



# Slavic News: Winter 2024

## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR, GORDANA CRNKOVIĆ

Dear Friends of the Slavic Department,



After what always seems a much too short Winter break, we are back in the full swing of teaching and research. Aside from our classes in Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian, Polish, Russian, Slovene, and Ukrainian languages, we are offering

popular literature and culture classes such as our Associate Professor Barbara Henry's "Underworlds," Professor Kat Dziwirek's "Ways of Feeling: Expressions of Emotions Across Languages and Cultures," and Professor José Alaniz's "Twentieth Century Russian Literature and Culture."

We are truly happy to welcome to our Slavic Department Dr. Agnieszka Jeżyk, whose arrival I announced in my Summer 2023 letter. Dr. Jeżyk joined us this Winter quarter as the Maria Kott Endowed Assistant Professor of Polish Studies, and has already attracted great student interest in her Winter course on Polish culture. She will be teaching Polish language, literature, and culture classes and take a leadership position in promoting Polish Studies at the University of Washington. Widely published, Professor Jeżyk specializes in the Polish avant-garde poetry of the interwar period and Slavic horror studies. She earned her PhD from the University of Illinois at Chicago and has taught at the University of Illinois at Chicago, the University of California Los Angeles, and most currently at the University of Toronto, Canada.

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We are also very fortunate to have in our midst this year Dr. Nataliia Kovtoniuk, our Ukrainian visiting Fulbright scholar. Dr. Kovtoniuk received her PhD in Ukrainian literature and postcolonial studies and is doing a great job teaching intermediate level Ukrainian language.

Lastly, I am very pleased to announce the launch of a new major, whose home is in the Slavic Department, Global Literary Studies or GLITS. The result of five years of work of the Humanities Division Committee on GLITS (Professors Gary Handwerk, Naomi Sokoloff, and myself), and supported by the Slavic Department, this initiative responds to nationally changing academic parameters and shifting UW student demographics. It is institutionally new and puts the Slavic Department at the forefront of innovative projects in the College, and we look forward to its future. GLITS is a major that provides a unified and integrated platform for literature courses taught in English and offered by our various Humanities departments, from Asian Languages and Literature to Spanish and Portuguese. A perfect major for students who want to learn about world literature

rather than focus on a specific national or language tradition, GLITS can also serve as an excellent complement for students who are majoring in one of our Language and Literature departments and looking for a broader second major. This new major can also introduce many of our science majors—whose schedules may not allow time for intensive study of a foreign language—to the literature of the world. The rich offerings of GLITS courses this Winter quarter include “Sagas of the Vikings,” “Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* in Translation,” and “Epic Emotions from Classical Greece to Contemporary India.”

With best wishes for your health and happiness, and with hopes for peace in the New Year,

Gordana

## STUDENT NEWS



In July 2023, Svetlana Ostroverkhova’s MA thesis, “The Guises of Prince Myshkin: Genuineness and Artificiality,” received the UW Graduate School’s 2023 Distinguished Thesis Award in the Humanities & Fine Arts category. Professors José Alaniz and Galya Diment served as her thesis advisors. Congratulations on this outstanding achievement, Svetlana!



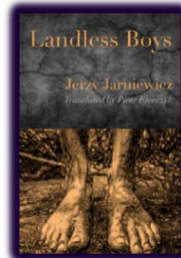
On November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023, PhD Candidate Taylor Eftimov presented at the 2023 Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES) Conference. Eftimov presented on a panel called “Breaking and Reshaping Motherhood: New Perspectives on the Maternal Figure in Eastern and Central European Literature” and her presentation was titled, “Reinvention of Motherhood Across Unstable ‘Homelands’.”



**Abstract:** This paper will explore the mother as a source of identity for the migrants from the Balkans, Macedonian migrants specifically. It will do so by reference to Luan Starova’s novel *My Father’s Books* (1992) and Natasha Garret’s personal essays, *Motherland* (2018). In the former, Starova’s mother is the ultimate librarian and keeper of the books as well as keeper of the family unit, she exemplifies the resistance that motherhood is required to take, especially in times of uncertainty due to forced migrations and the ever-changing borders, nationalities, and identities that Starova’s family faces in the Balkans; whereas in the latter bringing the parental couple to America, in order to help with child-care, re-creates a feeling of being “at home.”



## FACULTY NEWS



Piotr Florczyk published a volume of selected poems by Jerzy Jarniewicz this past October, called *Landless Boys*. This is the first book-length collection of Jarniewicz’s poems in English translation. Jarniewicz is a renowned Polish poet, critic, and theorist of translation who teaches at the University of Łódź. More info about the book here: <https://madhat-press.com/products/landless-boys-by-jerzy-jarniewicz>



**Piotr Florczyk's** book *Swimming Pool* will be released on Feb. 8, 2024, as part of Bloomsbury's Object Lessons series.

