



**ASU** **The Melikian Center:**  
Russian, Eurasian and East European Studies  
**Arizona State University**

**2019 Annual Report**

Events Preview - Year in Review 2019 - Transitions - CLI 2019 - Federal Partnerships  
Advancing Student Success - Regions In Focus - Discovery and Scholarship  
Connecting with Communities - Donor Appreciation





*Director Keith Brown with IIE program officer Kayla Springer at the ASU-hosted 2019 Project GO Annual Meeting in Mesa, AZ.*

It has been a busy year at the Melikian Center—marked by significant faculty affiliate success, an expansion in our language and area studies offerings, and growing collaboration on and off-campus to promote understanding of Russia, Eurasia and East Europe. In geopolitical terms, especially as great power rivalries increase, the region remains pivotal. Freedom House marked 2019 as the 13th consecutive year of declining global freedom. The organization's report, titled *Democracy in Retreat*, highlights in particular the overall negative trend in ranking scores among countries that were part of the post-Cold War democratization wave.

The picture across the region is not uniformly bleak—Armenia, for example, where the Melikian Center will renew its relationship with Yerevan State University in 2020, has made positive gains by Freedom House's metrics. But the news from Central Europe, the Balkans and the former Soviet Union serves as a reminder of the enduring need to pay attention to the particularities of regional economics, politics, and history, to understand the specific paths which governments and citizens take, and what shapes their choices.

Over the last 52 weeks, our 100+ faculty and graduate student affiliates, advisory board members and Critical Languages Institute instructors have offered fresh perspectives on the world and our region

to over 3,000 students, colleagues and community members from ASU, Phoenix, and far beyond. We heard first-hand from visitors from Estonia, Czechia, Poland, Hungary, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Albania, Croatia, Ukraine, Russia, Kazakhstan and Turkey on issues including cyber-security, populism, and pressures on civil society as well as entrepreneurship, artistic production, and community resilience. In workshops, conferences, and distinguished lectures we hosted colleagues from over 30 universities and colleges, addressing topics including Jewish human rights activism in Soviet Russia, the humanitarian and geopolitical legacies of NATO's 1999 armed intervention in Kosovo, and the 2008 Russian-Georgian War. We partnered with 14 ASU units and 5 Valley organizations to host public events, discussing the long history of cultural exchange along the Silk Roads, the stakes in Ukraine's spring elections, and how China's policy toward its Muslim minorities impacts Kazakhstan's civil society.

One highlight for me—and an affirmation of the unique standing of the Melikian Center—was an informal visit from University of Texas El Paso (UTEP) Emeritus Professor Anthony Kruszewski. Seeking a home for his personal library of Polish language materials, he identified ASU as one of a handful of U.S. Universities that has maintained a commitment to teaching less commonly taught languages. In April, he drove to Tempe from El Paso to deliver his books. Over a coffee, he shared some of his life story, including his service as a courier for the Polish resistance during the Warsaw Uprising in World War II, and his subsequent journey to, and gratitude towards, the United States where he earned his PhD. That experience fueled his activism and advocacy against the discrimination against Mexican-Americans he witnessed when he first arrived at UTEP in 1968.

Far distant to many of today's college students, the twentieth century represented a near-continuous struggle over principles of human rights, pluralism and inclusion. Equipping the communities we serve with resources of data and perspective to diagnose and withstand threats to principles of shared humanity are vital tasks for the 21st-century public university. Here at the Melikian Center, we look forward to building alliances to advance this mission in 2020 and beyond—we hope you will take the chance to join us.

## Spring 2020 Events - A Preview

### Headline Events

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 17

"Antisemitism, Fascism and Populism"

Federico Finchelstein, The New School for Social Research

A part of The Lowe Family Lecture Series: *Totalitarianism, Dissent and Democratic Institutions*, ASU Center for Jewish Studies

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4

"The Hungry Steppe: Famine, Violence, and the Making of Soviet Kazakhstan"

Sarah Cameron, University of Maryland



THURSDAY, APRIL 2 - SATURDAY APRIL 4

22nd Biennial Conference on Balkan and South Slavic Linguistics, Literature & Folklore.

Co-sponsored with School of International Letters and Cultures at ASU and the Department of Russian and Slavic Studies at the University of Arizona.

### Partner Events

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 16

Memorial Gathering for Professor Mark Von Hagen

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18

"Rescue Mission: Conflicts Over the Re-Civilization of Europe after 1945"

Paul Betts, Oxford University

Co-sponsors: School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies; School of Politics and Global Studies

FRIDAY-SUNDAY, MARCH 20-22

Arizona Romanian Film Festival

FRIDAY, MARCH 27

Global Forum - "Debating Empathy"

Sponsored by the Office of International and Intercultural Education, Maricopa Community College District

SUNDAY, APRIL 5

Annual Arizona AATSEEL Conference  
Co-sponsors: University of Arizona and Northern Arizona University

MONDAY, APRIL 20

"Necati Çelik, Master of the Turkish Üd"  
A performance of Turkish classical music by Necati Çelik

Co-sponsor: School of Music

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22

"Srebrenica Genocide 25 Years on"

Hasan Hasanovic, Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery

8th Genocide Awareness Week (April 20-24)  
Hosted by Scottsdale Community College

**For full dates, times, and locations, and for details of additional events, please visit <https://melikian.asu.edu>**

### Film Series - Perspectives on WWII: The Eastern Front

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27

*Stalingrad* (1993, dir. Joseph Vilsmaier)

Introductory remarks by Kim Allar and Volker Benkert, School of Historical, Philosophical & Religious Studies

THURSDAY, MARCH 26

*Come and See* (1985, dir. Elem G. Klimov)

Introductory remarks by Kim Allar and Volker Benkert, School of Historical, Philosophical & Religious Studies

## Year in Review Spring 2019

**16 JANUARY 2019**

"Hungary Today"

A Conversation with Peter Galbacs, Budapest Business School & Fulbright Scholar at Center for Study of Economic Liberty and Balint Szalai, Hubert Humphrey Fellow, Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

**24 JANUARY 2019**

*Wag the Dog*

Film Screening  
Introduction by Keith Brown,  
Melikian Center.



**21 FEBRUARY 2019**

*Miracle*

Film Screening  
Introduction by film's director Steven Beschloss,  
Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass  
Communication.

**27 FEBRUARY 2019**

"A View from the Other Side: Tito, Mao, and the  
Politics of the Cold War"

Works in Progress Lunch Series  
Robert Niebuhr, Barrett, The Honors College.

**13 MARCH 2019**

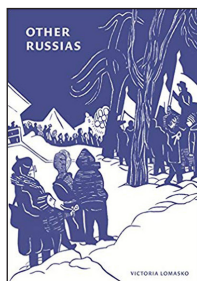
"Hybrid Analytica: Pro-Kremlin Expert Propaganda in  
Moscow, Europe, and the U.S."

Works in Progress Lunch Series  
Kateryna Smaglyi, McCain Institute Next Generation  
Leader.

**15 MARCH 2019**

Struggles of Religious Minorities  
in China's Uighur Province

Discussion with Mehmet Kasikci  
Volkan, doctoral student,  
SHPRS.



**19 MARCH 2019**

*Other Russias*

Book Discussion. Victoria  
Lomasko, graphic artist and writer.

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

**23 JANUARY 2019**

"Capitalism and Empire"

Works in Progress Lunch Series:  
Mladen Medved, Global Teaching Fellow,  
Melikian Center.



**21-23 FEBRUARY 2019**

Eighth Biennial ASEC Conference

Hosted by the Association for the Study  
of Eastern Christian History and Culture,  
ASEEES. Convened by Eugene Clay,  
School of Historical, Philosophical, and  
Religious Studies (SHPRS).

**26 FEBRUARY 2019**

"Macedonian Contemporary  
Phytomedicine - Medicinal and Aromatic  
Plants for Fighting Cancer"

Lecture by Dragan Jovanov, Special  
Advisor to Prime Minister Zoran Zaev,  
North Macedonia.



**01-02 MARCH 2019**

Third Annual Russian History in the Desert Workshop.  
Convened by Laurie Manchester, SHPRS.

**13 MARCH 2019**

Duo Juthoor Concert

Co-sponsored with Barrett, The Honors  
College and Herberger Institute for Design  
and Arts.

