

# NOTES FROM UNDERGROUND

## ЗАПИСКИ ИЗ ПОДПОЛЯ

THE ANNUAL NEWSLETTER OF  
THE BOWDOIN COLLEGE  
RUSSIAN DEPARTMENT

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**Dear alumni and friends of Bowdoin's  
Russian Department!**

*Greetings from the basement of Sills Hall on the beautiful Bowdoin College campus, our favorite underground hangout!*

*We hope that you will enjoy reading this new publication, which we plan to produce each spring to keep you updated on developments in the department and the achievements of our faculty, students, and alumni.*

*Please be in touch with us if you have comments, suggestions, kudos, or news to share, via email to Russian Department Chair Professor Gillespie ([agillesp@bowdoin.edu](mailto:agillesp@bowdoin.edu)) or the Alumni Contact form on our website. We look forward to hearing from you and keeping in touch!*



### A NEW ERA FOR RUSSIAN STUDIES AT BOWDOIN

With the hiring of Associate Professor Alyssa Dinega Gillespie to chair the Russian Department in fall 2016, the department entered a new and exciting era. Professor Gillespie came to Bowdoin from the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, where she had worked for 17 years as a professor of Russian language and literature and as co-director of the Program in Russian and East European Studies. She brought to Bowdoin her energy and creativity, her commitment to students, her teaching expertise on a wide range of topics, and her program-building experience. During the past three years she has worked tirelessly to rebuild and reinvigorate Bowdoin's Russian Department, with great success. In the pages that follow, we report on many of the changes that have come to the department during this time.

ABOVE: STUDENTS IN PROFESSOR GILLESPIE'S ELEMENTARY RUSSIAN CLASS ENJOY A HOME-COOKED RUSSIAN MEAL, FALL 2018

BELOW: A BOWDOIN STUDENT DELEGATION ATTENDS A LECTURE BY JOURNALIST MASHA GESSEN AT COLBY COLLEGE, OCTOBER 2018



## A THRIVING DEPARTMENT

# SENSE OF COMMUNITY STRONG AS INTEREST GROWS

The Russian Department is still the kind of friendly and intimate place where faculty and students might grab the occasional informal meal or coffee together, just because they enjoy one another's company. Nevertheless, the department is on the move. With 15 students now majoring and 2 students minoring in Russian, and with a total of 44 students enrolled in spring 2019

in two courses taught in translation (Modernity and Barbarism and Post-Soviet Russian Cinema), the sense of excitement around Russian Studies on Bowdoin's campus is palpable. Along with the increase in student numbers has come a set of new departmental traditions: the ice cream social during Orientation, which serves to recruit new students into

Russian language courses, now doubles as a reunion for upper-class students; at our holiday potluck party in December and our spring dessert party in May, Russian language students of all levels sing songs, recite poems, and perform skits; at our annual Russian department dinner in March, we enjoy a fancy catered Russian meal while celebrating our close-knit community.

## STUDENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The past three years have been marked by notable student achievements. In the three years Bowdoin has participated in the ACTR National Post-Secondary Russian Essay Contest, four students have won five recognitions: Jae-Yeon Yoo '18 (honorable mention, Level 3), Augustus Gilchrist '20 (silver medal, Level 4), Artur Kalandarov '20 and Dalia Tabachnik '21 (honorable mentions, heritage category), and Dalia Tabachnik repeated her success this year with a bronze medal. Other national honors our students have brought home include the Fulbright-Hays Fellowship for the ACTR Russian Language Program in Moscow (Laura Howells '20)

and the American Mathematical Society Scholarship for the Math in Moscow program (Sam Swain '18). Artur Kalandarov, Laura Howells, and Augustus Gilchrist have also all won prestigious fellowships to support summer research or unfunded internships over the past 3 summers. Augustus is the recipient of the Surdna Foundation Undergraduate Research Fellowship for summer 2019; his project is titled "The Happiness that Redeems the Bitterness of Previous Pages": Mikhail Zoshchenko and the 19th-Century Russian Canon." Laura and Artur are both recipients of the McKeen Center's Bowdoin Public Service



Fellowship; Laura is serving as a research assistant on U.S.-Russia-Europe relations at the Brookings Institution and is also doing data analysis work on Russian Presidential Grant Funding at the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies at George Washington University, while Artur holds an Internship at the Cohen Group, a consulting firm in Washington, DC.



## AN ARRAY OF VIBRANT CO-CURRICULAR OFFERINGS

THANKS TO A GENEROUS DONATION FROM A LOYAL BOWDOIN FAMILY, THE RUSSIAN DEPARTMENT HAS BROUGHT A RICH PROGRAM OF LECTURES, CONCERTS, AND CULTURAL EVENTS TO BOWDOIN OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS, PROPELLING US TO THE FOREFRONT OF CAMPUS CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL LIFE.

