



2021 ANNUAL REPORT

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

DONOR APPRECIATION

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.

Thank you to all the friends of the Melikian Center for your generous contributions of funds and time to support the Center and CLI in 2021.

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DIRECTOR'S LETTER

It's a pleasure and an honor to write as the Interim Director of the Melikian Center. Many of you have longer ties to the Center and deeper research connections to the region, but I hope I can be helpful institutionally. Standing in so Keith can have a research leave is also a contribution to the cause of scholarship.

By way of introduction, I am the former Director of the London School of Economics, President of the Social Science Research Council, and founder of the University Center for International Studies (now FedEx Center) at UNC Chapel Hill. In all these positions and in my research and teaching I have been concerned to connect context-specific knowledge, like that of area studies, to key analytic themes of public concern including nationalism, populist movements, and the future of democracy.

These themes have been prominent lately, and not least in Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia. From last year's Nagorno-Karabakh war to the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, tensions in the relationship of Poland and Hungary to the EU, and the very politically motivated construction of the Nord Stream pipeline, our regions have been part of global upheaval and restructuring. Without paying attention to them, it is hard to understand the political economy of energy, upheavals in security, reorganization of great power politics, the role of transnational religion in politics, challenges maintaining supply chains, or efforts to achieve sustainability and mitigate climate change.

ASU works to bring expertise, innovation, and solutions to problems like these. Part of Melikian's mission is to make sure technical knowledge is complemented by knowledge of places, cultures, histories, and politics that are crucial to actual outcomes.

This is an important moment for international studies and global engagements at ASU. The

ASU can't achieve real global leadership without the intellectual contributions of its faculty. The Melikian Center has the chance to be at the center of this.

University as a whole is striving to upgrade its international performance to match its leadership in mission-driven domestic innovation. This includes building new partnerships, launching high-impact development projects, and expanding our international enrollments. But it also must include growing depth and range of international scholarship, education, and research. ASU can't achieve real global leadership without the intellectual contributions of its faculty. The Melikian Center has the chance to be at the center of this.

Our affiliates already bring greater awareness of international affairs to ASU students, advance knowledge of different countries and transnational issues, and maintain ties to important networks of scholarship and action in our regions and beyond. The Melikian Center works to connect all of this, enhancing the visibility of regionally rooted scholarship on campus.

New initiatives across ASU are a chance for the Melikian Center to grow stronger. This will mean continuing to build relationships to other relevant parts of the university. The new College of Global Futures and Thunderbird both bring global strengths that complement those in CLAS. We can be a connector. We are also working with the Center for Asian Research and others on an "inter-Asia" initiative that will explore shifting connections—and fault lines—

across all the regions of Asia and into Eurasia, the former Soviet space, and Eastern Europe.

This theme figures in our effort to secure Title VI Funding from the US Department of Education. Keith is generously leading this even while on leave. I am preparing a parallel proposal for cross-regional international studies and coordinating a broader cross-school ASU effort to field four proposals. Among other things, this all speaks to the importance of bringing international awareness and expertise to ASU's distinctive student population.

During the coming year, the Melikian Center will continue to host great programs for students and for our broader community. The Center will help ASU welcome about 100 Afghan students and scholars. The Center will work to build ASU partnerships with universities in our regions, including innovative joint degree programs. And of course the Melikian Center will do even more.

It's great to be part of this work.

Craig Calhoun

On October 27, Melikian Center Interim Director Craig Calhoun welcomed Ambassador Yerzhan Ashikbayev of Kazakhstan to ASU on behalf of President Crow. ASU has rich and growing connections with Kazakhstan, which complement a longstanding and highly valued partnership between the Arizona Air and Army National Guards and Kazakhstan's military. Through the Melikian Center, we offer intensive Kazakh language and a variety of public programs with Kazakh presenters, host Fulbright scholars, and have a Memorandum of Understanding with Nazarbayev University. We have also helped build links to ASU programs in emergency management and security and new university partnerships through Cintana. Saule Moldabekova and Jacob Lassin were also present to talk about the Melikian Center's experiences working with partners in Kazakhstan. The Ambassador was effusive in supporting the idea of expanding our joint work.



Melikian Center Interim Director Craig Calhoun with Ambassador Yerzhan Ashikbayev of Kazakhstan

YEAR IN REVIEW

THIS YEAR'S SERIES

CREATIVE HORIZONS:
ART IN THE POST-SOVIET
ERA

Co-sponsored with the Havighurst Center for Russian & Post-Soviet Studies at Miami University (OH) and the Institute on Russia at the University of South Florida

THE RUSSIA
DISRUPTION

Co-sponsored with the Phoenix Committee on Foreign Relations and the Santa Fe Council on International Relations

CENTRAL ASIA:
GLOBAL AND LOCAL
WISDOM

Co-sponsored with International Education at Maricopa Community Colleges; the University of Arizona Center for Middle Eastern Studies, and the Asian Studies Development Program at the East-West Center

MELIKIAN CENTER FILM
SERIES

Ukrainian Film Series, Spring 2021 and Baltic Film Series, Fall 2021; curated by Melikian Center Postdoctoral Scholar, Jacob Lassin.

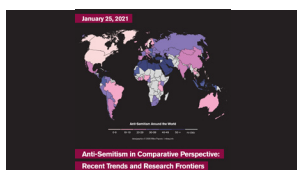
JANUARY 2021

21 January &
4 February



"Ethos," discussion with Yasin Basaran, 2020-2021 ASU Fulbright FLTA (Turkey)

25 January



"Antisemitism in Comparative Perspective," 2021 Lowe Family Research Workshop Co-sponsored with The Lowe Family Holocaust and Genocide Education Endowment and ASU Jewish Studies

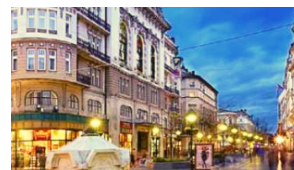
27 January



Vladimir Tsesler, Creative Horizons, Q&A session with the designer and artist from Belarus

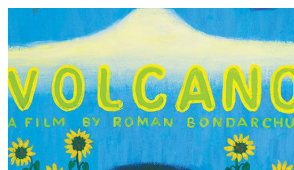
FEBRUARY 2021

16 February



"The Balkans: Where the U.S. and Europe Meet," discussion with Gabriel Escobar, U.S. Embassy Belgrade, Serbia Co-sponsored with the Phoenix Committee on Foreign Relations (PCFR)

18 February



Volcano (dir. Roman Bondarchuk, 2018), Ukrainian Film Series, discussion and asynchronous screening

24 February



"Assassination at Home and Abroad," The Russia Disruption, panel featuring Yevgenia M. Albats, *The New Times*; Paul Kolbe, Harvard Kennedy School; Shaun Walker, *The Guardian*

MARCH 2021

3 March



Little Star Rising (dir. Slađana Lučić, 2019), discussion with Slađana Lučić, 2020-2021 Hubert Humphrey Fellow Co-sponsored with the ASU Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication

10 March



Szabolcs KissPál, Creative Horizons, Q&A session with the artist from Hungary

18 March



"Russia and American after Trump," The Russia Disruption, with Andrei P. Tsygankov, San Francisco State University

18 March



The Wild Fields (dir. Yaroslav Lodygin, 2018), Ukrainian Film Series, discussion and asynchronous screening

APRIL 2021

1 April



"Coal, Renewables & Protest," with Nita Luci, University of Prishtina

1 April



"Democracy Promotion & America's Role in the World," with Michael McFaul, Stanford University; Co-sponsored with the Alexander Hamilton Society, ASU Chapter

2 April



Cinematic Emotions: From Soviet Avant-garde to Stalinism, book launch for Ana Hedberg Olenina, ASU with Anna Toropova, University of Nottingham

8 April



"Domestic and Foreign Policy Challenges of Dealing with Putin," The Russia Disruption, with Fiona Hill, Brookings Institution

8 April



Waterfront: A Post-Ottoman Post-Socialist Story

(dirs. Miloš Jovanović, Milos Miletic and Mirjana Radovanović, 2018), film discussion with Miloš Jovanović, professor, History Department, UCLA and Mirjana Radovanović

12- 17 April



Genocide Awareness Week

Hosted by Scottsdale Community College

18 April



Donbass (dir. Sergei Loznitsa, 2018) Ukrainian Film Series, discussion and asynchronous screening

29 April



"Research Pieces: Undergraduate Fellows Edition," with Spring 2021 Fellows (Mentor): Marie Elie (Danko Sipka), Madisyn Goodballet (Katherine Boyce-Jacino), Joe Thomas (Michael Polt), Cameron Vega (Daniel Pout) and Sofia Walsh (Beibit Shangirbayeva)

MAY 2021

19 May



"The Magnitsky Affair - How to Oppose a Criminal State?" The Russia Disruption, with Jamison Firestone

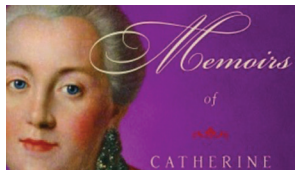
JUNE 2021

8 June



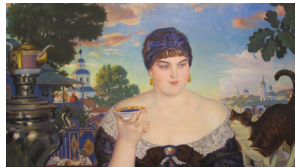
"The 1920 Soviet Abortion Decree & the Next 100 Years of Promised Women's Emancipation," with Kateryna Ruban, New York University

24 June



"Catherine The Great: Life And Legend," with Hilde Hoogenboom, ASU

28 June



"Examining the Silk Road Roots of Tea time through Archeology," with Laura Popova, ASU

JULY 2021

16 July



CLI 2021 Graduation Celebration

SEPTEMBER 2021

29 September



Ermina Takenova, Creative Horizons Q&A session with the animator, director, and illustrator from Kazakhstan

OCTOBER 2021

1 October



"Melikian Center Research Pieces: Faculty Edition," with Volker Benkert and Hilde Hoogenboom