**18 MARCH 2019**

"Refuseniks & Rights Defenders: Jews &  
the Soviet Dissident Movement"

Lowe Family Lecture Series on  
Totalitarianism, Dissent, and Democratic  
Institutions, Benjamin Nathans, University  
of Pennsylvania.



**21 MARCH 2019**

"Ukraine's Presidential Election - Democracy Being Tested by  
Russian Aggression"

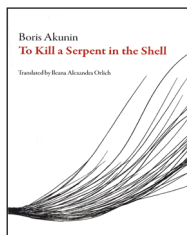
Panel Discussion. Valeriy Chaly, Ambassador Extraordinary and  
Plenipotentiary of Ukraine to the USA. Ambassador Kurt Volker,  
Executive Director, The McCain Institute. Liisa Past and Kateryna  
Smaglyi, Next Generation Leaders, The McCain Institute.

Co-sponsored with The McCain Institute for International  
Leadership and The Public Service Academy.



## Year in Review Spring 2019

MARCH



**27 MARCH 2019**

*To Kill a Serpent in the Shell*

Book Discussion. Ileana Orlich and Hilde Hoogenboom, School of International Letters and Cultures (SILC), and Eugene Clay, SHPRS.

**02 APRIL 2019**

*Trojan War*

Book Discussion. Dr. Elena Kocaqui, Aleksander Moisiu University, Albania.

**05 APRIL 2019**

Global Forum: The Silk Road - Past & Present Iterations Part II



**12-14 APRIL 2019**

Human Rights Film Festival. Sponsored by School of Social Transformation.

**15 APRIL 2019**

"Covering Crisis and Resilience: Egypt, Turkey, and Iraq"

Discussion with Jenna Krajeski, author and freelance journalist.



**18 APRIL 2019**

*The Cruise*

Film Screening  
Introduction by Dr. Michael Ostling, Barrett Honors College.

**24 APRIL 2019**

Ukraine Elections: What's Next?

Panel Discussion. Patience Huntwork, attorney. Kateryna Smaglyi and Liisa Past, Next Generation Leaders, the McCain Institute. Peter Schmelz, School of Music.

Co-sponsored with The McCain Institute for International Leadership and The Public Service Academy.

**28 MARCH 2019**

*Fuse*

Film Screening  
Introduction by Mladen Medved, Global Teaching Fellow, Melikian Center.

**03 APRIL 2019**

"Captured Courts and Legitimized Autocrats: Kazakhstan's Constitutional Council"

Works in Progress Lunch Series:  
Margaret Hanson, School of Politics and Global Studies (SPGS).



**10 APRIL 2019**

The U.S. is the Primary Enemy of Russia: How the Kremlin Uses Propaganda to Increase Putin's Support

Panel Discussion. Dmitry Goncharov, National Research University School of Higher Economics (St. Petersburg, Russia) and Alexey Gorbachev, Hubert H. Humphrey Fellow, Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, and Nezavisimaya Gazeta (newspaper, Russia). Moderated by Stephen Batalden, Melikian Center.

**15-19 APRIL 2019**

Genocide Awareness Week, Scottsdale Community College.

**16 APRIL 2019**

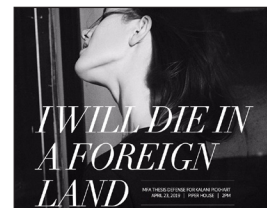
"Advantages and Disadvantages of Parliamentary Democracy in the Kyrgyz Republic"

Discussion with representatives from the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic: Shabdanbek Alishev, Aaly Karashev, Natalia Nikitenko, and Kamila Beishenbek. Co-sponsored by People to People International, Greater Phoenix.

**23 APRIL 2019**

*I Will Die in a Foreign Land*

MFA Thesis Defense  
Kalani Pickhart, Creative Writing Program.



**29 APRIL 2019**

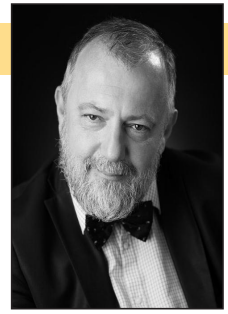
"The Armenian Genocide: What Have We Learned?"

Presentation and Discussion with Richard Hovannisian, Professor Emeritus at UCLA.

Presented by BASIS Charter Schools and the Armenian Bar Association.

APRIL

## Year in Review Fall 2019



JULY & AUGUST

**28 JULY - 02 AUGUST**

Fulbright Pre-Departure Orientation  
South and Central Asia

**11 SEPTEMBER 2019**

"Folk Music, Creative Agency, and  
Turkey's Cult of Anonymity"

Works in Progress Lunch Series:  
Dave Fossum, School of Music.

**17 SEPTEMBER 2019**

Research Pieces

Discussion with Shahin Berisha, GateWay  
Community College, Brian Goodman, Department  
of English, Margaret Hanson, SPGS, and Neveser  
Koker, Barrett, the Honors College.

**10 OCTOBER 2019**

*Son of Saul*

Film Screening  
Introduction by Anna Cichopek-Gajraj,  
School of Historical, Philosophical,  
and Religious Studies.



SEPTEMBER

**10 SEPTEMBER 2019**

Visit from Czech Ambassador  
Hynek Kmonicek

**12 SEPTEMBER 2019**

*District 9*

Film Screening  
Introduction by Andrew Maynard, School of the  
Future of Innovation in Society and Director of the  
Risk Innovation Lab.

**26 SEPTEMBER 2019**

Music of the Silk Road: A Dutar  
Performance

Performed by Batyr Odeyev.



**17 OCTOBER 2019**

"Corpses and Places"

Lecture. Elizabeth Cullen Dunn,  
Department of Geography, Indiana  
University.



OCTOBER

**22 OCTOBER 2019**

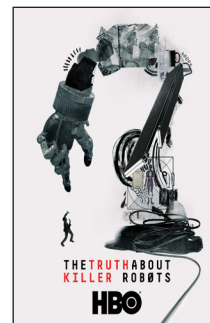
"Rediscovering the Jews of Białowieża  
through Oral History"

Lecture. Katarzyna Winiarska, Polish  
public historian and curator of the Virtual  
Museum of the Jews in Białowieża.

**25 OCTOBER 2019**

*Our New President*

Film Screening  
Introduction by director and producer,  
Maxim Pozdorovkin.



**23 OCTOBER 2019**

*The Truth about Killer Robots*

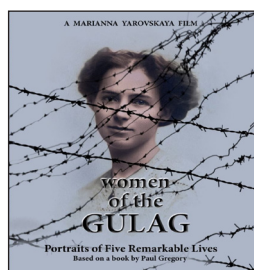
Film Screening  
Introduction by director and producer,  
Maxim Pozdorovkin.

NOVEMBER

**07 NOVEMBER 2019**

*Women of the Gulag*

Film Screening  
Introduction by director Marianna  
Yarovskaya.  
Part of the Lowe Family Lecture  
Series: Totalitarianism, Dissent, and  
Democratic Institutions.



**28-29 OCTOBER 2019**

Project Global Officer Annual Meeting

Co-hosted with the Institute of International Education and the  
Defense Language and National Security Education Office.

**18 NOVEMBER 2019**

*Bridge of Spies*

Film Screening  
Introduction and commentary by Volker Benkert, SHPRS, Greg  
Bernstein, Herberger School of Film, Dance and Theatre and  
Francis Gary Powers, Jr., independent scholar.



In 2019, the Melikian Center moved from its long-time home in Coor Hall to temporary quarters in Computing Commons. Renovations continue in Durham Hall, where the Melikian Center, the Center for Asian Research, and other initiatives that develop students' foreign language and regional expertise will be co-located.

2019 also saw several staffing changes at the Center. After making significant contributions at the Center over many years, Assistant Director of Education and Training Andrew Gunn and Business Operations Manager Marina Akins both moved on to exciting opportunities elsewhere. Andrew will draw on his Russian language and IT skills as a technical targeting analyst at Vigilante ATI, a global threat hunting and dark web cyber intelligence research team. Marina moved to the Cronkite School as part of the production team for the quarterly journal *Issues in Science and Technology*.

After serving as lead instructor for STARTALK, the Melikian Center's summer Russian program for high schoolers, Yuliana Gunn took a position as Russian Instructor at the University of Colorado Boulder, while student worker Jacque Kaercher graduated from ASU, and is now an Academic Advisor at The University of Southern Mississippi in Long Beach, Mississippi.

