

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

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ABSTRACTS

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“Has Lake Baikal Become Befouled?: A Review and Analysis of Environmental Pollutants in the World’s Largest Freshwater Lake Over The Past 30 Years”

Lake Baikal contains 1/5th of the globe’s total unfrozen fresh water, which is equivalent to all five Northern American Great Lakes. It has been previously thought that Lake Baikal was a pristine water source; however, studies have shown that it is in danger of harboring numerous contaminants. Using the Web of Science Database and specific keywords (e.g. “Baikal”, “pollution”, “contaminant”, “toxicity”) we retrieved a total of 335 research publications. Out of those 335, 53 papers had relevant data that were extracted and analyzed. Heavy metals, per and poly fluorinated alkyl substances, dioxins, organochlorines, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons were present in the water, sediment, and biota-phase of the lake. The total number of concentration data points extracted were 4517 for these contaminants, spanning from the years 1981-2016. The data were standardized and plotted to find trends over time. Our results showed that concentrations varied by up to 6 orders of magnitude depending on the contaminant class. In addition, these pollutants have largely persisted in the lake over time. This research will advance our understanding of Russia’s world-renowned water reserve and additionally fill the need for a succinct review on the recent progress in pollution detection.

Spencer Bonneteau, University of California, San Diego

“Comparative Slavic Phonology: Palatalization and Vowel Reflexes”

As part of a quarter-long Independent Study project within the Linguistics Department at UCSD (LIGN 199), I plan on comparing and contrasting phonemic inventories of various Slavic languages, the Slavic languages' developments over time, and the Slavic languages' morphophonemic alternation patterns. I am particularly focused on processes surrounding Slavic palatalization and vowel reflexes and how they affect the phonemic inventories of the Slavic languages. I plan on investigating the ten most-spoken Slavic languages (Serbo-Croatian varieties counted together), focusing on two Slavic languages every two weeks. I will be presenting on my findings from the first four weeks of the independent study, which will be especially highlighting the East Slavic languages (Russian, Belarusian, & Ukrainian) and Polish.

Peter Bota, University of California, Los Angeles
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“In the Shadow of the Apocalypse’: Humanism, Ideology, and Samizdat in Postwar Romania”

This presentation will discuss Dinu Pillat’s Samizdat novel, *In the Shadow of the Apocalypse*, and how it uses psychological analysis to stand against the Stalinist model of reality. The story follows multiple characters affiliated with the Harbingers, a fictional analog of the Legion of the Archangel Michael, a fascist group active in Romania in the 1930s. Through that story, Pillat defies the stunted worldview of authoritarianism, deconstructs revolutionary ideals, and reclaims human narratives from a collectivist view of history. The inner lives of the characters, examined lovingly by the author, and their corruption into monsters by the promise of perfecting society and humanity is a fundamental rebuttal of the Stalinist ideology imposed upon Romania by the USSR after the Second World War. While the regime subsumed the individual into the collective, refused the existence of a deeper psychological and spiritual life, and exalted Revolution and its promises of a New Man, Pillat presented the Harbingers as a mirror to the regime and all other authoritarian revolutionaries. *In the Shadow of the Apocalypse* represents the true spirit of dissident art, taking the events that wracked Romania for Pillat’s entire generation and denouncing the very spirit of authoritarianism as being not an advancement but an annihilation of humanity. Through analysis of this work, we can understand not only the conditions of Romanian society in the 1930s and 1940s, but also the very human compulsion and seduction of extremism.

Molly Burhans, Indiana University Bloomington
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“The Real Women of Pushkin and Turgenev: Self, Sex, & Power”

This paper explores the role of female characters as tools of the realist genre in "Fathers and Sons", by Ivan Turgenev, and "Evgeny Onegin", by Alexander Pushkin, with a focus on Odintsova and Tatyana respectively. While the 19th century was a time of great development in literature, men dominated the literary scene, as they seemed to have dominated the social sphere. However, in many works of this time, there are unique female characters that have emerged and played an important role in Russian literature. In these works, the main female characters are granted a degree of autonomy in thought, and both Tatyana and Odintsova face conflicts between knowledge of the self and perceptions of the outside world. These stories do not speak out against traditional gender roles, however, they acknowledge, and do not denounce, the subtleties of female knowledge of self, sexuality, and power. This paper will examine how independent female thought is a vital contribution to the Russian realist genre, while simultaneously speaking to the evolving role of women in Russian society during this time.

