Meet Our Faculty:

 Kristen Ghodsee, Professor, Department Chair. Dr. Ghodsee's research interests include the lived experience of socialism and nationalism, and post-socialist globalization and the gendered effects of the economic transition from communism to capitalism, and the ethnographic study of post-communist nostalgias in Central and Eastern Europe. Dr. Ghodsee will teach REES 0010: Central and Eastern Europe: Cultures, Histories, Societies and REES 0630: Behind the Iron Curtain.

 Maria Alley, Senior Lecturer in Foreign Languages, Language Program Coordinator. Dr. Alley's interests include second language acquisition and pedagogy, proficiency testing, and materials development. This fall semester, Dr. Alley will teach RUSS 0300: Russian III.

 Aleksey Berg, Lecturer. Dr. Berg's research interests include 19th and 20th century Russian poetry, and economic approaches to literature. This fall semester, Dr. Berg will teach RUSS 0410: Masterpieces of 19th-Century Russian Literature, RUSS 0100: Russian I, and RUSS 1100: Russian Society Today.

 Sierah Biareishy, Visiting Assistant Professor. Her research interests include literary and critical theory, German Romanticism and Idealism, Russian Formalism, Soviet and Western Marxism, materialism and the Spinozist tradition. This fall semester, Dr. Biareishy will teach RUSS 0130: Portraits of Soviet Society: Literature, Film, Drama and REES 0275: Montage and Revolution: Conceptual Cinema of Sergei Eisenstein.

 Maria Bourlatskaya, Lecturer in Foreign Languages. Her current research interest lies in techniques for training business professionals to develop and assess cross-cultural competencies. This fall semester, Dr. Bourlatskaya will teach REES 2271: Post-Soviet Russian in Film.

 Brian Kim, Assistant Professor. He is a specialist in Russian art and culture at the turn of the 20th-century and early Soviet era. This fall semester, Dr. Kim will teach REES 0481: Tolstoy and REES 6683: Cultures of Reading in Imperial Russia.

 Mila Nazyrova, Professor in Foreign Languages. Dr. Nazyrova's research interests focus on Russian art and culture at the turn of the 20th-century and early Soviet era. This fall semester, Dr. Nazyrova will teach I REES 2250: Russian Culture Through Art and Architecture: From Fin de Sicle to Perestroika.

 Mitchell Orenstein, Professor, Graduate Chair. Dr. Orenstein is a scholar of international politics focusing on the political economy of transition in Central and Eastern Europe. This fall semester, Dr. Orenstein will teach REES 0131: Putin's Russia: Culture, Society and History and REES 1570: Russia and Eastern Europe in International Affairs.

 Molly Peeney, Lecturer in Foreign Languages. Her interests are in language pedagogy, early 20th-century Modernism, and creative writing. This fall semester, Dr. Peeney will teach RUSS 0172: Madness and Madmen in Russian Culture, RUSS 0100: RUSS I, and RUSS 0300: Russian III.

 Kevin M. F. Platt, Edmund J. and Louise W. Kahn Term Professor in the Humanities. Dr. Platt works on representations of Russian history, Russian historiography, history and memory in Russia, Russian lyric poetry, and global post-Soviet Russian culture. This academic year, Dr. Platt is on a sabbatical leave.

 Vladislav Todorov, Senior Lecturer. Dr. Todorov is the author of several scholarly books as well as an accomplished fiction- and screen- writer. Three of his novels were made into films that garnered critical acclaim. Dr. Todorov is a voting member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. This fall semester, Dr. Todorov will teach REES 5550: Terrorism.

 Julia Verkholantsev, Associate Professor, Undergraduate Chair. Dr. Verkholantsev's academic interests are in the field of cultural history, early modern and medieval literary and linguistic culture, and the history of ideas. This Fall, Dr. Verkholantsev will teach REES 0100: Portraits of Old Russ: Myth, Icon, Chronicle.

 Lada Vassiljeva, Lecturer. Lada's research interests include foreign language teaching methodology and Russian phraseology. This fall semester, Ms. Vassiljeva will teach RUSS8001: Elementary Russian I.

 Margarita Staruk, FLTA. Margarita holds a BA degree in teaching English and Russian languages and a MA degree in Linguistic Expertise. She is a member of a Linguistic Experts Association of South Russia. She has lived and taught in Lithuania, Russia, and the United States. Margarita is the recipient of Erasmus, Fulbright, and Oxford Russia Fund Scholarships, which allowed her to participate in various international forums, including the XIX World Festival of Youth and Students.

 Maria Alley, Senior Lecturer in Foreign Languages, Language Program Coordinator. Dr. Alley's interests include second language acquisition and pedagogy, proficiency testing, and materials development. This fall semester, Dr. Alley will teach RUSS 0300: Russian III.

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 Rachel Bains, Undergraduate Chair. Dr. Bains's research interests include second language acquisition and pedagogy, proficiency testing, and materials development. This fall semester, Dr. Bains will teach RUSS 0300: Russian III.
At the same time, we have not lost sight of the tragedy that has befallen our partners in Russia, liberals and intellectuals who oppose Russia’s war of aggression and have faced their own increasing repression of speech and action and opportun- ity. Many of our colleagues have sought refuge outside of Russia. We remain dedicated to a Russia that, at last, begins to confront its legacy of terrorizing and colonizing its neigh- bors, and to support Russian cultures at home and in the diaspora that fight for a more modern Russia at peace with the other great nations of Europe. That day may seem far off right now, but this struggle has never been more relevant than today.

We welcome all those who come to our department in search of placement tests for other languages.

If you haven’t studied Russian, Ukrainian or another Slavic/ East European language, we encourage you to try and to start as early in your academic career as possible.

If you have studied one of these languages in the past, either formally in a classroom or at home or your community, you may be able to fulfill Penn Language Requirement by taking a placement test.

Even if you don’t fulfill the Language Requirement right away, this test will determine which language courses are best suited for your current proficiency level and will help you plan your academic career at Penn.

The Russian Placement test will be taking place during NSO, on Friday, August 26, from 10 to 12 pm. Contact Dr. Maria Alley (malley@sas.upenn.edu) to register or to find out more. Contact Dr. Maria Alley (malley@sas.upenn.edu) to register or to find out more.

Outside of the classroom, this year we will continue our cooperation with Holocaust Survivor Program at JFCS Philadelphia. In the past, Penn students put their Russian language skills to use to help care for the Holocaust Surviv- ors. Students participated in friendly calls with Survivors, organized and helped run health-focused workshops, and signed birthday cards for them. Additionally, we are cur- rently planning initiatives to help Ukrainian refugees who are resettling in Philadelphia. Join our team and help us make a difference!

With best wishes for a productive academic year,

Dr. Maria Alley
Russian Language Program Coordinator

Greetings on behalf of the Penn Russian Language and Culture program!

We look forward to the new academic year and are excited to meet each of you in our courses and at our events.

In our department, we encourage students to study more than one REES language and to explore languages you have not studied before. Our course offerings in partnership with Penn Language Center include Czech, Hungarian, Polish, Russian and Ukrainian language courses.

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The past year was studded with appearances from well-known personalities, and one such personality was Konstantin Borovoi who presented a talk titled “Russia’s Disinformation Campaign Against the U.S. and Its Citizens”. Dr. Orenstein and Dr. Michael Horowitz participated in the discussion. You can watch the event on our youtube channel.

Another talk from the past academic year that is available in the same place on youtube is “Poland’s Constitution- al Breakdown”, a talk by Professor Sadurska, the Challis Professor of Jurisprudence at the University of Sydney. The event was co-organized by Penn’s Center for Ethics and the Rule of Law. The lecture is available for viewing on our youtube channel.

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Our annual Undergraduate Research Conference returned this year, with the keynote lecture titled “The Soviet Pro- gram Era: Creative Writing Instruction under Socialism” by Olga Nechaeva of Penn’s Comparative Literature Program. Presentation topics were thought-provoking and ranged from “Fragility of Lithuania’s Nationalism and Oblivion of its Holocaust Memory” to “The Purchase of Mazekiai Oil Refinery – Poland’s Involvement in a Geopolitical Game over Yukos Assets” to “The Tale of Two Regions: Nomads, Balts, and the Story of their Post-Soviet Existence” to “The Machinations of the Great”

Our past majors and minors stay in touch with each other and our faculty through the LinkedIn group. It’s a lively community we are very proud of.
Dr. Nazyrova's research interests focus on Russian and East European studies. This fall semester, Dr. Nazyrova will teach REES 0010: Central and Eastern Europe. She specializes in the history and politics of the Cold War era, with a focus on the postcommunist countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Her research interests include second language acquisition, foreign language pedagogy, and proficiency testing.

Dr. Orenstein is a scholar of international politics and security studies. Her research focuses on the political economy of transition in Central and Eastern Europe. She has studied the impact of the Cold War on the region, and the role of institutions such as the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The interdisciplinary nature of the Russian and East European Studies department offers multiple pathways through our major and minor programs. Our students have graduated into a wide variety of career paths in the public, private, and non-profit sectors. Perhaps now more than any time in the last several decades, a careful understanding of the diverse histories of this fascinating part of the world is essential for making sense of our collective global future. Whether you decide to just take one course with us or plan on making us a more significant part of your major, we will share our passion and knowledge about this incredibly diverse and forever fascinating area of the globe!