

# O C R E E C A S

# N e w s

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The Oberlin Center for  
Russian, East European,  
& Central Asian Studies

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## *From the Director*

Greetings to all alumni and friends of Oberlin's Russian and East European Studies Program. A generous gift from Edith Clowes ('73) and the Clowes Fund established Oberlin's Center for Russian, East European, and Central Asian Studies earlier this year. After years of wishing we had the time, resources, and administrative help to take on some extra projects, we do – and we are.

Getting in touch with our alums was a first priority, and we've been very pleased to hear from so many of you. As you'll see on pages 4-6, Oberlin grads have assumed a variety of challenging positions in the Soviet and post-Soviet world. We've listed a number of you who have maintained ties to the area, and will include more in the next issue. If you'd like to be included, please write us. You'll find a form at the back of the newsletter.

OCREECAS has set many goals for itself. True to its Oberlin roots, the Center is chiefly concerned with providing opportunities for students: internships in Russia, Central Asia, and Eastern Europe; the sponsorship of visiting scholars and artists from those regions to our campus. We've included the Observer's announcement of the Center on page two, as well as a brief run-down on the current faculty and their activities.

You can expect to see our newsletter in your box a few times a year. For up-to-the-minute information about the Russian program and the Center, visit the Center's website: [www.oberlin.edu/~creecas](http://www.oberlin.edu/~creecas). In addition to Oberlin news and resources, you'll find terrific links to a wide range of sites.

Tim Scholl  
Associate Professor of Russian

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "T. Scholl".

# The Observer

Volume 19, Number 17

May 22, 1998

THE OBERLIN COLLEGE FACULTY AND STAFF NEWSPAPER

## College Establishes Center for Russian, East European, and Central Asian Studies

Over the next three years Oberlin will receive \$500,000 from the Clowes Fund and \$250,000 from Edith Clowes '73 to endow the Oberlin Center for Russian, East European, and Central Asian Studies (OCREECAS) at the College. The center will be housed in Peters Hall. Tim Scholl, associate professor of Russian, will be the center's first director.

"The region remains of crucial importance to U.S. and international interests as the countries work to establish—with varying success—free market economies and more open societies in the wake of the break up of the Soviet Union," says Arlene Forman, associate professor of Russian, who wrote the center's proposal with Heather Hogan, professor of history, and Pamela Snyder, director of corporate and foundation support at the request of the Russian and East European Studies Curricular Committee.

"The possibilities for artistic, business, nonprofit, scholarly, and other forms of cooperation with the nations of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, unimaginable just a few years ago, are now virtually limitless," says Forman.

"Regional specialists and experts from other disciplines who are knowledgeable about the area," Hogan says, "have a unique opportunity to observe and assist in the historic political, economic, and social changes facing these countries as they forge post-Soviet identities, and the Center for Russian, East European, and Central Asian Studies will play a critical role in preparing Oberlin students to take advantage of these new opportunities and realities."

### 25 Countries, Many Activities

The countries selected for study and service—including Russia, Ukraine, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan—number more than 25 in all.

The center will sponsor new courses, internships, career-development opportunities, and cultural activities that will help students and the broader College

community learn about the historic political, economic, and social changes now challenging the targeted nations.

With career possibilities opening in business, environmental studies, international development, law, education, science, and government in the area, OCREECAS will also prepare Oberlin undergraduates who combine the study of Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia with other fields.

OCREECAS has seven primary goals:

- develop new internship and community-service opportunities in Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia for Oberlin students and recent Oberlin graduates,
- create a database of potential employers in the region,
- expand study-abroad opportunities,
- coordinate center activities with events made possible through endowments such as the Edith Clowes Lecture Fund,
- develop residencies by artists, scholars, and specialists from the region in conjunction with other departments at Oberlin,
- develop half-semester, credit-bearing courses on contemporary topics by distinguished visiting scholars, and
- establish a newsletter for students and alumni active and interested in the region.

Following Scholl's initial four-year appointment, the directorship will rotate annually among the six full-time faculty dedicated to the region. The six already serve as the Russian and East European Studies (REES) Curricular Committee.