Mina Cvjetinovic and Nikola Nikolic, University of California, Los Angeles
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“Music as a Dividing and Unifying Force in the Ex-Yugoslav Republics”

Throughout history, music in the Balkans has often reflected the influences of outside empires which often went hand in hand with the annexation of different areas of the region. With the construction of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), there came a need to unify the multitude of nationalities, ethnicities, and religions living within the country. The internal dichotomy between the East and West allowed nonaligned Yugoslavia to create new sounds and aesthetics which were heavily advertised and supported by the Yugoslav government in order to unify the country. Groups and singers like Bijelo Dugme and Djordje Balašević became not only the heart of Balkan music at this time, but also the face of Yugoslav solidarity. By combining elements of Eastern “oriental” tunes and Western Rock n Roll, these musicians invented a type of “shepherd’s rock,” with lyrics and emotions that resonated with the common folk of Yugoslavia. The success with shepherd’s rock caused producers and musicians to create the genre of newly composed folk music trend—turbo-folk—where folk tunes were placed on top of dance and electric beats. Turbo-folk quickly became a success during the 1980s with artists such as Miroslav Ilic, Lepa Lukic, and Lepa Brena. However, turbo-folk’s catchy lyrics and addictive melodies also allowed it to be weaponized as a source of propaganda during the Yugoslav wars. This paper follows the history of the Balkans, with a focus on the formation and fragmentation of Yugoslavia, and how these events shaped the different eras of Balkan music.

Cate Hyojin Hwang, University of California, Santa Barbara
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“Chekhov's Sakhalin Island: Exile as the Abandonment of Knowing”

I will be presenting an overview of Chekhov’s “Sakhalin Island”, a non-fiction publication composed of his travel notes from his 1890 trip to Sakhalin Island. Chekhov suddenly decides to live amongst the inhabitants of the "uninhabitable" island in order to investigate its social and medical conditions and argue against the negligent penal system of Imperial Russia. The book functions as a work of literature in Chekhov's signature fashion, which compassionately and objectively portrays the bleak and desolate existence of Sakhalin life, and also a social science investigation into the demographics and socioeconomics of Russia's remote colony. Ultimately, the Sakhalin that he portrays is characterized by its pervasive non-Russianness which illuminates the extent to which exile divorces convicts from mainstream society and literally pushes them into absolute obscurity.

Elen Karapetyan, University of California, Los Angeles
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“Russian Architecture as Reflected in 19th Century Russian Literature: From Karamzin to Dostoevsky”

I want to focus on the historical architecture of Moscow and St. Petersburg as it is depicted in Russian literature throughout the 19th century. The literary works of fiction—as explored in this study—will be the works of the following authors: Nikolai Karamzin (his depiction of Moscow), Konstantin Batiushkov and Alexander Pushkin (their depictions of Moscow and St. Petersburg), Mikhail Lermontov (his depiction of Moscow), as well as Nikolai Gogol and Fedor Dostoevsky (their depictions of St. Petersburg).

Jennifer Leo, Portland State University
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“The Remission and Reappearance of Moscow's Economic Hegemony in Central Asia”

In examining the socioeconomic state of former Soviet republics in Central Asia, it becomes clear that the economies of nations such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan have been shaped by a history of Imperial, Soviet, and modern Russian economic hegemony. The term ‘hegemony’, coined by the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, is applied to reference the dominance asserted by Russia’s historical implementation of collectivization, current investments into various energy sectors, and the establishment of regional agreements and unions. In particular, the Eurasian Economic Union, which stimulates the flow of labor migrants from countries (Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan) reliant on remittances to Russian megacities. Furthermore, an analysis of Uzbekistan’s widely-criticized cotton industry will provide evidence for the claim that the systems created by Soviet economic planners maintain influence in Central Asia’s agricultural sector today.

