

**TWENTIETH ANNUAL  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
UNDERGRADUATE CONFERENCE ON SLAVIC AND  
EAST/CENTRAL EUROPEAN STUDIES**

**APRIL 30, 2017  
UCLA**

Persia Goudarzi

pgoudarzi@ucla.edu

Majors: Aerospace Engineering and Russian Studies, UCLA

**“Alliances of the East: How the Interplay between NATO Enlargement and Russia’s Balance-of-Power Policy Has Undermined Western Interests”**

This article examines the development of Russia’s foreign policy in relation to eastward expansion of NATO in the post-Cold War era. When the Soviet Union collapsed, Russia, economically in disarray and militarily weak, was eager to integrate with the West and envisaged a partnership with NATO. However, integration with the alliance appeared unlikely when NATO expansion created a European security structure that excluded Russia. To balance the power with NATO, Russia began looking for alternatives in Asia. Moscow’s top foreign policy agenda became strengthening ties with the East and forming alliances. The first alliance, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), is a Eurasian military organization, essentially a factor for political and military deterrence, comprising of 6 states from the former Soviet Union. The second alliance is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), primarily focused on security cooperation among its members. The two organizations cooperate politically, militarily and economically. CSTO and SCO together create a military bloc with deterrence capabilities and security missions that resembles that of NATO, forming a counter structure to NATO in the East. Through these two alliances, Russia has managed to establish control over a strategically important region that holds half of the world’s natural gas reserves and 25% of all oil reserves. The region is geopolitically important for NATO operations in combating terrorism in Afghanistan and transferring troops and equipment to that country. Bringing together more than half the population of the world, the two alliances offer Russia a unique economic potential and attractive market.

Taylor Anthony Freitas

TAFreitas66@gmail.com

Majors: Political Science and Russian Studies, UCLA

## **“Mistaken Identity: Why Realism Fails and Constructivism Succeeds to Understand Russia”**

This paper argues that Constructivism is a better analytical lens in comparison to Realism in application towards the Russian Federation. Specifically, it applies both theories to key events such as WWI, WWII, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the Ukraine Crisis, in order to distinguish the distinct Russian identities leaders held that drove their foreign policies. These identities have been fostered in Russia and were forged through its unique history, ultimately imparting strong international predispositions among the nation’s citizens. Naturally, these trends can be witnessed in the previously named events by analyzing the motivations behind leader’ often surprising actions. Therefore, Constructivism triumphs over Realism because the latter can not identify the rational motives behind irrational actions, resulting in sub par analysis and misguided policy. This paper ends with a recommendation for Western leaders to lay aside the Realist approach and adopt a Constructivist stance so that they may realize greater diplomatic progress with Russia.

Kathleen Robbins

Kathleen.robins16@gmail.com

Majors: Political Science and Russian Studies, UCLA

## **“The Eurasianist Appeal: Putin’s Use of Neo-Eurasianist Rhetoric in Support of his Aggressive Third Term Foreign Policy”**

This presentation examines the assertions of an increasingly dominant political ideology in post-Soviet Russia called neo-Eurasianism, the classical iteration of which took the form of a politico-philosophical ideology and geographic concept to explain Russia’s unique cultural and geographic position in world. Today neo-Eurasianism asserts the notion that Russian identity can be uniquely characterized as “Eurasian” and envisions increased authority for Moscow over the Eurasian space. The article identifies the movement of neo-Eurasianist geopolitical ideas from the periphery of Russian politics to the core of President Putin’s justification for his increasingly aggressive foreign policy in his third term. Putin has promoted neo-Eurasianism as a national identity framework for post-Soviet Russia, using it to bolster a narrative about cultural and historical ties with Russian borderlands and to justify the formal annexation of Crimea in March of 2014. Putin’s neo-Eurasianist rhetoric also supported the formation of a major international economic entity called the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) in 2012, which consists of Russia and a number of other post-Soviet states, and represents the Russian leader’s effort to establish continued economic integration with a select number of states in Central Asia and Eastern Europe, or the Eurasian space. Ultimately, Putin’s neo-Eurasianist rhetoric exists as a tool to support his assertion that post-Soviet Russia deserves a role in the management of the global security architecture as an alternative to Western political and economic hegemony.