The entire \$750,000 from The Clowes Fund and Edith Clowes is designated for the center's endowment. To strengthen the role of the center further, the College will seek additional support from alumni and public and private sources to increase the endowment and expand internship, curricular, and cultural programming.

### OCREECAS Internships and Fellowships

One of the most important initiatives of the center, says Scholl, will be the new internship and community-service fellowship program in Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia for upper-level students or recent graduates. "Designed to help efforts to build post-Soviet civil societies, the placements will give fellows invaluable

practical experience working with a nonprofit or nongovernmental organization in Eastern Europe or the former Soviet Union during this critical transition period."

Internship and volunteer-service hosts may include organizations addressing environmental pollution, reproductive- and other health-related issues, homelessness, child abuse, human rights, educational reform, drug abuse and alcoholism, labor issues, and sexual harassment, as well as groups dedicated to promoting independent media, funding for the arts, or grassroots activism.

OCREECAS will fund the fellowships, giving Oberlin students the financial freedom and unique opportunity to work at Russian, Eastern European, or Central Asian nonprofits, which, Snyder says "tend to have extremely limited resources and could not support an American intern on their own." Most importantly, she says, students interning at Russian, Eastern European, or Central Asian nonprofit organizations will be fully immersed in the culture, gaining an understanding of current conditions and local efforts to address social problems in a way not possible through positions at many U.S. or international organizations in the region—which are often headed by foreign staff with no regional expertise, hire locals primarily for translation or administrative support, and use English as the working language of the office.

Initially, all internships and volunteer service placements will last about eight weeks and take place in the summer. The budget will support two summer fellowships annually. Once the fellowship program has become established, the center director and faculty in the Russian and East European Studies (REES) Curricular Committee will seek to expand it to include semester and possibly academic-year positions and identify additional sources of funding.

The project will get under way July 1, with Scholl receiving released time and the services of a half-time intern for the first year of the four-year directorship. (Subsequent years of the directorship will carry release time for one course.) The first focus of the project will be to develop the center and identify other possible sources of support.

## Winter Term 1999

As our very first internship project, OCREECAS (in conjunction with the Russian Program) will sponsor a trip to volunteer in a Russian orphanage in January. A group of 2-4 Oberlin students, led by Visiting Assistant Professor and Mellon Fellow James Morgan, will travel to Tuzha, a small town in the Kirov region some 12 hours from Moscow by train. The orphanage (officially called an Internat) houses and educates approximately 120 children, ages 7 to 17. The Oberlin group will live and eat in the orphanage, working closely with the children for approximately three weeks.

## Who's Who in OCREECAS?

The Russian and East European Studies (REES) Curricular Committee will rotate the directorship of the Center for Russian, East European, and Central Asian Studies. The members of REES are Stephen Crowley, Assistant Professor of Politics; Arlene Forman, Associate Professor of Russian; Heather Hogan, Professor of History; Thomas Newlin, Assistant Professor of Russian; Tim Scholl, Associate Professor of Russian; Laszlo Scholz, Associate Professor of Spanish; Pamela Snyder, Oberlin's Director of Corporate/Foundation Support; and Veljko Vujacic, Assistant Professor of Sociology.

Crowley specializes in postcommunist transformations in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. His 1997 book, *Hot Coal, Cold Steel: Russian and Ukrainian Workers From the End of the Soviet Union to the Post-Communist Transformations*, was published by University of Michigan Press and was mentioned by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* as one of the books representing the new wave of research on the former Soviet Union.

Forman is involved in computer-based cultural instruction.

Hogan, author of *Forging Revolution: Metalworkers, Managers and the State in Saint Petersburg*, focuses on late-imperial labor history and the social history of early modern Russia.

Newlin is completing a book on the pastoral ideal in Russia from 1750 to 1825.

Scholl, author of *From Petipa to Balanchine: Classical Revival and the Modernization of Ballet*, is at work on a book that will examine the role of romanticism in the ballets of George Balanchine.