Several members of the Melikian Advisory Board took on other commitments in 2019. Former Chair Charles Case has moved to Santa Fe, where he is President of the Santa Fe Council on Foreign Relations, and committing his energies to that organization. Marcie Hutchinson has stepped down as board treasurer after being elected as a member of the Mesa School Board; Ambassador Barbara

Barrett has been appointed as Secretary of the Air Force and therefore resigned from the Advisory Board.

After serving as Chair-elect for the past year, Ramona Melikian succeeded Margaret Mullen as Board chair for a two-year term, starting in December 2019.



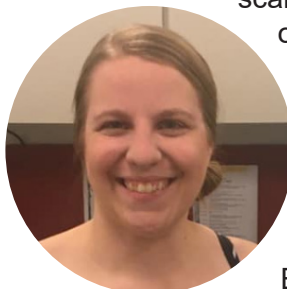
Shahin Berisha continues as Secretary, while Stephen Ovanessoff will serve as treasurer. They are joined by new members Linda Lederman, Arben and Elonia Lasku, and David and Claire Merkel. Board members also embraced an initiative to create standing committees on Communications, Strategic Planning and Development, and Corporate Engagement; all three committees are now established, and working with Melikian Center staff and faculty.

Following a national search, Irina Levin is leading efforts to integrate CLI's summer program into the Melikian Center's year-round operations, in a newly combined position as Center Associate Director and Director of the Critical Languages Institute. She has already revitalized outreach and marketing efforts, and successfully recruited students for the redesigned certificate program in Russian and East European Studies. Don Livingston continues to serve as Faculty Lead for CLI, with the plan of

scaling back his engagement in 2020 in order to focus on curricular innovation

that will serve both the School of International Letters and Cultures and CLI. Heidi Young (left) joined the Melikian Center as Business Operations specialist from a position in the School of Earth and Space Exploration; while David Brokaw

has taken on a new role as Events and Program coordinator. Layne Phillipson (right), who joined the Center as a student worker in February 2019, will continue in that role through her projected graduation in May 2020.



# The Critical Languages Institute

## Director's Report,

### by Irina Levin

My first summer as CLI director flew by in a rush of classroom visits and culture nights. Which is to say, it was busy and exciting! I got to know our wonderful faculty and students, who never failed to tell me that the best part of CLI was the people it brought together. That is the spirit that I take with me into CLI 2020.

In 2019 CLI saw the return of its Macedonian program. We welcomed five highly motivated students and a new instructor, Borče Arsov. Dr. Arsov is a member of the Faculty of Philology at the University of Skopje St. Cyril and Methodius, specializing in the study of both historical and contemporary Macedonian language. Dr. Arsov not only impressed his students with a lively classroom atmosphere and extensive linguistic knowledge, but offered a workshop on traditional Macedonian dance that was attended by students and members of the local Macedonian community.



***CLI 2019 expanded to include a first-year four-week extension and an eight-week second-year course for Ukrainian in Kyiv. CLI looks forward to continuing this growth in 2020 with the inclusion of a first-year four-week extension and an eight-week second-year program for Uzbek in Tashkent.***

This past summer also saw the expansion of our Ukrainian program with the addition of a first-year four-week extension and an eight-week second-year course in Kyiv. The first-year Ukrainian course in Tempe was taught by another new faculty member, Antonina Berezovenko, an associate professor at the

National Technical University of Ukraine. Dr. Berezovenko gave a talk on her area of expertise entitled “Language Politics and State Building in Ukraine.” Students made impressive progress in both the domestic and overseas Ukrainian programs, with some of our first-year students achieving intermediate-mid level, a good result even for second-year students, on their officially administered oral proficiency interviews (OPIs).





CLI continues to see great success with its Project Global Officer (Project GO) scholars and Title VIII fellows. Project GO, a Department of Defense initiative sponsored by the Defense Language and National Security Education Office, awards summer scholarships to ROTC students to provide them with critical languages training, regional expertise, and intercultural communication skills. Project GO is an extremely competitive program; applicants must demonstrate a high level of academic achievement and a commitment to their careers as future military officers. Title VIII fellowships for exceptional U.S. citizen graduate students are funded by the U.S. Department of State's Program on Research and Training on Eastern Europe and the Independent States of the Former Soviet Union. In 2019, 25 Title VIII students participated in CLI's domestic and overseas programs in Tempe, St. Petersburg, Yerevan, Tirana, Sarajevo, and Kyiv. CLI was successful in our latest Project GO and Title VIII applications and we look forward to welcoming more of these talented and dedicated students in 2020!



For CLI 2020, we are working on another exciting expansion. In 2019, as part of their class's culture night, our first-year Uzbek students put together a clever and

engaging video about Uzbekistan. They took the audience on a virtual tour of the country, showcasing their language skills, amusing the audience, and expressing their desire for a CLI program in Uzbekistan. With a great deal of assistance from our Uzbek instructor, Dr. Saodat Adilova, these students will soon get their wish! We have been working diligently with our colleagues at the Tashkent State University of Uzbek Language and Literature (TSUULL) and at ASU's Study Abroad Office to make Tashkent the newest CLI study abroad site.



At TSUULL, we look to offer a first-year four-week extension and eight-week second-year Uzbek courses. In late October, I attended a conference in Tashkent at the invitation of TSUULL's rector. I was able to meet with Dr. Adilova and her colleagues, tour TSUULL's dormitory and classroom facilities, and get to know some of the local students who will work with CLI students as language partners. I also had the opportunity to spend some time with two recent CLI Uzbek alumni who are currently Fulbrights in Uzbekistan. We are so proud of their accomplishments and the role that CLI played in their success! Finally, I met with three former Uzbek Foreign Language



Teaching Assistants (FLTAs) who had spent an academic year teaching Uzbek at ASU. They told me about the enormous positive impact that their time in Arizona and at the Melikian Center had on their lives and careers.

Early on in CLI 2019, I met a number of students from the Russian, Persian, and BCS classes while helping our intrepid videographer, Ari Gajraj, conduct interviews for the newest CLI outreach video—a before/after look at our students' motivations for coming to CLI and their language-learning experiences. This video highlights the wide range of career goals and academic interests among CLI students. These future military officers, historians, language scholars, and engineers share their own characterizations of their language-learning victories. I look forward to sharing the video across the ASU and Melikian Center networks, at community events in the Phoenix area, with our Project GO and Title VIII partners, and with colleagues and heritage groups across the country.



**Polina Maksimovich, CLI Russian Instructor**

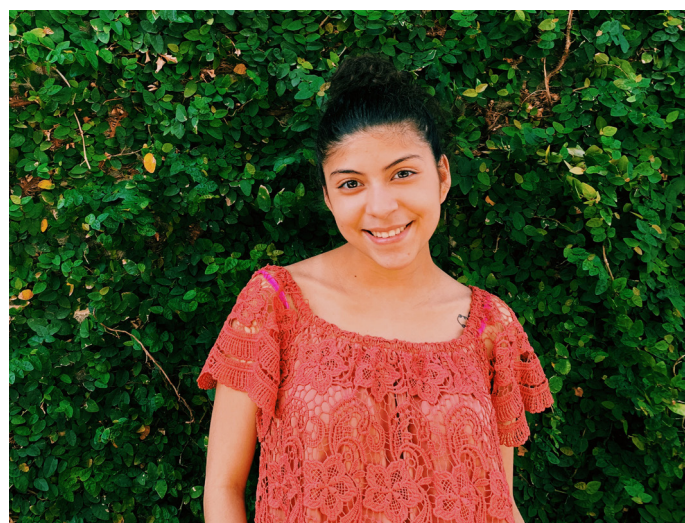
I team-taught an elementary Russian course in CLI for two summers and both times this experience profoundly impacted my personal and professional growth. Through ample teaching practice and support from my colleagues and students, I was able to recognize my strengths and weaknesses, gain confidence in teaching Russian, and discover what kind of instructor I want to become.

Serving as a CLI instructor opened up space for innovation and creativity, both inside and outside the classroom. With over 30 contact hours per week, I gained invaluable experience in lesson planning, instructional design, and collaboration with students in both formal and informal settings. My most rewarding classroom experiences relate to practicing collaborative learning techniques when all students participate in multi-step activities and keep each other accountable for their learning. I also like to take part in our “mingle” communicative activities, modeling meaningful interaction and demonstrating to students that my role is that of a facilitator, not knowledge-transmitter, and that we all participate in the co-construction of knowledge. An exciting part of the Russian program is the rich array of extra-curricular offerings, such as movie nights, games, and end-of-course performances. Since much of the learning happens outside the classroom, these activities further helped strengthen bonds with students (and with instructors!) and build a community of learners.