### About Our Faculty

#### Alyssa Dinega Gillespie

Dr. Gillespie (Associate Professor and Department Chair) is a specialist on Russian poetry of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries; her research interests include the poetry of Tsvetaeva, Mandelstam, Pasternak, and Pushkin; gender issues in Russian literature; poetic myth-making; and the creative psyche of the poet. She is the author of *A Russian Psyche: The Poetic Mind of Marina Tsvetaeva* (2001), published in Russian as *Марина Цветаева: По канату поэзии* (2015), and the editor of *Russian Literature in the Age of Realism* (2003) and *Taboo Pushkin: Topics, Texts, Interpretations* (2012). She has also received several awards for her work as a translator of Russian poetry. Her current projects include two books on Pushkin and a book-length translation of Tsvetaeva's selected verse.

#### Reed Johnson

Dr. Johnson (Lecturer) received his MFA and PhD from the University of Virginia, where he wrote his dissertation on how the writings of modernist author Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky illuminate critical shifts in Soviet conceptions of time. His research interests in 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century prose straddle the intersections of art and ideology. Dr. Johnson is the author of several essays, translations and works of fiction and has published in *The New Yorker*, *The New England Review*, *Gettysburg Review* and elsewhere. He lived in Russia for 8 years before completing his graduate education; he begins his appointment at Bowdoin in Fall 2019.

### Concerts

New York Balalaika Duo, "Russian Folk Music and Dance," September 2017

Zolotoj Plyos, "A Musical Journey across Russian Traditions," March 2018

Sarah Pelletier, soprano and Francine Kay, piano, "Alexander Pushkin in the Music of Russian Romanticism," September 2018



### Lectures and Lecture Series

Julia Mickenburg, "Gender, Race, and Radical Empathy: American Women in Revolutionary Russia, 1905-1945" November 2017

Semion Lyandres, "How an Uprising Became a Revolution, Or, What (Leading) Historical Actors Wanted Posterity to Remember About the Overthrow of Russia's Old Regime in February 1917," November 2017

Timur Guzairov, "Literary Reflections of Soviet Trauma: Civil War and Gulag," January 2018

### Russian Classics Today Spring 2018 Lecture Series

- Edyta Bojanowska, "Nikolai Gogol and Russo-Ukrainian Relations Today"
- Alexander Burry, "Screening Adultery: Anna Karenina in Film"
- Kate Holland, "Dostoevsky in the 21st Century"



### Russian Environment: Nature and Culture Fall 2018 Lecture Series

- Thomas Hodge, "The Russian Environment and Social Critique: Ivan Turgenev's Nature Writing"
- Jane Costlow, "Russian Artists in the Arctic: Contemporary Literary and Visual Perspectives"
- Nicholas Breyfogle, "Protecting the Pearl of Soviet Asia: Post-War Development, Conservation, and Lake Baikal"

Julia Ioffe, "What Russia Wants and What It Means for America," April 2019



# Our Students

## 2019 Graduates

### Johna Cook '19

Hometown: New Cumberland, Pennsylvania  
Majors: Russian and Government and Legal Studies

### Cem Töre Gökçam '19

Hometown: Istanbul, Turkey  
Majors: Physics and Russian  
Minor: Mathematics

### Stephen Pastoriza '19

Hometown: Bethesda, Maryland  
Major: Russian  
Minor: Economics

### Zoe Shamis '19

Hometown: Burlington, Vermont  
Majors: Government and Legal Studies and Russian

**Zoe Shamis '19** completed a senior thesis for her Government and Legal Studies major titled "Sharp Power and the Transformation of Russian Foreign Policy. Zoe's advisor was Professor Laura Henry.

**Laura Howells '20** spent summer 2018 researching women's NGOs and contemporary Russian civil society. Based on this research, she published a substantial article in the *Bowdoin Review* in April titled "[Inequality and State Influence in the Russian Third Sector.](#)" Laura's faculty mentor was Professor Laura Henry.

**Artur Kalandarov '20** published an article titled "[Soviet Germans and Soviets Living in Germany during the Second World War](#)" in the *Armstrong Undergraduate Journal of History*. This research was undertaken with the mentorship of Professor Page Herrlinger.