For the description, please visit:

<https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/swimming-pool-9781501394874/>

**José Alaniz** was a featured guest on the “Ways of Knowing” Podcast for [Episode 5: Disability Studies](#). Who gets to be a superhero? What about a villain? It depends on where you look. In the 1940s, comic book villains were often distinguished from heroes through physical disability. That changed in the 1960s and 70s, when it became more common for heroes – think Daredevil and Professor X – to be built around disability. In this episode, José Alaniz analyzes the physical depictions of superheroes and villains through the decades.



**Michael Biggins** was unanimously elected as a corresponding (foreign) member of the Slovenian Academy of Arts and Sciences last spring and formally inducted into the Academy at a ceremony on June 27, 2023, in Ljubljana. Each year the Academy nominates and elects new members in its six broad disciplinary divisions on the basis of exceptional lifelong achievement.

Then, on November 28, at the University of Ljubljana's [annual awards ceremony](#), Prof. Biggins was named an Honorary Senator of the University's Faculty Senate in recognition of “many years of professional and scholarly work connecting and promoting links between the University of Ljubljana and the University of Washington ... [and] greatly contributing to the reputation of the University of Ljubljana in the USA.” View a recording of Biggins's acceptance remarks in Slovene at the awards ceremony [here](#).



*Prof. Michael Biggins speaking in Ljubljana.*

## FULBRIGHT NEWS



The first time I visited a foreign country was when I finished my bachelor's degree and earned my first money to pay for the trip. My choice was Italy. I was walking on Piazza del Duomo in Florence and my eyes were glued to La Cattedrale di Santa Maria del Fiore. Being impressed by this picturesque beauty, I stopped. I was standing in front of the cathedral in absolute silence trying to seize the moment. Suddenly one unknown smiling guy interrupted me -- “Hi! Are you from Russia?” -- this question made me speechless because, as a person born in independent Ukraine, I did not anticipate it at all.

A lot of time has passed since this unpleasant case. I traveled to explore Western and Eastern cultures. Every year fewer and fewer people asked me, “Are you from Russia?” especially after the Revolution of Dignity when Ukrainians gained their own voice and geopolitical subjectivity and had a big fight on their hands to decolonize their culture. At last, modern Ukrainians are not perceived as Russians. However, after being dislocated to Austria because of the Russian full-scale invasion and occupation of my town Irpin (near Kyiv), in May 2022, I visited the



Albertina Museum in Vienna and was shocked by the description of one exhibition named “The Avant-garde in Russia” where works of artists from Kyiv were also displayed. I revealed that the local community still uses the term “Russia” instead of “the Russian

Empire” and “the Soviet Union.” Thus, I realized that Ukrainians, their beautiful culture and history, are still not visible enough, and as a teacher, I can contribute to the process of popularization and representation of Ukrainian distinctive features. Shortly, it was my way to start the application process to the Fulbright foreign language assistant (FLTA) program after years of hesitation. This coincided with a turning point in my career when, after 10 years of teaching the Ukrainian language as a first language, I decided to develop my skills of teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language.

Before my Fulbright experience, I was teaching Ukrainian language and literature in private secondary schools in Kyiv, the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, and Adam Mickiewicz University (Poznan, Poland). Now I am honored to develop myself as a teacher of Ukrainian as a foreign language at the University of Washington.

My previous professional experience abroad was a fellowship at the University of Graz (Austria) from March 2022 to September 2022. But I perceived it as a traumatic event, the loss of home because of the occupation of my hometown Irpin. I promised myself to perceive my experience in the USA as a joyful adventure and a unique opportunity to develop myself and learn the world. And it is a joyful adventure due to my brilliant students, outstanding colleagues, new international friends, and the Ukrainian and Polish diasporas in Seattle!

My adventure started smoothly in September 2023 due to detailed instructions provided to me by the

Chair of the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, Professor Gordana Crnković, and former Administrator and Graduate Program Advisor, Lani Phillips. They kept in touch with me the whole summer and answered all my questions! My adaptation to a new country was easy and quick due



to Professor Laada Bilaniuk and her husband Professor Ben Fitzhugh, who opened the doors of their home to me in September, and continue to support me in dealing with a lot of issues in Seattle and at the university. I was pleased to

meet Professor Eugene Lemcio and his family who assisted me in my adaptation. When I felt a little bit confused with the university grading system and developing the syllabus, Professor Bojan Belić generously shared his experience and guided me through this process. I am grateful to all these



people for their warm welcome and their help! Also, I want to thank Professors Katarzyna Dziwirek, Guntis Šmidchens, Valentina Zaitseva, and Inga Daraškienė for their everyday emotional and professional support!

