

Slavic News: Winter 2023

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR, GORDANA CRNKOVIĆ



Dear Friends of the Slavic Department,

Happy 2023 -- I hope your year has started well!

Here at the Slavic Department the Winter quarter is in full swing. In addition to courses in

Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian, Polish, Russian (including medical Russian), and Ukrainian languages, we are offering a variety of classes on Slavic literatures, film, and culture. A popular introductory class "Slavic Lands and People," for example, developed by our Teaching Professor Dr. Bojan Belić, familiarizes students with both views about the region and its peoples coming from the present-day residents of these lands, as well as the views about them from the institutions such as the UN and the EU.

Our other well-attended classes include those on Russian crime fiction "from czars to comrades and to new Russians," taught by Professor Galya Diment, a class on the "Golden Age" of Russian 19th century literature and culture taught by our Associate Professor Barbara Henry, and a class on Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* from the department's series of "Russia's Big Books" and taught by Professor José Alaniz. I enjoy spirited discussions and fresh student insights in my class on cinema by East European filmmakers who moved to the West at some point in their careers and have thus made films on both sides of the "Iron Curtain" and within very different aesthetic and social environments.

CONTENTS

> 2	Faculty News
> 6	Student News
> 6	Fulbright News
> 8	Romanian News
> 8	News from You
> 9	In Memoriam
> 11	Gifts
> 12	Support Us

Ongoing programs hosted by the department include the year-long lecture series on Ukrainian history and culture, organized by our Assistant Professor Sasha Senderovich, as well as a weekly Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian club open to both beginning and intermediate language speakers and hosted by our graduate student Biljana Konatar. Please stop by – you will get to share jokes, music, and even some of the excellent "Turkish" coffee which Biljana makes for all who attend! Initiated and led by our Affiliate Professor Michael Biggins, our Slovene Studies Fund Drive has been a huge success. The fund will ensure a longevity, quality, and the nationally leading place of Slovene studies at the University of Washington. Many thanks to all who contributed!

Sofiia Fedzhora, our Ukrainian Fulbright visitor and Ukrainian language teacher for the past two years, continues to be a true inspiration: despite the horrific war taking place in her country, Sofiia maintains a superbly professional, upbeat, and warm attitude. Together with our colleague Professor Laada Bilaniuk from the Anthropology Department and the Ukrainian Students United at the UW, Sofiia organized the first (!) "Rozkoliada" at the University of Washington. A traditional Ukrainian fest that usually marks the end of the Christmas and New Year holidays and is commonly

held in the period between Epiphany and Candlemas, "Rozkoliada's" main aim is to gather, sing carols, thank the people who were nearby in the previous year, and share good hopes and wishes for the upcoming year.

And finally—a few words about some new faces in the department!

Assistant Professor Piotr Florczyk (PhD USC), in his first year with us, is a poet, translator, scholar, and teacher. He taught a very well attended class on war literature in the Autumn quarter and is teaching another popular class this quarter, "Migrant Writers and their Journeys." His newest publications include a full-length collection of poems in Polish, *Granice* (trans. Borders/Boundaries/Limits), 2022, and a co-edited volume *Polish Literature as World Literature* (2023), containing articles that discuss "the relations between Polish culture and literature and the global world of literature." We are truly fortunate to have Piotr as our newest colleague! (For more on Prof. Florczyk, see <http://www.piotrflorczyk.com/>)

It is also a great pleasure to welcome our new administrative assistant -- and UW graduate summa cum laude! -- Isabelle Schlegel. With her impressive work ability and cordial personality, Isabelle has already proven herself as a fantastic addition to our department. She is helping our main administrator Lani Phillips who keeps the department running by managing the myriad threads of our financial, legal, and organizational aspects in her impressively capable hands.

Lastly, a few words about myself, the newly minted Chair of the department since this past summer.

My undergraduate study at the University of Zagreb focused on comparative literature and philosophy, and my graduate study at Stanford University, where I got my MA and PhD degrees, was in the Program of Modern Thought in Literature. While my research focuses primarily on the literature and film of the former Yugoslavia and the post-Yugoslav region, I mainly teach larger classes in comparative literature and East European literature and film, the subject of my latest book *Literature and Film from East Europe's Forgotten "Second World": Essays of Invitation* (2021, now available in paperback). I have worked alongside our former Chair, professor Kat Dziwirek, as well as our

previous Chairs during my tenure here, professors Galya Diment and Karl Kramer, and hope to build on their excellent stewardship of the Slavic Department.