Scholz, who also teaches at University of Budapest, is an expert on Magyar culture. Snyder brings to the committee her considerable administrative experience gained at the American Council of Teachers of Russian.

Vujacic is concerned with social changes in Russia and Eastern Europe, with a particular emphasis on questions of nationalism.

Besides those whose primary responsibilities are in REES, other faculty members have agreed to serve as resources for OCREECAS. They include James Morgan, Visiting Assistant Professor of Russian and post-doctoral Mellon Fellow; Elena Monastireva-Andsell, Russian Faculty-in-Residence; Daniel Goulding, Professor of Film Studies and Theater Arts; and Victoria Skrupskelis, Professor of French and expert in Baltic literature.

## *From Alumni*

**David Billheimer, '62**, in addition to computer programming, teaches Russian at the Penobscot School in Maine. He says he enjoys communicating with Russian ham radio operators—in Cyrillic morse code!

**Marianne Boich, '63**, now raises sheep in Oregon. She did use her Russian after Oberlin, however: working at JFK Airport assisting Slavic-speaking passengers, and then teaching Russian and French to elementary school children in Arizona.

**Edith Miller Heier, '64**, teaches English and German at a language school in Germany, where she is involved in student exchange programs with the city of Grodno, Belarussia; as well as home-stay programs for children from the Minsk area affected by Chernobyl.

**Craig Packard, '65**, got his Ph.D. in Serbo-Croatian Literature at Ohio State. He worked for several years as an escort-interpreter for the U.S. State Department. His main interest, however, has been Slavic folk music. He has been the musical director for Zivili in Columbus, OH, and has since founded several bands which play the traditional music of a variety of Slavic ethnicities. One of his groups toured Romania in 1978.

**Rev. Frank Panchak, Jr., '68**, was ordained to the priesthood of the Russian Orthodox Church in America in 1983. His parish is located in Norfolk, Virginia—where he says that he is immersed in “all things Russian,” although he has had little opportunity to speak the language recently, since all the services are done in English. He is anticipating a trip to Russia in the near future.

With a Ph.D. in Slavic Linguistics, **Karen Rondestvedt, '70**, is the Slavic Bibliographer for the University of Pittsburgh Library System.

**Cynthia Semmler-Vakareliyska, '73**, is Associate Professor of Linguistics at the University of Oregon. Her focus on modern Bulgarian and Bulgarian Church Slavonic manuscripts takes her annually to Russia and Eastern Europe, where she maintains several professional contacts, occasionally publishing articles in Bulgarian scholarly journals.

**Beverly McCoy Michaels, '74**, has become a children's librarian, after nine years of teaching Russian.

**Nancy Tittler, '74**, is Lecturer in Russian at Binghamton University in New York.

**Kitty Purgason, '75**, recently got a chance to appreciate her Russian when she spent five months in Turkmenistan as a Fulbright Lecturer in TESOL methodology.

**Judith Zabarenko Abrams, '80**, is now a rabbi and a writer living in Houston, developing a course about Judaism for Russian-Jewish immigrants.

**Maribeth Dunajski, '80**, works as an import specialist for the U.S. Customs Service in Champlain, New York. She has put her Russian to use translating for Customs, as well as conducting training sessions for their International Affairs division in Latvia and Lithuania. She is currently planning her next training mission—to countries of the Asian-Pacific Economic Corporation.

Assistant Professor of Biology at Indiana University South Bend, **Andrew Schnabel, '80**, travelled to Moscow in '90 to work at the Vavilov Institute of General Genetics. Since his return, he has been keeping in touch with Russian biologists immigrating to the US.

**Kevin Block, '81**, has just returned to San Francisco from the former Soviet Union, where he has lived and worked since 1990 as a lawyer—from Moscow to Vladivostok to Kiev.

**Laura Georing, '81**, Associate Professor of Russian at Carleton College, has just returned from her fourth trip to Russia.

**John Harrington, '81**, is starting a new job—fresh from a fifteen-year career in travel—as designer of the Russian travel program for Academic Travel in Washington, D.C.

**Francis Butler, '82**, who has just returned from a visit to Yaroslavl, is Assistant Professor of Russian at Northern Illinois University.