In addition to this, my Fulbright adventure became a unique opportunity to immerse not only in American culture and life but also in the culture and life of the Ukrainian diaspora embracing those who were born in the USA and those who were born in Ukraine and migrated later. Sometimes, I joke that my life in Seattle is even more Ukrainian than in Ukraine. I was surprised that so far from Ukraine I can volunteer in the concert of the Ukrainian music band *Druha Rika*, visit the Ukrainian ballet, watch screenings of Ukrainian films, and participate in the Ukrainian book reading club *Lovage* or Andriivski vetchornytsi in the Ukrainian center *Toloka*. Also, in November 2023, the Ukrainian Association of

Washington State, in collaboration with the Ukrainian Students United at UW, organized the Holodomor Commemoration event. Moreover, due to Professor Katarzyna Dziwirek I met a lot of people from the Polish diaspora and learned more about modern Polish films. I am still impressed by the screening of the documentary film *Erase the Nation* by Tomasz Grzywaczewski which depicts the destruction of Ukrainian cultural heritage by Russian Federation troops as well as the huge efforts of Polish people to support my country.



It seems I feel in Seattle like at home away from home. I came here first of all to improve myself as a teacher and contribute to the popularization and visibility of Ukrainian culture and I did not expect more. But the

people around me at the university and outside of it made my Fulbright experience so bright and unforgettable and my life here easier. They create the atmosphere in which I have the force and inspiration to develop my professional skills. On top of that, UW provides me with many opportunities to do this. Beyond learning from my colleagues, I attended the course *Foreign Language Teaching Methodology*, enriching my understanding of the communicative approach to teaching. Also, I participated in the Fulbright FLTA Mid-Year Conference in Washington D.C. in November where I met nearly 400 other FLTAs from almost all countries in the world and learned about the methodology of teaching heritage learners.

Beyond the courses and conferences, my professional growth is connected with my teaching a Second-Year Ukrainian course at UW. To help my students succeed, I want to join more and more professional conferences and courses on the methodology of teaching. I try to combine the development of listening, speaking, writing, and reading skills with the improvement of soft skills and



immersion in the culture. To reach this, every 2 weeks we have *Song Day*. On this day students choose their favorite Ukrainian song, bring its texts, video, or audio to the class, and conduct the lesson as a teacher. I sit on the seat of this student and participate in the process instead of them. At the end of the lesson, we all sing the song together (karaoke). I believe that it instigates their curiosity about Ukrainian popular music and helps to memorize new words. To include my students in the Ukrainian context, on the Day of Ukrainian Literacy, I offered them to write an All-Ukrainian Dictation of National Unity with all Ukrainians around the world. Also, on the Day of Saint Mykolai (Ukrainian version of Santa Claus) we organized Secret Mykolai in class and on Day of Saint Andrii we celebrated Andriivski vechornytsy cooking varenyky (dumplings) and kalyta (special Ukrainian bread for this day). In collaboration with the Ukrainian Students United at UW, we managed a book reading club and dedicated this quarter to reading *Tygrolovy* by Ivan Bagrianyi. Finally, we continued the Ukrainian club *Skoromovka* (conversational table).



Additionally, I was invited by Professor Scott Radnitz to speak to his class *Interdisciplinary Survey of Eurasia* about Ukrainian literature in response to Russian colonization which is my main research interest. It was a great chance because I am a Ukrainian literature scholar and Ukrainian literature lecturer as well.

Thus, my adventure goes on! I feel grateful to all the people making it smooth and soft and I am looking forward to a new chapter!

--- *Nataliia Kovtoniuk, Fulbright Ukrainian language teaching assistant 2023-2024 at the Slavic Languages and Literatures Department at the University of Washington (Seattle, USA)*

## ROMANIAN NEWS



### A New Exploration Seminar to Poland and Romania: Borderlands between East and West (Early Fall 2024)

It has been a while since an Exploration Seminar was conducted in Eastern Europe. The last one was in 2019 when, Ileana Marin, together with Mark Gitenstein, the former US Ambassador to Romania and current US Ambassador to the EU, co-led a very successful program in Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine. Students who attended the program embraced careers in the field of international studies, international relations, security, or went into prominent grad schools both in the US and abroad.

This year, Ileana Marin and Isabelle Schlegel will resume the Exploration Seminar on [Borderlands between East and West](#), and will take students to Poland and Romania. The two countries have been on the news since the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war as the two closest EU countries which have welcomed refugees find a safe haven, a home, a place where they can plan ahead a new life. Between August 24<sup>th</sup> and September 15<sup>th</sup>, the group will look for answers to the question whether borderlands are meeting places of stories, cultures and countries or just transit spaces of continuous movement of goods and people. In order to get a sense of what it means to reinvent yourself in a different language, culture and place, we will engage with the refugees who count on the world's help and want to share their crossing-the-border stories.

