We opened the spring semester of 2016 with a faculty retreat involving twenty core faculty members across the disciplines, facilitated by Allan W. Calarco, Senior Faculty Member at the Center for Creative Leadership in Greensboro, NC. Since then, we’ve set up several strategic planning committees, admitted a new class of MA students for the REEES track in the Global Studies MA program, and put together a wide-ranging and exciting program of events.

In addition to presentations by our own faculty, graduate students, and CSEEES fellows, we scheduled talks by Czech historian Kateřina Čapková; rector of the Warsaw School of Economics Tomasz Szapiro; historian David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye of Brock University; historian Marina Mogilner of the University of Illinois-Chicago; political scientist Henry E. Hale from George Washington University; professor of Romanian literature Andrei Terian from Lucian Blaga University in Sibiu, Romania; Polish public figure and Solidarity activist Adam Michnik; president of the International Center for Transitional Justice David Tolbert; Polish author Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki and journalist Konstanty Gebert. On April 13 we launched CSEEES’ Endowed Lecture Series with a talk by Dr. Antony Polonsky, Chief Historian at the POLIN Museum and Professor Emeritus of Holocaust Studies at Brandeis University. Our Poland-centered events are featured on pages 4-5.

In late January we learned that the Selection Committee and the Council of Ambassadors for the Visegrad University Studies Grant program funded the proposal that we submitted last fall. CSEEES received the largest grant awarded, amounting to approximately $50K, which will enable us over the next three years to bring eighteen scholars from Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia to campus. We are delighted by this good fortune.

We plan to end the semester with a thesis presentation seminar on April 28 and a faculty and student reception at my home on May 7. Please join us.

Hana Pichova (Associate Professor, Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures) published an article, “Milan Kundera’s Ignorance: The Czech Emigré Experience of Return after the Fall of Communism” in Eastern Europe Unmapped.


Donald J. Ralleigh (Distinguished Professor, History) published a book chapter, “Echoes of the International across the Historiographies,” in Russia’s Home Front in War and Revolution, 1914-22, Book 1, Russia’s Revolution in Regional Perspective, and an essay “The Russian Revolution after All Those 100 Years,” in Kritika. He spent spring break in Moscow archives, working on his biography of L. I. Brezhnev.


Trevor Erlacher (PhD Candidate, History) won the Neporany Doctoral Fellowship from the Canadian Institute for Ukrainian Studies. He published an article in South Writ Large and won the best graduate student paper prize at the Southern Conference on Slavic Studies for “The Roots of Ukrainian Integro Nationalism: Dmytro Dontsov’s Formative Years, 1883-1914.” He also won a dissertation writing fellowship from the Graduate School for the 2016-2017 academic year.

Ashley McDermott (MA Candidate, REEES) received a Title VIII Fellowship to study Russian in Bishkek, where she will conduct research for her MA thesis on language planning and policy in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan.

CSEEES graduate student travel subventions were awarded to Dakota Irvin, who presented a paper at the XLI Annual Conference of the Study Group on the Russian Revolution in Newcastle, UK, and to Audra Yoder Michal Skalski, and Virginia Olmsted, who gave papers at the Southern Conference on Slavic Studies in Tuscaloosa.

Interview with Petty Officer First Class Polina Kozak, MA ’05

What was your first post-graduate job?

I had quite a typical first post-graduate job as a barista at Starbucks. However, it allowed me to save money and join Professor Jenkins on his eye-opening Burch Field Research Seminar in 2007, which led to an internship and later work at the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Mission to Bosnia-Herzegovina. I had an amazing experience developing and implementing a wide variety of projects, conducting research, and traveling all over Europe. The best part of my job at the OSCE was that I was directly applying and building upon the knowledge I acquired at UNC.

Describe your current work.

A few years ago I had a dramatic career shift, choosing to join the United States Navy. It had to do with my lifelong dream to serve in the military, the desire to challenge myself mentally and physically, and to be a part of something greater. I wasn’t chosen for the Officer Commission, so I joined as Enlisted, willing to do whatever it took to realize my dream. A few months ago, I came back from my first deployment to the Arabian Gulf on an aircraft carrier, where our mission was fighting ISIS in Syria and Iraq. Now I am part of a team responsible for coordinating the refitting the ship for our next deployment.

How did your career path lead you to where you are now?

I feel like I got to have it all: be an international consultant abroad rebuilding a postwar nation and sail the world on a warship launching air strikes on “bad guys” in the Middle East. I wouldn’t trade my peacebuilding experience in the Balkans for the world, but it also led me to seek a career in the more proactive and dynamic field of peacemaking. In the Navy I am far less involved in the decision-making process than I was working at the OSCE, but I am part of a far larger and more potent mechanism.

What drew you to studying Eastern Europe?