Moreover, despite the long-lasting presence of Russia in Central Asia’s economic affairs, the emergence of new hegemonic cycles presents itself in the form of foreign investments from China and the West. Parallel to Russia, these entities possess an interest in Kazakhstan’s bountiful oil reserves, Kyrgyzstan’s gold mines, and the potential to devise trading networks. In combination, such international interests have contributed to the growth of Central Asian economies, as a multitude of former republics experienced a sharp economic downturn following the collapse of the USSR. However, in accepting foreign investments and forging partnerships with China and the West, countries such as Kazakhstan risk entering a new cycle of economic hegemony and have become arenas in which axis powers battle to maintain dominance.

Vlad Manzhlyiy, University of California, Los Angeles
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“Russia and United States: Race for the Arctic”

The United States and Russia, being two of the most influential powers in the world, have constantly competed with each other for economic dominance throughout history. This paper analyzes how Russia and the United States, in today’s political climate, continue to compete for international superiority, especially in regard to the Arctic. The Arctic has recently become more accessible over the years because of warmer temperatures. Russia’s primary focus in this new competition is the collection of newly accessible resources such as natural oil, gas, and minerals. In addition, they also seek to gain power through the militarization along the Northern Sea Route. In an effort to keep Russia from gaining more control over the Arctic region, the United States began to expand their air bases, radars, and seaports in Alaska for an upcoming fleet in Arctic research; this research includes gathering natural resources and scientific exploration. As Russia already had a head start in development in the Arctic regions with previously existing military bases from the Soviet Union, setting up for resource gathering, military expansion, and more missile and radar bases has been a quick process. Although Russia’s intent was to harvest resources from the Arctic, their recently intensified military presence has shown otherwise. While the United States is far behind in securing their stance in the North, they continue their efforts in monitoring Russia from Alaska while still working on expeditions and research studies about the Arctic.

Joseph Matveyenko, University of California, Los Angeles
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“Regime Change and Election Integrity in Post-Soviet Ukraine and Armenia”

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, democracy has spread into much of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus in a variety of forms. But even with the introduction of democratizing political and economic reforms, elections have proven to be fragile institutions in the region often susceptible to undue influence from power-hungry executives. This presentation examines the changing patterns of election manipulation in post-Soviet Ukraine and Armenia and the impacts of domestic regime change on election integrity. The overthrow of authoritarian incumbents via revolution is traditionally thought to improve the role of democracy within society, but the post-Soviet space has seen a range of outcomes following mass mobilization movements. In Ukraine after the 2004 Orange Revolution, the opposition that came to power split up and proved to be ineffective in governing, ultimately replaced by a resurgence of authoritarianism and election fraud under Viktor Yanukovich, who was elected president in 2010 and justified a retreat from democracy as a necessity to reestablish stability. Armenia, which experienced large-scale vote rigging throughout its independent history, held its first free and fair elections following the 2018 Velvet Revolution and ousting of President Serzh Sargsyan, dismissing any cultural narratives to its long history of vote buying and fraud. However, post-Velvet Armenia today is faced with the challenge of continuing its fight against corruption and initiating politically challenging reforms to avoid a democratic recession similar to that of Ukraine amidst a climate of growing discontent with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

Natalie Navarrete, University of Georgia

“Russian Holistic Investment in Latin America: A Counter to the Security Interests of the United States”

Russia’s foreign policy strategy in Latin America focuses on undermining the United States’ ability to meet its national security goals. Traditional means of wielding influence in this region are not effective for Russia, which in competition with the US and China, cannot provide the same wealth of capital. As a result, Russia has pursued a strategy that this paper classifies as Russian Holistic Investment (RHI). Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), media/education influence, and the exchange of energy supplies are three aspects of RHI analyzed in this research. A connection between increased RHI and votes cast in opposition to US interests in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) by Latin American countries was investigated. A direct relationship was found between increases in public channels of Russian media and votes undermining US security interests. However, another important trend was revealed. All Latin American countries on the UNSC from 2014-2019 with the highest rates of opposition to US interests received classified amounts of Russian FDI. Further research which expands the range of time considered is needed to be able to draw from a larger sample of Latin American countries and reveal the effects of long-term investments like those in education.

