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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
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EAST/CENTRAL EUROPEAN STUDIES**

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UCLA**

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Majors: World Arts and Cultures; Russian Language and Literature, UCLA

“West Hollywood's “Little Russia”: An Inquiry into Cultural Heritage and the Jewish-Russian Immigrant Community”

This research considers the roles of U.S. cultural policy and gentrification in the continuing diminution of Jewish Russian culture in West Hollywood’s “Little Russia.” Russian Jews flocked to West Hollywood during various waves of immigration throughout the 20th century, and have long been stakeholders of the city’s cultural landscape. However, as this population ages and gentrifying forces encroach—bringing with them higher costs of living and markedly different socio-economic and cultural interests—the Russian Jewish immigrant community is experiencing significant culture loss. As an aging, ESL (English as a Second Language) community, this population has specialized needs that must be met through various services, including cultural preservation efforts and accessible transportation.

Braunny Ramirez

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Major: Russian Studies, Minors: Linguistics and Asian Languages, UCLA

“Successes and Failures in Nuclear Disarmament: The Cases of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine”

After gaining their independence, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Ukraine all inherited a sizable nuclear arsenal from the Soviet Union, causing widespread concern in the international community. Many countries were concerned that these states would become sources of nuclear technology and material for other states or terrorist groups. Although Russia gained the most nuclear weapons from the Soviet Union, it was seen as the de facto inheritor of the Soviet Union, and thus was not expected to disarm. Accordingly, the disarmament of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine became a high priority in the international community. In particular, leaders from the United States and Russia lobbied for their swift disarmament and put forth various agreements to guarantee their disarmament and the return of their weapons to the control of Moscow.

These three countries ultimately disarmed due to their history with nuclear disasters, newly independent status, external pressure from large nuclear powers, and their desire to become integrated into the international community. Moreover, none of these countries wished to stay armed with nuclear weapons. Each country also had different degrees in success in receiving what they desired by disarming and in gaining recognition within the international community. This paper will analyze these successes and why some of these countries were more successful than the others. Ultimately, these success and failures in disarmament diplomacy played a large role in which country is seen as a good model disarmament for other nuclear armed countries that Western leaders want to see disarmed.

Nicole Tom

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“The Colder War?: A Threat Comparison of Russia and the Soviet Union”

The state of relations between the United States and Russia can be described, at the very least, as disconcerting largely as a result of conflicting policies and a lingering air of distrust.

Unfortunately, such has consistently been the case for over the last decade. However, while Russian policies remain a source of apprehension to the U.S., there are several factors that have lessened the threat Russia poses. This paper argues that present-day Russia is less of a threat to the U.S. than its predecessor, the Soviet Union, for the following four reasons: increased information access between the two countries, their economic interdependence, the lack of proxy wars, and their foreign policy. Due to modern technology, improved access to information has made each country’s actions more transparent and lessened the other side’s risk-taking. Likewise, the establishment of economic interdependence between Russia and the U.S. has both created incentives against initiating conflict and provided more peaceful means of imposing penalties, such as sanctions. In addition, the lack of proxy wars has also limited the chances of a rapid escalation of conflicts between Russia and the United States. Finally, foreign policy differences from the Soviet era to today have played a role in shifting long-term goals, such as the spread of communism to ensuring national security, and the perceptions that both states carry of one another. As a result, the nature of U.S.-Russian discord from the Cold War to today has changed in a way that has decreased the threat emanating from Russia.

Alexandra Steiner

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“Finnish Nonalignment in Response to Cold War Soviet Aggression: Historical Analysis and Contemporary Perspectives”

The Cold War is often characterized as a period of tension between the United States and the Soviet Union, but this simplicity does a disservice to the ways in which other nations were

affected. Finland's close proximity to the USSR and history with Russian occupation informs the way it successfully navigated the Cold War, which has enduring influence on geopolitics. Finland's professed neutrality, complicated by a pattern of kowtowing to the dictates of the USSR, produced a pervasive & persistent national crisis of conscience. Before the collapse of the USSR, Finland viewed the Cold War as a conflict of equal proportions between two equally at-fault nations, per their official neutrality, but today Finland recognizes the Soviet Union as the primary instigator. One could conclude that Finland, in truth, placed blame for the impetus of the Cold War solely on the Soviet Union, but it is important to realize that the Finnish brand of nonalignment in this context is a unique case which exacerbates an explication of whom it faults. Finland's thinly veiled neutrality in response to Soviet demands can be understood through a lens of preserving sovereignty, but it also indicates that Finland viewed the Soviets as aggressors. Contemporarily placing blame on the Soviet Union is a retroactive and necessary rationalization for the Cold War course of action that Finland chose. Finland, in its inimitable neutrality, recognized that the Soviet Union presented a threat which could be appeased through a degree of cooperation and shrewdly avoided becoming another Soviet satellite.