Being a kid growing up through transitions in Russia and seeking to understand them drew me to East European Studies. Contrary to popular belief, living through something and understanding it are two different things. I wanted to conceptualize and make sense of the changes that took place, to see where they came from and where they would take us.

What course or experience at UNC best prepared you for your career?

My Serbo-Croatian language courses and the Burch Seminar have had the most direct impact on my career, but I have drawn from every one of my courses at UNC in my work. It is the whole body of knowledge taken together that has shaped my worldview and is guiding me today. The knowledge of the language has proven indispensable in my work in Bosnia-Herzegovina removing the communication barrier that held other international specialists confined to their desks and handicapped. The Burch Seminar was almost a surreal experience that brought to life the world I knew from books and academic articles. It introduced me to the people and places that I grew to know well over the course of the next few years working at the OSCE.

What advice do you have for graduate students on starting their careers?

However trite it may be, the best advice I can give is don’t be afraid to ask seemingly stupid questions, to seem naive and to show enthusiasm. It may seem uncool but keeping an open mind and being curious about new people, places and opinions is the best way to make friends, earn respect and to continue to learn.
This semester CSEEES was delighted to host an array of Poland-related events, ranging from a lecture on Solidarity activist Adam Michnik on contemporary politics in Poland, to a book reading and discussion led by Polish author Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki, and a tour through a groundbreaking museum on the history of Polish Jews by Professor Antony Polonsky. On the next two pages we have included reports from these exciting events and some wisdom from Liliana Gregory, a recent graduate in Central European Studies.

**Focus on POLAND**

**FEATURE**

**Talks on East European Politics and Media**

In March CSEEES welcomed back Adam Michnik, who gave a lecture on “Between Tolerance and Xenophobia – Eastern Europe and Today’s Crises.” Michnik is the founder and editor-in-chief of Gazeta Wyborcza, Poland’s largest daily. He is among Europe’s most prominent public figures, with a distinctive voice dedicated to dialogue, tolerance, and freedom. He was a leading figure in the 1968 student movement in Warsaw, a member of KOR, and a prominent “Solidarity” activist in the 1980s.

Michnik discussed the changing discourse between the liberal and conservative political movements in East Europe. He was alarmed by the spike in xenophobic and nationalist rhetoric in the wake of the refugee crisis in Europe and argued for a stronger push back against the populist and right-wing parties, which present a serious challenge to the future of liberal democracy in the region. His lecture was followed by lively questions from the audience, which were posed in both English and Polish. During his three-day visit to the Center, Michnik also spoke to two undergraduate classes on Central European history and politics at UNC.

The topic of current political trends in East Europe, specifically in regard to the refugee crisis, was also addressed later in the semester by Konstanty Gebert. As a longtime foreign correspondent for Gazeta Wyborcza, he discussed the shortcomings of the current public debate and media representation of the crisis.

**Dean of Warsaw School of Economics Visits UNC**

CSEEES also hosted Tomasz Szapiro, dean of the Warsaw School of Economics, for a week-long visit to UNC. The purpose of his trip was to identify partner institutions in the Triangle for faculty and student exchange programs. He met with colleagues at UNC and other universities in the area, including Duke University, Elon University, NC State, and Meredith College. He gave two lectures during his visit, one in Polish to the members of the local Polish community, and another on “Poland in the EU: Past and Current Issues with Economic Integration” to a large class of UNC economics majors.

Both of Szapiro’s talks focused on the initial post-Communist reforms of 1989, such as “shock therapy,” which were intended to stabilize the Polish economy and push toward EU integration. He also discussed future actions, such as improving education and introducing nonpublic universities, which would improve and deepen innovation and business capabilities in Poland.

**Inaugural CSEEES Endowed Lecture Series**

For the launch of our new endowed lecture series, CSEEES welcomed Antony Polonsky, Emeritus Professor of Holocaust Studies at Brandeis University and Chief Historian at the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews. Polonsky presented his work on the POLIN Museum, a recently opened museum in Warsaw that seeks to provide a new narrative of the history of the Jews in Poland. The exhibits at the museum emphasize a more complex understanding of Polish-Jewish identity as not just Polish or Jewish, but a combination of the two.

Polonsky walked the audience through the museum and Polish Jewish history, beginning with the appearance of the first Jewish merchants in Poland in the tenth century and ending with the present day. He explained how the museum strives to create a clear and coherent narrative of the long history of the Jews on the Polish lands and is structured to allow visitors to be immersed in a rich cultural and religious tradition.