Ryan Donovan  
rdonovan@pdx.edu

Majors: International Relations and Russian, Portland State University

**“Transcending Paradigms: The Sino-Russian Relationship in Central Asia”**

The Sino-Russian relationship is neither entirely a temporary partnership based on convenience, nor is it one founded on an unbreakable ideological axis, instead it is best described as somewhere in between. Borrowing elements from contemporary major international relations (IR) paradigms, defensive realism, liberal institutionalism, and constructivism, this paper aims to address the limitations of strictly delimited international relations’ paradigms by applying elements of the analytic eclectic approach developed by Amitav Acharya, called the “Consociational Security Order” (CSO). While not exactly a CSO, the special relationship between Beijing and Moscow and its long-term stability, which has been developed through both bilateral political and economic ties as well as multilateral institutional development, is better elucidated using the conditions put forth by Acharya: interdependence, an equilibrium, institutions under shared leadership, and elite restraint. The Sino-Russian relationship is certainly not isolated from world events. Using this analytical framework, it soon becomes clear that the stability of the Sino-Russian relationship, while strong enough to endure conflicting interests and limited U.S. influence in the short-run, is increasingly vulnerable as Russia becomes more economically dependent on China, the status quo in the Central Asian shared space shifts, and shared institutions such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) become sidelined by Russia, as China is unwilling to develop the SCO along the security path that Russia calls for. Furthermore, the relationship is vulnerable to external pressures, particularly those from the United States (U.S.), as the U.S. is China’s largest trading partner and the target of Russia’s defensive strategic orientation.

Kathryn Hunt  
kathrynhunt@umail.ucsb.edu

Major: History, UCSB

**“Mass Communication Amid Mass Destruction: How Language and Word Choice Aided Soviet Victory in World War II”**

World War Two in the Soviet Union was a time of great difficulty. Nazi Germany unleashed a policy of annihilation towards the Soviet Union, leading to the death of tens of millions of Soviet and Slavic peoples. In the middle of this time of turmoil and loss, a unique kind of patriotic language arose that reflected not only on the hardships of Slavic peoples, but also celebrated their bravery and efforts in the war. The language used by both regular citizens and Soviet officials in radio broadcasts, speeches, and written works reveal a sense of unification and pride among Soviet and Slavic peoples during the war. Sometimes this language was genuine, sometimes it was forced upon people, and sometimes it was used to silence those who spoke out against the Soviet regime. With even beginning level knowledge on the Russian language, students can understand and analyze how Russian phrases used to communicate daily suffering,

bravery, patriotism, and national pride influenced the war effort and changed the thoughts and behaviors of Soviet citizens.

Cassidy Henry

cassidy.henry@ucla.edu

Major: Linguistics with a Specialization in Computing, Minor: Russian Language, UCLA

**“Vowel Harmony in Kazan Tatar”**

This paper documents vowel harmony in Kazan Tatar, or more simply known as Tatar, a Turkic language spoken in the Republic of Tatarstan in the Russian Federation. The data observed in conjunction with this paper are from fieldwork elicitation with a native speaker of the language from Kazan, Tatarstan. These data largely confirm vowel harmony patterns as described by several sources. The source I based my guidelines for developing an elicitation set upon is Bernard Comrie’s 1997 “Tatar Phonology.” Comrie described vowel harmony as palatal harmony, with a restricted form of labial harmony sometimes coming into play. Both my, and previous work by Jenna Conklin in 2015 rejects Comrie’s assertion of labial harmony. The governance of vowel harmony is such that every vowel in a word must match the initial vowel in frontness or backness, with relatively few exceptions. One notable exception is loanwords into the language: they can be disharmonic because they are not bound by harmony rules. As Tatar is a Turkic language, which are known to be highly agglutinative, this creates several productive scenarios in which one can observe the vowel harmony of the language at work. Generally, there are two forms of each suffix, corresponding to the palatal harmony possibilities governed by the need of the root morpheme. In cases of disharmonic words, affix harmony is governed by the last vowel in the root word. Compound words function as independent components in terms of their own harmony, but suffixation follows the latter portion’s harmonic governance.