Wishing you all the best in 2023,

Gordana Conković

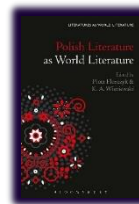
FACULTY NEWS

Sasha Senderovich's book, "[How the Soviet Jew Was Made](#)" (Harvard University Press, 2022), was recently named a finalist for the [National Jewish Book Award 2022](#) in the category Modern Jewish Thought and Experience.



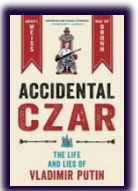
The book was reviewed in the most recent issue of the *New York Review of Books*, by Gary Shteyngart, in an article titled, "[Beyond the Pale](#)." It is available online now and appears in the print edition (Feb. 9, 2023).

Sasha penned an article titled, "[An American Package for Soviet Jews](#)," that was published Jan. 18 in *In geveb: A Journal of Yiddish Studies*.



Piotr Florczyk and K.A. Wisniewski recently published a co-edited volume of scholarly articles, *Polish Literature as World Literature*. For the full description, reviews, and purchasing details, visit [Bloomsbury Press](#).

Professor José Alaniz has published a book review of the graphic biography, "Accidental Czar: The Life and Lies of Vladimir Putin" by Andrew S. Weiss and Brian "Box" Brown, for "Russia Matters," a website maintained by the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center. Read the review here on [Russia Matters](#).





**Introducing Piotr Florczyk,
Assistant Professor of
Global Literary Studies,
and Administrative
Assistant Isabelle Schlegel**



December 2022 – Piotr and Isabelle sat down to discuss their beginnings at UW and the Slavic Department, and the intersections between personal and academic life.

Piotr: So, what's your favorite part about working at the Slavic Department?

Isabelle: The people. I love working with the students and faculty, and learning new things about language and culture—I hear so many different languages spoken in the office every day. It's so wonderful to be exposed to new foods I haven't tried before and to be in a place where everyone is excited to share their traditions with others. And to see more and more connections between the languages and cultures the more I get to know everyone.

Piotr: Do you have any kind of Slavic/Central European background?

Isabelle: I think my grandmother was born in Karlovy Vary. She referred to herself as German, but she's probably actually Czech. I'm very German, but I feel like my maternal grandmother is pulling me toward Eastern Europe a little bit.

Piotr: What about your educational background? You went to UW, correct? What did you study?

Isabelle: Anthropology and Comparative Literature. It was cool taking Comp Lit because I was able to take classes not only with professors from the Slavic Department, but from East Asian and Germanics.

Piotr: Are you considering graduate school?

Isabelle: Yes and no. I've been looking through jobs at the university to find out what I enjoy doing for work. I've been thinking about librarianship or museum work. I'm thinking about getting a Master's in Library Science or maybe doing a museum program. But I'm

trying to work there first to see what it's like before I make a commitment like that.

Piotr: That sounds really cool. The library science part especially. Are you by any chance an artist too?

Isabelle: I wouldn't call myself that. I feel like I can be creative. I don't know, I feel like I have this mental block. I refuse to call myself an artist because I feel like there's a lot of — [*gestures broadly*] — that comes with that. I really like designing for the department Instagram and making drawings. But I feel like calling myself an artist is committing to constantly pushing myself.

Piotr: The same kind of thinking applies to poetry. Some people call themselves poets. And other people, for various reasons, prefer to say, "I write poems." It's an interesting conversation that goes back a really long time, to poetry with the capital P versus somebody who's maybe closer to the root of the word "poet," which means "maker."

Isabelle: So, tell me about what you like to do—tell me about swimming.

Piotr: Swimming and water sports—for example surfing—in general are really important for both my wife and for me, though we're primarily lap swimmers with a Masters team. In fact, this is how we met, as former high caliber, competitive swimmers. I swam through college and professionally after college, then, after I retired, I became a swim coach, training kids and adults. At some point Dena, my wife, started coming to my workouts. One thing led to another, and here we are.

Isabelle: Did you ever consider coaching or getting involved with swimming at UW?

Piotr: UW cut their swimming program in 2008 or 2009. But you know what, I used to come up here every year when I was in high school to race in the Husky Invitational in December. My team, the Mission Viejo Nadadores would swim against the UW team, which hosted the meet, and a bunch of other teams at that complex in Federal Way. It's a great facility. That swim meet was my first taste of UW.

Isabelle: That's awesome. I was wondering, do you think this background has shaped your academic or research interests at all?

Piotr: Well, I am currently working on a book called *Swimming Pool*, for Bloomsbury Academic and their wonderful series called Object Lessons. These are short books, essays, really, and fit the category of public-facing scholarship. I have to deliver the manuscript in March.