### A New Romanian Culture Class on the UW Curriculum – Summer Term B 2024

Starting Summer Term B of this academic year, Ileana Marin and Otilia Baraboi will co-teach an online class dedicated to “The Western’s Other: Romanian Vampires and Vampirettes.” We will explore the complex relationships between Romanian and Balkan folklores, in the linguistic context of Slavic cultures. In search of defining elements of Romanian identity, modern revisitations of the vampire myth have attempted to validate the Romanianness (Cioran’s term) in Romanian cultural productions. We will investigate the vampire as an ambiguous figure of the fall and resurrection at the same time; we will explore the myths, cultural stereotypes and realities fueling Stoker’s portrayal of Prince Vlad the Impaler while providing a larger context of Romanian representations of vampires (*strigoi*), ghosts of the dead (*moroi*), werewolves (*vârcolaci*), and other blood-thirsty protagonists in folklore, literature, art, and film. Check [our website](#) in February to view course details.

### Romania Transformed will continue to be taught at the UW



The class on modern and contemporary Romanian literature, art, and film has been offered for six years at the UW. In a more diverse Pacific Northwest, where people are encouraged to maintain their heritage languages and cultures, students who have attended the class, irrespective of their ethnic background, have been inspired to reflect on their identity and personal contribution to the multicultural fabric of the UW campus and of our country.

Since the class was introduced in the UW curriculum in 2018, with the effort of the Seattle-based

nonprofit American Romanian Cultural Society, about 150 UW students have participated in the Romanian Film Festival, meeting internationally acclaimed Romanian directors, actors, script writers, and producers, thus having the unique opportunity to glimpse into one of the most remarkable artistic achievements: the Romanian New Cinema.



At the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the festival, students met with director Iulia Rugină who shared with them the ups and downs of making her first documentary called *Playback*. Actor and script writer Iulian Postelnicu talked with the UW students after the two screenings of Paul Negoescu's *Men of Deed*.

Students' participation in the festival has led to wonderful articles about the most recent Romanian films which are now in the process of being published in academic journals. Considering the record of successful submissions from previous years, I have no doubt that this year's submissions will be equally successful.

## SLOVENE NEWS

This fall UW will offer its first-ever Early Fall Start study abroad program in Slovenia. "Slovenia: Language, Culture and Society in a Crossroads Environment" (SLVN 499) will be a flexible, multidisciplinary 5-credit course taught entirely in English, drawing on a rich array of source materials made available to students in English translation. The course, which will take place August 25-September 14, 2024, in Kamnik, Slovenia, has no prerequisites and is open to any UW student.

Class sessions will seek to synthesize key findings from many disciplines, ranging from art and architectural history to anthropology, folklore,

religion, social psychology, literature, linguistics, music, geography, history, and current affairs. Periodic guest presentations by leading scholars, prominent Slovene writers, artists and leaders of civil society will also be featured. Weekends will feature course-related field trips to key regions of Slovenia (the Karst Plateau and Trieste with a focus on Italo-Slovene relations; and Maribor with a focus on Austrian-Slovene relations). Classes will run Mondays-Fridays from 9am to 1:00pm and will include two to three hours' instruction per week in Slovene language survival skills. The program's director and principal instructor is Prof. Michael Biggins, with assistant director PhD candidate Cyrus Rodgers.



Room, board and classrooms will be at the [Municipality of Kamnik's Mekinje Cultural Center](#), a former Ursuline convent built in the 17th century and recently converted to serve as a residential retreat facility for seminar and study groups such as our own.

The site of the program, Kamnik (pop. 14,000), is within easy hiking or bicycling distance of spectacular sub-Alpine natural environments. Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, is only 15 miles away (30 minutes by car, bus or train) and is rich in museums, theaters, concert venues, Roman archeological sites, a large medieval Old Town and other cultural attractions. For more information and to enroll, visit the UW Study Abroad web pages at <https://www.washington.edu/studyabroad/now-accepting-applications-for/>

## NEWS FROM YOU



**Dick Winslow ("Dima") (MA 1967)** writes:

I wish to pay special tribute to Zoya Mikhailovna Polack, who has completed her 50th year of teaching in our department, an amazing achievement! For me personally, I have benefited

from her instruction for 34 years. It began in January 1990, almost 25 years after I started my grad work here. I was preparing to be a host and interpreter for Soviet sports psychologists coming that summer for the Goodwill Games, an extensive competition between American and Soviet athletes. Then three years later, in 1993, I needed intensive work as I faced both speaking on the phone and then in person to Soviet psychiatrists. This culminated in my trip to St. Petersburg and Moscow to visit institutions there and, ultimately, to examine an American in long-term hospital care to see if he wanted to return to the US (he did not). I received invaluable tutoring and coaching from Zoya Mikhailovna at those times.