Mihai Popescu

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“Corruption in Romania: The National Anti-corruption Directorate's (in)ability to Bring Corruption to Its Heels”

The National Anticorruption Directorate is a Romanian governmental agency whose task is to prevent, investigate, and prosecute corruption offenses. It was created in 2002 under president Ion Iliescu, but since its inception, it has greatly failed the Romanian public in its task, letting corruption run rampant under pressure from powerful and corrupt government officials. Major scandals mask the government's short history, ranging from its failure to investigate severe bribing at Romania's borders, to its numerous missteps in prosecuting governmental corruption. More recently, a complete revamping of the NAD's structure has been initiated under the newly elected president Klaus Iohannis, marking a new and hopefully more fruitful era of an agency whose inability to create justice has been seen both nationally and internationally as corrupt as the propagators'.

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“Two Rivers, One Sea, and the Crisis in Between”

Images of marooned ships in the desert landscape of Southern Kazakhstan and Northern Uzbekistan have become famous worldwide as a symbol of the devastation of the Aral Sea, once the fourth largest inland body of water on the planet. In one generation, it has shrunk to a tenth of

its former size, resulting in what the United Nation Environmental Program referred to as “one of the most staggering disasters of the Twentieth Century”. This presentation will explore the geological conditions that formed and maintained the sea for millions of years, the Soviet irrigation policies that led to its decline, the environmental, economic, social and public health repercussions, and finally, steps that have been taken in its recovery. As an ecosystem that supports not only a way of life in Central Asia, but the very health of the planet and its people, the Aral Sea Crisis requires attention both on a national and international level. With the united effort and cooperation of the countries of Central Asia, restoration projects can mitigate the negative effects of its loss.

Sophia Kim

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“The Silent Rebellion against Propaganda: Subversions in Socialist Realist Paintings during the Stalinist Era”

This paper focuses on subversions in Socialist Realist Paintings during the Stalinist Era. Socialist Realism is defined as the official art style that dominated Soviet era from 1930s until the end of the Soviet Union. Socialist Realism was introduced as the state government tried to solidify its control over the arts. In fact, Igor Grabar, a painter and theorist, officially stated Socialist Realism as an art style at the 1934 All-Union Writers’ Congress and emphasized the relationship between literature and art of Socialist Realism. Then, Anatoly Lunacharsky, the first Soviet People’s Commissar of Education, who was responsible for Soviet education and culture, appealed to artists to come to the assistance of the new government. Therefore, Socialist Realist paintings are widely known as propaganda to spread certain ideologies and messages throughout Soviet Union. Stalin especially used Socialist Realist art to promote optimism, glorify Stalin as a heroic figure and highlight his policies, such as Five Year Plan, in order to unify people to follow them. Yet, some artists expressed their thoughts and reality into their paintings by deviating color, background, or proportion, but still managed to pass censorship. The following Socialist Realist paintings portray subversions, yet they were recognized as propaganda: *Collective Farm Festival (1937)* by Sergei Gerasimov, *Leader, Teacher and Friend (Comrade Stalin at the Congress of Collective Farm Shock-Workers) (1937)* by Grigory Shegal and *The Morning on Our Motherland (1946-48)* by Fyodor Shurpin.

Cory Klingsporn

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“Translating Dostoevsky’s Бесы: Shortcomings in Existing English-Language Translations”

This paper examines the five major English-language translations of *Бесы*, Dostoevsky's sixth novel: Constance Garnett's *The Possessed* (1916), David Magarshack's *The Devils* (1954), Michael Katz's *Devils* (1992), Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky's *Demons* (1995), and Robert Maguire's *Demons* (2008). Excerpts from the translations and from Dostoevsky's original Russian text are compared and analyzed to identify where and how the translators have introduced errors into the text, distorting the meaning of the Russian original. Particular attention is given here to the novel's religious and philosophical themes, an understanding of which is central to understanding the novel itself. In comparing the translations not only to the original text, but also to each other, this paper also identifies examples of good translation, where one or two translators have outperformed the others in preserving the meaning of the original. Ultimately, however, it argues that the existing English-language translations fall short of the best possible English-language translation—that is, that these shortcomings render the existing translations inadequate, and that a new translation of the novel is needed.