There’s a Russian saying: “summer is a small life.” Indeed, the two summers that I have spent with CLI really stand apart as two distinct experiences, marked by new friendships, new achievements, and new challenges in a vibrant multicultural environment. Most importantly, my work with CLI allowed me to make a difference in students’ education and become a full partner in their language learning experience.

**Rosario Moreno, CLI Russian Alumna, 2019**

I am now a senior at St. Mary's University of San Antonio and I am currently taking intermediate Russian. I think you will be happy to know that my Russian Professor is astonished by the changes he has seen in me. Russian class has now become one of my most enjoyable courses, as I am finding it easier to grasp grammar concepts, as well as work on perfecting my speech. I am looking into graduate school programs that revolve around Russian and Eurasian Studies and International Studies. I will be applying to UT Austin, Texas A&M College Station, Stanford, and Georgetown University.



I have recently come back from a graduate school fellowship interview in Washington, DC. I was selected as a Pickering Graduate Fellowship\* finalist and at the moment I am a first alternate. This particular fellowship allows students pursuing a master’s degree in International Relations or foreign studies to have their tuition completely funded. It also provides fellows with the opportunity to take up a full-time position as a US Diplomat. I am also applying to the Boren Awards, Critical Language Scholarship, and, of course, the CLI program!

No matter where I go, I hope to continue learning Russian until I reach a level of fluency. I cannot tell you how grateful I am to have had the opportunity to participate in this program. It has opened so many doors for me and has made the continuation of my education possible. Thank you!



*\*The Thomas R. Pickering Graduate Fellowship Program is funded by the U.S. Department of State and administered by Howard University. The program attracts and prepares outstanding young people for Foreign Service careers in the U.S. Department of State. It welcomes the application of members of minority groups historically underrepresented in the State Department, women, and those with financial need. Based on the fundamental principle that diversity is a strength in our diplomatic efforts, the program values varied backgrounds, including ethnic, racial, social, and geographic diversity.*

### Mary Elizabeth Walters, CLI Albanian Alumna, 2014 & 2015

We recently heard from CLI alumna Mary Elizabeth Walters, who studied Albanian twice through CLI. After receiving a National Security Education Program Boren Fellowship for 2014-2015, her Doris Hastings IDEA award in 2015 allowed her to extend her stay in the Balkans, continuing to learn the language, and engaging in research in Kosovo. During that time, she conducted approximately thirty oral histories with former refugees, displaced during the 1999 war and still living with its legacy. Mary Elizabeth shared this picture (right), taken in 2015 after an oral history interview she conducted with Bohvje Berisha and her son Xhelal. They are holding a framed image of the twenty-two family members who were killed on March 26, 1999. Bohvje herself died shortly after sharing her family's tragic story with Mary Elizabeth, who describes that time in Kosovo in these words:

"The month in Kosovo funded by the Hastings IDEA award was simultaneously the most rewarding and the most difficult period of my life. I sat with, and often cried with, massacre survivors and people, like Bohvje, who had lost everything. In doing so, my dissertation became more than a research project, but a way to start to tell these stories and to bring a human face to ethnic cleansing."

## CLI 2019 IN NUMBERS

# 134

STUDENTS STUDIED



# 12

CRITICAL LANGUAGES



# 300+

PROFICIENCY LEVELS  
GAINED

# 79

STUDIED  
ABROAD

# 81

RECEIVED  
SCHOLARSHIPS

SCHOLARSHIPS TOTALING

# \$550,070



ALL STUDENTS RECEIVED  
TUITION WAIVERS TOTALING  

# \$910,327



Mary Elizabeth completed her PhD dissertation in May 2019 and this Fall became assistant professor of history at Kansas State University. Bohvje Berisha's story already changed her life; now it will touch and educate generations of future students, increasing their understanding of war and its legacies, and inspiring them to become more engaged global citizens.

# From the Gates of Heaven to the Heavenly Hundred - Don Livingston

Many of CLI's government grants come with a delightful condition: we have to physically inspect the program. This summer four of our locations were due for inspection, and it was my honor to visit them.

From Phoenix, I headed first to Denpasar, a fairly lengthy trip with a ten-hour layover in Sydney. That leaves just enough time for a quick kangaroo steak on a bed of beet-dyed rice: very tasty. Kind of like a beefsteak but a bit more minerally. And then on to Indonesia!



*Don Livingston kneeling at the Gates of Heaven at the Pura Lempuyang Luhur temple in Karangasem in Bali.*

Our Denpasar program is now in its fourth year. First-year students first study eight weeks in Tempe, and then they travel to Denpasar for a four-week extension to practice their language in-country while living with host families. Our goal for the first-year course is for all of our Indonesian students to reach at least Interagency Round Table level L0+. We over-fulfilled our quota: all the students who took an oral proficiency at the end of the summer reached at least L1, and two of the students reached L2. We attribute this success to a combination of things. The first is the expertise of Nyoman Riasa, who coordinates the Indonesian curriculum and is an expert in communicative competence instruction and who conducts professional development sessions through APBIPA Bali throughout Indonesia. Of course, credit also goes to our local instructors in Bali, as well as the leadership of this summer's Resident Director, Jamie Edmonds, who ably coached the students through the emotional side of adapting to a new culture.



*CLI participant Logan Johnson with an eagle in Kyrgyzstan.*

The next stop was Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan. In addition to civilian students, the program hosts a contingent of ROTC students who are participating in Project Global Officer, a grant funded by the Department of Defense to develop linguistic and cultural expertise in future officers. First-year students begin with eight-weeks in Tempe followed by four weeks in-country. Second-, third- and fourth-year students have a solid eight weeks in-



country. The classroom experience is complemented by language practice in homestays, thrice-weekly meetings with coeval language partners, and excursions to Lake Issyk-Kul and yurt-building in the Ala-Too mountains.

Our St. Petersburg program is devoted to developing advanced language skills in Russian. Students who have Title VIII funding attend classes at the Derzhavin Institute, with whom we have partnered since 2013. Classroom communication is on a very high level here, which is complemented by homestays and Russian conversation partners. Every student here who took an official OPIc received at least an advanced low rating, and three received a rating of advanced high. That's just what we want before they spend a year abroad to graduate into the superior level.

This was our first summer back in Kyiv since 2013. Downtown Kyiv is clean and vibrant with color, music, traditional Ukrainian food, and sushi. Our partner is a language school called NovaMova ("New Language"), which hosted both the four-week extension for our first-year Ukrainian students as well as our 8-week second-year Ukrainian students. Our second-year students made us

particularly proud: Both leveraged their Russian language skills to achieve ratings in the advanced range. That is spectacular for second year in a Slavic language. This was my first trip to Kyiv, and I

was particularly struck by the lengths to which the Ukrainians go to make sure the past is not forgotten. Right downtown is a monument to the Heavenly Hundred: those who lost their lives during the Euromaidan. Their faces and names remind passers-by that their freedom and future are bought with a price.

Downtown Kyiv also bears the memory of the Holocaust. Right downtown is the site of Babi Yar, where over a hundred thousand people were massacred, men, women, and children. Monuments in English, Russian, Ukrainian and Yiddish bear witness to the things Ukraine has seen and will hopefully never see again. But Kyiv itself I very much want to see again.



Trinity Cathedral, St. Petersburg, Russia.



Memorials in downtown Kyiv dedicated to the Heavenly Hundred (below) and to victims of the Holocaust (above).



### Title VIII

The Critical Languages Institute is one of just two summer language programs that receives funding from the Department of State's Title VIII program, as part of its aims to support language and cultural expertise.

Between 2011 and 2019 (with a hiatus in 2015-2016, when no funds were awarded), CLI has been able to offer 149 fellowships to graduate students from across the country.

Because so many of these students are enrolled in CLI's intermediate and advanced programs, which operate in-country, they never meet face-to-face with fellow recipients studying in different locations. To encourage dialogue and learning within this cohort, the Melikian Center harnessed ASU's expertise in digital immersion to launch a new online class in Post-Soviet Geopolitics. Taught by Melikian Center Director Keith Brown, the course was designed to meet the Department of State's objectives for the Title VIII program, to lay the foundations for timely, independent analysis that should inform foreign policy decisions.