And I have had the pleasure of studying intermittently with her ever since, right up to the present at the Advanced Russian Table. Her spoken Russian is clear and beautiful, in just the right way for non-native speakers to understand, with corrections and suggestions at just the right moment so that we can improve.

For her decades of teaching in our department, Zoya Mikhailovna richly deserves our congratulations, our praise, and especially our thanks for the 50 years of working to enhance our knowledge of this wonderful language.

## Congratulations Zoya!

## Daniel Waugh and Ingrid Maier Publish New Book

The authors are pleased to announce the publication of their new book, which is freely accessible in electronic format:

Daniel C. Waugh and Ingrid Maier, *Cross-Cultural Communication in Early Modern Russia: Foreign News in Context*. Seattle and Uppsala, 2023. [2], 893 pp., with 61 illustrations.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.6069/XCSQ-BF71>

This is a work about the acquisition of foreign news in Russia, an attempt to determine its significance not only for government decision making but also for the cultural changes which were underway there during the seventeenth century. The core material for the study is the *kuranty*, the Russian translations from periodical newspapers and separates, most of them published in Dutch or German in the major European commercial centers. However, the Muscovite government regularly acquired foreign news from many other sources, both written and oral. Their analysis is essential too if one is to understand the importance of the *kuranty*. What was the institutional context within which such news was being obtained and processed? Who were the individuals involved? How accurate were the translations. How accurate was the news? Contextualization also invites serious consideration of how the foreign news was treated and understood in Europe, where there was a communications 'revolution' underway. Might there not be some similarities with what was happening in Russia, at the same time that there are significant differences? Do we see here evidence of 'influence', or might it not be better to think of 'creative adaptation' within a framework of existing pragmatic solutions to the challenges of obtaining essential information? The book thus has a broad comparative aspect which should offer new insights into the cultural, intellectual, and social history of early modern Russia and contribute as well to the study of the information revolution elsewhere in Europe.



*An open-access book in electronic format published in ResearchWorks at the University of Washington libraries. The volume may be downloaded from the ResearchWorks webpage accessible through the DOI link above. The book is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 United States.*

**Ronald D. LeBlanc (BA 1977, MA 1979, PhD 1984)** writes:

This past summer I completed a translation project that I had been working on for the past couple of years. It's an English-language translation of a lengthy Russian novel (560 pages) written by the little-known writer Vasily Trofimovich Narezhny (1780-1825), titled "A Russian Gil Blas, or The Adventures of Prince Gavriilo Simonoviich Chistyakov" (1825).

I first encountered this work in one of the first graduate-level courses that I took here at the UW back in 1977, a course taught by Professor James West that introduced students to works of Russian literature from various genres and to works that could be read with a variety of meanings. When I mentioned to Professor West that I was puzzled by what the author "A Russian Gil Blas" was seeking to do, he smiled and said that perhaps I should do some research on the author and the genre of picaresque fiction. I took James's advice to heart, and when it came time for me to write my dissertation a few years later, I selected Narezhny's picaresque novel, along with Faddei Bulgarin's "Ivan Vyzhigin" (1829), originally subtitled "A Russian Gil Blas," comparing and contrasting these two literary works as opposing approaches to the picaresque genre.

This project, for which I received funding from IREX and the Fulbright Program to conduct research in Moscow during academic year 1981-1982, culminated a few years later in my first book, "The Russianization of Gil Blas: A Study in Literary Appropriation" (1986). When I retired from teaching at the University of New Hampshire in

2016 and moved back to the Seattle area, I began to devote a considerable amount of time to translating works of Russian literature that hadn't yet been translated into English. Novels written by Vasily Narezhny were, of course, at the top of my list. I've deposited my translation of Narezhny's "A Russian Gil Blas" into a public access site (the Scholars Repository at UNH), so that anyone who is interested in reading this English-language translation of Narezhny's novel can do so gratis simply by using the following link:

[https://scholars.unh.edu/faculty\\_pubs/1610/](https://scholars.unh.edu/faculty_pubs/1610/)

Why, you might well ask, would I recommend reading Narezhny's novel? Well, for one thing, it's a raucously amusing and irreverent work of fiction that calls to mind the works of such late 18th-century British satirists as Henry Fielding and Tobias Smolett ("A Russian Gil Blas" was denied publication by tsarist censors in the 1830s due to its allegedly indecent portrayal of Russian society). Narezhny may well have been educated in Moscow, but he was born and raised in Ukraine, where his earthy sense of humour was initially shaped. For another thing, "A Russian Gil Blas" features, in a character named Ivan Osobnyak (his surname means, literally, one who "stands apart"), a literary version of the famous Ukrainian wandering philosopher, teacher, and composer of liturgical music, Grigory Skovoroda (1722-1794). These, in any case, are just a couple of reasons why it may well be worth your while to read Narezhny's "A Russian Gil Blas."