Robert Mkhitarian

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“Microcosmic and Macrocosmic Triangulations in *The Master and Margarita*”

This research examines Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master i Margarita* (*The Master and Margarita*), drawing upon mostly primary sources including Biblical materials, published reviews and scholarship, and the original Russian text. The analysis focuses on the relative character triangles, the link between fiction and reality, and the dilemma of good and evil. This focus brings to attention the multidimensional role of the writer in the text and, analogously, the author of the book. I argue that these triangular character parallels, conformist and oblivious masses, and metatextual levels of meaning offer one unified interpretation of the complex totality in Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*. This research underlines the sophisticated beauty in Bulgakov's work, by showing the intricate progression of his ideas.

Karemy Valdez

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“Andrei Tarkovsky's *Zerkalo*: Interpreting Aleksei's Dreams”

Andrei Tarkovsky's 1975 autobiographical film, *Zerkalo* (*The Mirror*), tells the story of a dying poet via his recollections and fantasies. We will examine the features that make *Zerkalo* a postmodern film, with particular attention paid to the main character, Aleksei's, dreams, in order to unravel the meanings behind the ailing poet's narrative. As Aleksei's dreams are the key to understanding the film, we will trace the visual and auditory clues put in place by Tarkovsky in order to make sense of the film's non-linear narrative. This presentation is in the hope of equipping the common viewer with the skills necessary to understand what might otherwise

seem a confusing and difficult film to grasp. Some topics to be discussed are the recreation of Greek mythology, theories of psychology and psychoanalysis, and the filmic poetics that make *Zerkalo* not only a film about trauma but also a film about the artist's responsibility to the people.

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Lily Shelton, ls15@my.fsu.edu, Major: English Literature, Florida State University

"The Erotic, Maternal, and Warlike Agency of Women in the Byzantine and Slavic Epic"

Each Greek and Slavic manuscript of the Byzantine romantic epic *Digenis Akritis* is radically different from the others, displaying contrasting styles of composition that ricochet between romantic literary and oral epic forms. Some of the most striking changes between versions are rooted in the folkloric tradition of the short epic song. The roles of women in the different versions of *Digenis* also differ strongly. Although female characters in *Digenis* lose agency in the shift from romantic to "oral" epic form, they gain a measure of new agency through their assimilation to heroic traditions. One of the most unusual features of this epic is the presence of a fully-fledged female warrior, Maximou the Amazon. Her characterization strongly parallels that of the hero Digenis. Strong mothers, as found in the Greek and South Slavic folksong traditions, are also found in *Digenis*. Third is the figure of the almost entirely passive girl, a stock romantic character: the "damsel in distress." In the strongly "epicized" Slavic *Digenis*, this figure's erotic power is greatly decreased. The analysis of techniques of oral composition (especially formulaic description) and speech through the characters of the girl, the mothers, and the Amazon allows us to examine the shifting roles of women in the various versions. Although the girl has the least agency, her specific romantic role allows her to accomplish conversion and achieve fame. The mother has more agency, as she has power over the men she gives birth to, although this is only evident in extreme circumstances. Maximou is the only character in the work as active and aggressive as Digenis, and the only woman to have power over men neither through beauty nor by threats. If her original purpose in the epic was likely the reinforcement of patriarchal structures, she may turn out to be an empowering model — and not only today. In the Slavic *Digenis*, perhaps under the influence of Maximou's presence, the girl gains rudiments of warrior traits, despite her largely passive role.

Marie Mach

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"The Ostromir Gospels: A Monument to Art and Language"

This presentation will provide a general overview of the Ostromir Gospels, the oldest dated East Slavic manuscript. It was commissioned by Ostromir, the governor of Novgorod, and written by the deacon Gregory in the ninth century, between the years 1056 and 1057. Today, the Ostromir Gospels are kept in the Russian National Library. The manuscript is the earliest preserved example of Old Church Slavonic, which was the liturgical language used in the Russian

Orthodox Church from the ninth to twelfth centuries. This illuminated manuscript is known as an aprakos, or Gospel lectionary, containing all four Gospels in addition to weekly church readings. Besides being a valuable example of the earliest Russian literature, The Ostromir Gospels also present a fascinating look at the artistic traditions of medieval Russia. In addition to examining the book's content and language, the presentation will examine several of the artistic motifs in the miniatures and lettering throughout the book.