Juliette Oliver, University of California, Los Angeles

“Greeted with Poems by Pushkin: An Exploration of the Significant Afro-Russia Immigration Waves and their Public Perceptions”

The emergence of Afro-Russians in Russia goes back to before the time of Peter the Great, but it would be he who would first utilize their presence to demonstrate the progressiveness and tolerance of Russian society for political gain. This same trend of exploiting Afro-Russians presence to strengthen Russia's public persona as a progressive safe haven prevailed and led to the two most notable waves of Africans and African Americans to the Soviet Union during the Great Depression and during the World Festival of Youth and Students. In my presentation, I discuss how both waves were influenced by the Soviet Union's desire to capitalize on Afro-Russians presence for economic and political gain, especially to spite the capitalist west and expose the tense race relations within the United States at the time. In addition, through my research I examine the evolution of public sentiment from overwhelmingly positive to increasingly negative of the Afro-Russian diaspora during the two waves and how the rise in nationalist sentiment affects these minority communities today. Finally, this presentation explores the challenges felt by the Afro-Russian diaspora today as many Afro-Russians struggle to find a place within a society lacking distinct laws to protect them from a rising number of hate crimes and instances of racial profiling as a result of rising right-wing ideology.

Sebastián Arce Rentería, Los Angeles Harbor College

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“Predecessors of the Written Art”

Пётр Ильич Чайковский has and is known to be one of the most brilliant and grandiloquent composers of his era, and nowadays, the orchestrator of many holidays, galas and cultural aspects throughout the world. One of his greatest inventions was the Nutcracker, along with its culminating « Waltz of the Flowers » ; The Waltz not only incites the dance, bewitches the eye and soothes the soul, but it permeates the hearts of many. Throughout the world, particularly in the United States of America has it encompassed millions of souls ; especially during one of our most beloved holidays – Christmas. The notes and melodies this piece emanates resemble the flexibility, the mystery and the complexity of the Russian folk, reminiscing back to the VOS word order *мама* speaks in, folk tales *бабушка* tells of, or during a wintry evening when cosy-in by the bonfire one reads the poems of *Ана Ахматова*. The « Waltz of the Flowers » promulgates this Russian spirit to the rest per se during the Nutcracker recital for elementary students, or during the December wedding of a relative – the first waltz perpetually embroidering together the hearts of a newly wedded couple, or on someone’s way to work whilst listening to the radio. It dominates the Usonian theatre – Broadway, cinematography – Hollywood and surely the ears of 331 million folks. One cold night centuries ago, Чайковский bequeathed all nations of the world a masterpiece which thrills our minds and delivers our hearts from silence during a snowy dusk.

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“An Introduction to Psychogeographic Discourses in Bely's Petersburg”

Andrei Bely’s Petersburg (1913) recounts the lives of a Tsarist Government Official, Apollon Apollonovich Ableukhov, his son, the student revolutionary, Nikolai Apollonovich, ordered by his compatriots to commit patricide, and various others, such as the object of Nikolai Apollonovich’s affection, Sofia Petrovna, and his fellow revolutionary, Alexander Ivanovich Dudkin, in the lead up to the 1905 revolution. It is a labyrinthine work of both personal and mythic scale, frequently compared to James Joyce’s Ulysses. As Dublin was for Joyce, so for Bely the city of Petersburg is a central character, a key factor allowing a theory of urbanism to be applied to literature, as the city’s quantifiable effect on the human characters in the novel allows an in-depth analysis through the lens of psychogeography. The theory of psychogeography, first formulated by Ivan Chtcheglov (1933-1998) and Guy Debord (1931-1994), seeks to analyze the way individuals are psychologically impacted by the human-constructed environments which they inhabit. Therefore, applying the theory of psychogeography to Bely’s novel produces insights into the psychological impacts of the environment on the characters. This is evident in Apollon Apollonovich’s fear of space, and his frequent mathematic cerebral play that is caused by the polyangular environment of Petersburg, and Nikolai Apollonovich’s persistent psychological anguish about suicide induced by a bridge, and the fear that overtakes him in the “hopeless void” of the Summer Garden. Furthermore, psychogeography allows a deeper reading of Dudkin’s depersonalization in the face of the massive Nevsky Prospect, where individuals

vanish into the collective motion, and for Sofia Petrovna, the frightening role of the Bronze Horseman grounding her memories into the present.