Ekaterina Walch

ekaterina@umail.ucsb.edu

Major: Film and Media Studies, Minor: Slavic Studies, UCSB

**“Language Loss and Reacquisition in Adopted Russian Children”**

The presentation looks at the rapid rate in which adopted Russian children lose fluency in their mother language. It is common for younger children to more quickly lose complete understanding of the Russian language once adopted. Older children have a higher chance of retaining the Russian language especially if the adopted family supports maintaining it through school or practice. The child’s life before adoption can also affect the rate of language loss, especially if the child was raised in a deprived environment. Unfortunately, most children do end up forgetting Russian and completely replace it with the adoptive language due to a lack of contact with Russian within the new country and not having fully completed their education in Russia. The other question the presentation addresses is whether adopted Russian children can reacquire the mother tongue later in life. Studying how Russian children lose their first language

to replace it with another and their attempts to relearn it can give a great insight into the study of how children learn language.

Stanley Wu

wustanleyucsb@gmail.com

Major: English Literature, Minor: Education, UCSB

**“Inspector’s Introspection: Skovoroda’s Ontology in Gogol’s The Government Inspector”**

A key element in Nikolai Gogol’s “The Government Inspector” is Khlestakov’s transformation from a penniless civil servant into the supposed titular inspector. This paper examines Gogol’s portrayal of this transformation as a projection of Hryhorii Skovoroda’s ontology. This is accomplished through an investigation of Gogol’s use of interiority, external expression, and portrayal of the interactions between the “body”, the “mind”, and the “heart”. By showing the relationship between Gogol’s literature and Skovoroda’s ontology, this paper highlights the influence of the “philosophy of being” on Gogol’s literary content as well as theatrical structure.

Kendall Werneiwski

Werneiwski@wisc.edu

Majors: Political Science, Russian Language and Civilization with a certificate in European Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison

**“Towards Moscow or Brussels: The Future of EU-Ukraine Relations”**

Since becoming an independent country following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine has been confronted with two conflicting developmental paths spearheaded by two conflicting European powers: the European Union (EU) to the west and the Russian Federation to the East. This dichotomy of power captured the world’s attention during the 2014 Euromaidan protests after former President of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich, refused to sign the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement (EUAA) in favor of a treaty favoring closer economic and financial ties to Russia. Now, the pro-European government headed by Petro Poroshenko is seeking closer ties with the EU through the implementation of economic, financial and anti-corruption reforms on the promise of receiving visa-free travel with the EU bloc and enactment of the EUAA, which was signed post Euromaidan. However, the EU’s inability to materialize these promises have left Ukraine frustrated with their efforts to deepen their relations with Europe, effectively leaving Ukraine susceptible to influence from the East out of fear of western abandonment amidst times of increasing war violence and economic hardship. This paper examines this critical point in current EU-Ukraine relations, the future of these relations, and the future effects on the EU’s mechanisms for deepening and retaining their influence in this key geopolitical state that lies between these two competing influencing powers.

Yana Demeshko

dyana@ucla.edu

Major: Central and East European Languages and Cultures, UCLA

**“A New Shadow Over the Kremlin: Reasons for Church and State Backing of the Muscovite Statue of St Vladimir”**

The Russian state and Orthodox Church unveiled a controversial statue to Saint Vladimir on Borovitskaya Square in Moscow on November 4th, 2016. Controversy arose due to an already existing statue in Kiev, Ukraine. The originally proposed location for the monument in Moscow and the numerous similarities to the one in Kiev inspired many to question the true reasons of the Russian state and church behind the statue. President Putin and Patriarch Kirill expressed that the monument was erected to pay respect to such an important figure in Russian history as Prince Vladimir. However, the analysis of public speeches, along with the sculptural differences between the Muscovite and Kievan statue show the ulterior motives for its erection, namely the desire to justify the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea, through the emphasis on unity of the Russian people.