8 October



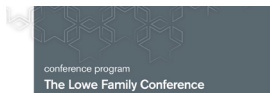
"Indigenous Peoples of Central Asia," Central Asia: Global and Local Wisdom Series, with Morris Rosabi, Columbia University, Albert Celoza, Maricopa Community College (moderator)

14 October



The Ancient Woods (dir. Mindaugas Survila, 2017), Baltic Film Series, discussion and screening

17 October



**Jewish-Muslim relations
through the ages:
co-existence and conflict**

"Jewish and Muslim Relations Through the Ages,"

The Lowe Family Research Conference Co-sponsored with The Lowe Family Holocaust and Genocide Education Endowment and ASU Jewish Studies

20 October



***I Will Die in a Foreign Land*,** book launch for Kalani Pickhart, hosted by Changing Hands Bookstore

22 October



"Environmental and Cultural Impact on Indigenous Peoples of Central Asia,"

Central Asia: Global and Local Wisdom Series, with Laura Popova, ASU; Saskia Abrams-Kavunenko, University Copenhagen; Nicholas DelSordi, Phoenix College (Moderator)

27 October



Kateryna Babkina, Creative Horizons Q&A Session with the poet, short-story writer, novelist, playwright, and screenwriter from Ukraine

NOVEMBER 2021

3 November



"Copyright Consciousness," Work-in-Progress discussion with David Fossum

9 November



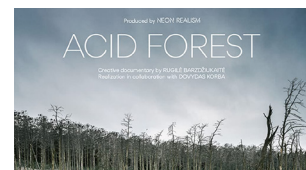
"The North Caucasus in Contemporary Russian Literature," with Azamat Gabuev, Fulbright Scholar (Russia), Cornell University

5 November

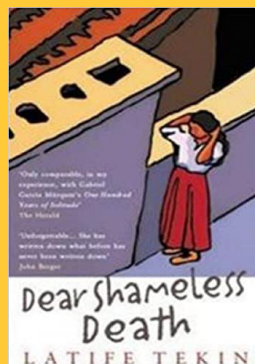


"Roots from the Region," Central Asia: Global and Local Wisdom Series, panel with Beibit Shangirbayeva, Fulbright Scholar from Kazakhstan, Melikian Center; Orhon Myadar, University of Arizona; Nargis Kassenova, Harvard University; Michael Little Crow, ASU (moderator)

18 November



Acid Forest (dir. Rugile Barzdziukaite, 2018), Baltic Film Series, discussion and screening featuring Lukas Brasiskis, NYU



The Melikian Center Reading Group continued meeting online throughout 2021. Working its way across Russia, Eurasia, and Eastern Europe, the group has continued to have engaging conversations about history, culture, politics, and the craft of storytelling. The last book of 2021 was ***Dear Shameless Death***, by Turkish author Latife Tekin.

2021 EVENTS SPOTLIGHT

Creative Horizons

When the Covid-19 pandemic upended the Melikian Center's programming in 2020, we sought out ways to stay connected and offer events relevant to both scholars and broader audiences. One outcome of our efforts is Creative Horizons: Art in the Post-Soviet Era. A collaboration between the Melikian Center, the Havighurst Center at Miami University, and the University of South Florida's Institute on Russia, the series presents artists from across the post-Soviet region. We introduce each artist with an interview produced by videographer Ari Gajraj, followed by a live online Q&A. Through the magic of the internet, we travel seamlessly between Arizona, Ohio, and Florida—and onwards to Russia, Belarus, Hungary, and beyond. If you have not yet had a chance to check out a Creative Horizons event, these short interviews available on the Center's website with two of our featured artists will give you a taste of what you have been missing!

Ermina Takenova

Ermina Takenova is a London-based digital artist from Kazakhstan. Takenova researches Kazakh culture to explore contemporary issues through art.

Why did you decide to create Kazakh art, and how has this act of creation shaped your relationship with your culture?

I wouldn't call what I do Kazakh art specifically, as the traditional art is rooted in craft practices. I'd say my art is deeply inspired by Kazakh culture, history, mythology, traditional craft, and the nomadic way of life. I communicate with the world and myself best through art, so it became a tool for me to reconnect with my roots. Creating illustrations based on Kazakh culture and folklore helps me digest it. I think art is a powerful and engaging educational tool.



Illustration of Kazakh women by Ermina Takenova

You mentioned that you worry about the authenticity of your art. Do you see yourself as someone who is building a new Kazakh culture?

I always try to be aware and careful not to self-orientalize, so authenticity and honesty are very important to me. I want to be open about the environment I grew up in and the sense of detachment I had from my own culture. An important step to reconnect with my roots is to discuss colonization. I'm lucky to have family members who cherish our culture. My grandfather was a historian, the only surviving child of my great-grandparents, who lost eight children in the famine. He influenced my father, who sparked an interest in Kazakh history in me. I'm inspired by Kazakhstan's art community. After I started posting political illustrations on social media, I connected with creative people from my country. I think we are all building a new identity. For a culture that has experienced colonialism, I wonder if the act of revival and reconnection inevitably means building a new culture anyway.

Your short film 'Mankurt' is based on a Turkic legend and alludes to Chingiz Aitmatov's novel, while your art is very stylized. What do the medium of digital art and your modern style bring to your explorations of Kazakh tradition?

I strongly believe that culture doesn't have to be static. We should allow flexibility for our culture to move with the times. That's why I feel comfortable mixing folklore with contemporary issues, as well as going for a more surreal and grotesque imagery. I often deal with heavy subjects in my art and hence my visual language tends to be on the darker side. The Turkic/Kazakh mythological realm also has grotesque elements that feed my love for surreal art.

//

Creating illustrations based on Kazakh culture and folklore helps me digest it.

- Ermina Takenova

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Kateryna Babkina

Kateryna Babkina is a Ukrainian writer whose art traces the shadow the country's complicated past throws on the present. Her work touches on themes including intergenerational trauma, anti-Semitism, and life in a country undergoing armed conflict. Babkina has published fiction, poetry, screenplays, and children's books. Her short story collection, *My Grandfather Danced Better Than Anyone Else*, won the 2021 Angelus Central European Literature Award.

Out of the artists in our series so far, you have devoted the most time to promoting your compatriots' work. How does your art respond to the inaccessibility of Ukrainian art to the wider world?

I try to speak up about Ukraine, and about Ukrainian literature. I use all my chances to represent my writing and the writing of other Ukrainian people. I gladly participate in festivals and workshops and always volunteer. I do whatever I can; I write articles, I lecture, I write about Ukraine, and I try to write well so that people get interested in Ukrainian literature. Through my writing they become open to this literature and to Ukrainian art in general.



Kateryna Babkina

You work in many genres. Where does your inspiration come from, and does your creative approach change based on genre?

The inspiration for my work comes from life, from people, and from how they transform their experiences, their past, their feelings, their traumas, their everything into something new that they carry on into the future. This is the most exciting thing about life, how people change and how they change the world. I don't think this creative approach shifts based on genre; in different forms you can talk about the same things. This is what I do, whatever it is, be it a film or a book for children. I'm really fascinated by people, their stories, their experiences and their emotions. I want to show to other people through my stories as many different experiences and as many different outcomes as I can so people understand each other more.

Many of your works portray contemporary Ukrainians grappling with historical and ongoing upheavals such as the Second World War and the current conflict in eastern Ukraine. What happens when you transform traumas into literature?

What happens when one transforms ongoing traumas into literature and what generally happens when one transforms anything, any experience, into literature? Literature happens. Stories happen. Life happens, and other people who are readers are invited to share this experience, so they become hopefully more thoughtful, more understanding, more caring, or at least they think wider and they know more. That's what happens, I think.

I use all my chances to represent my writing and the writing of other Ukrainian people.

-Kateryna Babkina

Baltic Film Series

In Fall 2021, we organized a film series to celebrate 30 years of independence for the Baltic countries. We screened two documentaries, both of which focus on nature. In October, we showed *The Ancient Woods* (2017, dir. Mindaugas Survila), which took us into a Lithuanian forest, one of the last old-growth forests left in Europe.

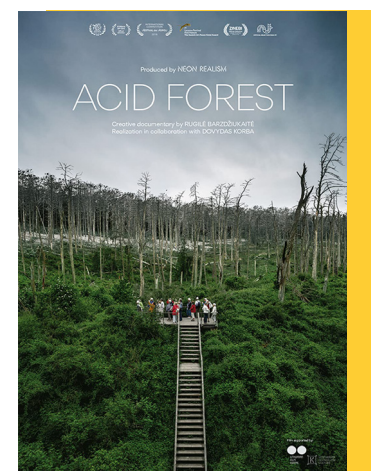
In the film, we were treated to stunning views of this forest, observing it throughout the course of an entire year. With intimate scenes of some of the rarest animals in the world and a lyrical quality to the direction and editing, Survila's film provided an immersive experience that left the audience in quiet wonder.

The second film, *Acid Forest* (2018, dir. Rugile Barzdziukaite), was screened in November. Barzdziukaite's film provides a contrasting perspective on nature in Lithuania by taking us to a forest that has been destroyed by the presence of invasive cormorants. The film provided a fascinating view of this complex and uncanny development in the region's natural history. The various reactions of the many visitors who come to this forest provided social context.

In addition to the film, we were treated to an introduction by Lukas Brasiskis, a specialist in Baltic cinema and NYU PhD candidate. His knowledge and expertise on the films of the region made for an insightful introduction for our second film. We would like to thank faculty affiliate Ana Hedberg Olenina for her assistance in organizing the series.



Film poster for The Ancient Woods



Film poster for Acid Forest

2022 EVENT PREVIEW: GENOCIDE AWARENESS WEEK

The Rosenbluth Family Charitable Foundation Genocide Awareness Week (GAW) is the largest conference on the topic in the United States. Held annually as a free and open event at Scottsdale Community College, GAW attracted 2,800 visitors in 2018 alone. As a collaboration between different Humanities and Social Science units at ASU, NAU and UofA, chiefly among them the Melikian Center, GAW will be held at ASU from April 2022 onwards.



Genocide Awareness Week logo

In a world increasingly shaped by violence and displacement, the study of genocide, human rights, political and ethnic violence, justice and trauma as well as peace studies is of utmost importance. In order to combat bigotry, hatred, and violence, GAW pursues three interlinked missions: research, education, and policy on genocide. GAW will enhance research efforts by bringing together scholars of diverse genocides to explore genocide comparatively and through different disciplines. In addition to its research mission, GAW will create awareness among ASU, NAU and UofA students by connecting speakers directly to courses. In reference to the new AZ mandate on the Holocaust and other genocides education, GAW will work with high schools in person and online. Supporting the efforts of the Arizona Department of Education and its Holocaust and other genocides taskforce, GAW will also offer teacher training workshops in collaboration with Echoes and Reflections. Lastly, GAW will be a forum for discussion on policy by bringing together world leaders in genocide education, experts on justice and restitution, as well as diplomats working on reconciliation and prevention.

The Holocaust is the paradigmatic genocide whose study, documentation, and memorialization informs how we confront other genocides. Sponsored by the Phoenix Holocaust Association, we will bring Father Patrick Desbois as keynote speaker to ASU in 2022 as well as feature an exhibition on his work *Holocaust by Bullets* at Hayden Library. Ambassador Michaela Küchler, the outgoing president of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance as an international governmental agency to support Holocaust education, will also speak as well as Cherrie Daniels, the former US Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues. Sponsored by the Armenian Apostolic Church in Phoenix, GAW will also feature Professor Barlow Der Mugrdchian, California State University, Fresno, to address the Armenian Genocide. Particularly through its focus on Eastern Europe as the site of German atrocities in WWII as well as its focus on Armenian history, the Melikian Center has been one of the most important sponsors of GAW.

Hosting GAW will enhance existing ASU strength in Holocaust and Genocide education, through the work of individual faculty across the university as well collaborative work with the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. It will expand ASU's social embeddedness in metropolitan Phoenix; advance inter-disciplinary and knowledge-creation about collective violence; and enhance ASU's national and global reputation in Genocide Studies, Jewish Studies, Conflict and Human Rights as well as Justice and Social Inquiry.

Volker Benkert

NEW FACES



In early 2021, the Melikian Center welcomed a new student worker, **Collin Frank**. As a CLI alum (Russian 200, '19), Collin was able to jump right in with the help of outgoing student worker, Rae Larsen. He is double majoring in Global Studies and Russian, in addition to completing the Russian and East European Studies Certificate. Collin is also an alum of the center's Melikian Undergraduate Fellowship program, having assisted faculty affiliate Candace Rondeaux with her research on Russian paramilitary groups and their online presence in the spring of 2020. He will graduate from ASU in May 2022 and is currently working on graduate school applications for master's programs with a focus on diplomacy and global security.

This fall, the Melikian Center welcomed another student worker, **Harmanpreet Bains**. Harmanpreet is working on her MS in User Experience. She is putting her training and professional experience to great use at the center by revamping our website with a focus on user experience and by doing the layout and graphic design for this annual report! Harmanpreet is passionate about creating better user experiences through aesthetics and problem solving. After completing her program at ASU, she wants to take up a job as a User Experience designer and solve problems and improve designs of products used in the medical field.



In October, the Melikian Center was delighted to welcome back **Marina Akins**. In 2019, Marina took a position with ASU Media Enterprise in Business Operations & Circulation managing the newly acquired quarterly journal *Issues in Science and Technology*. With the departure of Heidi Young, who was happy to find a job closer to her family out East, we are delighted that Marina decided to accept the newly created Program Manager role. In this role, Marina oversees the center's operating budget and financial operations, including grant management, and supervises hiring processes. She is excited to be working with old friends, as well as our new board members, faculty affiliates, and CLI faculty.

NOTES FROM HELSINKI



Keith Brown enjoying summer in Finland

I write this guest column from research leave in Helsinki, where I am spending this academic year. Thanks to the flexibility of Social Sciences Dean Pardis Mahdavi and the generous collegiality of Irina Levin and Craig Calhoun, I have a unique opportunity to focus on research and writing as a core fellow at the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies.

I'm in Helsinki to produce the manuscript of a book that has been part of my life for a few years now. The book focuses on creative democratic activism by "ordinary" citizens in response to governmental intimidation, disinformation, and repression. I focus on the story of a small village in Western Macedonia with its own deep historical traditions of playful protest (through carnival). From 1987—when socialist bureaucracy was still very powerful—a group of civic-minded villagers led a movement to demand government accountability after police used excessive force in the village against peaceful demonstrators, including women and children. In 1989, they led a march on the capital city that resulted in the resignation of the Interior Minister. They provided support, solidarity and inspiration for other change agents across Yugoslavia—including environmental, youth and women's movements, as well as intellectuals and artists—and eventually secured for their village

Almost eighty ASU faculty members have chosen to affiliate with the Center, reflecting ASU's transdisciplinary range and broad interest in the region.

the status of municipality, allowing something close to their ideal of direct democracy in which citizens, rather than political parties, call the shots. I hope that this book will at least partly repay obligations to colleagues, friends, and hosts in Macedonia from whom I've learned so much.

Besides my own work, I will also focus on leading our effort to gain recognition as a Title VI National Resource Center (NRC) for Russian, Eurasian, and East European Studies in the quadrennial funding call from the Department of Education. The first two months in Helsinki have provided the chance to reflect on the progress the Center has made since our last Title VI application in Spring 2018. Almost eighty ASU faculty members have chosen to affiliate with the Center, reflecting ASU's transdisciplinary range and broad interest in the region. Between the expansion in Critical Languages Institute enrollments, students taking the REES certificate, Melikian undergraduate fellows and Barrett seniors undertaking honors theses focusing on the region, the Center is reaching a growing number of ASU undergraduates. Our collaborations with Maricopa Community Colleges, internationally-oriented high schools, and sister city organizations provide further

entry routes for diverse students to gain new perspectives on Russia, its neighbors, and their history and culture. Besides maintaining and growing our Title VIII and Project GO awards, we have expanded the Center's grants portfolio through work with Fulbright, the US Russia Foundation, and the US Embassy in Yerevan. The Center has also supported affiliate research, providing expertise or seed funding for major Department of Defense and USAID grants, as well as award-winning scholarly work. And Advisory Board members have led the way in expanding philanthropic giving to the Center and to CLI, which has included substantial giving to support Russian language teaching, as well as engagement in Ukraine, Kosovo, and the Republic of North Macedonia.

The dedication and commitment of staff, faculty, board members, and students has sustained all this momentum in the face of continued uncertainty over the future of global engagement. While we've seen an unprecedented public health effort worldwide over the past 10 months, with over 7 billion doses of Covid-19 vaccine administered since December 2020, the differences in government policies, public responses, and distribution levels are stark. Many of the countries where the Melikian Center pursues programming and partnerships have high death rates per capita or very low rates of vaccination.

Sending students abroad, and collaborating in person with colleagues and partner institutions, have tremendous benefits which we know from our own experience and from the stories alumni tell. Having visitors to ASU's campus from Armenia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Indonesia, and Morocco this year undoubtedly broadens our horizons and generates new perspectives. In 2022

The dedication and commitment of staff, faculty, board members and students has sustained all this momentum in the face of continued uncertainty over the future of global engagement.

and beyond, maintaining global engagement will demand continued innovation in terms of online language teaching, outreach to both past and future students, and building effective and productive partnerships remotely. 2021 taught us this was possible. We were able to "send" students to Kazakhstan in the summer, adding to CLI's unique array of less commonly taught languages. We deepened and extended our collaborations with the Phoenix Committee on Foreign Relations and Maricopa Community Colleges to reach national audiences, while developing new programming in conjunction with colleagues in New Mexico, Florida, and Ohio. Our faculty affiliates, as well as a range of alumni, shared their scholarly and creative work with far-flung communities, united by curiosity and open-mindedness.

As we map out an agenda for the next four years, 2021 reminds us of what artists have long known: that constraints can spur our capacity for innovation and creativity. I hope, as you review what the Melikian Center's community has achieved and aspired to over the past 12 months, you'll see spaces of opportunities to participate in the exciting and challenging times ahead.

Keith Brown

CLI DIRECTOR LETTER

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CLI is really at the heart of some the most major social transformations that we are going to see unfold and actually such a critical part of tackling these challenges

-Dean Pardis Mahdavi

//

When we began planning CLI 2021 in the fall of 2020, we hoped that our students would once more join us on the Tempe campus and abroad. Starting in September, we held monthly Zoom planning meetings with CLI faculty. As we came closer and closer to the rollout of the Covid-19 vaccine, the on-campus experience seemed tantalizingly close. (Some of us could almost taste the plov!) And yet, by January, we made the difficult decision to keep CLI's Tempe Campus programs online for another summer. We soon came to the same conclusion for our study-abroad programs; given the uncertainty about the timeline for vaccinations in the US and uneven vaccine distribution across the world, we needed to devote our energies to providing another successful year online.



Irina Levin, CLI Director

These decisions, and our clear and consistent communication through emails and regular online info sessions, gave students and faculty confidence in CLI. To broaden our reach, we turned to Melikian Center faculty affiliate Andi Hess, who generously shared her knowledge on creating social media outreach campaigns. We know that these efforts paid off because more than 160 students pursued training in 13 languages with us in 2021. Autumn Moore, a 1st-year Turkish student and aspiring ESL teacher, was one of these students. During her graduation speech she highlighted not only the efficacy of our outreach, but the importance of our commitment to keeping CLI affordable; "I came across the Critical Languages Institute via a well-timed Instagram ad . . . I had been searching for a type of language program that would fit my schedule . . . and my budget. So finding this synchronous, small-group language course that cost the same amount as my stimulus check was perfect."