Students embraced the opportunity to share perspectives across disciplinary and geographical boundaries. Peter Levins (Albanian), a Ph.D. student of Art and Architecture at Brown University, described the geopolitics course as a “fantastic experience for deepening my regional expertise and building critical professional relationships with other emerging scholars.” Caitlin O’Grady, a Master’s student at SAIS, Johns Hopkins, found that the course

complemented her Macedonian language study by covering more about the region’s history, its political and economic context, and contemporary issues it faces today. And Brendan Hamilton, studying Russian literature at UC Berkeley, observed from the course that “some of the same paradigms we employ for describing Russian literature of the 19th century still hold water when it comes to describing 21st-century Russian geopolitics. ... it turns out that a number of the skills and perspectives I have been developing in trying to understand the Russia of 150-200 years ago translate effectively into current efforts to understand the Russia of today.”

In their positive evaluation of ASU’s application for continued funding in 2020, Title VIII reviewers commended the innovative approach to promoting peer-to-peer learning, encouraging interdisciplinary conversation, and building students’ confidence and capacity to apply their regional expertise in policy discussions. The course will be offered again in 2020.

### Project Global Officer

2019 was ASU’s 12th year participating in Project GO (Global Officer): twenty-four ROTC cadets from units across the United States studied Indonesian and Russian in Tempe, Denpasar (Bali) and Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan). This latest cohort brings the total number of ROTC scholarships awarded since 2008 to 396.

In October 2019, ASU hosted the annual meeting of Project GO programs, with leadership from DLNSEO, IIE and the twenty-two universities that participate each year, training over 500 cadets in twelve mission-critical languages. Among the issues discussed was the overall reduction in funding for culture and language programming across the US military. In this climate, Project GO has the opportunity and the imperative to highlight the impact for individual officers, and for mission readiness. These aspects were emphasized by ASU’s speakers at the conference.





Captain **Steven Borden** from the Pat Tillman Veterans' Center, and Lieutenant General **Benjamin Freakley** from the McCain Institute. In addition, the Thunderbird Institute's Professor **Mansour Javidan** shared his research on the significance of cross-cultural competence in establishing trust and achieving results with Project GO's new working group on cultural awareness, which is co-chaired by Melikian Center Director Keith Brown.

Assisting at the Project GO meeting was stand-out Project GO Indonesian student **Javier Bustos Maldonado**, who combined academic year study with ASU Professor Peter Suwarno with two summers of intensive study with Project GO, including time at Ngurah Rai University in Bali. Speaking of his experience, Javier says "Of all the things I've done in College, Project GO was the most rewarding... It also made me a little more ambitious in what I want to do in the future... eventually to become an ambassador." Javier was commissioned as 2nd Lieutenant in the United States Army in December 2019.



*Project GO Alumnus and Melikian Center Undergraduate Fellow, Javier Bustos, learning to make 'canang sari' from palm leaves in Indonesia.*

*Ambassador Jeff Bleich (right), Chair of the Fulbright Board, chats with Fulbrighters and staff at the August Predeparture Orientation.*



## Melikian Center Helps U.S. Fulbrighters Prepare for Central Asia

In July 2019, in partnership with the Institute for International Education, (IIE), the Melikian Center hosted the pre-departure orientation for U.S. Fulbright scholars, student researchers, and English Teaching Assistants (ETAs) heading to four Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) and Bhutan.

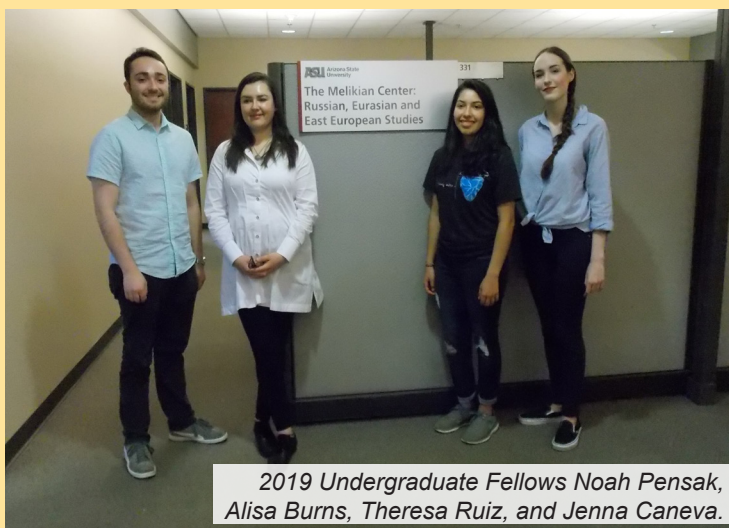
The keynote welcome address was given by new Advisory Board member **David Merkel**, who during his State Department career served as Deputy

Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs and Director for European and Eurasian affairs at the National Security Council in the White House. The new Fulbrighters also heard from videographer **Ari Gajraj** on best practices for audio and video recording; and from Melikian faculty affiliates **Dave Fossum** on the challenges of conducting human subjects research in Central Asia, and **Steve Beschloss** on techniques for telling their Fulbright stories through different media outlets. On the final day, Fulbright Board chair **Ambassador Jeffrey Bleich** offered closing remarks, emphasizing the commitment to excellence through inclusion and diversity shared by the Fulbright Commission and ASU; and looking ahead to continued collaboration.

## Advancing ASU Student Success

Committed to ASU student success, the Melikian Center undertook three new initiatives designed to inform students of opportunities to work closely with faculty and to identify and support talented undergraduates.

In Spring 2019, we launched a new Melikian undergraduate fellowship program, for which any ASU student with interest in Russia, Eurasia, and East Europe can apply. The program offers students a \$1000 scholarship and the opportunity to work as a research assistant on a project at the Center.



2019 Undergraduate Fellows Noah Pensak, Alisa Burns, Theresa Ruiz, and Jenna Caneva.

In this first cohort, awardees worked on an oral history transcription; gained experience in designing and organizing an academic conference; conducted research on differences in media coverage of immigrants from different parts of the world; and used Russian language knowledge on a research team tracking the social media trail left by Russian proxy military forces. The students also had the opportunity to meet informally with guests to the Center.

2019 also saw the redesign and relaunch of the Melikian Center's Certificate in Russian and East European Studies. Students take a total of 19 credits in courses focused on the region, including at least introductory-level courses in a less-commonly-taught language. As well as serving as a complement to majors in Global Studies, History, Religious Studies or International Letters and Cultures, the

certificate is designed to provide students in other schools and colleges an opportunity to develop their cultural and linguistic skill-set, and to earn a credential that showcases their global mindset.



Finally, in Fall 2019 the Center offered an expanded range of professional development opportunities for students in the Barrett Fellows program, or writing their senior theses on topics in the region. **Nikki Hinshaw** (pictured above) is completing her Honors thesis on the career impact of international exchanges, with Tempe Sister Cities as her primary case study. **Elena Boyd** connected the Melikian Center with STEM faculty in grant proposals, and is helping incoming Global Teaching Fellow Adriana Qubaiova in syllabus design for the courses she will offer in Spring 2020.



Barrett Fellow Elena Boyd (center) with Associate Director Irina Levin (right) and CLI Russian Alumna Rachel Larsen (left).

### Tyler Gobble, CLI Turkish Alumnus, 2018

This August I started the Master of Science in Foreign Service (MFSS) program at Georgetown University. As an ASU undergraduate in engineering, I knew that I wanted to attend graduate school and pursue a career in public service with an international focus. But it was my positive experience at the Critical Languages Institute that provided me the pathway forward.

A year after graduating I enrolled in Turkish through CLI. I wanted to study a non-Romance language and knew I was interested in this critical region and



culture. During my time at CLI, I met with other like-minded students and teachers, all of whom were eager to share their language of study and unique in-class experiences. I made a great group of lasting friends; we have stayed in close touch, encouraging one another to seek opportunities for growth and to stay on track with our goals.

After CLI I returned to work in aviation, a field I love deeply, but I knew I wanted to do more with my career and more for my country. In Fall 2018, I applied to graduate programs in international relations, including Georgetown's MFSS program. In late January 2019, I traveled to Turkey where I was able to use my language ability, and learn more from being immersed with native speakers. I also visited my CLI teacher, Emrah, in his hometown. His encouragement, and everything I experienced in Turkey, confirmed for me that I was on the right path. Although the logistics and cost required some management, when I received an offer from Georgetown I accepted and began the program in Fall 2019.