But the second part of my answer would be that swimming has taught me how to devise projects for myself. How to have goals, how to strategize, how to achieve those goals, all of the stuff that you learn as an athlete. How to deal with setbacks, too. In that sense, a lot of my work, not to mention a huge part of my identity, has its roots in my former life as a world-ranked swimmer. By the way, I strive to pass some of these lessons on to my students.

Isabelle: That's great. What other projects are you working on?

Piotr: I have a book that's coming out on January 12th, a co-edited volume called *Polish Literature as World Literature*. Then in February, I'm publishing a translation of poems by Jerzy Jarniewicz, one of Poland's most acclaimed poets, critics, and translators.

Isabelle: You asked me if I consider myself an artist. Would you consider yourself a poet?

Piotr: I'm in the group that says, "I write poems." I am artistically inclined, of course, and I can be a bit of a dreamer. I mean, you have to be in order to create art. But I think of poems as objects made of words, and so I'm interested in being a craftsman, somebody who chisels away at a block of language and creates a poem. Poetry is a big part of my life. I read poems every day. I think about poetry every day. But I don't write poems every day, not even close.

Isabelle: When you're thinking about poetry or just thinking in general, how much of it is Polish and how much of it is English? Does it ever mix together?

Piotr: That's a really great question! I'm what's called a translingual poet, someone who writes in an acquired language, but I also write in Polish. My two languages

permeate each other, though I try to keep them apart. When I write in Polish, I write in Polish. When I write in English, I write in English. And I would stick to that, even though there have been instances when I started writing something in Polish and I finished it in English. Or vice versa. Having started writing something in English, I got stuck, and I found a way forward by continuing the same piece in Polish.

Okay, well, how about you? Do you know other languages?

Isabelle: No. I mean, I took two years of Spanish in high school, actually three years, but it feels like two because we never really practiced speaking. I can understand what people are saying when they talk to me, but I freeze up and I can't respond. I had a woman come up to me at the store asking me in Spanish how much the chairs were, and I was like, I'm so sorry. I literally cannot speak. But I don't know. I'm really interested in learning languages. During the pandemic, I got really bored and I went on Duolingo and just started tapping on every single language to see what it was like. I've had a good time attending BCMS club meetings, and I've been trying to figure out a way to get more people involved in the language courses here. It's frustrating being an American and seeing all the scholars coming over from Europe speaking three, four or five different languages, or working for the department, and I wish that were me. I want to be that.

Piotr: Yeah, I know. It really is impressive.

Isabelle: What would you say have been some unexpected or surprising things that have happened along your journey to get where you are now?

Piotr: Well, I feel like I'm on the couch! I don't know if this qualifies as surprising or unexpected, but one of the things that I continue to encounter is people who can't square the "swimmer-to-poet-to-university professor" thing. None of that makes sense to them, because it's not something that you hear about often. I write about that in my swimming pool book, in the final chapter, a quasi-memoir of my life as a swimmer who then became passionate about literature. All of this is very American, don't you think? I reinvented myself. Isn't that what America is all about?

Piotr: So, let's turn to you. What do you like to do in your spare time, which we know you don't have much of?

Isabelle: I've been trying to get back into reading for a really long time. I was just a movie watcher, and I still am. When I get back to Colorado, I'm looking forward to going on hikes. And I love food. I feel like food is probably the biggest part of my personality right now. I'm very food-driven, and lots of people say that about me.

Piotr: Do you mean you like to cook, or just eat it more?

Isabelle: So... eat. I do like learning new recipes, though, and baking.

Piotr: What's your favorite type of food?

Isabelle: Sushi. I very much like different textures. I like how it's just all the food groups in like a single meal, in a single bite. It really is cool to me. You have rice and vegetables and fish. Everything in just one little piece of a roll.

Piotr: I like sushi too. I like Asian cuisine, because I like seeking out things that are different, that will expose me to different tastes. New experiences are really important to me. Asian food is so different than the stuff I grew up eating or the things that we may cook at home. I feel the same way about Indian food. Is that the same for you?

Isabelle: Yeah, I would say so. Coming with recipes from the previous generations in my family that's just... potato and starch... we try to go to Oktoberfest every year to kind of get back in touch with all the traditions. But I don't know. I definitely could not eat schnitzel and sauerkraut all the time.

Piotr: So, you mentioned movies—what's your favorite type of movie or reading?