Natalia San Antonio, Bryn Mawr College

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“The Impact of Politics on Scientific Progress in the Soviet Union”

Russian and Soviet science has been adversely impacted by political, social, and economic factors during the twentieth century. This impact was most profoundly experienced during Iosef Stalin’s reign, resulting in repression of scientific discovery, particularly in natural science (e.g. biology and genetics). This thesis addresses the question: Which factors primarily contributed to the near demise of natural science in the Soviet Union?

To address this, the thesis details the state of science from tsarist to Soviet Russia, with particular focus on Stalinism, and the shift in government control over science during Khrushchev’s Thaw. Specifically, during tsarist Russia in the late 1800’s, scientific investigation has led to fundamental discoveries despite paucity of government funding, and science in Russia was poised to flourish. However, the 1917 Revolution led to a power shift to the Communist Party, the uprising of Marxist principles, and a centralized communist science. In 1927, with the rise of political leader Iosef Stalin, befell the total dependence of science on state funding, strong censorship, isolation from the West, and denouncement of theoretical bourgeois science. These Stalin-led ideologies endorsed the rise of Trofim Lysenko, a simple agronomist, and dogmatist, whose false scientific doctrines dominated Soviet science for decades.

This thesis addresses whether the repression of scientific progress was caused by the government’s endorsement of Lysenko’s false doctrines, combined with the ideologies of the political leaders, and Soviet Union’s isolation from the West. Specifically, the rise and fall of Lysenko is assessed, starting with his non-peer-evaluated and fraudulent scientific research, speeches, and essays that were supported by Stalin, to Khrushchev’s Thaw that led to a re-birth of natural science. An argument is proposed that despite the scientific re-birth during The Thaw, the loss of scientific integrity and discovery during Stalin’s era has hindered the progression of natural science.

Alexandra Stewart, Portland State University

“On the Propp-Levi Strauss Debate: Applying Propp's Functions to Jane Austen”

Soviet folklorist, Vladimir Propp, created a list of functions that are common to all fairytales in order to describe the difference between them and other types of fiction. In *Morphology of a Folktale* Propp catalogued elements of Russian fairy tales and identified 31 common narrative functions, focusing on the order in which these functions occur and the relationships that exist between these functions. However, Levi Strauss, a critic of Propp, argues that Propp's functions were too broad to be applicable only to fairytales. By examining Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* through the lens of Propp’s functions, I corroborate Strauss’ criticism of Propp’s functions as too general. In Propp’s later theory he expands on his previous functions and includes ideas regarding how time, space, and characters’ behaviors are important factors that

differentiate fairytales from other stories. When reexamining *Pride and Prejudice* through the lens of Propp's later theory, it becomes clear that *Pride and Prejudice* is not a fairytale, illustrating that this later theory is a more precise definition, one that accurately describes the distinction between fairytales and other stories.

Gemma Taylor, University of California, Los Angeles

“Foreign Foundations of Nation: Imperialism and the Development of the Russian Nation in A Hero of Our Time”

Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time* continues a tradition of romantic and Orientalist Russian literature of the Caucasus that was first established by Pushkin in his narrative poem “Prisoner of the Caucasus.” In both *A Hero of Our Time* and “Prisoner of The Caucasus,” the protagonist experiences life free from the intellectual censorship, bureaucracy, and Europeanized customs of the Russian court. Although it is unclear if Lermontov met Pushkin, his work was heavily influenced by Pushkin's. Pushkin's poem was part of the same intellectual climate of the Decembrist revolt of 1825. The Decembrists were a revolutionary group of intellectuals and veterans of the Napoleonic Wars, who wanted to establish a republic with a constitution similar to that of the United States. Although the Decembrists failed, they were able to link their political goals to literary practice. They also supported tsarist imperialism in Transcaucasia and the territories of the Ottoman Empire. In many ways these intellectuals supported the goals of the empire, but disagreed about its internal politics. Both Lermontov and Pushkin, despite their professed love for the Caucasus, actively fought against its native inhabitants. In their view, the land which frees the romantic poet from the chains of Russian court society is something to be brought back into the nation to improve its people. This paper uses postcolonial theory to explore the ways in which Lermontov uses colonial and imperial rhetoric, specifically in the realms of nature and women, to provide a cultural foundation for an expansionist Russian nation.