For me, CLI was more than just a chance to learn a language and culture. It has served as inspiration and prompted me to grow and connect with other like-minded people. It has expanded my network of support and boosted my confidence, enabling me to refocus my professional goals. I cannot overstate the value I found in CLI's encouraging and transformative environment. As my career progresses, I look forward to encouraging other students to take on the life-changing encounter with foreign language and area studies that CLI represents.

### **Tatum James, CLI Albanian Alumna, 2016 & 2017**

In 2016, after becoming close to the Albanian community in Fountain Hills, I discovered that I could learn more about this culture at the Critical Language Institute. That summer, I enrolled in First-Year Albanian and spent hours immersed in the Albanian language and culture. Our instructor, Linda Meniku, made the intensive class enjoyable yet challenging. She opened my eyes to an entirely new world. By the end of the program, I was awarded the Outstanding Student honor and reached intermediate proficiency

in the language. The following year, I was awarded a Melikian Scholarship to continue learning Albanian through CLI's 8-week program abroad in Tirana. While in Albania, I lived with a host family and engaged deeply in my community: communicating solely in Albanian with my neighbors, learning traditional dances, and even attending week-long wedding ceremonies. I left Albania as a more confident and global-minded young student, and for that, I am grateful to CLI.

I have continued my involvement with the Albanian community as an intern with Education USA Albania through the U.S. Department of State's Virtual Student Federal Service program. I coordinate and facilitate meetings with high school students all over Albania who are pursuing higher education in the United States. We meet bi-weekly to discuss their academic and professional goals as well as the importance of international education. My connection to Tirana and the Albanian language has allowed me to connect more personally with the students and to be a mentor for them on their journey towards higher education in the U.S.



Currently, in my final year at Arizona State University, I am conducting my honors thesis with Dr. Keith Brown of the Melikian Center and Dr. Henry Sivak of the School of Politics and Global Studies. For the next five months, I will be photographing and interviewing Albanian-Americans all over the valley to hear of their journey to the United States as well as discuss their intentions to maintain their culture and identity being so far from home. Through my research, I hope to share the fascinating stories of the Albanian-American community in Arizona and provide documentation that can be passed down and inspire future generations of Albanians in the valley.

## Regions in Focus: The Western Balkans

Through faculty research, study abroad opportunities, and partnership activity, the Melikian Center has a presence in twenty-eight countries of East Europe and Eurasia. As the Center seeks to innovate and contribute to larger University goals, we will maintain and extend this reach; while also looking to deepen key relationships where ASU has a comparative advantage.

In 2019-2020 we have made strategic investments in key regions where we have significant faculty expertise and can leverage long-term relationships. We anticipate that these cultural and political crossroads, which we identify as historical encounter zones, will be focal points for use-inspired research and global engagement to address the growing challenge to peace and prosperity posed by Great Power rivalries in the 21st century.

In the **Western Balkans**, ASU has had formal ties to the University of Kiril and Methodius (UKIM) in Skopje, the capital city of the Republic of North Macedonia, since the 1970s. This was originally an extension of the sister city partnership established between Tempe and Skopje, as part of Yugoslavia, in 1971, through which high schoolers from the two cities spend half the summer in each city.



*Dan Fellner in UKIM in North Macedonia.*

In 2019, the Melikian Center launched several initiatives to re-energize this long-standing relationship. Faculty affiliate **Dan Fellner** taught intercultural communications at UKIM as a Fulbright specialist.

UKIM faculty member **Borče Arsov** came to teach introductory Macedonian at CLI. Among his students was 2012 Tempe Sister Cities exchange participant and 2017 ASU alumna in Global Studies, **Caitlin O'Grady**. In addition to her Title VIII fellowship for language study, Caitlin was awarded a Boren scholarship to spend the academic year 2019-2020 in North Macedonia, where she is researching community resilience to violent extremism.



*Caitlin O'Grady in Skopje city center with her exchange sister from the Tempe Sister Cities project in 2012.*



*Caitlin O'Grady at Canyon Matka outside Skopje, during her Boren Fellowship in 2019.*



Summer 2019 also saw another ASU and CLI alumnus and current Melikian affiliate, **Daniel Pout**, together with **Henry Sivak**, leading a new study abroad program in the School of Politics and Global Studies. Entitled “Cities, Nationalism, and Borders in Macedonia,” the course offered a new generation of ASU undergraduates a 3-week introduction to identity politics in the region.

Finally, faculty affiliate **Kiril Hristovski** and Advisory Board member **Victor Friedman** have advanced ASU’s partnerships in the country. Professor Hristovski is collaborating with academic leaders to develop national capacity in environmental and emergency management. Victor Friedman is one of the co-convenors of



*Global Studies students and faculty with Macedonian film director Milcho Manchevski in Skopje, North Macedonia, June 2019.*

Most recently, Berisha and Batalden collaborated with World Learning and USAID on the Transformational Leadership Project, to support innovation and enterprise at the University. One of the important legacies of this work was the establishment of the transdisciplinary Center for Energy and Sustainability (CES), at the University, which fosters faculty collaboration and offers a unique certificate program. During the summer of 2019, Shahin Berisha co-taught a summer course with Center affiliate (and 2018 Fulbright scholar at ASU) **Zeqir Veselaj**. He also assisted CES in their successful application for a one-year grant from the US Embassy, which will support expanding course offerings at the Center and developing a training program for energy auditors.

the biennial conference on Balkan and South Slavic Linguistics, Literature and Folklore, which will be held in Tempe in Spring 2020. The keynote address will be delivered by **Elsie Ivancich Dunin**, Professor Emerita from UCLA, drawing from her five decades of fieldwork and community engagement among the Roma community of Skopje.

ASU has other ties in the region, including in particular with the University of Prishtina in Kosovo. These ties, established over the past two decades, owe much to the significant contributions of faculty affiliate and board member **Shahin Berisha**, as well as founding Melikian Center Director **Stephen Batalden**.

★ **Prishtina**

★ **Skopje**



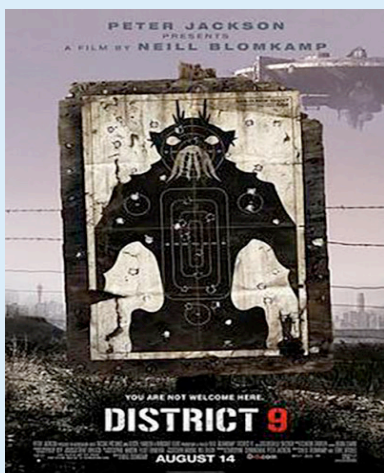
*Shahin Berisha and Zeqir Veselaj with students in Prishtina.*

# Film Series: "The Camp"

The proliferation of immigration detention camps along the US southern border, as well as the ongoing debates about the living conditions, legality, and morality of these camps, drove the theme of the Melikian Center's Fall 2019 Film Series. "The Camp" was comprised of three remarkable and diverse films chosen to spark introspection and discussion among our colleagues, students, and members of the broader ASU community. The series was also aligned with one of our headline events, a lecture by **Elizabeth Cullen Dunn**, Professor of Geography at Indiana University. In a talk entitled "Corpses and Places," Dr. Dunn spoke about the role of funeral rituals in helping Georgians displaced by war and relegated to socially isolating internally displaced people's (IDP) camps rebuild their lives.

The series began with Neil Blomkamp's *District 9* (2009), a science fiction account of how governments, corporations, and ordinary citizens deal with the arrival and long-term residence of (space) aliens who have nowhere else to go. Filmed on location in Johannesburg, South Africa, the film raises unsettling questions about race, class, and the limits of humanity in the context of a refugee camp that has been allowed to deteriorate into a militarized slum. **Andrew Maynard**, Professor in ASU's School of the Future of Innovation in

"The Camp" film series sparks introspection, discussion, and reflection among attendees.



Society and Director of the Risk Innovation Lab, introduced the film. As the author of *Film from the Future: The Technology and Morality of Sci-Fi Films*, Dr. Maynard provided viewers some key questions with which to approach the film. Attendees returned to these questions in a lively and thought-provoking post-film discussion.

The second film in "The Camp" series was *Son of Saul* (2015), directed by László Nemes. The Hungarian film, set in the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, provides an unflinching portrayal of two days in the life of a Jewish-Hungarian prisoner intent on giving a dead child a proper funeral. **Anna Cichopek-Gajraj**, Professor in ASU's School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies and author of two books on postwar Jewish history, introduced the film. Dr. Cichopek-Gajraj provided historical context for the period portrayed and noted the film's commitment to historical accuracy. After the film, viewers had numerous questions for Dr. Cichopek-Gajraj and engaged in a challenging discussion about the film's message.

For the final film in the series, the Melikian Center screened *Women of the Gulag* (2018), a documentary about the female survivors of the Soviet prison labor camp system. For this event, we invited the film's director, **Marianna Yarovskaya**. Ms. Yarovskaya is an award-winning



filmmaker and *Women of the Gulag* was short-listed for an Academy Award. The film featured six women who recounted the circumstances of their arrests, interrogations, and the years they spent in the Gulag. In the post-screening discussion, audience members asked Ms. Yarovskaya about her experiences finding and interviewing the women in her film, her portrayal of the women's strength, the film's distribution in Russia, and the lessons we should take from the Gulag.

All three films in "The Camp" series, as well as Dr. Dunn's lecture, had sizeable and engaged audiences. A number of attendees came to all four events, demonstrating a sustained interest in the topic and the Melikian Center's examination of it.



# Faculty Research on the Rise

Melikian faculty and graduate affiliates from diverse schools and disciplines achieved national recognition for their research through major publications and grant success.

The grant season of 2019 provided further evidence of the high quality of the Melikian Center's faculty and graduate student affiliates. For projects across a wide range of the humanities and social sciences, Melikian affiliates were awarded over \$270,000 in external funds from federal and foundation sources, including several of the United States' most prestigious awards.



These included **Fulbright Awards** for Melikian affiliate **Dan Fellner** to North Macedonia, and for **David Siroky** (School of Politics and Global Studies) to Czechia. The **National**

**Council for Eurasian and East European Research** (NCEEER) awarded a grant to **Laurie Manchester**

(School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies) for her work on Russian return migration from China after World War II.

The **Charles Koch Foundation** provided support for **Henry Thomson's** (School of Politics and Global Studies) project entitled "Watching the Watchers: Controlling the Secret Police and Securing Authoritarian Rule in Socialist Central and Eastern Europe."



*Faculty and graduate affiliates pull in over \$270,000 in external funding from both federal and foundation sources in 2019.*



Among graduate students, **Tyler Kirk** (left) won a post-doctoral fellowship from the **Kennan Institute**. **Garine Palandjian** won a grant from the **American Councils Research Scholar Program** for her dissertation work on border-crossing in teaching and peace-building in Armenia.

**Amanda Weaver**, **John Romero**, and Tyler Kirk all successfully defended their doctoral dissertations in 2019.

Two faculty affiliates won special distinction in 2019-2020. **Agnes Kefeli** (School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies) is spending the year at the National Humanities Center in North Carolina. **Peter Schmelz** (School of Music) won a fellowship from the **John Simon Guggenheim Foundation**.

Together with John Romero, both have received seed funding from the Melikian Center in the past two years.



*Amanda Weaver with mentor Danko Šipka's after her graduation.*

### John Romero, ASU 2019

In summer 2019 I received funding support through the Melikian Center to participate in a conference in the Russian Federation, in Tiumen'. I was able to present my project and discuss my findings with my peers and scholars at the journal *Ab Imperio*. As many of the scholars in attendance were Russians, including several from Tatarstan, the region which is the focus of my research, the experience was incredibly useful in both seeing how my work is received by others and in making connections with future colleagues.

This was just the latest support I received from the Melikian Center as a doctoral student at ASU. In 2012 and 2013 I took Russian in Kyiv and then Tatar



in Kazan, through the Critical Languages Institute. These programs offered not only the chance to develop my language skills but also to meet other graduate students and spend time abroad in preparation for my extended dissertation research, which I finished in Summer 2019.

I am now a postdoctoral fellow

at Indiana University's Russian Studies Workshop, revising my doctoral dissertation into a publishable book manuscript. I am also currently drafting an article on the nature of the Great Purge of 1937-38 in the Tatar Republic, emphasizing the roots of the political repression of the Tatar intelligentsia from the 1920s onwards. Alongside my own research, I serve as facilitator and moderator for a new monthly writing workshop, or *kruzhok*, for graduate students across different departments with interests in Russia. Presenting our work to peers from other disciplines opens up new approaches and provides invaluable feedback. In Spring 2020 I will teach an upper-division course on comparative colonialism in Indiana University's interdisciplinary International Studies Department, and I look forward to returning to Russia for research in Summer 2020.

### Peter Schmelz, School of Music

With support from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, I am finishing my book *Cold War Intimacies: A Ukrainian Composer, Conductor, and Musicologist Struggle for Independence, Recognition, and the Avant-Garde in the 1960s*. This book discusses the lives and works of three interconnected figures: composer Valentin Silvestrov, conductor Igor Blazhkov, and musicologist Galina Mokreeva, remarkable musicians who all came of age during the Khrushchev Thaw of the late 1960s.

Their stories open a new vantage on Soviet music and musical life in the 1960s, touching on several key topics in cultural history from the decade, including Igor Stravinsky's 1962 homecoming tour to the USSR, with which Blazhkov was directly involved as rehearsal conductor, as well as the rise of the "Kyiv avant-garde," the group of young composers that counted Silvestrov among its members.

The lives and fates of Silvestrov, Blazhkov, and Mokreeva force a reconsideration of art and censorship in the post-Stalin era, revealing the traumatic consequences that affected music during the



Khrushchev Thaw despite the generally upbeat reports from many musicians today about the time. Furthermore, by treating the Ukrainian SSR and the Russian SFSR as separate, unequal constituent elements of the larger USSR, my intimate history develops a new perspective on the complicated identity of Ukraine in the Soviet period and after. I received support from the Melikian Center to travel from Berlin to Kyiv in September 2017, to attend events marking Silvestrov's 80th birthday. This visit made clear to me the pride that Ukrainians take in Silvestrov's entire professional career. It also illustrated the importance of addressing the aesthetic as well as the political dimensions of the current conflict between Ukraine and Russia.





Melikian Center Affiliate  
Dr. Agnes Kefeli at the University  
of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

**Support and advice from other Melikian Center faculty affiliates propels Kefeli to Benjamin N. Duke Fellowship at the National Humanities Center in North Carolina.**

## Agnes Kefeli, SHPRS

Hello from the National Humanities Center in North Carolina.

I am currently enjoying the view of tall pine trees through my window at the National Humanities Center in Research Triangle Park. I was awarded the 2019-2020 Benjamin N. Duke Fellowship for my research on the revival of Islam among the Volga Tatars--the largest Muslim minority in Russia and Europe. The Melikian Center played a large part in my journey here. My 2018 summer travel grant from the Center allowed me to return to Kazan and its countryside for the first time in nine years. There I was able to access Tatar literary journals and periodicals, textbooks, village novels, and dissertations at the National Library of Tatarstan. I browsed mosque bookstores

and bought a significant amount of material—religious textbooks, pamphlets, memoirs, and tapes of sermons—that I could not find in US libraries. I was able to interview officials from the Ministry of Culture, who provided me transportation to Bolghar, a major sacred place for both Muslim and Christian Tatars, which is now the site of an Islamic university and an important pilgrimage place for Tatars living outside Tatarstan. This trip helped me discover new facets of Tatar modern eschatology which now combines traditional religious themes with ideas borrowed from Western and Russian occultism, New Age philosophies, the Alt-Right, and even Religious Studies theorists such as Mircea Eliade. I was also able to revisit the village of

Elyshevo which was the starting point of my 2014 book *Becoming Muslim in Imperial Russia*, and to interview elderly people who gave me a personal sense of their religious life during the Soviet period.

In addition to the Melikian travel grant, I also benefited from the encouragement and support of other faculty affiliates. **Hilde Hoogenboom** and **Mark Cruse**, who were fellows at NHC, encouraged me to apply and offered invaluable advice.

**Stephen Batalden**, the Melikian Center's founding director, offered to read the final draft of my proposal. Thanks to their help, I am now enjoying a full year working on my second book, provisionally entitled *Re-Enchanting the Eurasian Steppe*:

*Eco-Nationalism and Eschatology in Soviet and Post-Soviet Tatar Literature*. I focus on the ways that Tatars have related to their Muslim faith and national ecology in Soviet and post-Soviet literature. Despite Soviet policies limiting access to Islamic literature and education, Islamic culture was not confined to folklore, food and



Kefeli at the Ak Jami Mosque in the city of Bolghar in Tatarstan.

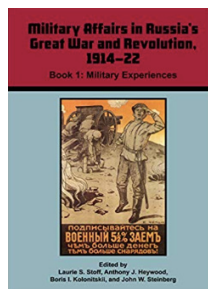
## Discovery and Scholarship

festivals but remained a powerful organizing principle in people's lives. In particular, ideas about land and its ties to heaven played and still play a key role in the transmission of religious knowledge and identity formation. Attention to topography and ecology, I believe, captures the continuity and resilience of religion from pre-revolutionary Russia to the present. The National Humanities Center, reportedly conceived as a modern monastery and located in the middle of a forest, serves as a daily reminder of the deep influence of place on the life of the mind. I look forward to sharing my findings and renewing productive conversations with Melikian colleagues and ASU students in Fall 2020.



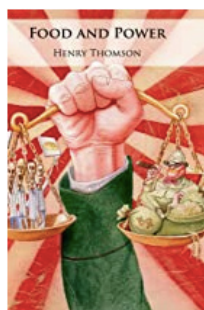
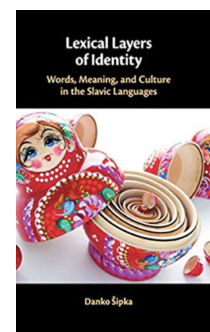
Raila Sabirova, Golsina Khamidullina, Agnes Kefeli, Ilsoyar Iksanova at the Folklore Center in Kazan, 2008.

***As well as their grant success, Melikian faculty affiliates produced a range of peer-reviewed research publications during 2019, including multiple articles and four books.***



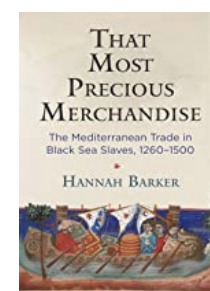
Principal Lecturer and Barrett Senior Faculty Fellow **Laurie Stoff** has been heading a major collaborative research project on the social dimensions of Russia's Great War and Revolution, and the first volume was published this year.

Long-time SILC professor and former CLI Director **Danko Šipka's** monograph *Lexical Layers of Identity: Words, Meaning, and Culture in the Slavic Languages* was published by Cambridge University Press.



Assistant Professor **Henry Thomson** (Politics and Global Studies) published the book, *Food and Power: Regime Type, Agricultural Policy, and Political Stability* (Cambridge University Press), which explores how different types of governments take action to shape the course of economic development, focusing on agriculture. It explains variation in agricultural and food policy across regime type and the impact on the stability of authoritarian governments.

Assistant Professor **Hannah Barker** (History) also has a new book out, *That Most Precious Merchandise: The Mediterranean Trade in Black Sea Slaves, 1260-1500* (University of Pennsylvania Press). The book examines the process of exporting slaves from the Golden Horde to Mediterranean markets on the basis of archival sources from Genoa, Venice, and Cairo.





Faculty affiliates **Gary Grossman** (School for the Future of Innovation in Society); **Margaret Hanson** (School of Politics and Global Studies); **Andi Hess** (College of Integrative Science and Arts); **Laurie Manchester** (School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies); **Claudia Sadowski-Smith** (Department of English) and **Laurie Stoff** (Barrett, The Honors College) volunteered to serve on a newly-constituted Faculty advisory committee, to work with the Melikian Center's Director and staff, with a particular focus on student success, research support, and high-profile visiting speakers.

**Volker Benkart** (SHPRS) took up a new role as Director of Graduate Studies for the new World War II program, which is offered in partnership with the World War II Museum in New Orleans. The program offers an online Masters degree, and already has over 100 students enrolled.

**Steven Beschloss** established and now directs the Narrative Storytelling Initiative at ASU, a university-wide effort to encourage and train knowledge-producers to write for publics beyond the academy.

**Lenka Bustikova** was awarded tenure and promoted to Associate Professor in the School of Politics and Global Studies in May 2019.

**Margaret Hanson** and **Saule Moldabekova** (pictured right) provided pre-departure briefings on Kazakh politics and culture to the 1st Battalion 158th Infantry Regiment of the AZ National Guard, as they trained to participate in the Steppe Eagle exercise in summer 2019.

**Mladen Medved**, Global Teaching Fellow and Melikian Center affiliate in Spring 2019, was awarded his doctorate summa cum laude at Central European University for his thesis "Transition to Capitalism in Croatia, Hungary, and Austria (1830s-1867/8): A Study in Uneven and Combined Development."

Doctoral student **Garine Palandjian** successfully completed her preliminary exams and defended her thesis proposal in the Mary Lou Fulton Teacher's College.



**Milos Popovic**, Center affiliate in 2018-2019 while working at the Center for the Future of War, won a Marie Curie post-doctoral fellowship at Leiden University in the Netherlands.



Faculty affiliate and Board member **David Kader** and wife Pat spent time in Poland during summer 2019, where David was conducting "detective work" on his parents --- Polish Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. They met up with **Ania Cichopek-Gajraj** in Krakow and travelled together to Auschwitz, where David's mother was a prisoner from summer 1944 into very early 1945, before visiting her birthplace, Radom, where Ania secured access to both City Registrar and Archives to gather documentation for David's writing project.

## Connecting with Communities

During the past two years, the Melikian Center has welcomed twenty-four new faculty affiliates, whose research and teaching drives the Center's reputation on and off campus. In 2020 and beyond, we hope to draw this disciplinarily diverse group into new conversations and collaborations, to invigorate the study of Russia, Eurasia and East Europe as well as identify and explore its global connections. This enterprise will gain impetus in Spring 2020, when the second cohort of undergraduate Melikian fellows will work closely with faculty affiliates on their research. Among the affiliates participating in this effort are **Candace Rondeaux** (pictured right), who will continue to build a team of data science and language and culture students to track the involvement and ideology of private military security contractors, especially the Wagner group, involved in Russia's ongoing proxy wars.



The Center will also host for the second time a Global Teaching Fellow from Central European University. Following the successful contributions made by Mladen Medved last Spring, the new fellow will be **Adriana Qubaiova** (pictured left), who received her PhD in gender studies in 2019. Dr. Qubaiova has done extensive field work in Beirut, and her classes on Gender and Conflict, and Democratic Erosion, will offer ASU students new perspectives on human rights activism and the politics of inclusion in the Middle East.



The Center continues to develop expertise and programming in the borderlands where customs, cultures and imperial and national ambitions come into contact. Our headline speaker this Spring will be Professor Sarah Cameron from the University of Maryland, whose pathbreaking book on famine and societal breakdown in 1930s Kazakhstan, *The Hungry Steppe*, has already won multiple accolades and awards. In conjunction with the School of International Letters and Cultures, and the Department of Russian and Slavic Studies at the University of Arizona, the Melikian Center will convene the 22nd Biennial Conference on Balkan and South Slavic Linguistics, Literature and Folklore in April.

Looking ahead to the academic year 2020-21, the Center will continue to invest in collaboration at home and abroad. We will be bringing together ASU American Studies faculty with counterparts at Yerevan State University in Armenia, who are launching an American Studies Center and degree program. We are also already preparing for two milestone anniversaries in 2021. The Critical Languages Institute will host events to celebrate 30 years of teaching less-commonly taught languages in Tempe to students from across the United States. And 2021 will also mark the 50th anniversary since Tempe and Skopje, Yugoslavia, formally became sister cities—marking the first such relationship between the United States and East Europe. Working with colleagues at ASU's libraries, the Tempe Sister Cities organization, and Tempe Historical Museum, we are helping to design and mount a museum exhibit on the theme of citizen-diplomacy and the resilience of people-to-people ties. Acknowledging the vision and energy that launched these international engagement endeavors serves the Center's goal of building knowledge across generations and inspiring the next generation of globally-oriented leaders.



Members of ASU's Citizen-Diplomacy research cluster with President Udo Hebel and Professor Birgit Bariudl from the University of Regensburg, Tempe's second sister city.



**Board and community support for passionate students, dedicated teachers, critical languages, and thought-provoking programming helps to make ASU a premier national research and training center for East European and Eurasian studies.**



*Gregory Melikian and fellow Advisory Board Members Gabe and Penny Ruben with CLI Title VIII recipient, Patrick Rich, July 2019.*

Thank you to all the Melikian Center friends for your generous contributions of funds and time to support the Melikian Center and CLI in 2019.

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*Emma Melikian with Andrew Gunn, July 2019.*

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