**Peggy Hall Smith (BA 1973)** writes:

I have very fond memories of the Russian House. When I decided that I wanted to major in Russian Language and Literature at the University of California in Santa Cruz, I knew I needed to get a year's worth of Russian under my belt, so I applied to take the 2nd-year intensive summer Russian course in summer of 1971. Someone at the university informed me of the Russian House, and since they had openings there, I stayed there for the summer and the following two years.

Nina Nikolaevna was the epitome of a true Russian woman. She was well-versed in many topics and always right. In contrast, her husband, Ono-San, was very quiet and reserved. Nina Nikolaevna always made herself available in the afternoons to help or teach us the Russian language and Russian culture. I applied to study Russian at Leningrad State University for a semester. This required a written letter in Russian as well as a telephone interview in Russian. Because of Nina Nikolaevna, I was accepted into this semester-long study abroad program, for which I am extremely grateful.

Now, 50 years later, I am finally returning to the University of Washington. I am sorry that the Russian House no longer exists, but I am very grateful for my experience there.

**Bill D. Howard (BA 1961)** writes:

The Russian House originally was located at 4746 17th Ave. NE. After a couple of years at that location, when the owner of the building wanted to tear it down and use the property as a parking lot, Russian House moved to the address and building shown in [the Daily article](#). I understand that in later years, it became The Russian - German House. One of the original faculty advisors was Vladimir Gross, a native Russian-speaking instructor in the (then) Far Eastern Faculty. At that time, I was working as a TA for Ivar Spector, Professor of Russian History. The idea for the House stemmed from discussions among the students of a full-time (15 credit hours) intensive summer Russian-language course in the summer of 1961. As I recall, a number of us were sitting on the lawn in front of Thompson Hall and The Hub lamenting that we might lose all of the fluency/language skills we were acquiring once we were no longer required to speak Russian for several hours every day; someone (I don't recall who) suggested we rent a house where we would speak only Russian. In the house on 17th, I was the only occupant of the basement even though there was space for two separate rooms.

I graduated from the UW with a BA in History/Far Eastern Studies in 1961, attended one year of Graduate School '61 - '62 working on a PhD (skipping the MA) with Donald Treadgold as my Faculty Advisor. I was a Teaching Assistant to Ivar Spector 1961 - 1962. I left the University in 1962 to take a position with the CIA. I served as a Clandestine Service Operations Officer at Headquarters in Langley and in several overseas postings, mainly in Europe. After retiring from the Agency, I re-enrolled in the UW Graduate School in 1992, again with Treadgold as my Faculty Advisor. I thought I might teach. However, I did not finish an advanced degree at the UW; instead, I enrolled in the Baking and Culinary Arts Program at Seattle Central College, earned a certificate in Baking and an AS in Culinary Science.

My overseas postings: Berlin, Bangkok, The Hague, London, and Vienna. Foreign Languages: Russian, German, Dutch (all a bit rusty from lack of practice) and "nitnoy" (a "little bit") Thai.

After returning to Seattle in 1991, I attended a reception at the then Russian House (at its then newer location). There was a grand piano (рояль) in the living room. One of the Russian House residents was playing. I commented to another attendee, "Он играет довольно хорошо" (he plays rather well). The other guest asked, "Вы играете на пианино?" (Do you play the piano?) I answered, "К сожалению, нет. Играю только на нервах." (Unfortunately, No. I play only on the nerves). I don't think he appreciated my humor.

*Additional Russian House resources linked below:*

[Abridged Proposed Plan of Operation](#) for the Russian House, shared by Bill D. Howard

Seattle Daily Times, 22 Mar. 1964, p. 48. NewsBank: Access World News – Historical and Current, [https://infoweb-newsbank.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/openurl?ctx\\_ver=z39.88-2004&rft\\_id=info%3AAsid/infoweb.newsbank.com&svc\\_dat=WORLDNEWS&req\\_dat=5571AD5ADB7245A884D175640FB2C7D8&rft\\_val\\_format=info%3Aofi/fmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Actx&rft\\_dat=document\\_id%3Aimage%252Fv2%253A127D718D1E33F961%2540WHNPX-12CBECBC9BB23DDE%25402438477-12C60440371338DB%254047](https://infoweb-newsbank.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/openurl?ctx_ver=z39.88-2004&rft_id=info%3AAsid/infoweb.newsbank.com&svc_dat=WORLDNEWS&req_dat=5571AD5ADB7245A884D175640FB2C7D8&rft_val_format=info%3Aofi/fmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Actx&rft_dat=document_id%3Aimage%252Fv2%253A127D718D1E33F961%2540WHNPX-12CBECBC9BB23DDE%25402438477-12C60440371338DB%254047). Accessed 30 Jan. 2024.



