

SPUTNIK



Penn Arts & Sciences | Department of Russian and East European Studies

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 Colloquium 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.



Dr. Mitchell Orenstein opens the conference

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!

Sput-nik

Russian, literally 'fellow-traveler': each of a series of Soviet artificial satellites, the first of which (launched on October 4, 1957) was the first satellite to be placed in orbit.

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*From the left: Dr. Mitchell Orenstein and HE A. Antonov
Photography by Eric Sucar, University Communications*

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 Pirogovskaia 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.

Last Year at a Glance

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 (Себа) Ehart and Tathagat (Влад) Bhatia were awarded the gold medal (first place nationally) and honorable mention in the second level of instruction. Молодцы!

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. Djamilia Nazyrova.

The performance was attended by students in different levels of Russian language courses, including first-year Russian. REES and Dr. Nazyrova 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 Smytsnyuk (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 Rus-

sian 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. We are planning to have another Eastern European movie series in the new academic year. Please check our social media for more information.

In February 2019, REES hosted **Mikhail Kozyrev**, a prominent Russian journalist, music critic, a producer, and founder of one of Russia's largest rock stations, *Nashe Radio*. On February 19, he discussed his role in assembling the sound track for *Brother 2* («Брат-2») with Dr. Kevin M.F. Platt. This cult film brought many Russian rock musicians to prominence, including Zemfira and Bi-2. The auditorium was overflowing with attendees with standing room only. After the lecture, Mr. Kozyrev answered questions from the audience.

On February 21, for his second talk, Mr. Kozyrev was joined by Hunter Heaney, the executive director of The Voice Project, an advocacy group focused on promoting freedom of artistic expression as an agent of social change, where they discussed music, youth culture, and protest in Russia.



On stage: Dr. Kevin Platt (left) and Mikhail Kozyrev

The visit was organized by REES and Penn Russian Club, and cosponsored by the Perry World House, the Huntsman Program, CARGC, and the Browne Center.

In April, REES hosted a one-of-a-kind event that was equal parts academic presentation and a feast. Dr. Maria Pirogovskaia's presented her research on gender roles in Soviet celebrations in her well-researched and captivating presentation titled **"The Ostentatious Feasts: Performing Gender at the Late Soviet Table"**. Attendees enjoyed authentic

Soviet cuisine as Pirogovskaia explored the connections between Soviet food, ideas of abundance, and gender performance at the kitchen table. This talk was part of an anthropological research project on food in the late-Soviet era being conducted by Pirogovskaia.



From the left: Dr. Kevin M.F. Platt, Dmitry Golyenko, Anastasiya Osipova, Yanis Sinaiko, Galina Rymbu, and Pavel Arseniev

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 Golyenko 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 Osipova.

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 Irby, 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 Dashesky'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.

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.

In October of 2018, RUSS001 students attended the **"Romeo and Juliet" ballet** by S. Prokofiev at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia. Such cultural experiences allow students to develop a greater emphasis on reflection and understanding of the Russian language and culture, and balance classroom activities with outside-the-classroom trips. Attendance of such events increases student motivation for language learning while affording the students a chance to bond with their classmates. More cultural events of this nature are planned for the next academic year.



The third iteration of **Your Language My Ear** project took place in March 2019. The project brings together Russian and American poets, scholars, translators, and students of Russian poetry to celebrate and translate contemporary poetry from Russian to English and vice versa. This year's symposium took place at first at Princeton University and continued at Penn with a bilingual reading and a question & answer session at the Kelly Writers House. Translating workshops and recording sessions for poets and translators were held as well. The fourth iteration of the project is expected to take place in 2021.

Upcoming Events

- 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

Meet Our Faculty:

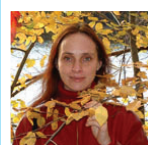


Mitchell Orenstein, Professor, Department Chair. Dr. Orenstein is a scholar of international politics focusing on the political economy of transition in Central and Eastern Europe. This fall semester, Dr. Orenstein will teach RUSS123: Russia and Eastern Europe in International Affairs.



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
- RUSS402 Soviet Childhood



Maria Boulatskaya, Lecturer in Foreign Languages. Dr. Boulatskaya 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 interest

lies in techniques for training business professionals to develop and assess cross-cultural competency. This fall semester, Dr. Boulatskaya will teach RUSS311: Advanced Russian Conversation and Composition.

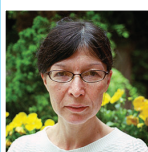


Kristen Ghodsee, Professor. Dr. Ghodsee's research interests include the lived experience of socialism and postsocialism, the gendered effects of the economic transition from communism to capitalism, and the ethnographic study of postcommunist nostalgia in Central and Eastern Europe. This fall semester, Dr. Ghodsee will teach:

- RUSS026 Behind the Iron Curtain
- RUSS160 Sex and Socialism

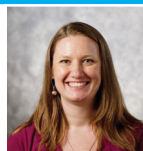


Brian Kim, Assistant Professor. Dr. Kim received his PhD from Stanford University. He is a specialist in Russian literature of the long nineteenth century, translation studies, and literary and cultural relationships between Russia, Western Europe, and East Asia. This fall semester, Dr. Kim will teach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



Mila Nazyrova, Lecturer. 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:

- RUSS360: Russian for Heritage Speakers I
- RUSS472: Moscow and Moscovites



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.



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 Verkholtantsev, Associate Professor. Dr. Verkholtantsev'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. Verkholtantsev 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.

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