Meet Our Faculty:

Molly Peney, Lecturer. Her interests are in language pedagogy, early twentieth-century Modernism, and creative writing. This fall semester, Dr. Peeney will teach:
- RUS1123: Russia and Eastern Europe in International Affairs.

Kevin M. F. Platt, Edmund J. and Louise W. Kahn Term Professor in the Humanities, Interim Undergraduate Chair. 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 fall semester, Dr. Platt will teach RUS197: Madness and Madmen in Russian Literature and Culture.

Maria Alley, Senior Lecturer in Foreign Languages, Language Program Coordinator. Dr. Alley’s interests include second language acquisition and language pedagogy, proficiency testing, and materials development. This fall semester, Dr. Alley will teach:
- RUS5001: Elementary Russian I
- RUS5402: Soviet Childhood

Maria Bourlatskaya, Lecturer in Foreign Languages. Dr. Bourlatskaya specializes in teaching advanced Russian content-based courses for business professionals with the use of film, literature, and political and business materials. Her current research interests lie in techniques for training business professionals to develop and assess cross-cultural competency. This fall semester, Dr. Bourlatskaya will teach RUS3311: Advanced Russian Conversation and Composition.

Kristen Ghodsee, Professor. Dr. Ghodsee’s research interests include the lived experience of socialism and post-socialism, the gendered effects of the economic transition from communism to capitalism, and the ethnographic study of post-communist nostalgia in Central and Eastern Europe. This fall semester, Dr. Ghodsee will teach:
- RUS5626: Behind the Iron Curtain
- RUS160: Sex and Socialism

Brian Kim, Assistant Professor. Dr. Kim received his PhD from Stanford University. He is a specialist in Russian literature of the long nineteenth century, translation studies, and literary and cultural relationships between Russia, Western Europe, and East Asia. This fall semester, Dr. Kim will teach RUS3145: Masterpieces of 19th-century Russian Literature.

Mila Nazyrov, Lecturer. Dr. Nazyrov’s research interests focus on Russian art and culture at the turn of the 20th century and early Soviet era. This fall semester, Dr. Nazyrov will teach:
- RUS360: Russian for Heritage Speakers I
- RUS472: Moscow and Moscovites

What Is Our Department?

It is:
- a diverse group of scholars and students;
- Language programs designed for non-heritage and heritage learners;
- exciting lecture series and roundtables on a broad variety of cultural and political topics; talent shows, concerts, poetry readings, undergraduate research conferences;
- student trips, Russian conversation hour (Russian Tea), family atmosphere, and much more!

On March 14, 2019, the Russian and East European Studies Department co-organized and participated in a highly anticipated conference, *Is Russia Undermining Democracy in the West?* The conference was a team effort with the Foreign Policy Research Institute, Penn’s Andrea Mitchell Center for the Study of Democracy, Ronald O. Perelman Center for Political Science and Economics, and Penn-Temple European Studies CollegeLogium contributing to the organization of the event. Scholars from various disciplines came together for a full-day conference to discuss Russia’s role in disrupting democracy abroad. Panels focused on the question of Russia undermining democracy in the West, elections becoming cyber wars, and whether or not Russia’s strategy was backfiring. REES’s Dr. Mitchell Orenstein and Dr. Anna Mikulskla presented their research.

On April 30, 2019, in collaboration with the Embassy of Russia in Washington, DC, and the Russian and East European Studies Department, Penn Russian Club brought His Excellency Anatoly Antonov, the Russian Ambassador to the United States, to campus for an address and a question & answer session. In conversation with REES’s own Dr. Mitchell Orenstein, His Excellency discussed U.S.-Russian relations, “fake news”, and the urgent need for nuclear disarmament between the two nations. He A. Antonov is currently personally sanctioned by the E.U. and Canada for his role in Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014, when he was the Deputy Minister of Defense. This was a rare opportunity for the Penn community to hear Ambassador Antonov address the audience and later answer their questions. Both the address and the question & answer session are available on REES’s social media channels.

This spring semester, the REES department had the honor of hosting two visiting scholars from the European University at Saint Petersburg, Russia. Maria Pirogovskia and Anna Tuzova spent three months at the University of Pennsylvania working on their research and collaborating with professors and graduate students. We wish Maria and Anna all the best in their careers! We look forward to working with them again in the future.
Following a long-standing tradition, Penn Russian students once again participated in the 2019 National Post-Secondary Russian Essay Contest organized by the American Council of Teachers of Russian. In this year’s contest, there were a total of 1434 essays submitted from 67 universities, colleges, and institutions across the nation. As always, the essays were rated by a panel of judges in Moscow, Russia. Two Penn students, Michael (Сева) Ehart and Tathagat (Влад) Bhatia were awarded the gold medal (first place nationally) and honorable mention in the second level of instruction. 

Every Monday, students and faculty of all Russian language levels gathered for tea and cookies and honed their Russian language skills. Russian Tea has been and continues to be an excellent opportunity for students to practice their Russian in a more relaxed, non-classroom setting, and meet other Russian-speakers at Penn.