Isabelle: I feel like I really connect with historical nonfiction and historical fiction. I feel more connected to other people in the human experience. When I just see stories portrayed in such different ways, I feel like I really connect to the visual aspect of film. I feel like I'm really interested in collective memory. And I don't

know, the experiences that shape people, that... if you mention a city or a place or food, a singular image comes up for a lot of people. I took a folklore class, and that was really interesting. We had started talking about meme culture and how, in a way, it's kind of always existed. We just have a new name for it. So that's all really cool to me. I have thought about maybe going into- I had a journalism streak for a while that I'm kind of still in touch with. I do think documentary making would be really cool—to go make documentaries. I love watching documentaries.

Piotr: Me too!

Do you have siblings?

Isabelle: Yes, I have an older brother. He's seven years older than me. He and I actually graduated at the same time. I graduated in June with my BA and he graduated with his Master's in Music Education. And now he teaches music K-12 in rural Western Washington. They just had their winter concert recently and it was great fun. I always enjoy hearing him tell me that it's weird teaching the kindergartners that don't know how to count to 13, and then the high school seniors that are trying to figure out how to go to school again after online learning through COVID. I mean, they're all trying to figure it out.

You mentioned that your kids travel with you when you visit Poland—how old are your kids?

Piotr: Well, my daughter, Iza, is 6, and my son, Ed—we call him Edzio ("Eddy" in Polish), will turn 1 in March. My parents haven't met him, so we hope to get to Poland this summer.

Isabelle: Yeah, that's good to hear. Well, I know you have to go soon for your next meeting—

Piotr: Yes, but let me say how much I appreciate you and what you do—and thanks for this! This was a lot of fun!

STUDENT NEWS



December 9th, 2022: Svetlana Ostroverkhova presented a defense of her Master's thesis, titled, "The Guises of Prince Myshkin: Genuineness and Artificiality."



January 20th, 2023: Stefana Vukadinovich successfully completed her general examination. The committee members unanimously concluded that Stefana should be admitted to candidacy for a doctoral degree.

FULBRIGHT NEWS

Fulbright experience 2.0.

The roads we choose – do we REALLY choose?

My Fulbright journey started in June 2020 when I submitted my application on the website intending to participate in the Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) program funded by the United States Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA). At that time, I could not even imagine what I would experience and go through. Looking back, I have been more and more convinced that some things we really do(n't) choose or don't know completely what awaits us in the future.

My participation in the Fulbright FLTA program was chosen consciously. I remember I mentioned in my "Objectives and Motivations" application that one of my strongest desires is "to show the world the diversity of the Ukrainian language, history, and culture in all possible ways" through teaching, cross-cultural meeting or events, and diving into tradition and customs. But I could not even expect what price would be paid for this recognition of Ukraine as an independent country with its own values and rights to live as an equal among equals.

I arrived in Seattle as a Ukrainian FLTA in September 2021 for 9 months and had to come back to Ukraine in June-July 2022. Unexpectedly, in February 2022,

Vladimir Putin declared a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and my country was at risk of being fully illegally occupied by the Russian military. Thanks to God, it didn't happen! People all over the world have stood against the cruelty and injustice to defend the right of Ukrainians for their independent and free country. Since February 24th, my life, like the lives of all Ukrainians, has been divided into two periods: before the war and after. For a couple of weeks, I could not come to my senses and believe that this is true. I have lost count of the calendar's days, in my mind, there was the 7th, 16th, 25th day... And even now I am living according to this "wartime clock" schedule and clearly realize that today is the 335th day of Ukraine's resistance, and I am fully persuaded that victory day is coming up soon!

Remembering the last year, I can honestly say that without people's support and help, I could not survive mentally being so far from my home for such a long time. I am endlessly grateful for the support and understanding of all professors of the Slavic Languages and Literatures Department, especially Katarzyna Dziwirek and Krystyna Untersteiner, who did not let me give up and motivate me on my way of learning Polish. Last summer, I got a Polish Award from the Polish Women's Club (Kolo Pań) and realized that I could help my people by developing my knowledge and broadening my professional network connections with others. Later in July, there was a big Polish festival, where I got a chance to participate as a "Barvinok" dance member and organized a workshop on creating patriotic bracelets (100% of the fund went to the Ukrainian relief).

Almost till the end of the summer, I did not know whether I could stay in the U.S. for a while or not, and only due to the enormous efforts and cooperation of the Department's chairs (Gordana Crnkovic, Katarzyna Dziwirek, thank you!) and Fulbright Office's administration my visa was extended, and I was honored to get a chance to teach



Ukrainian at the University of Washington for the 2nd year!

