

OCREECAS Newsletter

2024-2025 Academic Year

About OCREECAS

The Oberlin Center for Russian, East European, and Central Asian Studies ([OCREECAS](#)) is designed to strengthen the study and teaching of Russian, East European, and Central Asian studies at Oberlin. Created in 1998 with support from the Clowes Fund, Inc. and other private contributions, its mission is twofold: to foster the development of new courses and cultural activities on campus focusing on the region, and to support student opportunities through OCREECAS grants.

Director [Kristina Paabus](#) and Internship Coordinator [Maia Solovieva](#) provide the administrative support and resources essential to developing innovative programming for Oberlin students and recent graduates. They also assess participant safety and program quality within the rapidly changing conditions of the region.

OCREECAS is committed to providing Oberlin students with opportunities for the study of Russian language, and for studies in, about, and with the cultures and countries of the OCREECAS region. The OCREECAS region is defined as the following: Armenia, Albania, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. *Please note that OCREECAS does not support travel to locations with a U.S. State Department travel advisory 3 or 4.*

Statement on the Russian War in Ukraine

OCREECAS and REEES continue to condemn Russia's unprovoked attack and ongoing war of aggression in the sovereign nation of Ukraine. We grieve for the victims of this war, and we stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine, along with all those who have protested the Russian government's actions.

OCREECAS Supported Events

OCREECAS supported a wide array of programming, events, and experiences by working with REEES (Russian, Eastern European, and Eurasian Studies) as well as the larger campus community during the 2024-2025 academic year. This included the following OCREECAS sponsored events:

Academic Year 2024-2025

- Resuming the success of *The Russian Revolution and the Global South Reading Group* that ran between 2021-2024, students continued their studies under the tutelage of Assistant Professor of History, Nicholas Bujalski, during the 2024-2025 academic year by examining the following two texts: "*Decolonial Marxism: Essays from the Pan-African Revolution*" (2022) by Walter Rodney, and "*On Practice and Contradiction*" (2017) by Mao

Tse-Tung.

Fall 2024

- Vladimir Ivantsov, Assistant Professor of Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies, invited three virtual speakers to his first-year seminar course *FYSP 085: Rebellion, Revolution, Rock'n'Roll: Art and Dissent in Russia*:
 - Joanna Stingray, musician and author
 - Victoria Lomasko, artist and author
 - Katie Frevert ('22), PhD student at University of California-Berkeley
- Anna Lordan, Visiting Assistant Professor of Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies, brought the following speakers to her course *REEE 210: Art in Action: Contemporary Ukraine*, through video conferencing:
 - Irina Tsilyk, film director
 - Sasha Dovzhyk, writer
 - Viktoriia Grivina, writer
- Maia Solovieva, Director of Russian House and Senior Lecturer in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies, organized two events:
 - Students met with Nana Tsikhelashvili, Associate Professor and Director, School in Russia, Russian Program in Kazakhstan.
 - Virtual course visit with film director and screenwriter Toma Selivanova for *REEE 411: Searching for Inner Freedom*.

Spring 2025

- Nicholas Bujalski, Assistant Professor of History, invited the following speakers to his class *HIST 440: Europe's East: Orientalism from Russia to the Balkans*, with support from OCREECAS, REEES, and History:
 - Mario Kikas, PhD Research Fellow in the Faculty of Social Sciences at Nord University in Bodø, Norway visited HIST 440 via video conference to present historical content and historiographical theory.
 - Ksenia Un, Virginia and Walter Nord Postdoctoral Fellow at the Baker-Nord Center for the Humanities at Case Western Reserve University, conducted an in-person class visit and public lecture to discuss her research on the intersection of power, representation, imperialism, and racialization in late-Imperial Russia.
- Olesya Ivantsova, Lecturer in German and Russian, brought two guest speakers to her *CMPL/GERM/REEE 246: Sex under Socialism* classroom via video conferencing.
 - Amy Ballard, Senior Historic Preservation Specialist Emerita at the Smithsonian Institution and producer of the film *"Dear Mr. P... A Love Letter to James Lloydovich Patterson"*.
 - Julie Cassiday, Professor of Russian (with specialization in queer culture and performance), Williams College.
- Vladimir Ivantsov, Assistant Professor of Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies, organized an in-person visit with artist and author Victoria Lomasko, which included a public talk on her most recent book *"The Last Soviet Artist"*, and class presentations in *Advanced Russian* and *Sex under Socialism*.
- Maia Solovieva, Director of Russian House and Senior Lecturer in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies, organized a series of three film screenings and conversations with film director and screenwriter Toma Selivanova for the REEES and campus community.