**SLAVIC LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION**

In collaboration with the Polish Cultural Institute and the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures, the Center sponsored a literary evening with Polish author Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki and translator Julia Sherwood. The two discussed and read in both Polish and English from the author’s newly translated book Lapalicy for a Hanged Man. The book tells the story of three East Europeans trying to build a new life for themselves in Iceland. The conversation was facilitated by Professor Ewa Wampuszyc and touched upon the choice of Iceland as the book’s setting, the importance of getting to know a place and people before writing about them, and the process of collaborating with a translator. This was CSEEES’ second event on Slavic literature in translation and we look forward to more next year.

“"There will be people who will ask, upon hearing your major, ‘What are you going to do with THAT?’ If you’re like me, who majored out of interest but planned to go into business after graduating, people will be endlessly confused. Ignore them. I am the only person in my office who can say they have lived and worked in Poland when chatting with senior leadership. By making yourself the resident expert in this region, you are setting yourself up for success, in whatever direction you choose to take it.”

— Liliana Gregory, Central European Studies graduate and business analyst for Public Consulting Group, Inc.
I am in a car driving from Panjakent, Tajikistan, the small city near the Uzbek border where I live, to Dushanbe, the capital, three hours away. A police officer waves us over with his bright orange stick. The reaction is automatic; our driver reaches for a three-somoni bill in the console and opens his door. He walks to the police officer and slips him the money (the equivalent of 37 cents) through his passport. Moments later we are on our way again. This low-level bribery is a constant presence in Tajikistan. For as much as the Tajik government has cracked down on civil rights and potential supporters of political opposition groups, it is unable to control rampant bribery at even a most basic level.

I have been in Tajikistan for almost eight months. I spent two months studying Farsi and Tajik in Dushanbe, but after a brief break I returned to Tajikistan as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant. While I do not perform formal research here, living in the country has nonetheless provided me with a wealth of source material for my Master’s thesis, tentatively entitled “Legitimacy and Islamic Symbols in Contemporary Tajikistan.”

My source of inspiration here is the local community of nongovernmental organizations in Panjakent. Though there are maybe only four or five civil society organizations active in a city of approximately 40,000, their leadership represents an unparalleled level of determination and optimism. These organizations tackle only the most nonpolitical projects, helping rehabilitate disabled children, providing aid and practical skills training to survivors of domestic violence, and developing extracurricular activities for schoolchildren. While Tajikistan endures difficult times, filled with economic and social issues, these people are committed to their homeland. Brushing up against the vast extent of corruption in Tajikistan can be disheartening at times. But the existence of a small group of motivated individuals, working within a difficult government structure to improve their community, gives one hope.

This is not an official State Department publication. The views presented here are my own and do not represent the Fulbright U.S. Student Program, Department of State or the host country.
Tell us a little about your dissertation. What drew you to this topic?

My dissertation explores the implementation of Soviet nationalities policies from the perspective of Kazan, which is today known as Russia’s “Third Capital.” An important industrial, educational, and cultural city on the Volga River, Kazan is also the spiritual and historical capital of the Tatars, Russia's largest minority. I was drawn to the topic by my own experiences in Kazan and seeing how Tatars interact with their Russian neighbors, friends, and coworkers, balancing issues related to their own ethnolinguistic and religious differences. I wanted to understand how Tatars and Russians interact, and how the modern state of affairs came to be. I investigate these nationalities policies in Kazan through a number of key spaces in Kazan: schools, universities, factories, and theaters, for example. My argument is that many of the habits common to living in the city today developed in the 1920s and 1930s, when the Bolsheviks attempted to draw Tatars into urban life in ways that were very different from how they were treated before the October Revolution.

What are your plans after graduation?

I will be moving to Washington, DC, and working for Education Advisory Board (EAB), a consulting firm that works with hundreds of colleges and universities in the US and UK to develop best-practice solutions to their most pressing needs. Drawing on the skills I have developed at UNC as a historian and researcher, I will be conducting long-term studies on important issues facing higher education and then delivering recommendations and plans of action for how administrators can address those topics. I am excited to work in a field that will enable me to shape the future of higher education, as I believe strongly in its importance for both individuals and our society as a whole. My time at UNC has given me a great perspective on some of these issues, as well as the writing and communication skills to succeed in this role.

What advice do you have for graduate students just starting an MA or PhD program?

As a graduate student, it is easy to develop tunnel vision with your own research and teaching. Undoubtedly that work requires a lot of time and attention, but graduate school is also so unique in terms of the community you have around you. CSEEES provides such an array of interesting people studying the widest possible range of topics, some of which might be related to your particular interests, and others not. Either way, I would encourage graduate students to take advantage of the CSEEES community, whether it means attending talks and seminars by notable guests, meeting with incredible faculty that have expertise in fields and regions of interest to you, or seeking out alumni who have pursued unique career paths. You never know where you might find a source of inspiration and insight. If there’s ever a community that could offer that, it would be CSEEES.