Marie Mach

mmach@brynmawr.edu

Majors: Classical and Near Eastern Archaeology, Russian, Bryn Mawr College

**“Princess of the Altai: The Siberian Ice Maiden, Her Origins and Impact on Russian Culture”**

The discovery of the Siberian Ice Maiden, known in Russian as the Princess of Ukok, is regarded as one of the most important archaeological discoveries in Russia. The remains of this “ice maiden” were discovered on the Ukok Plateau in the Altai Republic in 1993, causing waves in the archaeological community, both in Russia and abroad. The mummified remains date to the 5th century B.C.E and belong to the Pazyryk culture, a nomadic society that inhabited the Altai mountains of Russia, Kazakhstan, and Mongolia. Due to the preserving power of permafrost, many of the artifacts found within the mummy’s burial chamber have remained in excellent condition, presenting themselves as invaluable opportunities to conduct in depth research of the Pazyryk peoples, as well as other early cultures of the southern Siberian steppe. The first portion of this presentation will be centered around the various artifacts found within this burial and the ways in which they pertain to Pazyryk culture. The second portion of this presentation will be concerned with the implications of this discovery on modern Russia; residents of the Altai Republic in recent years have demanded that the mummy be reburied in the Ukok Plateau, rather than interred in a museum, in honor of their traditional beliefs. This controversy is demonstrative of issues of cultural heritage in Russia, and is also especially important due to its relation between the continuation of archaeological research in the Altai mountains and local communities in Russia.

Kyle Sallee

ksallee@pdx.edu

Majors: History and Russian Language, Minor: Political Science, Portland State University

**“The Illusion of Parity: Determining U.S. Nuclear Policy in the Post Post-Soviet Period”**

For 70 years, Soviet schoolchildren were taught “Moya rodina — Sovetskiy Soyuz (The Soviet Union is my motherland),” but the motherland would be brought to her knees in 1991 as the trans-national Soviet identity disappeared with the collapse of the Soviet Empire, taking with it the ruins of the ideological, social, and political institutions that had supported civilization in the USSR and the Eastern Bloc for generations. What remained in the wake, a nuclear apparatus which was second only to that of the United States, would be the cause of an ongoing discourse between the Russian Federation and the United States. This essay details this discourse by analyzing US-Russian relations during the Post-Soviet Period from 1992-2007 and the Post-Post Soviet Period which follows the Russian Federation’s invasion of Georgia in the summer of 2008. Chronicling the history which has led to the New START program between the United States and Russian Federation, I answer three questions: Firstly, does the Russian Federation pose a significant nuclear threat to the United States, secondly, does the proposed end of the Post-Soviet Period signal the end of nuclear cooperation between the United States and the Russian Federation, and thirdly, how must U.S. and NATO policy adapt to suit the current offensive Russian strategy?

Meagan Ford

meaganford@g.ucla.edu

Majors: History and Russian Studies, UCLA

**“A Historical Analysis of United States Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1917-1920”**

The purpose of this research is to analyze the United States’ unofficial intervention against the Bolshevik government in the Russian Civil War between 1917 to 1920, tracing phases of development and different approaches utilized by the United States government over the course of intervention. This paper will consist of a literature review of primary and secondary source documents in English and Russian. The first section will detail the United States’ motivations for action against the communist government in Russia. The body of the paper will examine the actions it undertook, including financial support of anti-Bolshevik forces, military involvement and propaganda; followed by the reasons for cessation of intervention and the results of its failure. The paper will conclude with an evaluation of the legacy of the intervention in the context of the early Cold War.

Alexandra Steiner

asteiner4@wisc.edu

Majors: International Studies and Russian, University of Wisconsin-Madison

**“Пятая колонна’: Implications for the Opposition in Putin’s Russia”**

What does the ‘fifth column’ refer to? How did a term that arose during the Spanish Civil War become part of the Stalinist vernacular that sent so-called enemies of the people to labor camps? What brought about the term’s resurgence in contemporary Russia under Vladimir Putin? Much like in the Soviet Union, the ‘fifth column’ is used in the modern Russian Federation to negatively characterize members of the political opposition, i.e., anyone who diverges from the government’s official stances. The term carries important historical connotations that inform the way it is used today; the manner in which leaders name and classify their opponents in political discourse is significant. The return of the ‘fifth column’ in Russian political discourse carries important implications for the domestic Russian opposition and international relations alike. The idea of a sinister, internal network of enemies working in tandem with Western nations to subvert the government speaks volumes about the persistent fear of both foreign influence and political opposition in Russia. Furthermore, the term ‘fifth column’ draws suspicion toward opposition leaders and the West, advancing the narrative that liberal political opponents do not have Russia’s best interests in mind, thus undermining their legitimacy and swelling the control of the Russian establishment. While the Russian government rarely uses the term itself, tacit approval of its use benefits those in authority. In this manner, the resurgence of the term strengthens Vladimir Putin’s monopoly on political power.

