding urban expanse abruptly ends and turns into empty steppe. The event site consisted of the Kazakhstan pavilion—a giant, eight-story sphere—

surrounded by concentric rings of buildings housing other countries' pavilions. The US pavilion was between the Vatican and Venezuela, with Poland right down the way.

The US pavilion featured several video shows, a model city displaying energy grids provided by GE, an interactive exhibit about Chevron, a copy of the always-popular Hollywood sign, and a display showing the American and Kazakhstani flags shaped like hands joined together in a firm handshake, symbolizing the cooperative relations between our two countries. At every stage of the pavilion, student ambassadors were positioned to interact with guests and manage the attractions. On a daily basis, we interacted with thousands of guests, mostly from Kazakhstan, with some Russians and Europeans. The occasional American guest was always a welcome surprise.

Naturally, other countries interpreted future energy in different ways. Russia brought a giant iceberg and some model ships to showcase their plans to explore the Arctic to find new energy sources. Georgia brought a whole lot of wine. Turkey had an escalator up to a volcano. Germany brought an electric BMW and had an impressive laser light show. The crown jewel of the event was, without a doubt, the Kazakhstani pavilion, an eight-story sphere with an interactive science museum inside. A potential source of future energy was on each level of the building.

The student ambassadors from each pavilion lived in Expo Village, an apartment complex located adjacent to the Expo site itself. Although many of the apartments were unfinished when we moved in, they were brand new and quite spacious. We had neighbors from

almost every corner of the world, which made for a very interesting living experience.

In addition to our work duties at the US Pavilion, many of the student ambassadors had the opportunity to travel both around Kazakhstan and to other nearby countries, including Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine, Russia, Turkey, and India. Most of us also made visits to Borovoe, a famous lake resort located a few hours by car or train from Astana.

Overall, it was an incredibly interesting and rewarding experience, both to be in Kazakhstan and to be among young people from all over the world. It was a totally unique experience we will be talking about for years to come. In the meantime, we will be sure to keep an eye on Dubai, which is currently preparing to host Expo 2020.

Top Image

Downtown Astana.

Left Bottom Image

Kazakhstan Pavilion Exterior.

Right Bottom Image

USAP Group 2.

All photos by Mark Dovich and Jonathan Poser.

Language Study Scholarship Opportunities

The Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, in partnership with the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies and the Copernicus Program in Polish Studies at the University

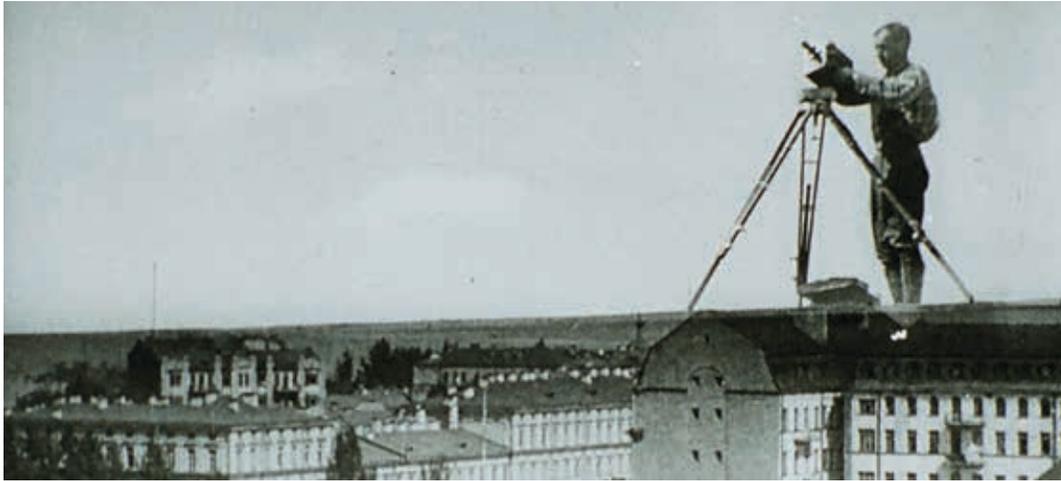
of Michigan, is offering scholarships for Polish, Czech, and Ukrainian language study. Scholarships are open to undergraduate students who enroll in two consecutive terms of the target language

and receive a grade of a B- or higher. These scholarships are a way for the Department to recognize and encourage students' hard work and perseverance throughout the school year.

in the classroom

Metrotextualities: Reading Cities in East/Central Europe

By Jodi Greig, Lecturer, Slavic languages and literatures



Left Image
Metrotextualities

The idea for a course on cities in literature had been percolating in my brain for a few years. Miron Białoszewski's *A Memoir of the Warsaw Uprising* first sparked my interest in literary urban space; the way he describes the city's topography inexorably disappearing into smoke and flame layers the historical, personal, and

cartographical aspects of urban space in unexpected ways. When I was asked to teach Slavic 225: *Arts and Cultures of Central Europe*, I realized it was my chance to develop a new course focused on the cities of Central and Eastern Europe. *Metrotextualities* offers students an accessible overview of East/Central