Last quarter was remarkable for me because of the many things that happened both in my studying/teaching practice and in my country's life. During the day I was attending classes, and in the evening or at night, I was monitoring the situation in my Homeland. However, I would love to highlight one event that literally brought a view-changing experience for me. That was a Fulbright FLTA Mid-Year Conference held in Washington, D.C. in November 2022. First, I met another Ukrainian FLTA Lesia Cheban that was the only participant from Ukraine this year. Second, I got acquainted with lots of other FLTAs from all over the world (around 56 countries!) and truly was impressed with the power and influence of education. The program was scheduled in such a way that there was time for studying and resting (attending museums, memorials, and parks, and observing the capital itself with new friends-FLTAs). Third, I was grateful to be able to present Ukraine at the international conference and talk about ongoing Russia's war against the people of Ukraine. At that event, I made sure that only together, unified and cooperating, we can win this life-or-death battle, and the role of world



support plays an inevitably crucial role. That's why, now I am seriously thinking about coming back to Ukraine in order to co-found something similar to Fulbright, but in the Ukrainian context. I know it may sound crazy, but who knows 😊

So, after the return to Seattle, I started to teach my students with a new passion, trying to uncover a true Ukraine for them: beautiful, authentic, and strong. During the Fall quarter, we founded a weekly speaking club "Skoromovka" and organized plenty of events dedicated to important Ukrainian historic and cultural dates (e.g. Ukrainian language and literacy day, Protection of the Theotokos and Defenders and Defendresses of Ukraine day, Hryhoriy Skovoroda's

300 anniversary) as well as delicious culinary parties cooking borsch, varenyky, and kutia (a traditional Christmas meal) 😊 Together with the Ukrainian Students United at UW, we host a movie screening of "Winter on Fire" and invited Carl Larson, an American who served in Ukraine for several months. Nothing of the above would be possible without my amazing students – the best students that one can only dream about: hardworking, passionate, and interested in the Ukrainian language, culture, and history. Some of them have Ukrainian origin and want to come back to their roots, while others are Americans who study Ukrainian for professional or personal purposes, and it is a true blessing for me to teach them.

In this life, sometimes we cannot choose what is going to happen to us, but what we can choose is our attitude of how to face it and our choice to accept it and be ready to stand for our own values instead of hiding



because only in such a way we can find ourselves and our life path. I am deeply grateful for the possibility to participate in the Fulbright FLTA program, studying and teaching at the

University of Seattle. Hope to do everything that is possible and impossible to support my friends and family, as well as help the defenders of the Armed Forces of Ukraine to win this war. Looking forward to the upcoming victorious year 2023!

Sofiia Fedzhora, Fulbright Ukrainian language teaching assistant 2020-22 at the Slavic Languages and Literatures Department at the University of Washington (Seattle, USA); a Ph.D. student at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (Ukraine); a Kyiv citizen whose homeland has been being shelled over 330 days in a row, but who undoubtedly believes in Ukraine's victory!

Slava Ukraini 🇺🇦



ROMANIAN NEWS

American Romanian Cultural Society, a UW partner for years now, engaged in supporting classes dedicated to Romanian modern and contemporary culture, testing for Romanian language, and proctoring ALTA tests for Romanian and STAMP tests for English at the UW Language Learning Center, has recently received two grants from the Romanian Government through the Romanians Abroad Department / Departmental Românilor de Pretutindeni: one grant is for education, one grant is for sustaining our non-profit's efforts to create a welcoming headquarters where ARCS will organize cultural, artistic, and fundraising events.

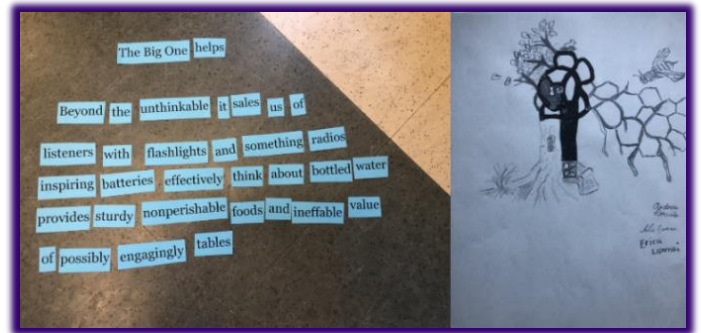
After an intense month of shopping online, negotiating on chat and in person, always proudly representing ARCS, we are richer with 10 iPads, 2 MacBook Air Laptops, 1 desktop, a professional printer for instructors and students, and we succeeded in partnering with Apple for technical support.

We will soon open our space at the Martin Luther King Jr. Fame Center on 3201 E Republican, Seattle. Furnished with an elegant conference table and 12 chairs, art displays, room divider, folding tables, roomy bookcases now filled with teaching aid materials, textbooks, age-appropriate books for our students, games, and a big map of Romania, ARCS headquarter is both a pleasant space for meetings and a well-equipped place for workshops, classes, and events.