**Ruth Goodyear Diver, '82**, owns a trade consulting business with her husband in New Zealand—working with companies exporting to Germany, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union.

**Joshua Searle-White, '82**, is Assistant Professor of Psychology at Allegheny College in Pennsylvania. In the past he has made thirteen trips to the FSU, leading delegations of psychologists on professional exchanges, working on US/Russia training programs, and conducting dissertation

research in Moscow. He also held a summer job with a US-Soviet fishing venture off the coast of Alaska. Recently he has been organizing training programs for Russian visitors to this country, with USAID.

**Tammy Teas, '82**, has just returned from a two-month stay in Central Asia and Russia: she particularly recommends Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. She is soon to embark on her next trip, to Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia this fall.

**Martha Loerke, '83**, is Director of Network Scholarship Programs for the Open Society Institute in New York (the Soros Foundation). She works with OSI representatives in 27 countries of the FSU and Eastern Europe.

**Jennifer Goheen Myers, '83**, has worked with Russian emigres at the Jewish Family and Children's Services in San Francisco, as well as spending time on Soviet factory ships in the Bering Sea. Home to somewhat warmer climes, she is now back in San Francisco—in a Russian-speaking neighborhood.

**Thomas Sigel, '86**, got an MA in Russian and East European Studies, which landed him a teaching position at a Youth Cultural Center in Leningrad. In 1989 he left pedagogy for the world of business. After working with joint ventures and trade in Russia and Eastern Europe, he filled a Vice-President's position in an Ohio bank, managing international finance; and found himself back in Eastern Europe, this time as economic policy analyst for the Soros Open Media Research Institute. Writing financial news articles for area publications, he eventually came to co-edit the OMRI Economics Weekly. Now living in Cincinnati, Mr. Sigel works for South-Western College Publishing.

A doctoral candidate in Russian and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, **Kirsten Painter, '87**, has made several trips to Russia over the past decade.

**Shirley Haruka Bekins, '88**, has just changed careers to domestic policy, but she used to work with the United States Institute of Peace on international conflict resolution, sometimes with Russia and Eastern Europe.

**Eliot Borenstein, '88**, is an Assistant Professor of Russian at NYU. He makes regular trips to Moscow.

**Robert DiGiacomo, '88**, now works for the Chevy Chase Bank in Maryland. From 1989 to 1996 he helped provide the citizens of St. Petersburg with

food and beverage products from IMMS, Stollwerk, and Frito-Lay.

As a graduate student at the University of Michigan, **Naomi Galtz, '89**, is combining her interests in sociology and Russian in a dissertation on dachas.

**Jennifer Cogley, '90**, has used her Russian skills in the non-profit sector, doing resettlement work with Russian-Jewish refugees, management training for small-business owners in the FSU, and even playing interpreter and clown for a Russian puppeteer. Now an MBA, Mrs. Cogley is Executive Coordinator for a non-profit health care network.

As an attorney in Delaware, **Michelle Morgan-Kelly, '90**, has maintained contact with several colleagues in Minsk and Moscow.

**Karen Segar, '90**, is now a Ph.D candidate in Sociology with a minor in Russian and East European Studies at Indiana University. Between her two fields of study she has already developed a lengthy resume: Summer Lecturer at the Moscow Center for Gender Studies, a year of teaching sociology at Ural State University for the Civic Education Project, and work on projects dealing with Russian women in the media and Soviet education. She says she also dabbles in Central Asian studies on the side, including a spurt of learning Uzbek.

**Sharon Vandivere, '90**, started life after Oberlin by teaching English in Estonia. She then landed a job in the Office for Central Europe and Eurasia at the National Academy of Sciences, administering grants for collaborations between American and foreign scientists. Although she now works on domestic policy, she says she has her Russian to thank for the opportunities she has had to travel abroad.

**Kim Brown, '91**, currently teaches literature to children from the FSU in a New York public high school. She still keeps in touch with friends in St. Petersburg.

As Administrative Manager for the International Finance Corporation, **Melissa Merrill, '91**, enjoys living in Minsk, Belarus.