Europe's history through an "urban lens"—we cover the topics of empire, revolution, war, Communism, and the economic and political transitions of the 1990s, examining how each of these phenomena affected the cultural fabric of a given city. Students are challenged to consider the city as more than a physical space: we

discuss the city as a historical and cultural palimpsest, as a living social organism, and even as an ideological or physical weapon. The course aims to teach students to analyze urban text(ure)s, paying attention to the narrative, thematic, aesthetic, and/or ideological role cities play in films, short stories, novels, poems, and music videos. From Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman* to 21st-century rap videos, discussions of graffiti, and mapping the subterranean routes of Warsaw insurgents and refugees, *Metrotextualities* offers students a multidimensional exploration of East/Central European history and culture through its urban spaces.

Learning about the Cultures of Ukraine

By Svitlana Rogovyk, Lecturer, Slavic languages and literatures

Students of Slavic 290: *Cultures of Ukraine* explore and learn about the diverse cultural traditions of modern Ukraine through its history, literature, cinema, architecture, music, and art. By territory, Ukraine is the largest country in Europe, and it is located on the crossroads between Europe and Asia. "Ukraine is the land," wrote English historian Norman

Davies, "through which most of European peoples went to settle in their final homeland, including the Kyivan Rus' as the largest political and cultural dynasty in Europe in the Middle Ages."

The cultural diversity of Ukraine will be introduced in this course through some uncommon topics, such as the Byzantium influence

on the development of intellectual discourse, religion and cultural life in the region, and women's equal rights in education during medieval times. We will also discuss the migration of Germans into the Volhynia region of Ukraine in the early 1800's, the change of border between the Ukrainian SSR and Poland, and its effect on the population of the border areas, and more.

The course is intended to help students perceive how the cultural diversity of Ukraine has become one of the important components of the creation of the Ukrainian nation. Topics are presented as a "cultural mapping" of Ukraine, which was influenced by a variety of other cultures, yet never lost its own identity.

staying connected

To Assist, Protect, Defend That Which Is Terrific

By *Cavin Park, 2nd Lt. of the U.S. Army, BA '17*

Most find learning a language scary, and among languages, Russian is considered terrifying. But as terrifying as the grammar and conjugations may be at times, the rewards at the end of the tunnel are terrific!

I graduated from U-M in April, 2017, with a BA in Russian Language and Literature, Political Science, and REES, among which my favorite major by far was Russian. As I left the university to set along my career in the U.S. Army as a commissioned officer, my only regret was graduating a year early and missing out on a whole year's worth of exploring other aspects of Russian studies.

During my summer in Fort Benning, Georgia, my Sundays consisted of teaching and practicing languages. Being a native Korean with Russian language skills, my fellow trainees jumped at the opportunity to brand me a 'spy' in good humor; but one week after another I began receiving requests to teach them Russian and Korean. Sundays quickly became our designated times for language study and practicing. What started as three person lessons became classes of 10–15 men. The barracks classroom for 3rd Platoon of Bravo Company 1-46 Infantry Battalion became the rally point for



foreign language speakers to teach America's best and honor the education we've received by passing it on to others.

In Officer Candidate School (OCS), my Russian studies played an integral role in choosing my branch in the Army. Like most OCS candidates, I wanted the Military Intelligence branch; however, I began looking for other opportunities that would allow me to use Russian up close and personal—not behind a computer. I realized that the Military Police branch in particular worked closely with locals and focused primarily on the cooperation and communication between

locals and our military to accomplish its missions. I hope to one day speak with the locals I interact with in their language and take the fear and strangeness out of working with foreigners.

As a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army, I know that my chances of casual travel in Russia is slim; but until favorable times come, I hope to better my Russian skills and hold dear the value of understanding that which we find mysterious, that which we find unfamiliar, and that which we find terrifying; because it is on the other side of that terrible fear where our greatest accomplishments and triumphs exist.

Above Image
Cavin Park at graduation.

I will soon be attending my Military Police training in Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, until the latter half of 2018, when I will be stationed in Fort Drum, New York, with the 511th MP Company. I applaud all those brave enough to take on the challenge of Slavic languages and studies, for in today's polarizing times, we need you most. To the faculty, students, and others who equipped me and countless others past, present, and future, with the skills to succeed, I cannot thank you enough, and your dedication to make the world a better place—This We'll Defend!

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slavic october
film festival

6–8 pm | LRC Video Viewing Room, North Quad

10/5 Czech
10/12 Polish
10/19 Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian
10/26 Ukrainian (Halloween theme)

Free pizza!

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Left Image

Poster for Slavic October Film Festival