Alejandro Sanchez Mosqueda

mos1122@g.ucla.edu

Major: Russian Language and Literature, UCLA

**“Russian Injectable Narcotic Users and The Never-ending Cycle with The Medical Industry”**

This paper examines the state of how healthcare providers are nearly inaccessible to Russian narcotic users. During the dissolution of the Soviet Union, organized crime began to embed itself into Russia’s underworld and large quantities of narcotics began to cross the shared borders with Europe and the Middle East. Russia was not prepared to deal with this trafficking of drugs across its borders which caused mass outbreaks of narcotic abuse cases and diseases, most notably HIV/AIDS. Along with this, the policies of perestroika and glasnost implemented by Mikhail Gorbachev began to shift most medical industry provisions, such as rehab programs, to private ownership and enter into a less government-centralized industry. However, these privatized organizations are underregulated and are overly priced, which has caused mass relapses of users, failed attempts to effectively treat patients, and heavy expenses for users and their families. The Russian Federation has taken measures to help combat the spread of transmittable diseases by establishing government-sanctioned needle exchange facilities, but even these come up short as they are generally located in untrustworthy locations. Law enforcement corruption has caused these locations to be associated with mass extortion, unlawful arrests, and abuse of users. This association has caused many users to avoid ever accessing these locations due to a lack of trust. If these industries are left underregulated and police abuse continues, narcotic users will continue to be left with no viable source of assistance.

Heleana Melendez

elein.22830@gmail.com

Majors: Psychology, Russian Language and Literature, UCLA

### **“Under their Roof: The Normalization of the Russian Mafia and its Effect on Russian Society”**

This presentation examines the factors behind the Russian Mafia’s consolidation of power during perestroika and the post-Soviet period. Specifically, it looks at the ways in which its activities in the economic and political spheres normalized its presence in Russian society. Beginning during perestroika and continuing after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Mafia was able to take advantage of the political, social, and economic instability, assuming various roles the state was unable to undertake. The Mafia was able to cut through the state bureaucracy and make things more secure and efficient for others. Through the provision of both legal and illegal services, such as private protection and money laundering, the Russian Mafia was normalized. As a result, Russian entrepreneurs and politicians began to prefer the Mafia rather than going through the legal structures set in place by the government, thus cementing the Mafia’s presence in post-Soviet society. Examining the factors that led to the normalization of the Russian Mafia can then be used to shed light on ways of combating other similar organizations, such as those in El Salvador.

Daniel Dobrin

dh.dobrin@gmail.com

Major: Psychobiology, UCLA

### **“LGBT – A Story of Oppression”**

LGBT individuals have been oppressed in Russia throughout its history. In recent years, there has been the gay propaganda law. This political issue coincides with the popular social mindset, making Russia a dangerous and unfavorable setting for LGBT individuals to reside in. The gay propaganda law was created to prevent minors from having any positive notions about non-traditional couples, which is a euphemism for same-sex couples. Defending LGBT people or ideas, participating in pride parades and events, and publicly displaying same-sex affection have all been illegalized by the State Duma. In addition, LGBT discrimination is not punishable by law, further worsening the living conditions of LGBT individuals. In current news, the government in Chechnya, a federal subject of Russia, is rounding up, torturing, and even murdering gay men. They are being sent to prison camps. However, Chechnya is denying such allegations, explaining that there are no homosexuals to round up. From a social perspective, Russia is known as one of the most homophobic countries in the world. The majority of people in Russia are homophobic and express disgust toward LGBT individuals. People on the streets sometimes take matters into their own hands and attack LGBT individuals. The combination of

legal and social bans induces fear in LGBT individuals and leads to the limitation, and even the destruction, of the well-beings of LGBT individuals, both emotionally and physically.

Alice He

alicehe72@gmail.com

Majors: Linguistics and Comparative Literature, UCSB

**“Tarkovsky and Time”**

The way people perceive time varies from one person to another and only a few are able to fully express their perception of time. Film director Andrei Tarkovsky distinguishes himself through the way in which he pushes the limits of the concept of time in a moving picture medium, such as *Stalker*. This paper examines a few scenes from Tarkovsky’s 1979 film *Stalker* in order to unwrap Tarkovsky’s concept of time. It begins with a short analysis by Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek on *Stalker*. From there, specific scenes in *Stalker* are closely examined and are supplemented with a few scenes from Tarkovsky’s other film from 1972, *Solaris*. It is through this close reading that this paper concludes that Tarkovsky’s concept of “time” is not the same as the common of meaning of “time.”