Henry Misa

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“The Soviet Historiography on Central Asia: Khorasan, Transoxania and the Inner Asian steppe 800-1000 AD”

How do we define “the other”? For Europe it was “the East” or “the Orient.” For China it was “the North” or “the West.” Ideas about “us” and “them” change over time and structure how we understand ourselves. This study examines a “created other”: the relationship between the cultured “Tajik” regions and the nomadic steppe (9th and 10th c.) and, later, the cultural response resulting from official Soviet histories. Focusing on the Russian language historiography of Central Asia, this paper makes two arguments. First, western scholars cannot ignore Russian language historiography. English lacks any satisfying study of the Samanid or Qarakhanid dynasties. Single chapters in *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia* (1990) or *The History of the Civilizations of Central Asia* (1998) are brief and confusing. In the 1998 UNESCO *History*, the two chapters dealing with the Qarakhanids and Samanids are summaries by academics (Negmantov 1977; Davidovich 1983) who have entire books—in Russian. Works like Negmantov's *The Samanid State* and Bartol'd's *A Study of the History of the Turkmen People* support my first argument. Second, ideas about national history in Central Asia emerged during the Soviet period. Even the post-Soviet historiography demonstrates continuity (Kamoliddin 2009; Tasmagambetov 2005). My two arguments are supported by focusing on trade and warfare between considered regions up to the Qarakhanid invasion and brief review of Kamoliddin and Tasmagambetov. Acknowledging a wealth of material in Central Asian languages, this study is limited to Russian sources.

Mila Meghan MacFarlane

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“Selling Svetlana: Human Trafficking of Women in Contemporary Russia”

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, a concurrent global slave trade in human trafficking has been thriving. The dismantling of the Iron Curtain and the geopolitical and economic changes that followed opened new possibilities for migration between East and West. As international borders have become more relaxed and accessible to migrants, citizens of the Russian Federation are

forced to migrate in search of employment opportunities. In addition, the expansion of tourism and entertainment industries has only propagated the trafficking industry. This paper posits that Russia maintains its position as not only one type of trafficking country, but three: source, transit, and destination. There are currently many trafficking routes in existence in the Russian Federation, which are utilized by transporters for conveying their victims in and out of the country. Over the last two decades, human trafficking has become exacerbated by a few factors: globalization; Communism collapsing within this former Soviet Union; and a male-driven market in which women are being used as the new trading good in the particularly patriarchal Russian society. As a result of cultural and traditional backgrounds, the women from the former Soviet Union face increasingly threatening circumstances as they have become more of a commodity in a male-dominated market in order to meet a popular interest.

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“Driven into Madness: The State of Psychiatry in the Russian Federation”

In the Soviet Union, punitive psychiatry was used by the Soviet government to “normalize” dissidents who opposed it, for the purpose of controlling behavior that was viewed as a “burden to society” other than suppressing opposing ideas. This was done by institutionalizing dissidents into psychiatric hospitals with mental illness, even if they were not diagnosed as mentally ill, isolating them from society as a result. Many years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the abuse of psychiatry for political purposes is still viewed among Russian society today, to the point where the Russian government uses mental illness as a political purpose to stigmatize anti-government activists and homosexuals, by portraying them as mentally unstable. This paper will focus primarily on two groups: anti-government activists and homosexuals, as their behavior is a current problem viewed as a “threat to society” and the government’s ongoing intolerance among ideas outside of traditional Russian society. This paper will also discuss and analyze the Russian government’s political control over the concept of “mental illness,” specifically applying it to anti-government activists and homosexuals. By comparing the past practices of psychiatry in the Soviet Union with the current practices of psychiatry in contemporary Russia, this paper argues that the government abuses psychiatry aimed at these two groups by restraining “deviant and pervasive” behavior that would isolate them from society as means of protecting the traditional morals and values of Russian society. This paper will also discuss how the past approach to psychiatry influences practices of psychiatry today.