**IN MEMORIAM:  
DAVOR KAPETANIĆ  
Professor Emeritus  
(1928-2023)**

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Davor Kapetanić, Professor Emeritus of Slavic Languages and Literatures and a former Chair of the Department, died on February 13, 2023, in Edmonds, Washington. He was 94 years old.

Born in Zagreb, Croatia in 1928, Prof. Kapetanić's first engagement with UW was as a Fulbright Visiting Scholar during the 1970-1971 academic year, during which he taught courses in BCMS (then Serbo-Croatian) language and literatures. He then returned to Croatia, where he resumed his former position as a senior scientific researcher at the Institute for Literature and Theater Studies of the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts (since renamed Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts), while at the same time completing and defending his PhD dissertation in Croatian literature at the University of Zagreb.

During that interim year (1971-1972), the UW Slavic Department obtained approval to recruit for a new, tenure-track professorship in BCMS language and literature, a process it concluded when it appointed Davor Kapetanić to the position. He arrived in Seattle in fall 1972 together with his wife Dr. Breda Kogoj-Kapetanić, a specialist in comparative literature with particular strengths in French, English and Croatian literatures. Davor and Breda began tandem careers teaching at UW that reached into the 1990s, Davor in Slavic Languages and Breda in Comparative Literature.

From July 1977 to March 1984 Davor served as Chair of the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures during one of the most expansive arcs in its history. Among his legacies to UW was the establishment in 1984, at the behest of the UW provost, of an ongoing campus-wide exchange of

faculty and PhD candidates with the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia that continues to this day. Recognized as a leading authority on the work of Croatian novelist and playwright Miroslav Krleža, in 2000 he was elected a corresponding member of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts (HAZU).

After their retirement in 1993, Davor and Breda divided their time between their homes in Seattle, Croatia and Slovenia, but they stayed in touch with their UW colleagues and students. Below we share remarks contributed by a number of them.

**Gordana Crnković (Professor and Chair, UW Slavic Languages and Literatures)**

I had known of Professor Kapetanić's work long before I got to know him as a person when I interviewed, many years ago, for the position of Assistant Professor in the Slavic Department. Davor was a South Slavic expert and a faculty member who asked the hardest questions after my job talk on early and lesser-known texts by the Yugoslav winner of the Nobel Prize for literature, Ivo Andrić. Despite this serious (and not entirely comfortable) probing, I could not help but appreciate Professor Kapetanić, from the first, as a person of rare integrity, intelligence, and kindness. We came upon one topic, during this visit, on which I strongly and unequivocally disagreed with him. I remember the smile he gave me, which told me it was OK to hold my ground and that he would not take it against me but, on the contrary, that he respected this.

Once I started working at the Slavic Department, and once Davor left the department to enjoy retirement with his wife Breda Kogoj-Kapetanić, Professor Emerita of Comparative Literature at the UW, we connected from time to time and talked about literature, politics, and the cultural scene in Croatia and the whole post-Yugoslav region. Davor had a wealth of knowledge and a talent for seeing through the appearances to the core of a situation, and for saying things in a way that explained and illuminated them to me. He was wise, stoical, and always with a fine sense of humor. The last time we

met he was sad that he could not any more travel, on account of a medical condition, to his beloved, native city of Zagreb. "Samo da hodam po onim ulicama..." -- "If I could only walk those streets..."

Davor Kapetanić was a man of substance who gave a lot to the world. His departure is felt deeply; he will be missed.

**Ron LeBlanc (PhD 1984, UW Slavic Languages and Literatures; Professor Emeritus, University of New Hampshire)**

I had the great good fortune of attending two of the courses that Professor Davor Kapetanić used to teach here at the UW.

As I recall, the first one (I've long forgotten what the course number or course title were) was a general introduction to literary theory and criticism. I remember that from the very first day I was highly impressed with Professor Kapetanić's intelligence and his breadth of knowledge about the subject matter. I also remember that this was the first class that I was taking as a graduate student and that I was feeling that I might have been in over my head. To Professor Kapetanić's credit, he seems to have anticipated that most -- if not all -- of the students in this course might well be feeling the very same way as I was. In any event, he quickly allayed our fears, displaying a real knack for explaining the meaning of terms that we were not familiar with. And he also used humor as a way to calm our fears and lessen our apprehensions. I wouldn't go so far as to say that Professor Kapetanić made literary theory and criticism "fun" (nor do I think that he should have done that), but he certainly did much to help demystify the subject matter in this course.