Summer 2025

- OCREECAS supported a three-day excursion to Tallinn, Estonia, from Helsinki, Finland during the four-week June language and culture intensive, *SOCI 266: The Happiest Country? Finland and its Welfare State*. The course was led by Professor of Sociology Greggor Mattson, with support from Visiting Assistant Professor of Politics Amanda Zadorian.



Spring 2025, campus visit by artist and author Victoria Lomasko. Photo credit: Madeline Flack



Students and faculty from Oberlin's June language and culture intensive, *SOCI 266: The Happiest Country? Finland and its Welfare State* visiting Tallinn, Estonia. Photo credit: Greggor Mattson

OCREECAS Student Grants

In the 2024-2025 academic year, OCREECAS continued its grant programming to support students with three distinct award opportunities: the OCREECAS Russian Language Study Award, the OCREECAS Winter Term Grant, and the long-standing OCREECAS Internship Award.

OCREECAS Russian Language Study Award

In 2024-2025, OCREECAS provided monetary awards to students who wished to supplement their Russian language learning with additional educational opportunities. Students typically use these funds during winter or summer to enhance their Russian language proficiency in the U.S. or abroad. This award is designed to promote language learning, and is open to first-, second-, and third-year currently enrolled students who have taken at least two consecutive semesters (fall, winter, or spring) of Russian language and intend to continue studying Russian at Oberlin. Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis and require a statement of purpose, confirmation of participation in a program, a detailed budget, and brief letter of support from an Oberlin Russian language faculty member. For 2024-2025, the overall annual budget for this program was increased to \$8,000. Awards were allocated on a rolling basis, with a maximum amount of \$2,000 per student.

2024-2025 OCREECAS Russian Language Study Award Recipients:

- January 2025 - Rai Runions ('27) was granted funding to attend the summer 2025 Language Workshop for Russian 2 at Indiana University–Bloomington.
- March 2025 - Danilo Vujacic ('26) secured funding to attend the summer 2025 American Councils Advanced Russian Language and Area Studies Program (RLASP) in Tbilisi, Georgia.
- April 2025 - Natasha Dracoby was recognized with funding to study Russian in Armenia through the SRAS 8-week summer program.
- April 2025 - Mea Johnson ('28) was awarded funding to continue her language studies through Beloit College's Center for Language Studies online summer program.

OCREECAS Winter Term Grant

In January 2025, OCREECAS awarded three grants (up to \$1,000 each) to assist students with winter term projects that were thematically related to the OCREECAS region. Projects could be individual or collaborative in nature, and focus on creative, scholarly, or other pursuits. The OCREECAS Winter Term Grant was open to all currently enrolled students, with priority given to REES students and majors, and additional consideration towards demonstrated financial need. The project location could be almost anywhere, but proposals required a thematic relationship to Russia, Eastern Europe, or Central Asia.

2025 OCREECAS Winter Term Grants:

- Madeline Flack ('27) organized "Russian, Eastern European, and Central Asian Winter Term Cultural Programming," a three-week series of events including film screenings, crafting sessions, informational lectures, food preparation, and community gatherings.
- David Mnuskin ('27) studied Ukrainian during January 2025 through online lessons with Preply and the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv, Ukraine. He also practiced conversation with local speakers in Pittsburgh and held regular virtual meetings with Professor Anna Lordan.

- Kash Radocha ('26) conducted archival research in Poland at the Kraków branch of the Polish National Archives to define her senior honors project, which compares the Polish judiciary under communist rule with the U.S. judiciary.

OCREECAS Internship Award

As part of its long-running grant programming, OCREECAS has awarded three grants (up to \$5,000 each) to support student internships in the OCREECAS region during 2025. While a few affiliate placements are available, students are strongly encouraged to create their own opportunities with recognized institutions. Internships typically last one to three months and require at least one affiliate institution in the host country. The program is open to current students and recent graduates (within the past two years), with priority for REES majors and students who have not previously received this award.

2025 OCREECAS Internship Recipients:

- Eliza Balmuth ('24, Musicology & Comparative Literature; minors in English and French) will join the organizational teams for two classical guitar festivals in summer 2025: the Summer Guitar Program in Celje, Slovenia, and the International Guitar Festival and Courses in Brno, Czechia.
- Sasha Paris-Cater ('25, Composition & Improvisation) will spend two months in Tallinn, Estonia, interning with Tier Music, a women-owned and operated music publisher specializing in education and outreach.
- Eliza Youngman ('25, Studio Art; minor in East Asian Studies; Food Studies Integrative Concentration) will complete a three-month internship in textile arts at Forest and Meadows studio in Vilnius, Lithuania, during fall 2025.