At the end of the Fall Quarter, after a week of conferences with each of the 24 students in the Romania Transformed class, I feel rewarded that my teaching has led to powerful topics, strong arguments, and extremely unexpected, yet pertinent comparisons between Romanian and Columbian, French, Chinese,

German, and American film, literature, and art. I could not have hoped for a better way of ending this quarter but with a stack of papers from my UW students and a set of IT equipment and pieces of furniture at the ARCS headquarters.



-Ileana Marin

NEWS FROM YOU

Michele Anciaux Aoki (Ph.D. 1991) writes: I have so appreciated my continued connections with the Slavic Department over this past tumultuous year for the region where Slavic (and other East European) languages are spoken. Thanks to COVID, it has become normal to offer seminars virtually, which means that people like me who are far away from campus can still attend and learn. Thank you to all the faculty and graduate students who have made the commitment to reach as wide an audience as possible.

I have now spent almost two years staying with our daughter's family in Florida so that I could take care of our now 2-year-old granddaughter, Ruth. What could be better for a linguist than experiencing and observing (and contributing to) language acquisition from the beginning? It's a delight.

In my spare time, I continue my volunteer efforts as an advocate for languages through a number of organizations. Last February I was honored to receive the J. David Edwards Power of Advocacy Award from JNCL-NCLIS, and now I'm on the planning committee for [Language Advocacy Days February 8-10, 2023](#) (which will be held virtually).



**IN MEMORIAM:
NORA HOLDSWORTH**
Professor Emerita, Russian
(1927-2021)

Her students remember her as a dedicated teacher and a defining leader of their Russian education.

The scholarship in her name helped open the door for high school students to continue studying Russian language at the UW. Her memory lives on in her students and colleagues, who miss her dearly:

Alan Sachs (B.A. 1971) was Nora's student between 1967-1968. He shared on the phone with us his recollections about Nora's life and her work as an instructor:

I remember her as one of the most dedicated and most talented instructors that I have ever had for any subject in my life. She was that outstanding. She is somebody that I remember with enduring affection. I think that one of the reasons for my opinion of her is that, when I was at university, I was preparing to be a school teacher myself – so I was not only learning Russian from her, I was also watching her teach.

She was originally from Leningrad area; she told me that she was from Pushkin. That's where she was born and where she grew up. She probably got the idea of being a teacher and the love of teaching from her mother, I would say. She told me that her mother was a teacher of English [in Russia], and used to burn the midnight oil very frequently in studying not only English itself, but also teaching methods of English. I definitely got the idea that that's what Mrs. Holdsworth did in Russian.

When she was a very little girl, she was nearly run over by a huge truck. She was walking on the road, and she didn't have time to get out of the way and she said – *[exclaims in Russian]* – she survived simply by crouching under this huge thing. She was unscathed, she fit under the entire underside of the truck. She told it in Russian- it was very instructive for me.

Her education itself was very interrupted by WWII, by the dropping of bombs and the siege of Leningrad, and frequent hunger. As a child, she was allowed to go out and look for food, because the family was always dealing with the possibility of imminent starvation.

She somehow got out of the Soviet Union when she was a teen. She was in Germany by the time she was 18 in 1945. We were talking about driving – which I don't think she ever learned to do – but somebody in Germany in 1945 tried to teach her and she ended up crashing his car. She went to the Edison School on Broadway. Of course, she was very much past high school age, but she went there to get what she had missed in WWII. That building is now occupied by Seattle Central Community College.

We would have grammar lecture in English on Monday. I was in her 3rd-year class and working very hard. The rest of the week we weren't allowed to use anything but Russian except for emergencies. And we made sure these emergencies didn't come up. Especially since moving to New York, I get to speak [Russian] sporadically. When I would speak with Russians here – and tell them about the rigorous teachings that we got, first Thursday in 1967, [they would say] *oh my God, you sound exactly like the teachers that we had back there.* We were whipped into shape.

I asked her whether her mother was a good a teacher as she, and she answered, "Oh, much better." I just did not believe that to be possible. I don't think it was humanly possible for somebody to be that much better than Mrs. Holdsworth was. She always seemed to know exactly what to present exactly at the right moment, exactly what to ask to find out not only what we knew, but to deepen our understanding of what she was teaching us.