After two years of graduate study in Moscow, **John Fowler, '93**, is working as a Russian-English translator for a law firm there, where he also takes music lessons.

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With her MFA in Acting from Carnegie-Mellon and the Moscow Art Theatre Program, **Rana Kazkaz, '93**, is currently performing in an off-Broadway production of Gogol's *The Marriage*, directed by Garik Cherniaknarsky. She is also a founding member of the American Russian Cultural Foundation.

**Jeff Piatt, '93**, plans to leave the world of database programming and start a career in Russia. He says he has been keeping up his language skills by watching Russian cable TV.

**Heather Daly, '96**, has just returned from two years in Moscow, where she studied International Education at Moscow State University, and then taught English to Russian and East European bankers and school children. She is now at Brown University, in the Slavic Literature Ph.D. Program.

**Carilynn Balbo, '97**, is off to St. Petersburg for a year, where she plans to teach English.

**Amelia Glaser, '97**, spent a "great year" in St. Petersburg, followed by a summer working in the Jewish Museum in Vilnius, Lithuania. She is now enrolled in the Comparative Literature Ph.D. Program at Stanford University.

Millionaires: Parables for the New Russia," she discussed her current research on the class of so-called "New Russians" that has arisen since the fall of the Soviet Union. In the second, she spoke about her experiences in Moscow interviewing people and listening to their stories about life in Russia before and after Perestroika—which led to her prize-winning book on the construction of Russian cultural identity through its talk.

The Czech novelist **Iva Pekarkova** read from her works (in English translation) at Oberlin on October 15, 1998. Ms. Pekarkova grew up in Prague, where she studied microbiology--before defecting to the West in 1985. For six years she worked as a cab driver in New York City.

She has published four novels so far: *Truck Stop Rainbows* (1989), *The World is Round* (1993), *Gimme the Money* (1996), and *The Scarz* (1998). The first two are available in English translation. Ms. Pekarkova's innovative and highly colloquial narratives draw, in part, on her own experiences in Communist Czechoslovakia, and later in an Austrian refugee camp and then in New York. She is among the best-known and most widely read of today's younger generation of Czech writers. Her visit was sponsored jointly by the Oberlin College Women Studies' Program and the Russian Program.

## Peters Hall

In the fall of 1996 the German and Russian Department, along with the rest of the foreign language and literature departments at Oberlin, moved into the newly renovated **Peters Hall**. Although lacking onion domes, Peters is full of many spacious classrooms. Nor should its archaic exterior fool you—Peters Hall is home to Oberlin's new Edith and Paul Cooper International Learning Center, which houses banks of networked computers and advanced audiovisual equipment for technology-aided teaching and learning. Peters also houses OCREECAS.

On October 15-18, 1998, the International Association for the Scholarly Study of Russian Old Ritualism hosted an **International Conference on Russian Old Believers**, in Erie, PA. The Conference featured panel discussions and speakers on the subject of "Belief in Traditional Russian Culture," given both by scholars in the field as well as by real-live Old Believers themselves. As Erie is one of the largest communities of Russian Old Believers in the United States, participants also had a chance to visit churches and attend services, hear a concert of 17th Russian liturgical chant, and view exhibits on the local history of the Old Believers.

## Events

In April 1998, as annual speaker in the Clowes Lecture Series, **Nancy Ries**, Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Colgate University and author of the book *Russian Talk: Culture and Conversation During Perestroika* (Cornell, 1997), gave two talks in Oberlin. In the first, entitled "Mafioso and

*We would like to hear from you.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

What contact have you had recently with Russia, Eastern Europe, or Central Asia?

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

We look forward to your reply. You can return this form, or write us at:

*OCREECAS  
50 North Professor St.  
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Or e-mail us: [ocreecas@oberlin.edu](mailto:ocreecas@oberlin.edu)

To find out what's new with us, check out the OCREECAS Website at:  
[www.oberlin.edu/~creecas/OCREECAS.html](http://www.oberlin.edu/~creecas/OCREECAS.html).

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