More than 65% of our students received some merit- or need-based funding through CLI, including 22 Project GO cadets and midshipmen and 28 Title VIII graduate fellows. All of our CLI faculty from 2020 committed to teaching online for another year and poured their heart and soul into the work. Increasing interest in the first-year Russian program meant that we had to hire a talented new instructor. In 2020, the cancellation of most of our study-abroad programs meant that we did not have students studying second-year Albanian, Armenian, Macedonian, or Uzbek, or advanced Russian. In 2021, we offered all of these courses by recruiting new instructors and collaborating with our long-time partners in Albania and Russia. We also worked with our new partner, Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan, to offer instruction in Kazakh. Across the board, standardized proficiency scores once again exceeded our expectations.

CLI 2021 IN NUMBERS

163

STUDENTS STUDIED



13

CRITICAL LANGUAGES



400+

PROFICIENCY LEVELS
GAINED



57

STUDIED
WITH PARTNER
PROGRAMS



107*

RECEIVED
SCHOLARSHIPS

SCHOLARSHIPS TOTALING

\$479,420



*Including 23 need-based fee reductions

The CLI 2021 Graduation Celebration was a fitting reflection of this year's program: filled with emotion and the voices of students and faculty. The Covid-19 pandemic may have once more kept us in our Zoom boxes, but it could not stop us from fostering global connections. As Dean Mahdavi, who joined us as guest speaker, noted, "As we think about how we take on the world's most challenging and wicked problems, we have to think about how we communicate and how we build bridges across borders. And so, for that reason, CLI is really at the heart of some the most major social transformations that we are going to see unfold and actually such a critical part of tackling these challenges."

The students of CLI 2021 are determined to use the language skills and perspectives they have gained to confront these issues. Kerith Fern, a 2nd-year Persian student pursuing her MA at the University of Virginia's Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Cultures Department, said, "[CLI] dissolved many of my preconceived notions of American interactions with the Middle East, especially Iran. I hope one day to engage in this crucial diplomatic work myself."

I could not possibly write about this summer without memorializing the two CLI 2021 students who met untimely deaths during the program: Russell Moore and Anna Nutter. Their passions for Turkish and Russian brought them to CLI, where they pursued their studies with great enthusiasm and determination. Though we are devastated to have lost them, we are very lucky to have known them.

At this moment, planning for CLI 2022 is in full swing and, thanks to the wide availability of the vaccine and the public health measures taken by ASU, we feel confident telling our students and faculty that we look forward to seeing them in person. The CLI team has presented in classrooms and at events across ASU's campus. (We offer a special thank you to Melikian Center community members and our visual designer colleagues in the College's Office of the Dean for their collaborative efforts on the redesign of our Albanian and Ukrainian materials.) The coming weeks and months will see us, along with members of our dedicated Communications Committee, continuing our outreach efforts at ASU and beyond. We look forward to welcoming the next cohort of CLI students and watching them change the world.

Irina Levin

CLI INSTRUCTOR MUSINGS

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While I have not physically been to the ASU campus yet, I feel as though I have been there already.

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For CLI 2021, we again had our 1st-year class online due to Covid-19. For me, this year was more fun than CLI 2020. This was particularly because we had a semester free from internet issues; however, the challenges of online teaching, such as screen fatigue, remain. These challenges seemed to disappear when I started working with a group of thirteen intelligent, gracious, and fun students. They contributed immensely to our fun and successful experience this year. While I have not physically been to the ASU campus yet, I feel as though I have been there already. This is because CLI has always created a collaborative environment with an excellent sense of belonging and respect for students, instructors, and staff. We met four hours a day, five days a week, and I empowered my students to take ownership of their own class and actively engage in exciting learning experiences. They practiced Persian with Iranian native speakers from around the world. They visited Iranian historical and cultural sites virtually in live conversation with Persian guest speakers. They virtually dived inside the Persian Gulf by going to a 16th-century castle on its red soil. Throughout the program, I did not just encourage and support them; I challenged them, too. This year, these exciting experiences not only helped develop very close relationships among my students, it also established a safe and nurturing environment, giving my students a sense of community. It was a very memorable semester for me as well. In a nutshell, during our CLI 2021 experience, we went from “surviving” in the pandemic to “thriving” in the pandemic.

Jafar Shokrollah Zadeh



*Jafar Shokrollah Zadeh,
1st-year Persian instructor*



*Hormuz Castle, virtually
visited by Jafar's Persian
students*

NOTES ON A WRITING WORKSHOP

As a two-time alumnus of the Title VIII Fellowship program at CLI, I was very excited to take part in this year's Title VIII Alumni Professional Writing Workshop. After completing graduate studies at Georgetown University in Russian, Eurasian, and East European Studies, I believe strongly in the value of area studies. Global cooperation demands nuanced understandings of various regions and appreciation and acknowledgment of every region's unique history. It is as important, I think, for those who do develop area expertise to not limit themselves exclusively to academic writing, but

rather to attend to the challenge of transmitting their knowledge and research products to a general audience.

This makes ASU's Title VIII Alumni Professional Writing Workshop a valuable addition to traditional area studies programs and the Title VIII Fellowship. Professors Keith Brown and Steven Beschloss introduced us to strategies and techniques for translating our academic backgrounds into writing targeting a broader audience. The topics my colleagues and I elected to focus on ranged from domestic violence legislation in Armenia to the dandelion seed-hunting Wehrmacht officers in Soviet Ukraine during World War II—a reflection of the fascinating topics that area specialists can share with larger audiences.

I opted to write about the bobsled track on Trebević mountain outside Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Built for the 1984 Winter Olympics, the track and the mountain as a whole have fascinating recent histories as venues for Olympic competition and the frontlines of the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In choosing this topic, I relied on my academic background as a student of Balkan history and politics, along with two Title VIII summers at CLI learning Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian (BCS). I also had spent the previous months in Sarajevo, frequently taking in the spectacular views from Trebević's heights. Added to that, my previous experience leading hikes and overnight backpacking trips for my undergraduate university's outdoors program meant that this topic was located at the intersection of several of my otherwise disparate interests.

Steven and Keith gave me concrete tips to help me break out of my writing comfort zone (which has been writing for academic audiences), and encouraged me to explore Sarajevo's history from an outdoor writer's perspective. This led me to pitch my story to outdoor publications such as *Outside* magazine's travel section, and *Alpinist* magazine. As we move towards the opening of the next Winter Olympics in February 2022, I plan to adapt my piece to spotlight Trebević in the context of Sarajevo's Olympic history and memory.

Nicholas Kulawiak

// I have personally benefited from the way the fellowship sets out a path for deepening language skills and regional expertise. //



Nicholas Kulawiak with Sarajevo in the background



The bobsled track on Trebević mountain

2021 GRANT ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

Ongoing

Title VIII

In 2021, twenty-four graduate students were awarded fellowships from the Title VIII program and pursued language studies with CLI. Four additional Title VIII fellows, who had deferred their 2020 awards, also completed their language studies this summer for a total of 28 Title VIII fellows.

The Title VIII program is administered by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research at the U.S. Department of State. The program's mission is

"to ensure that timely, independent, analysis informs foreign policy decisions." Title VIII supports research and training on Russia, Eurasia, and East Europe, and encourages grant recipients to make their expertise and insights accessible beyond academic circles. In support of this important goal, September 2021 saw the launch of ASU's first Title VIII Alumni Professional Writing Workshop. Four alumni participated in the 2-day online program, led by Keith Brown and Journalism Professor Steven Beschloss. The workshop generated one grant application in narrative journalism and two story pitches to news outlets, all based on participants' scholarly expertise.

This year's Title VIII grantees were spread out between 9 different CLI languages: Albanian, Armenian, BCS, Kazakh, Macedonian, Polish, Russian, Uzbek, and Ukrainian. In other years, most of these students would have studied abroad. However, one advantage of CLI's online program is that it allowed them to take advantage of CLI co-curricular programming that is normally offered only to students taking classes on the Tempe campus. One student who took advantage of this opportunity was Stephen Bridges, an incoming MA student at California State University-Long Beach. Stephen studied 6th-Year Russian with instructors from the Derzhavin Institute in St. Petersburg. He wrote, "ASU's CLI hosted many insightful and informative conferences and panels with many notable speakers, such as Ambassador-in-residence Michael Polt, and a State Department panel with three current employees. These opportunities to hear from professionals who are actively working for the State Department further solidified my ultimate career aspirations. Being able to hear from those with firsthand experience in the job, and even within my desired region (Russia/Eastern Europe) was a priceless perk of participating in ASU's CLI Program. This newly acquired information has transformed my Foreign Service Officer goal from an aspirational idea to a crystal-clear vision. I look forward to progressing through my scholastic and professional journey(s) with the skills and insight I have now obtained as a result of this Title VIII-funded endeavor."

Title VIII fellows praised the quality of instruction by both CLI instructors and instructors in partner programs. Timothy Straw, a poetry and translation student at the University of Iowa and 1st-year BCS student, wrote, "Thanks to the inspired and meticulous instruction of Jakov Causevic, I was

I look forward to progressing through my scholastic and professional journey(s) with the skills and insight I have now obtained as a result of this Title VIII-funded endeavor.

-Stephen Bridges

able to gain what I feel is a solid foundation in the language after seven weeks. I hope to continue with 2nd-year BCS next summer and to have a working knowledge of the language by the fall of 2022." Peter Levins, architecture PhD student at Brown University and CLI 2019 Albanian alum, continued his study of Albanian with our partner in Tirana, American Councils. He wrote, "Highly effective programming through American Councils' Tirana Office allowed me to work one-on-one with a professor from Albania's top university, the University of Tirana, to create a tailored cultural course that addressed Albanian culture, language and literature, architectural and urban heritage, and politics."

The post-Soviet geopolitics course, co-taught by Keith Brown and Jacob Lassin, also garnered high praise from many participants. Jared Rodriguez, an incoming ASU MA student who studied 2nd-year Uzbek, wrote, "[The seminar] helped me gain regional and cultural expertise through stimulating lectures, discussions, and writing assignments. Combined with intensive language study, it helped me piece together historical, political, and cultural nuances that I was exposed to daily." Andrea Serna, a history PhD student at the University of California-Santa Barbara, studied 3rd-year Russian with CLI partner the London School in Bishkek. She wrote, "I really appreciated the geopolitics course . . . I enjoyed being forced out of my disciplinary comfort zone to learn about other issues and perspectives, particularly current events."