I also can't recall specifically the course number and title of the other course that I took with Professor Kapetanić, but I do know that I took it sometime during the 1982-1983 academic year and that the course was designed by Hazard Adams of the Department of Comparative Literature as a seminar whereby an advanced graduate student (all-but-

dissertation) who was either majoring in English or matriculating in a language & literature department was paired off with a faculty member from the same department and they were to make a joint presentation on a literary critic or theorist in their field. I had just returned from an IREX-Fulbright academic year spent in the former Soviet Union (mainly in Moscow) researching the topic of my dissertation (the novels of Vasily Narezhny). Being paired off with Professor Kapetanić in this seminar and working with him to make a presentation was like a dream come true for me, for it allowed me to put in perspective not only my recent experiences abroad, but also my understanding of the ideas advanced by literary critics and theorists in the Slavic world, especially those of Mikhail Bakhtin and Yuri Lotman. Professor Kapetanić served wonderfully as my mentor in this seminar, and I owed him a huge debt of gratitude for all that he taught me as his junior partner in this enterprise.

I have nothing but fond memories of my interactions at the UW with Professor Davor Kapetanić, both as a mentor and as a human being. I feel that I was privileged to have met him and to have worked with him. May he rest in peace.

**Bob Ewen (PhD 1979, UW Slavic Languages and Literatures)**

Prof. Jack Haney was infamous for keeping a bottle of either sherry, always quite presentable, or cognac behind three green books about shoulder height in the wall-to-wall bookcase of his almost cavernous office. We never did find out how Jack had finagled those digs. As occasions required, Jack was never one to stint with the sherry, especially on a Friday afternoon.

One Friday afternoon Prof. Imre Boba [UW professor of history] and I were in Jack's office celebrating what I can't remember, each of us with a glass of sherry, when Davor knocked on the door. Out of well-practiced habit, Jack quickly and adroitly secreted the bottle and all three glasses in a desk drawer before inviting Davor in. Prof. Davor

Kapetanić, then chairman of the department (as my memory serves), entered the office and gave us a long, slightly amused look. He casually walked to the bookcase, purposely touched the three green books, turned to us and said in his unfailingly cordial manner, “so what is it we are celebrating this afternoon, eh?”

**Rosanne Gostovich Royer (MAIS 1976, UW Jackson School of International Studies)**



*Breda and Davor*

They were both students at the University of Zagreb, where it was very hard to get admitted. It was easier to get in if you were a member of the Party, but they weren't, so you really had to be tops in your entrance exams and your high school achievements.

Breda was a graduate student in Comparative Literature. Davor was in Slavic Languages and Literatures.

It was 1951 and Tito and the Party had broken with the Soviet Union three years before. The Yugoslav government was trying various methods to demonstrate to the West that Yugoslavia was truly in a reform mode—that democratization was in the offing.

The University called together a group of graduate students to plan the organization of a new student publication. Davor and Breda were token appointments from their separate departments. They were not acquainted before this. They met for the first time at this gathering.

Breda said Davor made a great impression on her. Not only his good looks, but what he had to say, and she fell head over heels for him that day.

Davor said he entered the area where they were meeting. It was a room in a building with a balcony. Breda was a blonde then. She was leaning over the balcony smoking. The sun was hitting her hair in a most dazzling way and Davor said to himself, “That is a good-looking woman.” Later she demonstrated her intelligence as well. They left the meeting together and started to see each other after each meeting.

**Kit Adams (UW Slavic Languages and Literatures alumnus)**

Davor was always an enthusiastic and helpful conversationalist in Croatian. There were a few of us who spoke at a quite high level... Davor's erudition and native knowledge of the literary language and the people who functioned in its world was beyond helpful. Its importance in raising my level of knowledge can't be overstated. Most of the papers I undertook were on topics Davor suggested. For example, when I took [UW historian] Prof. Peter Sugar's class in Eastern European history, Davor helped me get set up to write a paper on the writers associated with the Croatian Peasant Party in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. When it came time to choose a dissertation topic, Davor again helped me out. I undertook a study of the influence on the Croatian literary language of the Kajkavian dialect and urban jargon as spoken in Zagreb. Davor helped me get an IREX to study in Zagreb for half a year and helped me with all kinds of invaluable contacts not only in Zagreb, but in Belgrade and other cities. This was in 1979. Sadly, my research stalled, and I never finished the dissertation. If Davor was disappointed, which he certainly had every right to be, he was exceedingly gracious about it. It did not seem to affect our relationship. Davor was the kind of professor who was invariably collegial with younger people undertaking a life of study and research. This was especially true of the graduate students in the UW Slavic Department... Although Davor remained a rather private person, even with the students he was closest to, he was always extremely cordial and charming. He had a hearty laugh which he

employed often in the deployment of a great sense of humor.

With thanks also to alumni **Jim Hoath** (MA 1980, UW Slavic Languages and Literatures), **Michael Seraphinoff** (PhD 1993, UW Slavic Languages and Literatures), **Alma Plancich** (Alumna, UW Slavic Languages and Literatures), and **Norman McCormick** (Professor Emeritus, UW Mechanical Engineering)



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