Mikhail Prokhorov

mikhail\_prokhorov@umail.ucsb.edu

Major: Philosophy, UCSB

**“The Aesthetics of Andrei Tarkovsky in Relation to Russian Culture and History”**

Although Andrei Tarkovsky was an atypical Russian filmmaker, yet his works were impactful in Russian culture. Interestingly, his success in filmmaking did not stem from the content of his films, but rather from his unique stylistic approaches towards filmmaking. This paper will argue this point with respect to one of Tarkovsky's films by conducting a rigorous formal analysis.

Lola Mitsuk

lola2017@g.ucla.edu

Major: Russian Language and Literature, Minor: Film, Television and Digital Media, UCLA

**“Russian Science Fiction Space Cinema: From Unreality to Reality”**

This paper examines the transition made by Russian science fiction cinema from a focus on unrealistic fantasy to a more realistic portrayal of travel in space, occurring from the 1920s to the 1960s. The first Russian science fiction film *Aelita*, directed by Yakov Protazanov in 1924, was rather unrealistic in terms of its representations of travel through space, a trait shared by Protazanov’s cinematic contemporaries and literary predecessors. This changed, however, when Vasilii Zhuravlev, who consulted with Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, released *Kosmicheskii reys: Fantasticheskaya novella (Cosmic Voyage)* in 1936, a transformational work that depicted space

travel realistically rather than fantastically. Three major Russian science fiction films about space travel from 1957 to 1962, continued this trend toward realism— *Doroga k zvezdam* (Road to the Stars, Pavel Klushantsev, 1957), *Nebo zovet* (The Sky Calls, Aleksandr Kozyr, 1959), *Planeta bur* (The Planet of Storms, Klushantsev, 1962)—each film containing more realistic special effects and scientifically accurate depictions of space travel than the film that preceded it. These films were so realistic and so visually stunning that, from 1962 to 1967, contemporary American directors appropriated the films and repurposed them as Western science fiction films and distributed them to American audiences. This paper argues that *Kosmicheskii reys: Fantasticheskaya novella* bridged the gap from unreality to reality in Russian science fiction cinema in representation/depiction of space travel and space exploration, which set a trend toward realism in Russian, as well as Western, science fiction cinema, whose effects can be seen in the genre to this day.

Sydney Millar

srmillar@brynmawr.edu

Major: Russian, Bryn Mawr College

**“Art in Rebellion: Nonconformist Art in Khrushchev’s Soviet Union”**

After the death of Stalin and Khrushchev’s rise to power the Soviet Union entered a period known as “The Thaw.” A period characterized by decreased repression and censorship by the Soviet authorities, as well as political reform concentrated on de-Stalinization. Despite the relaxation of the government, the activity, of what many term to be nonconformist artists, was met with resistance by not only the Soviet government, but was also publicly criticized on many occasions by Khrushchev himself. The most notable among these occasions was when Khrushchev attended a public exhibition and got into an argument with one of the most famous nonconformist artists Ernst Neizvestny. This would lead to an anti-abstractionist campaign making the act of creating nonconformist a form of protest, politicizing an act not originally intent on being political. The original aim of this art movement was to move away from the dominant style of social realism in the Soviet Union, and explore art as a form of expression. Certain groups of these artists would come together and talk about art and display their work together, despite the fact that many were exploring different movements, such as abstractionism and conceptualism. This project focuses on the the origins of this art movement and how Khrushchev’s visit to that exhibition in 1962 affected this underground art scene and how it operated under increased surveillance from the government.

Shaimaa Khanam, Sk15h@my.fsu.edu, Major: English and International Affairs Dual Degree, Minor: Communications, Florida State University

Simon Prado, Simon.prado@hotmail.com, Major: International Affairs, Florida State University

**“Change and Continuity of the Masculine Ideal in the Byzantine and Slavic Epic”**

Focusing on the twelfth-century romantic epic *Digenis Akritis*, we will analyze how the acculturation of civil and military conventions in later Byzantium and other Orthodox lands led to a new normalized concept of the ideal male figure. Over this period, the eastern border of Byzantium was moving westward from the Euphrates River toward Constantinople due to migratory and military pressure from the Seljuq Turks. The border was simultaneously a locus for conflict and assimilation: these two factors shaped the hero of the Byzantine epic *Digenis Akritis* whose name means “the border guard of two origins.” This hero, in turn, contributed toward a more militaristic construction of masculinity in Byzantium.