Shosh Westen (Slavic Department Administrator from 1993-2016) shared on the phone her memories as a student and later colleague of Nora:

She lived not very far from campus, so I used to walk home that way. There were a couple of occasions where I stopped to say hello, and I would not leave for about three hours because she just had so many stories to tell about her life. Especially during the war. She was a live wire.

She met her husband when- he was one of the people that liberated her camp. He was an officer in the military, and she and her family were at that point working in Germany. They had been brought there to be laborers. It's amazing that she and her mother and her two brothers survived. Especially because she was so small and so thin. She was a ball of fire and very, very strong. Her mother had a good deal to do with her strength.

I had her for 2nd and 3rd-year Russian, and she had us read these stories – short novels that were put into easy Russian – and then she created tapes of herself reading these stories. Our assignment would be to read them and listen. I used to work downtown, and I would take the bus to campus in the middle of the day, and come back to work and finish my work, and listen to her reading these stories- on the way to work, on the way to class, on the way home ...

It was amazing. I had some of the stories memorized. And I would take tests ... and I would just hear her voice in my head. You listened to it enough, and you just absorbed it.

She would read the story once at a normal pace, and then she would read it slowly, and she would break down the sentence and analyze the grammar and the verbs and adjectives and nouns. And she would read it again a third time, and give you enough time to repeat it again after her. And she would read it again a fourth time. I was just so impressed by how dedicated she was and how much she wanted to impart her knowledge and impart Russian. It was certainly a gift to have seen, and to have studied with her for two years.

The Slavic Department used to be in Smith Hall on the mezzanine, and her office was just two offices away from the main office. But, you could *tell* her footsteps. She was so small, but she was a dynamo - *tap tap tap tap tap* - and you knew it was Nora. She was amazing.

We created [the Nora Holdsworth] scholarship. Because of Nora and the role that she had played in my life, I wanted to honor her by creating this scholarship. She donated some money for that as well. It was basically to honor her and to encourage the students to come and see what a summer quarter program we offered.

After she retired, she somehow got into gardening. I used to bring flowers to the office all the time. I guess she enjoyed them. Her yard was just stunning. She lived on a corner so she had a lot of area to take care of – just gorgeous, just amazing.

In our Winter 2016 newsletter celebrating the department's 100-year anniversary, many of our alumni shared fond memories learning alongside Nora, some of which have been re-printed here:

James Bartee (B.A. 1972) described Nora as one of the "greats" of the department, and recounted an entertaining class reading of Nekrasov's "Two Captains":

A student earnestly wanted to tell us about a letter the main character was writing regarding the orphans camp he was staying in, and the hideous soup they served known as "otrava or mogila." Unfortunately, and to both the vast amusement and chagrin of Ms. Holdsworth, the moveable stress on the verb *pisat'* got away from him. The soup took a decided turn for the worst.

David Miles (B.A. 1974) wrote: Nora Gerbertovna Holdsworth taught intensive third-year Russian the summer I took it. Years later I told my Spanish instructor that the Spanish instructor reminded me of my favorite teacher of Russian and she said, "Was that by any chance Nora Holdsworth?" The Spanish instructor had modeled her teaching after Nora's.

Mary Kruger (B.A. 1970) wrote: There were many excellent classes and instructors, but two who stand out for me were Prof. Paul Gribanovsky and Nora Holdsworth.

Both tied our daily Russian language lessons to the culture: Prof. Gribanovksy as a dignified representative of old Russia and Nora Holdsworth as an energetic explorer of everything new. They offered a tantalizing glimpse of the world we could discover once we finally mastered the endless grammar drills.

Read more of Nora's story in the Winter 1996 issue of the department newsletter [here](#). If you have stories you would like to share about Nora, send an email to slavoffice@uw.edu.

GIFTS

The following is a list of gifts made to departmental funds since the Summer 2022 newsletter. Many thanks to all donors for their generous support of Slavic Studies at the University of Washington!

Donors to the *Friends of Slavic Languages & Literatures Fund*

Harlan C. Adams	Piotr Horoszowski	Stewart Parker
Michele Anciaux Aoki	Brian E. Jacoby-McCurdy	Michael G. Peskura
Boston Foundation	Janicek Rev. Living Trust	Aleksandra Petrovic
Robert Charles Ewen	Claudia R. Jensen	Kylee G. Schmuck
Jason E. Fabritz	Mary Anne Kruger	Sharon A. Scully
David R. Grant	Cheryl L. Lundgren	David N. Sunderland
Cylvia L. Grantham	Bruce W. McKinney	Henry E. Szymonik

Donors to the *Friends of Polish Studies Fund*

Jason Attaman	Ronald C. Kinsey, Jr.	Michael S. Wishkoski
Ronald F. DiGiacomo	Wojtek Kozaczynski	
Anne George	Krystyna Untersteiner	