Moriah Thomas, University of Georgia

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“Kazakhstan in the Middle”

Kazakhstan's economy has been pulled between Russian, the European Union, and China for years now which has caused it to suffer in its agricultural sector – its strongest trading asset. Many in Kazakhstan feel like they must be loyal to Russia in trade, while others feel like trading with the EU is the best way for Kazakhstan to grow economically. Kazakhstan is a small country and has been torn in this way for some time. For them to be able to stand on their own may take international intervention. For this study, I will interview native Russian speakers, those with knowledge about Kazakhstan, and experts on developing countries and international interventions. The purpose of such interviews will be to gain an inside view of what Russian speakers, Kazakhstan natives, and international relations experts believe would be the best route for Kazakhstan to follow. I will also research the impact that NGO's, trade sanctions, and international aid have had on Kazakhstan in the past few years. I anticipate that my findings will

be split just as Kazakhstan's population is on the issue. This issue is significant because Kazakhstan represents all of the countries around the world that are being pushed around by larger ones. If Kazakhstan can stabilize its trade economy through international intervention, that means that international cooperation and mutual trust are possible without both parties matching each other in strength or prowess.

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“Руководство Большевиков и Государства в Гражданской войне”

The constantly changing social, military, and economic upheavals that took place during the Russian Civil War resulted in an intense period of political evolution in the country's leadership in a relatively short period of time. This presentation will examine that political evolution, and particularly within the leadership structures of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and how they evolved over the 4-5 years of Civil War within the country. The main institutions that will be examined are the Politburo, Central Committee, and Orgburo. However, these are not the only Party institutions that will be explored. In addition to the Party's structures, the newly created institutions of the Soviet State will also be given attention. These include but are not limited to the All Russian Congress of Soviets and the All Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK). In the analysis of the Party's and State's leadership institutions in the early years of Soviet power, this presentation seeks to explore how the power sharing relationship between the two progressed during the years of the Civil War. For example, at the early stages of the war, many decrees and laws were passed through the VTsIK and then given validity through the All Russian Congress of Soviets. However, later in the war, VTsIK began to act unilaterally, until finally most decisions were first made by the Party's Politburo and Central Committee, and then sent to VTsIK for a rubber stamp confirmation. Exploring how and why this transformation happened is the goal of this presentation.

Jonathan Vukovic, University of California, Los Angeles

“How Religion Shaped National Identity in the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s”

This presentation examines how religion shaped national identity in the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s. In particular, the discussion focuses on the nations of Croatia, Bosnia, and Serbia. This presentation begins by detailing the difficulties that these once-independent nations faced during their existence as the multiethnic state of Yugoslavia. Emphasis is placed on the ways that the differing historical and cultural backgrounds of each nation contributed to rising tensions within the multiethnic state of Yugoslavia. This presentation also analyzes the key role that religion played in fueling these tensions. In spite of communist leaders' efforts to ban religion, it was passed down behind closed doors by ethnic Croats, Bosnians, and Serbians. This continuation of closely-held religious beliefs—and their correlation with specific ethnicities—enabled religion to serve as an instrumental tool used to shape national identity and spark patriotism for one's own formerly independent country. As a yearning for independence gained strength, citizens were spurred to take up arms in alliance with other members of their own respective nations. Each nation tended to correspond with a particular religion or series of religions: Croatia with Roman Catholicism, Serbia with Orthodox Christianity, and Bosnia with a combination of Catholicism,

Orthodoxy, and Islam. Due in part to these correlations, religion was used, and often manipulated, by forces to gain support for their cause throughout the Yugoslav Wars. This presentation concludes by exploring the specificities of these religious manipulations and their profound influence on the national identification of individuals in the former Yugoslavia.