Our framework makes use of historical secondary material (Kazhdan and Epstein, Birkenmeier, Luttwak) and contemporary theories of masculinity (Heldon, Reeser) in order to contextualize our primary material. We have identified a number of military conventions in our source texts, such as horsemanship, armed combat, and defensive and offensive measures; and pedagogical conventions, such as a nobleman’s education (the trivium, horsemanship, etc.) vs. a “street” education (scouting, boasting, bride-stealing, etc.).

*Digenis Akritis*, devoted to its hero’s “warlike and amorous exploits” (Ihor Sevcenko) – likewise educational – such as war games, hunting, raiding, and bride-stealing, created a model for masculinity that would satisfy Byzantium’s changing socio-cultural and ideological needs. Each of its extant manuscripts, composed in a different place and time, conveys in turn a subtly different model.

Mihai A. Popescu

mihaiopescu@g.ucla.edu

Major: History, Minor: Central and East European Studies, UCLA

**“Decriminalizing Corruption in 2017: The Romanian Government’s Efforts to Escape Justice through Emergency Ordinance 13”**

On the last night of January 2017, Romania’s Government met in secret and adopted legislative changes to the penal code through an emergency ordinance, decriminalizing bribery of up to \$48,000, and effectively legalizing abuse of public office. These alterations prompted an immediate response from the Romanian people, attracting as many as 600,000 citizens out in the streets in protest. President Iohannis called it “a day of mourning” for the Romanian justice system. Their indignation was heard by the European Parliament as well, which condemned the Government’s action as taking a “step backward” from the progress made by Romania’s Anti-Corruption Directorate in recent years. This presentation will take a look at February’s protests, the largest since the 1989 Revolution. Finally, at a time when the country’s politics are becoming increasingly polarized, it will lay down some lessons to be learned by both the government and the people as ways towards avoiding such future confrontations.

Sophia Yaghmaee

sophiayaghmaee@aim.com

Major: Applied Mathematics, Minor: Central and East European Studies, UCLA

## **“Paul Erdős: The Story of a Man Who Loved Numbers”**

This research study is about Paul Erdős, one of the most prolific mathematicians of the 20th century. He was born in Budapest, Austria-Hungary in 1913 in a Jewish family. Both his parents were high school mathematics teachers and he was home-schooled by his mother since his father was captured as a prisoner of war for six years during World War I. Due to the political climate in Hungary after World War II, the citizens of Hungary had limited freedom of government to enter and exit the country, However, Paul Erdős managed to leave the country and spent time in US, the UK, Canada, France, Israel, Australia, the Netherlands, and many other countries around the globe. To understand Erdős’ life, it is essential to understand the social and cultural changes in Hungary between in first half of the 20th century as well as his nomadic lifestyle. He essentially lived out of a suitcase as he traveled around the world to study mathematics and made his living out of earning from various awards, to fund his travels and basic needs. Erdős was addicted to mathematics, but also cared deeply for his community of friends and he remained aware of current political events until the very last minute of his life. Hungary continues to nurture mathematical talent partly because of role models like Paul Erdős.

Samantha Yaghmaee

samanyaghmaee@yahoo.com

Major: Applied Mathematics, Minor: Central and East European Studies, UCLA

## **“Architectures of Budapest”**

This paper introduces some of the major public and governmental architecture in City of Budapest, which became a single city due to unification of two cities of Buda and Pest in 1873. Moreover, the paper discusses the historical background and significance that each structure has brought to the City. Budapest is the current capital and most popular city of Hungary; it has architecturally notable buildings in a wide range of styles that helps the city to gravitate and drive tourism. More importantly, many of these architectures are not just beautiful, but hold significant historical meaning. For example, Széchenyi Chain Bridge is regarded as one of the modern world's engineering wonders that connect the western and eastern sides of the city across Danube, the longest river in Central and Eastern Europe. Each individual landmark reflects the story of culture at the time and allows us to see how the previous generations have projected itself to the future generations. Taking a deeper glimpse into the history behind each landmark brings a higher appreciation and deeper understanding of how the City came to be and why it is such a beautiful country today.