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“Putin’s Popularity: Finding Answers Through Cultural Factors”

This paper examines how the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin appeals to deeply held values and symbols in Russian culture in order to reinforce his popular support. Specifically, this paper examines how Putin appeals to cultural factors like collectivism, conservatism, paternalism, and stability to improve his popular image. The sanctions imposed by the US and the EU on Russia and Putin's counter-sanctions following the events in Crimea, along with the drop of oil prices, have all contributed to the new severe economic recession. Nevertheless, according to the Levada Analytical Center, Putin's approval rating has held steady around 80% since 2014. Cultural factors appear to be an under-appreciated explanation for political popularity, as Putin's popularity has violated the convention that there is a direct relationship between economic performance and presidential approval ratings.

Jennifer Reppenhagen

Major: Russian Studies, UCLA

“Putin's Internal Power Struggle: ‘The Enemies of the People’”

This presentation examines the repercussions of Russia's dissidents, or “the enemies of the people” (*vrag naroda*) and the way in which Vladimir Putin deals with them. “The enemies of the people” (*vrag naroda*) is a term often used in the Soviet Union and was meant to inspire suppression and fear under soviet control. Much in the same way, Vladimir Putin rules under the same method of suppression and fear when it comes to *vrag naroda*. Vladimir Putin's version of *vrag naroda* is anyone that targets and brings forth the truth or the undergoing's of his reign, essentially anybody that knows too much information. These subjects of knowledge can range from anything such as reporting on issues such as what is going on in the Ukraine, or knowing too much about Vladimir Putin's finances, involvement with the FSB (Federal Security Service), any corruption within his reign and his circle of trustees, or simply being against his policies. The following four famous cases of Putin's *vrag naroda* will be presented and examined: Anna Politkovskaya, Vladimir Kara-Murza, Boris Nemstov, and Alexander Litvinenko. Each have internally disrupted Vladimir Putin's peace and therefore threatened his power. All of which also shared same gruesome ending: political assassination. This present study exposes the alarmingly increased number of political assassinations since Vladimir Putin has first come to power and the lengths he takes to stay in control.

Alexander Yelich

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“Myth and Folklore in Serbian Culture”

My presentation will examine Serbian myth and folklore. These myths have shaped the country and affect the average Serbian nearly every day. I will retrace the origins of these myths and explain their relevance in Serbian society. These include historical, religious, and cultural examples. Some myths are whimsical and some are deadly serious. Ranging from the middle

ages until present day, these myths and superstitions have evolved and are still considered pertinent in modern day life. I will illustrate the reasons behind their importance with relation to the region's war torn history and lingering psychological effects on the people. The shaping of the Serbian stronghold on these enduring myths is quite unique and can be viewed in the larger context of historical development of the nation. Many of the examples will be unique to Serbia and many can be linked to all of former Yugoslavia. Some myths extend to central and eastern Europe as a whole.

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"The Future of Polish Democracy"

Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS), translated to Law and Justice, is a conservative, right wing political party in the Republic of Poland. In 2015, a PiS-endorsed presidential candidate was elected, PiS won the majority of seats in both houses of parliament, and the PiS candidate for Prime Minister defeated the reigning premier. PiS holds absolute majority in all facets of Polish government, the first party in this position since the fall of communism and subsequent institution of democracy in 1989. PiS has lost no time in enacting radical legislation potentially giving the party more control over the government. The first proposed law will change the functioning of Poland's highest judicial power, the Constitutional Tribunal. The second gives the government control of public radio and television. Now, the newest controversial law reduces police restrictions on monitoring digital data. PiS's absolute majority win and rapid introduction of controversial legislation have the European Commission worried Poland is transitioning to a PiS-governed authoritarian government. Through analysis of PiS's political history and the social climate in Poland, a prediction can be made as to whether PiS will pull on the reigns or cause a complete disintegration of democracy in Poland in its remaining four and a half years in power.

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"Women in Yugoslavia"

From the socialist years of Yugoslavia to the breakup of the communist regime and independence wars, women's roles have often been ignored and subordinated. While communism took away autonomy from Yugoslav women by withholding daily sanitary and beauty necessities, the wars of independence targeted women using rape as a form of terror in order to humiliate and instill fear. Today, women's roles continue to change, although their experiences during communism and the Yugoslav wars continues to go neglected.