I really appreciated the geopolitics course. I enjoyed being forced out of my disciplinary comfort zone to learn about other issues and perspectives, particularly current events.

-Andrea Serna

Since 2011, Title VIII has supported over 180 fellowships to attend CLI. CLI's application for support in 2022 was successful; Title VIII funds will support the return of 1st-year Tatar, in addition to the next iteration of the Title VIII Alumni Professional Writing Workshop.

Project Global Officer

2021 was ASU's 14th year participating in Project Global Officer (GO), a program of the Defense Language and National Security Education Office (DLNSEO) which equips future military officers with language skills, regional expertise, and intercultural communication skills. As in 2020, we worked with our long-time partners in Bishkek, the Kyrgyz Republic and Denpasar, Indonesia to provide ROTC cadets with a virtual study abroad experience featuring virtual excursions, cultural programming, and regular Zoom interactions with their "virtual" host families in addition to intensive language instruction.

As always, 2021's Project GO students came to us from institutions across the US, including Grand Canyon University here in Phoenix and Interamerican University in Puerto Rico. They were active participants in CLI programming, from the Russian program's inaugural blini-making contest to the Indonesian program's Balinese martial arts classes. CLI aimed to deliver the same proficiency targets as in prior years: for introductory level students to reach ILR 1, and for intermediate-level students to reach ILR 1+ or better. Out of the 22 PGO students who completed this year's program, 17 achieved or surpassed those targets. CLI's application for support in 2022 was successful.

Fulbright Pre-Departure Orientation

At the end of June 2021, in cooperation with the Institute for International Education (IIE), the Melikian Center hosted a virtual pre-departure orientation (PDO) for U.S. Fulbright scholars, student researchers, and English Teaching Assistants (ETAs) heading in the fall of 2021 to five Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) and Bhutan. This is a program of the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government, administered by IIE.

2021 was the third year that the Melikian Center partnered with IIE to host the Central Asia PDO and the second time this orientation was conducted remotely. Key contributors included Dan Hart in ASU's Study Abroad Office and Carla Mahnke from the Office of Equity and Inclusion, who briefed participants on issues of personal health and safety in the region. Sessions specifically geared towards the English Teaching Assistants were run by colleagues Shane Dixon, Vincent Lauter, and Dilafruz Vosieva from ASU's Global Launch. Elizabeth Blackburn, two-time CLI alumna (2014, 2016), former Fulbright ETA in Kazakhstan (2016-17), and former Program Coordinator for Global Initiatives at the Cronkite School, also drew on her own experience to address PDO participants' questions and concerns about living and working in a culture and place very different from their own. Faculty affiliates of the Center, Dave Fossum (School of Music), Margaret Hanson (School of Politics and Global Studies), and Saule Moldabekova Robb (School of International Letters and Cultures), served on a panel with Keith Brown to guide the Fulbright awardees through an overview of the region's people, culture, and politics. All of the presenters were aided by Fulbright alumni, who gave valuable insight from their experiences of being on the ground in Central Asia.

New Directions

US Russia Foundation

In 2021 we applied for our first ever grant from the US Russia Foundation (USRF). Our proposal, entitled "Broadening Russian Studies in the Southwest: Indigenous Knowledge and Global Imagination," featured three interlinked components: collaborative curriculum development on Indigenous knowledge, environmental stewardship, and economic livelihood in Russia; professional development for early career scholars, with a focus on taking knowledge public; and multimedia content production to bring diverse Russian and former Soviet Union artists' perspectives to US audiences in Arizona and, through collaboration with university partners, in Ohio and Florida. Winning high praise from USRF's board, the grant was fully funded.



Summer solstice Ihiak ceremony (Photo by Aya Kuo)

This fall, Melikian Center postdoctoral fellow Jacob Lassin and undergraduate research assistant and ASU Global Studies major Sofia Walsh have begun the process of developing curricular

// **With all of these modules, they are excited to introduce students to new ways of seeing Russia and uncovering unexpected connections between Russia and Arizona.**

materials to share with Arizona public schools and community colleges. Input and materials from Indigenous scholars, who are members of overlapping research networks and Indigenous communities locally and globally, have played a crucial role in their efforts. These efforts have also benefitted from resources and advice provided by Anna Kerttula de Echave, former program director of Arctic Social Sciences at the National Science Foundation.

// The curricular modules will be piloted with students at Mesa's Westwood High School. We are grateful to board member Marcie Hutchinson for connecting us to Jacob Davis, Westwood's International Baccalaureate Director, whose support for our program has been invaluable. Westwood is the ideal location for this first presentation of the modules as it has both a strong International Baccalaureate program and a Native Studies program.

In December, Jacob and Sofia are presenting the first of these modules, "Community Origins and Narratives." This module involves teaching students about the scientific, genetic, and linguistic research on the origins of Indigenous groups in both Arizona and Russia. This information is complemented with the stories, myths, and traditions of the Indigenous groups. Through this approach, they hope to give students a holistic view of these questions and spur discussion and conversation.

In the Spring, Jacob and Sofia will be presenting two additional modules, "Interactions with the State" and "Environmental Protection and Infrastructure." With all of these modules, they are excited to introduce students to new ways of seeing Russia and uncovering unexpected connections between Russia and Arizona.

We have also expanded our Creative Horizons: Art in the Post-Soviet Era series, now in its second year. While this digital series had previously featured only visual artists, with 6 events scheduled during the grant period (September 2021-August 2022), we have now featured a writer and look forward to featuring representatives of the performing arts.

American Studies at Yerevan State University

When ASU's longtime international partner, Yerevan State University (YSU), first approached the Melikian Center in 2019 about a \$500,000 competitive funding opportunity from the U.S. Embassy-Yerevan to support creation of an American Studies Center at YSU, no one anticipated a worldwide pandemic that would lock down virtually all international travel.

// **Courses at ASU have acquainted me with new teaching and learning methods — it's very nice to feel like a student again and be integrated into student life here at the campus!**

-Tigran Sargsyan

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Armenian scholars on campus at ASU



"Experience America," Armenian Scholars and founding Melikian Center director, Steve Batalden, at the Grand Canyon

Yet, despite some related setbacks, Yerevan State University not only secured the embassy funding, but managed to establish its American Studies Center as a hub for international research and training. For its part, the Melikian Center pledged to work with YSU in training a select group of YSU scholars for delivery of their new MA degree program in American Studies.

After a two-semester Covid-related hiatus, six Armenian visiting scholars arrived at the Melikian Center in August 2021. They have each prepared, with assistance from their ASU mentors, syllabi for courses they will be offering in the American Studies program upon their return to Yerevan in December. The group includes two political scientists (Gor Petrosyan and Edgar Elbakyan), an economist (Samvel Hovhannisyan), an historian (Tigran Yepremyan), a geographer (Tigran Sargsyan), and a philologist (Gohar Harutyunyan, this last a veteran Armenian instructor in the Melikian Center's Critical Languages Institute).

The third year of the ASU partnership with YSU (2022) will include an exchange of visits designed to assure the sustainability of the program and its ambitious research and training agenda. Energized by the six outstanding bilingual visiting scholars who spent the Fall 2021 semester at the Melikian Center, the project is once again demonstrating the importance of longstanding international partnerships for development of new curriculum in critical fields such as American Studies.

Considering his experiences at ASU, geographer Tigran Sargsyan wrote that the program has "helped me to understand how broad the field of American Studies is." The American Studies program at YSU must therefore be "deeply multidisciplinary." Sargsyan noted that his courses at ASU have "acquainted me with new teaching and learning methods—it's very nice to feel like a student again and be integrated into student life here at the campus!" He is grateful to his mentors, who provided guidance on preparing syllabi according to American higher education standards.



Gor Petrosyan giving a lecture at St. Apk'ar's Armenian Apostolic Church

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The most exciting thing I have experienced at ASU is the inclusive work ethic and interdisciplinary environment.

- Tigran Yepremyan

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Philologist Gohar Harutyunyan, who is, after many years at CLI, finally getting to enjoy Arizona's mild fall weather, wrote, "I have been taking advantage of the opportunities to use library resources, audit courses, participate in seminars, and interact with scholars and students. All this has definitely enabled me to gain deeper insight into American culture and communication. It has also helped me to become a better intercultural communicator, so helpful for designing and developing YSU's new program." On her hopes for the students who will study with her in YSU's American Studies program, she wrote, "My goal is to help them gain profound knowledge in the sphere of academic writing and American mass media and culture, deepening their understanding of society and communication."

Reflecting on how she and her YSU colleagues have contributed to the cultural and intellectual community at ASU, Harutyunyan wrote, "It is a true pleasure to introduce our American colleagues to Armenian culture and its strong impact on fields as diverse as international relations, politics, law, business, management/marketing, and education."

Economist Samvel Hovhannisyan asserted "ASU is a place of excellence." In regard to how he will use his newly acquired knowledge in YSU's American studies program, he wrote that he has "gained a better understanding of American society, its values, history, and the way of life "and will incorporate it into the curriculum in the form of "case studies and topic-related examples."

Political scientist Gor Petrosyan, who is preparing several courses on American society and politics, emphasized "the importance of in-person participation" in ASU classes; "This not only deepens my knowledge on the subject, but also provides a deeper understanding of how university classes are organized and taught at ASU. It also provides an opportunity to obtain valuable teaching skills." Beyond the classroom, "Daily life in Phoenix allows me to see and feel the diversity of the US culture and its influence on politics." Petrosyan looks forward to "incorporating into my classes the pedagogical methods that I obtained during course work at ASU."

Historian Tigran Yepremyan wrote, "The most exciting thing I have experienced at ASU is the inclusive work ethic and interdisciplinary environment." He values the support of his mentors and the Melikian Center team, as well as the "country study tours, meetings and events, the contextual knowledge and the most positive energy." On his plans for the future, Yepremyan wrote, "I hope to incorporate the interactive teaching methods, textbooks and amazing formats of supplementing

materials, the contextual knowledge, interdisciplinary approach, creative and critical thinking and inclusive learning environment into the newly established American Studies program at YSU." Drawing on his experience in YSU's World History Department, he concluded that "national history can be better understood on the background of the whole, and, therefore, should be considered and taught within the context of the world history."

Faculty Enrichment Program (Uzbekistan)

The Faculty Enrichment Program (FEP) is a program of the US Embassy in Tashkent administered by the American Councils for International Education. FEP offers university instructors from across Uzbekistan the opportunity to enhance their pedagogical skills and professional disciplinary expertise through a four-month U.S. academic enrichment program. While on the FEP, fellows engage in curriculum development, explore alternative teaching methodologies, expand knowledge in their fields of study, and gather new teaching materials and resources. Throughout their stay in the United States, fellows observe courses, attend academic conferences, and work closely with faculty mentors from US host institutions of higher education. Through structured opportunities to engage with students and faculty both in and outside the classroom, fellows are able to significantly enhance their understanding of the US higher education system.

In spring of 2021, the Melikian Center applied to be an FEP host institution. We highlighted ASU's commitment to global engagement and to the wide range of disciplinary backgrounds and research interests among our faculty affiliates. Our application was successful and this fall we have hosted Nigora Gulomova, of Tashkent's Academy of Public Administration, and Mekhriniso Rakhmatova of Bukhara State University. Gulomova is Deputy Director for the Center for Assistance of Economic Development at the Academy. Her academic and teaching interests lie in management and economics. Her Academic Inquiry Project, which she has been pursuing during her coursework at ASU and through meetings with her ASU faculty mentor, Don Siegel (Center for Organizational Research Design), is on the topic of Commercialization of University Research. Rakhmatova holds a PhD in Philological Sciences and MA in English Language and Literature. She is hoping to develop competencies in the design of both synchronous and asynchronous online courses and assessment. Rakhmatova has been working on an Academic Inquiry Project focused on online and blended teaching approaches in the US with input from her instructors and her mentor, Claudia Sadowski-Smith (English).

Nigora Gulomova's ASU Experience

I have found ASU courses to be some of the most interesting and valuable in my teaching career. They are scientific, challenging, and beneficial. Professor Manjira Datta's ECN 360 has been an incredible course, with significant implications on the economic realms of labor markets, migration, and contemporary models of development and underdevelopment. The interesting things I have learned from the Math Tools for Data Science course I have been observing are methodologies for recognizing and solving problems. I have learned that you can be creative in analyzing and interpreting data in order to find a pattern.



Nigora Gulomova

ASU's Canvas learning management system has been very useful for me—it allows me to check homework, complete assignments and quizzes, access readings, and complete practice questions and practice exams.

In considering how I would incorporate this newly acquired knowledge into my own teaching at the Academy of Public Administration, I would like to design iCourses, i.e. map out structure, provide detailed modules, and build video-based learning modules, quizzes, and assignments similar to ASU courses. Further, I am planning to add online discussion forums to each course I teach in Uzbekistan. There is an online learning management system for students like Canvas at the Academy of Public Administration. However, it is currently mostly used for course assignments and learning materials. At the Academy of Public Administration, all courses have lectures and seminars. Lectures are usually provided by Professors, and mostly concentrate on the theoretical basis of the module. After each lecture, there are two seminar meetings to address the practical part of the lectures. Seminars are conducted by teachers or teaching assistants and are discussion based. For large lecture courses, ASU should consider how this kind of individualized instruction can help by focusing on the needs of each student and providing the appropriate support.

Mekhriniso Rakhmatova's ASU Experience

Thrown into the deep end, I have learned so much about eLearning technology and the specificities of instructional design from the hands-on-practice techniques of my professor at ASU. I fell in love with the online instruction of Dr. Steven Salik, whose warm personality and professionalism eased and supported my learning. As my mentor, Dr. Caudia Sadowski-Smith is guiding me through my Academic Inquiry Project. I am learning about ASU's supportive learning environment, as well as its efforts to ensure Academic Integrity. Essential to these efforts is the availability of writing tutorial assistance and the teaching of good writerly habits in every course designed by professors in Canvas. I have come to understand that at American universities, the goals of Academic Integrity are achieved by teaching students how to write properly, not by constantly reminding them what they should and should not do. I am proud not only of the professional expertise I am gaining, but also of the interpersonal communication habits and techniques that I am learning with the help of Melikian Center staff. At Bukhara State university, my colleagues have faced challenges with implementing eLearning. The brain rewire I am experiencing in regard to digital updates has prepared me to support my department with state-of-the-art design ideas. I can't wait to cascade the experience I gained at ASU in my home country.



Mekhriniso Rakhmatova, in front of ASU's Hayden Library

Uzbeks are very social people, they believe that not everything is learned in classrooms. We have frequent "Ma'naviyat" educational parties, events where students and teachers socialize through organized educational gatherings in dormitories and make the life of international students more colorful. Uzbek professors prefer to spend their time with young people helping them to organize these events. Professors conduct open lectures to welcome anyone interested to their lectures and they announce upcoming lectures on social media.

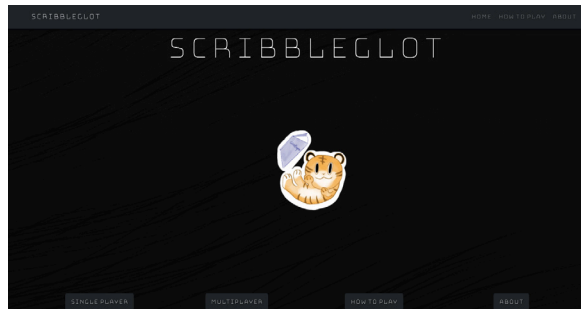
2021 REES CAPSTONES

All students enrolled in the Melikian Center's Russian and East European Studies (REES) Certificate program complete a 1-credit capstone course in their junior or senior year. Their capstone projects take many forms—from artistic creations, to graduate school preparation, to research papers on a wide range of topics. In 2021, 12 REES certificate students participated in the capstone course.

In Progress

Collin Frank

Understanding Diplomacy: Russian & East European Studies in Higher Education; Applied project researching graduate programs in IR, national security, and foreign service and developing materials to apply to these programs



The homepage for the beta version of Scribblegot, Kristina McCarthy's drawing game for vocabulary practice

Callahan Farr

My Discovery: Jewish Representation in 19th Century Russian Literature; Article exploring the depictions of the Jewish diaspora in several primary and analytical sources and explaining how these works define the student's research as a Russia scholar

Kristina McCarthy

Scribbleglot: Beta version of an online drawing game for learning and practicing Russian vocabulary

Christopher Schnecke

The Politics of Art in Former Yugoslavia; Mixed media art series exploring the connections between art and political movements in the Balkans

Isabelle Kinney

The Space to Demand Rights: Constitutions in Central Asia; A research paper on the initial constitutions of Central Asia examining how they are written, what the governments have actually done, and how people are using the language of the constitutions to demand greater rights

Spencer Erjavic

Divine Intervention: How the Russian Orthodox Church Can Save Nuclear Arms Control; Research article, intended for publication in a relevant blog, on how the Russian Orthodox Church can become a positive player on arms control and risk reduction measures



Work in progress by Christopher Schnecke; a ceramic tile inspired by the modernist artwork of Stojan Ćelić and the Serbian artist collective Decembarska Grupa

Completed

*Mother and Child,
Orthodox icon painted by
Maria Ghatine*



*Work in progress
by Maria Ghatine;
the stages of icon
painting*



Jamie Horowitz

Translations from *Homeland: Marc Chagall in Vitebsk*; Translation project, from Russian, of sections of a book on Marc Chagall's upbringing in current-day Belarus and the influence of Jewish life and culture on his work

Katharina Anderson

The Role of International Law in the Relationship of Russia and the United States; Research paper comparing how Russian and American domestic legal systems function in relation to international law

John (Logan) Johnson

Soviet and Post-Soviet Urban Geography; Research paper examining the ways in which the growth and development of cities in post-Soviet states were affected by the presence or absence of Soviet-built metro systems

Mary Elie

Examining Russia & East European Studies for Graduate School and Beyond; Applied project researching graduate programs in Russian & East European Studies and developing materials to apply to these programs

Maria Ghatine

Mother and Child Orthodox Icon; Orthodox icon painting and artist statement discussing historical and contemporary developments within the Assyrian Orthodox Church

Cameron Vega

The Shackled Leviathan: Representative Sovereignty, the UN Security Council, and the Responsibility to Protect; Research paper examining how Carl Schmitt's notion of sovereignty could operate within the UN Security Council to allow for human rights interventions under the Responsibility to Protect doctrine

REFLECTIONS FROM A MELIKIAN CENTER UNDERGRADUATE FELLOW

*2021 Undergraduate Fellow, Sofia Walsh*

In Spring 2021, I had the opportunity to work with Dr. Beibit Shangirbayeva, the Melikian Center's visiting Fulbright Scholar. Prior to receiving the Melikian Undergraduate Fellowship, I did not have any research experience. I was not sure what to expect and was nervous about the tasks and responsibilities that might be asked of me. However, as the semester progressed, I developed the research skills necessary to be an effective assistant.

On a practical level, my research assistantship with Dr. Shangirbayeva made me more familiar with the vast resources the ASU library offers; I realized that up until this point, I had barely scratched the surface of the tools the library provides. Through my fellowship, I learned how to navigate the library website and catalogue, as well as familiarize myself with various databases and request external items. I will continue to take advantage of them going forward, particularly as I continue with more advanced classes and eventually my honors thesis.

I also feel that my fellowship experience gave me a wonderful glimpse into the process of writing and publishing an academic article. One part of this process I found particularly

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I am grateful to have broadened my experience with navigating these resources and will continue to take advantage of them going forward, particularly as I continue with more advanced classes and eventually with my honors thesis.

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interesting was determining which scholarly journals Dr. Shangirbayeva could potentially submit her finished work to. This gave me a sense of the wide variety of academic journals that exist, the factors a scholar might consider when choosing a journal to submit to. I also appreciated the chance to attend the workshops in which Dr. Shangirbayeva presented her drafts. It was a privilege to see how scholars work together and support each other.

While my fellowship was a fantastic opportunity to develop my knowledge of the research process, it also allowed me to explore a diverse array of topics and interesting content areas,



Beibit Shangirbayeva, Assistant Professor at Eurasian National University (Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan), visiting Fulbright Scholar at the Melikian Center (2021), and Sofia's faculty mentor

which included Kazakh culture; human rights; the Eurasian Economic Union; free expression theory; policy transfer and diffusion; and even the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and his theories on nomadism. I had not anticipated exploring such a wide range of topics, and had assumed that most of the tasks I would be assigned would focus closely on Russia's relationship with Kazakhstan. Looking back, I appreciate having had the chance to explore so many topics, particularly as I am not sure I would have gravitated towards them on my own initiative. For example, learning about the legal culture of Kazakhstan was fascinating and I would not be at all surprised if there came a time in my future studies or career when having this background knowledge will prove useful.

Most excitingly, my work with Dr. Shangirbayeva introduced me to the field of policy transfer studies. Exploring research in this field was one of my favorite tasks. Many of the sources I found were focused on the diffusion of democratic principles, laws, or institutions, but there is also a growing body of work focused on authoritarian policy transfer. Considering global trends of illiberalism and authoritarianism, I found this topic fascinating and important. Due to my fellowship experience, I am now considering

writing my honors thesis on this type of policy transfer.

My fellowship experience and the skills it helped me develop were a wonderful complement to a separate internship I pursued in the spring of 2021. Specifically, I had the chance to intern remotely with the London-based NGO Index on Censorship, which is dedicated to promoting freedom of expression and combatting censorship across the globe. My Melikian fellowship experience was the perfect background for this internship (and may have even played a role in my being chosen for it in the first place). The two experiences mutually enhanced each other and allowed me to gain a comprehensive understanding of free expression issues.

Ultimately, I am incredibly grateful to the Melikian Center and Dr. Shangirbayeva for this fellowship experience. Not only has it improved my research skills, it has also given me great insight into avenues of research I would love to pursue on my own. I have no doubt that I will continue to look back on my fellowship as one of the most beneficial experiences of my college career.

Sofia Walsh

ALUMNA REPORT

Completing the Russian and East European Studies (REES) Certificate, the Undergraduate Fellowship program, and a summer at the Critical Languages Institute at the Melikian Center overprepared me for the work I do now as a graduate student at the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs. Through the REES certificate, I was exposed to a wide breadth of history, literature, and culture of the Russian and East European region that now forms the backbone of my knowledge when I engage in high-level political discussions. Moreover, doing research with Dr. Hilde Hoogenboom for the undergraduate fellowship program taught me how to effectively collect and organize sources of information. This skill has become particularly useful in the research I'm now partaking in with the FBI. Finally, CLI, even in an online format, gave me the foundation to continue taking Russian courses with my graduate course load. More than anything, the time I spent at the Melikian Center allowed me to engage with the Russian and East European region and appreciate its complexities and relevance today. And it is why I am now on the board of the Graduate Organization for the Study of Europe and Central Asia (GOSECA) at Pitt.

Jamie Horowitz, ASU '21

AFFILIATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Hannah Barker, Assistant Professor of History, was awarded the ASU Institute for Humanities Research Book Award in 2021 and an honorable mention for the Wadjih F. al-Hamwi Prize for the best first book in Mediterranean studies by the Mediterranean Seminar in 2021 for her book, *That Most Precious Merchandise: The Mediterranean Trade in Black Sea Slaves, 1260-1500*.

Volker Benkert, Assistant Professor of History, together with the Genocide Awareness Week Board of Directors Alan Sandler and Lisa Kaplan, received a 2021 award from the Rosenbluth Foundation for \$25,000 (renewable for three years and up to \$75,000).

Keith Brown, Melikian Center Director and Professor of Cultural Anthropology, was selected as a Core Fellow at the Collegium for Advanced Studies at the University of Helsinki for 2021-2022. His project is titled, "Democratic Alternatives: Oral History, Civil Society and the Practices of Pluralism."

Lenka Bustikova, Assistant Professor of Political Science, and **David Siroky**, Associate Professor of Political Science, won a joint National Center for Eurasian and East European Research (NCEEER) grant for their research on political extremism in Eastern Europe. Their project is titled "Uncivil Society and Radical Right Voting," and focuses on understudied dimensions of political participation and democratic competition that are shaping the political future of the region.

Anna Cichopek-Gajraj, Associate Professor of History, conducted research with the help of a 2020-21 Ben and Zelda Cohen Fellowship from the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. This fellowship allowed Cichopek-Gajraj to focus on her new book project, tentatively titled *In Transit: Global Migrations of Polish-Jewish and Ethnic Polish Families after WWII (1940s-1950s)*.

Dan Fellner, Faculty Associate, was awarded a Fulbright Specialist Grant to teach at South East European University in North Macedonia in Fall 2021. His assignment includes giving lectures on intercultural communication, media systems, and other topics related to American Studies.

David Fossum, Assistant Professor of Ethnomusicology, was awarded a 2020-2021 ASU Institute for Humanities Research Fellowship for his project, "Making Copyright Global: Musical Creativity and Intellectual Property in Turkey."

10 
**Fellowships
& Awards**

2 
Book Prizes

5  **Collaborative Public
Education Projects**

12 
**Faculty affiliates
awarded over**

\$4+ million in
**external, region-
focused grants**

Lance Gharavi, Associate Professor of Digital Performance and an experimental artist and scholar, is serving on a team of scholars at ASU that has been awarded a grant of nearly \$500 million by the National Science Foundation (NSF) called, "Scaling up commons dilemma experiments for research and education." This project investigates three fundamental puzzles: First, what makes communication so effective at stimulating cooperative outcomes? Second, how does a group's size impact the ability of its members to cooperate? Third, how do groups that address collective action problems cope with uncertainty and surprises?

Brian Goodman, Assistant Professor of English with a focus on American, Jewish and East-Central European literature and culture, has had his book manuscript accepted for the international workshop "Recovering Forgotten History: The Image of East-Central Europe in English-Language Academic and Textbooks," hosted by scholars affiliated with the University of Warsaw and Jagiellonian University in Krakow, December 2021.

Anna Holian, Associate Professor of History and a Jewish Studies Faculty Affiliate, was awarded a 2021-2022 National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) fellowship to support her book project *Setting Up Shop in the House of the Hangman: Jewish Economic Life in Postwar Germany*.

Jacob Lassin, Postdoctoral Research Scholar, was awarded an NCEEER grant to conduct research in Russia and Ukraine for his book manuscript *Sacred Sites: The Russian Orthodox Church and the Literary Canon Online*. Lassin's research explores how Russian Orthodox websites use Russia's literary tradition to harness popular support for the church's and the government's traditionalist agenda, and thus defuse or demobilize potential opposition among middle class professionals.

Laurie Manchester, Associate Professor of History and Associate Head of Undergraduate Studies, has been awarded a 2021-2022 National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) fellowship for her book project, *From China to the USSR: The Return of the "True" Russians*, on the 1954 return of Harbin Russians to the Soviet Union from China.

Ana Hedberg Olenina, Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature and Media Studies, was awarded a 2020-2021 ASU Institute for Humanities Research Fellowship for book her project, *Eisenstein's Embodied Spectatorship in the Context of Contemporary Neuro-cognitive Approaches to Film*. Her book, *Psychomotor Aesthetics: Movement and Affect in Modern Literature and Film* (Oxford University Press, 2020), received the 2021 Wayne S. Vucinich book prize by ASEES "for the most important contribution to Russian, Eurasian, and East European studies in any discipline of the humanities or social sciences." She was also chosen as a visiting associate professor at the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center at Hokkaido University for the fall of 2021.

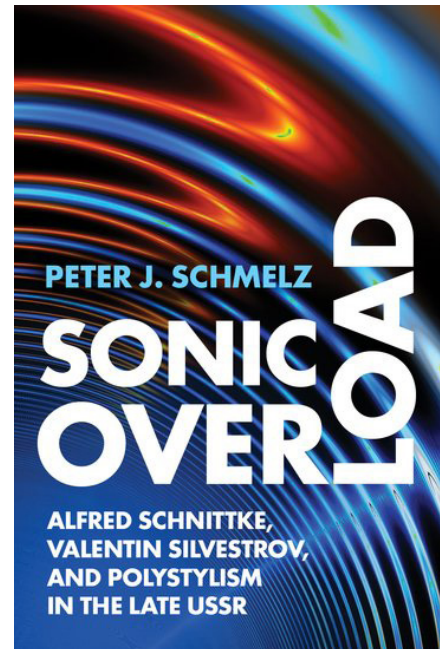


Ana Hedberg Olenina, pictured with Nancy Condee of the University of Pittsburgh, accepting the 2021 Wayne S. Vucinich Book Prize at the 2021 ASEES Conference in New Orleans

Michael Ostling, Honors Faculty Fellow and Religious Studies scholar, was awarded one of three 2021 Centennial Professorship Awards. The award recognizes faculty on all ASU campuses engaged in scholarship, emerging leadership, dedication to community service and enrichment of students' academic experiments.

Peter Schmelz, Associate Professor of Musicology, published *Sonic Overload: Alfred Schnittke, Valentin Silvestrov, and Polystylism in the Late USSR* (Oxford University Press, 2021).

Iveta Silova, Associate Dean of Global Engagement, Director of the Center for Advanced Studies in Global Education, and Professor of Global Education, is the research director of a new ASU initiative called "Turn It Around! Flashcards for Education Futures," a card deck that calls for climate action and ecological justice. ASU and the Artists' Literacies Institute, with the support of UNESCO's Futures of Education initiative and Open Society Foundations, presented this completed card deck to policymakers and global leaders at the 2021 United Nations COP26 Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, Scotland, in November.



Peter Schmelz's Sonic Overload, published in 2021, is a musically centered cultural history of the late Soviet Union



Former US Ambassador and ASU Law Professor Clint Williamson to lead project focused on 2 crisis zones

ASU News article on Ambassador Williamson's transitional justice grant

Danko Šipka, Professor of Slavic Languages and Applied Linguistics, was awarded a Fulbright Scholar fellowship to Serbia.

Henry Thomson, Assistant Professor of Political Science, has been chosen as a member of the first cohort of visiting fellows for the Program on Pluralism and Civil Exchange at George Mason University's Mercatus Center. Thomson is investigating the challenge to liberalism posed by economic nationalism.

Ambassador Clint Williamson, Distinguished Professor of Practice of Law, is leading a team that has been awarded a \$2.6 million grant by the U.S. Department of State Office of Global Criminal Justice to implement a three-year project advancing transitional justice in Ukraine and South Sudan.

REPORT FROM THE COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE CHAIR



As we emerge from our Covid-19 cocoons, re-engaging with students and prospective Advisory Board members to share the mission of the Melikian Center is paramount.

As Chair of the Melikian Center Advisory Board's Communications Committee, my outreach goals for the coming year are threefold:

1. Conduct information sessions with college bound high school seniors particularly those in AP language programs to introduce them to the Critical Languages Institute. We want students to know that, regardless of where they attend college, the Critical Languages Institute affords them an exceptional opportunity for immersive language studies abroad.

2. Engage undergraduates in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and Barrett, The Honors College to encourage participation in the Melikian Center's Certificate Program. As a graduate of ASU's then-fledgling Honors College and Russian and East European Studies Program, the Certificate Program is one I particularly wish to highlight. At major research universities, graduate students are often the only students who can enroll in the most engaging courses with preeminent professors. The Melikian Center's Certificate Program is a cherished exception to that rule.

3. Identify and meet with prospective Advisory Board members who share our connection to the Melikian Center's mission and can bring unique skills and talents to our Advisory Board.

I look forward to returning to post-pandemic life in 2022 and seeing all of you in person.

Всем всего наилучшего в наступающем году!

Shelley D. Cutts

The Melikian Center
Building global understanding across national borders

The Melikian Center for Russian, Eurasian and East European Studies at Arizona State University advances research, teaching and outreach on the languages, societies and geographies of greater Eurasia. The center's core mission is to enhance global awareness and cross-cultural understanding in the communities it serves by harnessing innovative and partnerships across disciplinary, ideological and geographical borders.

Philanthropy fuels possibilities

Established as a consortium in 1984, the Melikian Center adopted its current name in late 2016, in recognition of the generous support of Gregory and Emma Melikian. Since 2014, members of the Melikian Center's Advisory Board have contributed expertise as well as financial support for the center's initiatives. As a result of the generosity of the Melikian family, the advisory board and other donors, the center provides over 30 scholarships to students in the Critical Languages Institute each summer. In addition, the center also provides five to 10 Melikian Center Undergraduate Fellowships to ASU students each spring and a wide range of high-quality programming to enhance public understanding of the diverse cultures, peoples and histories of the post-Soviet world.

What better way to communicate than to speak each other's language?
-Emma Melikian

Building global understanding across national borders

Join the conversation
@asu.mcreeves
@MelikianASU

ASU Melikian Center
Computing Commons #331
501 East Orange Street
Tempe, AZ 85287

PH: 480-955-4188
Fax: 480-955-1700
email: melikiancenter@asu.edu
or: cl@asu.edu

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

In consultation with the Communications Committee, the Melikian Center introduced a new outreach tool in 2021

LEE B. CROFT RUSSIAN FUND ENDOWMENT

Emeritus Professor Lee Croft, CLI's founder and former director, is fundraising to endow the Lee B. Croft Russian Fund to support CLI students and our Russian language program. The Critical Languages Institute is able to offer affordable language courses thanks to a tuition waiver from the University Provost. Students pay a flat administrative fee instead of tuition, making CLI one of the most affordable intensive language programs in the country at \$1,500 for all Tempe-based courses. The purpose of the Lee B. Croft Russian Fund is to ensure that this tuition waiver remains in place in perpetuity, as well as to provide scholarships for students studying abroad in Russia. Currently, the waiver is renewed every four years and is dependent on individual grants and donations. Lee's goal is to raise \$300,000 over the next five years through the ASU Foundation.



Lee Croft and wife Lesley (back center) on a 1989 "mini-tour" of the CHAIKA dorm in St. Petersburg, Russia, then the Soviet Union

On teaching Russian at ASU

"No one in the U.S. is required to take Russian. It has a stigma of difficulty, so the only people who take it are those who are undaunted by intellectual challenge. My whole career in the university was teaching Russian, to just the brightest and the best. It was such a joy from day 1 to day 100,000; it just made my whole life there one a great pleasure. I always tried to include them in my scholarly activities as well. All my students were those who go above and beyond, which was such a joy."

On where his dedication to learning came from

"The answer is my family. I was born and raised in Cut Bank, Montana, and have no Russian family ties at all. I started Russian as an adjunct to the study of mathematics in college at age 19 and stayed with it, and kept on and on until I could teach Russian even to Russians. No grandparent of mine ever finished high school, my parents did not attend college, yet they revered education and esteemed the educated, telling me, 'Lee, education is something they can never take away from you. You might lose your house, your car, your job and all your money, even your health, but education is power and gives you advantage in the world, and can't be taken away.' I knew what they sacrificed to see me go to college and I always tried to work as hard at higher learning as they worked to get me access to it."

On why students should learn Russian

"Why does Russian matter today? It matters particularly as a result of the number and multifarious power of the Russian people, high achievers not only militarily in the world, not only in technology and science, but in literature, art, dance, music and in many diverse fields of human endeavor. We should be trying to learn all we can about them in order to make them not adversaries but valued collegial allies in this world, and this is best done by knowing and using their language when necessary for persuasion or argumentation or just mere communication. It's a disadvantage to us that more Russians can use English than Americans can use Russian. We should be trying to correct this."

GREETINGS FROM THE OUTGOING BOARD PRESIDENT

Though these past few years have brought considerable uncertainty, we have seen great displays of support and positivity at the Melikian Center and throughout ASU.

The leadership of Keith Brown, Irina Levin and their staff, who have assiduously adapted to the Center's needs, has ensured that the Center has continued to thrive. Without their expertise and unending dedication, such a strong foundation for growth would not have been possible. I feel honored and privileged to have participated in this growth as President of the Melikian Center Advisory Board.

As my time as President is nearing its end, I would like to convey my sincere gratitude for the time and effort dedicated by so many towards advancing the mission of the Melikian Center and ASU. I am deeply appreciative for our unwavering supporters, esteemed Advisory Board, Executive Board, Committee Chairs, and our extended Melikian Center family and friends who have positively impacted a multitude of students with life-changing educational opportunities.



Carrying on this tradition of excellence, the Melikian Center and ASU will continue to deepen its global engagement and strategic international partnerships, with David Merkel leading as the next Advisory Board President. We are thrilled to welcome David to this position. His extensive network in the international community make him the ideal individual to lead our Board in raising the profile of the Melikian Center nationally and globally. This has been a much-treasured experience. I extend my sincerest thanks to each of you for your ongoing support, participation and enthusiasm, which have strengthened the Melikian Center and ASU.

Together, we have not only weathered the storm but have continued to grow into a flourishing, world-renowned Center of academic excellence.

With gratitude,

Ramona L. Melikian

President, Advisory Board
2019-2021

GREETINGS FROM THE INCOMING BOARD PRESIDENT

I am pleased to serve as incoming President of the Melikian Center Advisory Board. While following in the footsteps of the gracious, thoughtful and inspired leadership of Ramona would give anyone pause, we will all benefit from her continued participation with the Melikian Center and her presence on the Advisory Board.

My career has focused on the region covered by The Melikian Center at ASU. I have served with the State Department, National Security Council, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, several think tanks, international organizations, NGO's and businesses. I have a deep appreciation of the critical role that the talented staff, faculty, and students play in successful programming. Nothing in my professional experience has had a greater impact on the mode of a negotiation or an introduction than when a member of the US delegation demonstrated a familiarity with the history, art, culture, or language of our host. My work and travels have taken me throughout Eurasia for many years, and knowledge and interest in the culture of the region has been helpful time and time again. I also have a great appreciation for advanced education and what a privilege it is to be associated with the faculty that call the Melikian Center and Arizona State University home.



There is a bit of history for me in taking on this role. When I first traveled to Phoenix from Moscow to see my then-fiancée Claire's hometown, I met Emma and Gregory Melikian. They were important to Claire, now my wife, who also serves on the Advisory Board, so they became very important to me. What I found, and what is known to all who know the Melikians, is a charming family with great knowledge of the history and culture of the region I was living in, and an infectious passion for sharing that knowledge.

An added bonus of following someone like Ramona is that I have the opportunity to think in expansive terms of what can be next for the Melikian Center. There is no rebuilding required as Ramona, Keith Brown, Craig Calhoun and the Melikian Center staff have ensured that there is a strong Center, and we are free to be creative and imagine what more can be done. I look forward to spending time with each of you to get your thoughts and learn from your knowledge and experience. I also look forward to finding avenues for your greater involvement—where desired—that will assist in the work of the Melikian Center.

Regards,

David A. Merkel

President, Advisory Board

2021



The Melikian Center:

Russian, Eurasian and East European Studies

Arizona State University

The Melikian Center

PO Box 874202

Tempe, AZ 85287-4202

Tel. 480-965-4188

Fax: 480-965-1700

melikiancenter@asu.edu

melikian.asu.edu

**The Critical
Languages
Institute**