Donors to the *Polish Studies Endowment Fund*

Daniel Beck	Piotr Horoszowski	Susanna Westen
Marlena Dzis	Henry Szymonik	

Donors to the *Oleg Fomin Scholarship Fund*

The Blackbaud Giving Fund

Donors to the *Friends of Ukrainian Studies Fund*

Vinton L. Eberly	Bohdon Wowtschuk
------------------	------------------

Donors to the *Ukrainian Studies Endowment Fund*

Laada Bilaniuk	Susanna J. Westen
Benjamin Fitzhugh	Anna Lewak Wight

Donors to the *Roma Boniecka-Anna Cienciala Endowment for Slovene Studies*

Michele Anciaux Aoki	Piotr Horoszowski	Edgar L. Stout
Gloria L. Barello	Christopher D. Jones	Franc Strgar
Randal A. Beam	Jurij Leskovec	Irene M. Svete
Benevity	Milenko Matanovic	Lloyd S. Takasugi
Michael Biggins	Norman J. McCormick	James William Tollefson
Laada Myroslava Bilaniuk	Nives Mestrovic	Krystyna A. Untersteiner
Nina Bozicnik	Inta Moruss-Wiest	Vanguard Charitable Endowment Program
Robert E. Breidenthal, Jr.	Andrew Jack Mullins	Lucky Vidmar
Charles Bukowski	Frederick J. Newmeyer	Mark Vlastic
James J. Clauss	Ksenija Pergar	Margaret Walker
Sarma P. Davidson	Lea Plut-Pregelj	Ping Wang
Matej Drev	Timothy Pogacar	Susanna J. Westen
Katarzyna A. Dziwirek	Sabrina P. Ramet	Louis E. Wolcher
Gregory J. Ettl	Marija J. Rode	Metka Zupancic
Aleksander Fabijan	Lee D. Scheingold	
David M. Fenner	Guntis I. Smidchens	
Sherrilynne S. Fuller	Evelyn C. Sroufe	
Sarah Haines	Cynthia Standley	
Lisa A. Heath	Hannah Standley	

Donors to the *Romanian Studies Fund*

ARCS	Ileana Marin	Susanna J. Westen
------	--------------	-------------------

Donors to the *Mickleesen Graduate Support Fund*

Frederick McDonald

Donors to the *Vadim Pahn Scholarship Fund*

Burton E. Bard, Jr.

SUPPORT US

We are very grateful to our alumni and friends for your generous support. Please help us continue our efforts to further the study of Slavic languages and literatures by giving generously whenever possible. Donations may be made by credit card on the [Support Us](#) page of our website, or by sending a check made out to the *University of Washington Foundation* with one of the funds designated below on the memo line. Checks should be mailed to:

University of Washington Foundation
Box 359505
Seattle, WA 98195

- () CZECHS Czech Studies Endowment Fund – Support for students studying Czech
- () POLISS Friends of Polish Studies Fund – General support for Polish studies
- () SLADIS Friends of Slavic Languages & Literatures – Gifts may be expended at the discretion of the Chair
- () SLAVIC Institutional Allowance – General support for the department, including undergraduate and graduate student awards
- () FOMSCH Oleg Fomin Scholarship Fund – Travel scholarship to promote exploration and study of the languages, cultures, and histories of post-Soviet states
- () MICKLE Micklesen Graduate Fund – General support for graduate program
- () POLDIS Polish Distinguished Speakers Fund – Showcase achievements of Poles by bringing speakers to campus
- () POLFUL Polish Fulbright Fund – Increase Polish-specific course offerings by bringing Polish Fulbright scholars to the UW
- () POLEND Polish Studies Endowment Fund – Promote permanence and expansion of program to include more levels of Polish language, history and culture
- () ROMANI Romanian Studies Fund – Support Romanian Studies, including but not limited to support for a Romanian Fulbright
- () RBCEND Slovene Studies Endowment Fund – Provide Support for Slovene Studies
- () SWAYZE Swayze Fellowship Fund – Fellowship support for graduate students
- () UKRANI Ukrainian Endowment Fund – Provide Ukrainian language and culture instruction
- () PAHNSC Vadim Pahn Scholarship Fund – Russian language scholarship for undergraduates

Gifts are tax deductible in accordance with the law. If you are associated with a company that will match your gift, please include the appropriate form. Pursuant to RCW 10.09, the University of Washington is registered as a charitable organization with the Secretary of State, State of Washington. For information, call the Office of the Secretary of State, 1 (800) 332-4483.