OCREECAS Student Experiences

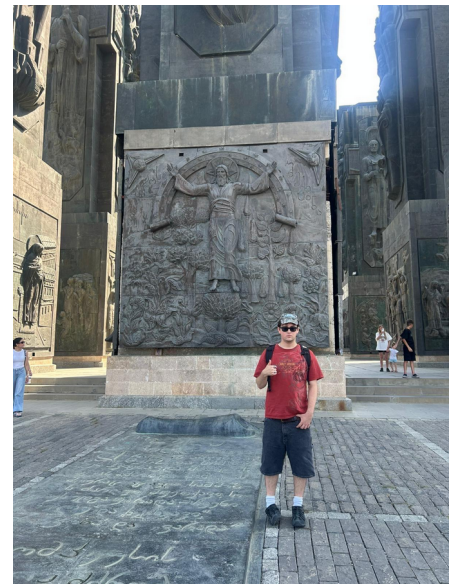
2025 OCREECAS Russian Language Study Awardee Testimonials:



Natasha Dracobly, SRAS, Yerevan, Armenia



Rai Runions, Indiana University-Bloomington



Danilo Vujacic, American Council, Tbilisi, Georgia

"Привет and Barev from Armenia! I'm Natasha, and this spring I finished my second year in the REES major

at Oberlin. With the help of the OCREECAS scholarship, I'm now spending 8 weeks of my summer in Yerevan, taking intensive Russian classes with SRAS and learning about Armenian culture and history! I'm over 5 weeks into my program now, and I've learned so much both in my classes and just by living here. Yerevan is a wonderful, totally fascinating city and Armenia is a beautiful country with such a rich history. I've gotten to explore museums, monasteries, and so many incredible public monuments and parks here. I'm excited to bring this experience with me back to Oberlin this fall, and if you ever get the chance to visit Armenia -- do it!"

- Natasha Dracobly

"This program has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. My Russian skills have grown dramatically and I've found friends that will last a lifetime. Honestly, having class 4 hours a day has been a lot of work and exhausting at times but I never expected to have as much fun as I have here. Since I've been here I've had Ukrainian food for the first time, went to the county fair with classmates, and even celebrated Ivan Kupala. Truly I extend my greatest gratitude to OCREECAS for making this opportunity possible for me!" – Rai Runions

"Thanks to the support of OCREECAS I had the privilege of studying abroad in Tbilisi, Georgia through American Councils. The two months I spent there were deeply memorable and if anyone ever has the opportunity

to travel to the Caucasus, they must. There is so much that is mind-blowing in Georgia. It is a place packed with history and you can feel it every where you go. Each person, each building, and each street seems to have a million stories to tell. Perhaps what is most striking is that despite being subjugated to the rule foreign empires for nearly all of its history, Georgia has held onto a very distinct national identity and one that is very unique. The food is fantastic, the language is unlike anything you will ever hear, the nature is stunning, and Georgians are wonderful people who will take you in as your own if you show an interest in experiencing their culture.

Once

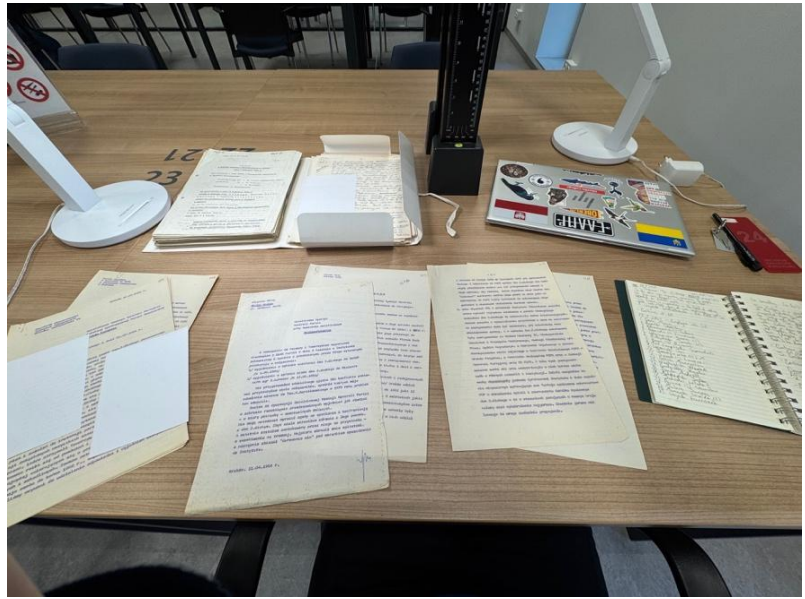
you go there you will wish to never leave." - Danilo Vujacic

20205 OCREECAS Winter Term Awardee Testimonials:



Madeline Flack, "Pysanka" crafting session with painted wooden eggs.





Kash Radocha, archival research at the Polish National Archives in Kraków, Poland.

"I learned so much over this Winter Term project. I learned about cultures different from my own, but I also learned how to communicate what I had learned with others. I also think I learned a lot about forming a community. Throughout this project I watched as people who came to events became closer, and I even made new friends myself. This project brought me more than just cultural knowledge, and I hope to bring those community building skills to other areas of my life." – Madeline Flack

"This will undoubtedly help me as a student of Russian, Eastern European and Eurasian Studies at Oberlin College. I also hope to use Ukrainian in my study abroad experience this upcoming spring semester in Latvia... [I will] take my skills to the next level and ensure that I can use the language in a professional environment in the future." – David Mnuskin

"This month in Poland was something both incredibly special to me and equally fruitful for my future work in the history department. As I wish to apply for and pursue an honors project my senior year, I needed a strong basis on which to build my research from. Going into Winter Term, I conceptualized my project as narrating some portion of Polish and American history during the 20th century, and this grant allowed me to dive into the

Kraków branch of the Polish National Archives (Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie) to hopefully clarify some of those uncertainties and develop this basis. What I ended up with were multiple documents exchanged between individuals, corporations, labor movements, and the government to bring clarity to where I would go from here:

developing a comparative project between the Polish judiciary under communist rule and the U.S. judiciary. [...] I wish to thank OCREECAS again for its generosity and support of my research endeavors, and conducting this archival work could not have been possible without it." – Kash Radocha

2024 OCREECAS Internship Awardee Testimonials:



Martina Taylor ('24), OCREECAS 2024 Internship Awardee, conducted two arts internships with Art Quarter Budapest and Threadwritten in Budapest, Hungary.



Wade Burleson and Martina Taylor, OCREECAS 2024 Internship Awardees, at Art Quarter Budapest, Hungary.



Wade Burleson ('24), OCREECAS 2024 Internship Awardee, traveled to Budapest, Hungary for a 3-month internship with BPZines, a Risograph printing studio and independent publisher.

“Over the course of my time in Hungary, though I learned new techniques of artmaking and business, I learned more about my work style, my ability to immerse myself in new cultures, and my resilience. [...] I really enjoyed my time abroad, though there were also times where I struggled. I feel stronger, more self-confident, and a lot more focused. Thank you to the OCREECAS board for the support; this opportunity was life changing for me!” – Wade Burleson

“I mainly worked at AQB’s Project Space, a non-profit gallery hosting an exhibit that had been shown in Prague earlier in the year. It was my job to watch over the gallery and assist visitors, as well as help with the occasional administrative task. I went on field trips with the resident artists to gallery openings, met other artists and gallery owners, and went to openings at the other exhibition spaces at AQB. [...] I am so grateful to OCREECAS for the incredible opportunities they have given me access to, and the support and encouragement to have a cool idea and see it through.” – Martina Taylor

OCREECAS encourages student applications for the upcoming 2025-2026 academic year! Please visit the [website](#) for more information, and reach out to Kristina Paabus or Maia Solovieva with any questions.

OCREECAS Acknowledgements

OCREECAS is thankful to the following:

Edith Clowes ('73), Brown-Forman Chair Emerita, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, University of Virginia

Department of Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies

Alyssa Nickley, Administrative Assistant for REEES, East Asian Studies, and German

OCREECAS 2024-2025 Committee Members:

- Nicholas Bujalski, Assistant Professor of History
- Vladimir Ivantsov, Assistant Professor of Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies
- Anna Lordan, Visiting Assistant Professor of Russian and East European Studies
- Kristina Paabus, OCREECAS Director, Chair of Studio Art, Associate Professor of Reproducible Media
- Maia Solovieva, OCREECAS Internship Coordinator, Director of Russian House, and Senior Lecturer in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies
- Pam Snyder, Executive Director, Foundation, Government & Corporate Grants

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