At the end of the fall 2018 semester, Russian heritage students of RUSS474 (Anton Chekhov), put on a production of the first act of Chekhov’s “Seagull” (“Чайка”) in original Russian. Mikhail Lion, a Seattle area theater director, co-directed this production in collaboration with the course instructor, Dr. Djamila Nazryrova. The performance was attended by students in different levels of Russian language courses, including first-year Russian. REES and Dr. Nazryrova intended to recreate a true Russian theatergoing experience for the students, both actors and spectators.

This past year, REES hosted two movie screening series, thanks to our Fulbright Scholars Andriy Smysnyuk (Ukraine) and Vladimir Sviridov (Russia). Two concurrent series took place: one for Russian films, and the other for Ukrainian films. Some films shown in the Russian movie series included the historical drama Spacewalker (“Время первых”), cult classic Brother 2 (“Брат 2”) and the iconic Soviet film, Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears (“Москва слезам не верит”). Some films shown in the Ukrainian movie series included the critically acclaimed The Tribe (“Плем’я”), the documentary Close Relations (“Рідні” / “Родные”), and The Guide (“Поводир”), a film about life in 1930’s Soviet Ukraine.

On November 27, 2019, the department had a special honor of hosting a poetry reading and discussion with poets and intellectuals from Russia and Ukraine. Pavel Arseniev and Dmitry Golynky of Saint Petersburg, Russia, and Galina Rymbu and Yanis Sinaiko of Lviv, Ukraine, read their poetry and proved once again that poetry and politics not only mix but become a powerful tool and an instrument of change. This event was held at the Slought Foundation and was co-moderated by REES’ Dr. Kevin Platt and NYU’s Anastasiya Osiipova.

The 16th Annual Slavic Bazaar, which took place in April 2019, was an all-day showcase of REES’s undergraduate research that spanned across the humanities and social sciences. This also included two presentations from students from Moscow’s Higher School of Economics. The keynote speaker was doctoral student Mariana Ibry, whose presentation, “Scaffolds of Futures Past: Migration, Memory, and Belonging in the former USSR” focused on the experiences of Tajik migrants during the Soviet Union. Other topics ranged from joint U.S.-Russian Peacekeeping in Bosnia by Bryce Klehm to Yehudit Dashevsky’s selected translations from “Requiem” by Anna Akhmatova. A student mixer concluded the day. Penn students were able to discuss student life and cultural differences and similarities with their peers from Russia.

On November 7 - 8, 2019: Social Impacts of Post-Socialist Transition and Policies for the Future, an international conference
• December 2019: holiday party/talent show
• Spring 2020: 17th Annual Slavic Bazaar
• Weekly Russian Tea
• Eastern European Movie Series
• Guest lectures
• May 2020: REES majors and minors end-of-the-year BBQ

We hope that this event is the first in a series of collaborative student research projects to take place at Penn and in Moscow in the future.
Meet Our Faculty:

Molly Peeney, Lecturer. Her interests are in language pedagogy, early twentieth-century Modernism, and creative writing. This fall semester, Dr. Peeney will teach: RUSS003 Intermediate Russian I • RUSS197 Madness and Madmen in Russian Literature and Culture.

Kevin M. F. Platt, Edmund J. and Louise W. Kahn Term Professor in the Humanities, Interim Undergraduate Chair. 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 fall semester, Dr. Platt will teach RUSS191: Putin’s Russia and RUSS250: Tarkovsky’s Passions.

Maria Bourlatskaya, Lecturer in Foreign Languages. Dr. Bourlatskaya specializes in teaching advanced Russian content-based courses for business professionals with the use of film, literature, and political and business materials. Her current research interests lie in techniques for training business professionals to develop and assess cross-cultural competency. This fall semester, Dr. Bourlatskaya will teach RUSS311: Advanced Russian Conversation and Composition.

Peter Steiner, Professor Emeritus. Dr. Steiner’s major areas of research are literary theory and modern Slavic literature and culture.

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 European Film Academy. This fall semester, Dr. Todorov will teach: RUSS111: The Art of Plotting • RUSS164 Russian Film from 1900 to 1945 • RUSS575 Russian History in Film (online).

Julia Verkholyantsev, Associate Professor. Dr. Verkholyantsev’s academic interests are in the field of cultural history, early modern and medieval literary and linguistic culture, and the history of ideas. This academic year, Dr. Verkholyantsev will be on an academic leave.

Lada Vassilieva, Instructor. Lada’s research interests include foreign language teaching methodology and Russian phraseology. This fall semester, Ms. Vassilieva will teach RUSS001: Elementary Russian I.

Brian Kim, Assistant Professor. Dr. Kim received his PhD from Stanford University. He is a specialist in Russian literature of the long nineteenth century, translation studies, and literary and cultural relations between Russia, Western Europe, and East Asia. This fall semester, Dr. Kim will teach RUSS145: Masterpieces of 19th-century Russian Literature.

Maria Alley, Senior Lecturer in Foreign Languages, Language Program Coordinator. Dr. Alley’s interests include second language acquisition and language pedagogy, proficiency testing, and materials development. This fall semester, Dr. Alley will teach: RUSS001 Elementary Russian I • RUSS492 Soviet Childhood.

Kevin M. F. Platt, Edmund J. and Louise W. Kahn Term Professor in the Humanities, Interim Undergraduate Chair. 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 fall semester, Dr. Platt will teach RUSS191: Putin’s Russia and RUSS250: Tarkovsky’s Passions.

Peter Steiner, Professor Emeritus. Dr. Steiner’s major areas of research are literary theory and modern Slavic literature and culture.

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 European Film Academy. This fall semester, Dr. Todorov will teach: RUSS111: The Art of Plotting • RUSS164 Russian Film from 1900 to 1945 • RUSS575 Russian History in Film (online).

Julia Verkholyantsev, Associate Professor. Dr. Verkholyantsev’s academic interests are in the field of cultural history, early modern and medieval literary and linguistic culture, and the history of ideas. This academic year, Dr. Verkholyantsev will be on an academic leave.

Lada Vassilieva, Instructor. Lada’s research interests include foreign language teaching methodology and Russian phraseology. This fall semester, Ms. Vassilieva will teach RUSS001: Elementary Russian I.

Brian Kim, Assistant Professor. Dr. Kim received his PhD from Stanford University. He is a specialist in Russian literature of the long nineteenth century, translation studies, and literary and cultural relations between Russia, Western Europe, and East Asia. This fall semester, Dr. Kim will teach RUSS145: Masterpieces of 19th-century Russian Literature.

Maria Alley, Senior Lecturer in Foreign Languages, Language Program Coordinator. Dr. Alley’s interests include second language acquisition and language pedagogy, proficiency testing, and materials development. This fall semester, Dr. Alley will teach: RUSS001 Elementary Russian I • RUSS492 Soviet Childhood.

Kevin M. F. Platt, Edmund J. and Louise W. Kahn Term Professor in the Humanities, Interim Undergraduate Chair. 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 fall semester, Dr. Platt will teach RUSS191: Putin’s Russia and RUSS250: Tarkovsky’s Passions.

Peter Steiner, Professor Emeritus. Dr. Steiner’s major areas of research are literary theory and modern Slavic literature and culture.

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 European Film Academy. This fall semester, Dr. Todorov will teach: RUSS111: The Art of Plotting • RUSS164 Russian Film from 1900 to 1945 • RUSS575 Russian History in Film (online).

Julia Verkholyantsev, Associate Professor. Dr. Verkholyantsev’s academic interests are in the field of cultural history, early modern and medieval literary and linguistic culture, and the history of ideas. This academic year, Dr. Verkholyantsev will be on an academic leave.

Lada Vassilieva, Instructor. Lada’s research interests include foreign language teaching methodology and Russian phraseology. This fall semester, Ms. Vassilieva will teach RUSS001: Elementary Russian I.

On March 14, 2019, the Russian and East European Studies Department co-organized and participated in a highly anticipated conference, Is Russia Undermining Democracy in the West? The conference was a team effort with the Foreign Policy Research Institute, Penn’s Andrea Mitchell Center for the Study of Democracy, Ronald O. Perelman Center for Political Science and Economics, and Penn-Temple European Studies College-locum contributing to the organization of the event. Scholars from various disciplines came together for a full-day conference to discuss Russia’s role in disrupting democracy abroad. Panels focused on the question of Russia undermining democracy in the West, elections becoming cyber wars, and whether or not Russia’s strategy was backfiring. REES’s Dr. Mitchell Orenstein and Dr. Anna Mikulska presented their research.

On April 30, 2019, in collaboration with the Embassy of Russia in Washington, DC, and the Russian and East European Studies Department, Penn Russian Club brought His Excellency Anatoly Antimonov, the Russian Ambassador to the United States, to campus for an address and a question & answer session. In conversation with REES’s own Dr. Mitchell Orenstein, His Excellency discussed U.S.-Russian relations, “fake news”, and the urgent need for nuclear disarmament between the two nations. HE A. Antonov is currently personally sanctioned by the E.U. and Canada for his role in Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014, when he was the Deputy Minister of Defense. This was a rare opportunity for the Penn community to hear Ambassador Antimonov address the audience and later answer their questions. Both the address and the question & answer session are available on REES’s social media channels.

This spring semester, the REES department had the honor of hosting two visiting scholars from the European University at Saint Petersburg, Russia. Maria Pirogova and Anna Tuzova spent three months at the University of Pennsylvania working on their research and collaborating with professors and graduate students. We wish Maria and Anna all the best in their careers! We look forward to working with them again in the future.

Dr. Mitchell Orenstein opens the conference.