## Student Research

**Stephen Pastoriza '19** completed an honors thesis for his Russian major titled "Images of Women in the Works of Ivan Turgenev and Aleksei Kharklamov." This project grew out of Stephen's interest in the painting *Young Woman and Child* by Kharklamov (1840-1925) that is owned by the Bowdoin College Museum of Art (and currently on display in the galleries). The project breaks new scholarly ground in the understanding of the relationship between the novelist Turgenev and the painter Kharklamov, and of the implications of this relationship for the two men's respective creative works. In particular, Stephen draws attention to the role of the visual arts (painting especially) in Turgenev's fiction and creative process. Stephen's thesis advisor was Professor Alyssa Gillespie.

## Study Away

More and more of our students are having intensive Russian immersion experiences while studying away. Here is what they have been up to over the past two years:

### ACTR Russian Language Program (semester)

Anastasia Pruitt '19 (St. Petersburg, fall 2017), Zoe Shamis '19 and Johna Cook '19 (St. Petersburg, spring 2018), Laura Howells '20 (Moscow, fall 2018), Augustus Gilchrist '20 (St. Petersburg, spring 2019)

### ACTR Summer Business Russian Program

Nat Deacon '20 (2019)

### Middlebury College Summer Russian Institute

Miguel Diaz Segura '20 and Nat Deacon '20 (2018) and Brennan Clark '20 (2019)

### Math in Moscow

Sam Swain '18 (fall 2017)

## Internships at Home and Abroad

Our students have also pursued a variety of exciting opportunities beyond the classroom to broaden their experience in Russian-related fields. Over the past two years, students have held internships at the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies in Tbilisi, Georgia, the Center on National Security at Fordham Law, the Winter Language Camp of Cosmopolitan Educational Center in Novosibirsk, the *Moscow Times*, the Cohen Group, the Brookings Institution, and the Russian human rights organization Memorial. Laura Howells '20 owes thanks for her internship with the *Moscow Times* to her meeting with Evan Gershkovich '14, a staff writer for the newspaper. You can read about it [here](#).



RUSSIAN STUDENTS MODEL  
BOWDOIN RUSSIAN  
DEPARTMENT SPIRIT WEAR



CLASS OF 2019 RUSSIAN  
DEPARTMENT SENIORS



PROFESSOR GILLESPIE AND JOHNA  
COOK '19 AT COMMENCEMENT



RUSSIAN STUDENTS ENJOY  
SOCIALIZING AT THE SPRING  
DESSERT PARTY



Stephen Pastoriza '19 with Kharklamov's painting *Young Woman and Child* (1894) after his gallery talk in the Bowdoin College Museum of Art.





Clockwise from top left: Professor Gillespie serves up Russian borschch, buddies Justin Winschel '21 and Colin Lamphier '22 at our spring party, students at the dinner for Julia Ioffe, Kireia Takata-Glushkoff '19 at Commencement, Professor Gillespie gives a gallery talk at the Soviet poster exhibit in fall 2017, Advanced Russian students

## Our Alumni

Last but certainly not least, we celebrate the successes of our Russian Department alumni. At the present time, we are aware of the following recent alumni who are currently engaged in educational or professional pursuits that build upon their Russian major:

Daniel Mark '09 has been admitted to the doctoral program in Russian History at the University of California, Irvine

Joey Kellner '09 received his Ph.D. in Russian History at UC Berkeley in June 2018

Mira Nikolova '13 is completing her Ph.D. dissertation on Russian poetry in the Slavic Department at Brown University

Melanie Tsang '13 is pursuing a Master of International Affairs degree at Columbia University; in summer 2018, she interned at the U.S. Department of the Treasury in the Office of Europe and Eurasia

Zackary Suhr '14 works at the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the State Department, where he helps to advance international understanding through the study of language and culture

Jenny Goetz '15 is finishing her second year of a Russian History Ph.D. at Columbia University

Nick Tonckens '16 will be starting law school at New York University in the fall

## The Future is Bright

The past couple of years have brought so many successes that the department has been profiled twice in the Bowdoin news media this spring:

[Russian Department Booms, Hires New Lecturer](#)

[Russian Department Hails "New Era" as Expansion Continues](#)

We look forward to continuing these successes in the future and keeping you informed! For next year, we are planning a fall lecture series in connection with our new course "Love, Sex and Desire in Russian Culture," co-sponsoring a lecture by journalist Masha Gessen, and hosting a performance of Serbian dance, among other events. Stay tuned for more details!

## Please Keep in Touch!

We are always happy to hear from our Bowdoin Russian Department alumni and grateful for your support. We would be very interested in having you visit campus to meet with current students to discuss the role of Russian in your career path or set up a long-distance internship or career mentorship for our students. We would also just love to hear from you and find out what you are up to! Please be in touch through the alumni page of our website. If you have a creative idea that you would like to bring to life, please do let us know!

Find us on the web:

