



Dr. Nina Vyatkina has been selected to serve as the next chair of the department after her year as interim chair. Professor Vyatkina was chair of the department of German Studies before the two departments were merged. We thank her for her service as interim director and are looking forward to her leadership in the department.

Current Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) Dr. Ari Linden has been asked to serve a year as interim Director of the Jewish Studies Program. Dr. RB Perelmutter will serve as interim DUS for SGES.

IN THIS ISSUE

Honors & Graduate Recognition Ceremony	3
Interview with Biljana Konatar	7
Event Round Up	11
Giving to the Department and Center	13

HONORS&GRADUATE RECOGNITION CEREMONY

This year we were again happy to celebrate our students who excelled in their language classes and those students who graduated from our department. The attendance by students and their friends and family at the recognition ceremony filled the room!

This year we recognized 30 students for excellence in their language studies and 9 students for their overall outstanding work and dedication. 3 studentswere inducted into Dobro Slovo, the national honor society for Slavic studies, and 8 were inducted into Delta Phi Alpha, the national German honor society. 9 students graduated with a BA in Slavic, German, and Eurasian Studies and 6 finished with a minor offered by our department. One graduate student passed their MA exams and will continue on to his Ph.D. with us. This academic year, the graduate certificate in Second Language Studies moved into the department and 5 students finished the certificate.

We were glad to welcome the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies (CREES) as part of our ceremony again this year. CREES recognized the recipients of their annual awards and fellowships.

We are thankful for the generosity of alumni and donors to the department, which allows us to give awards to our students. Your gifts are used to support students in the form of scholarships, but they also serve to recognize students' hard work and motivate them to develop their studies in and passion for the languages and cultures we teach.



Biljana Konatar with Excellence in BCMS awardees

Excellence in Language

Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, Serbian

- Luke Wolf Elementary
- Victoria Tate Elementary
- Oksana Vykhopen Intermediate
- · Paige Habiger Intermediate

German

- Dakota Appl Elementary
- Sarah Patti Elementary
- Archer Schutte Elementary
- Maeve MacNaughton Elementary
- · Lillian E. Kiracofe Intermediate
- · Caleb Hite High Intermediate
- Zander Semrau High Intermediate



Dr. Ljudmila Bilkic with Excellence in German awardees

Persian

- · Amelia Mohamadi Elementary
- Derick Reid Advanced

Polish

- · John Jan Krasnow Elementary
- · Krystle Kwiatkowska Intermediate
- · Ashley Wozniak -Intermediate



Dr. Razi Ahmad presents Amelia Mohamadi for Excellence in Persian at the Elementary level



Above: Marta Kapszewicz presents Krystle Kwiatkowska with an award for Excellence in Polish at the Intermediate level

Below: Sena Karayagiz with her students Aidan Reed-Schall and Andriyana Baran



Russian

- Christopher Dunn Elementary
- Dagan Fultz Elementary
- Kiwi Mango Elementary
- Kaitlyn Carson Elementary
- Alexander Hoefel Intermediate
- Oscar Pavlove Intermediate
- A Schroeder Advanced

Turkish

- Aidan Reed-Schall Elementary
- Andriyana Baran Elementary
- Emily Tummons Advanced

Ukrainian

- Trystan LaCoss Elementary
- Vera Yushchenko Elementary
- Masha Shishmareva Advanced
- Jordan Zaugg Advanced

Honor Society Inductions

Dobro Slovo | National Slavic Honor Society

- · Dakota Morgan
- · Armina Aliyah Raheel
- · Anika Schroeder
- David Spenny

Delta Phi Alpha | National German Honor Society

- Michial Argotsinger
- · Allison Bell
- · Katelyn Craft
- Mikayla Craven
- · Samuel Curnes
- · Connor Fenlon
- · Spencer Whitney Kerfoot
- · Kaylee Ann Schlein



Above: Dobro Slovo inductees

Below: Delta Phi Alpha inductees with Drs. Bilkic and Linden



Special Awards

Outstanding Graduating Majors

- Allison Bell (German Studies)
- Armina Aliyah Raheel (Russian Studies)

Outstanding Graduating Minors

- Katelyn Craft (German Studies)
- Charitha Lakkireddy (Peace and Conflict Studies)
- Mallory Davisson (Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies)

Outstanding Service to the Department

- Abigail Butler (Undergraduate)
- Jordan Zaugg (Graduate)

Outstanding Graduate Teaching Award

· Andriyana Baran

2024 Russian Scholar Laureate from the American Council of Teachers of Russian

Adrianna Brady



Graduating Majors with Dr. Ari Linden

Graduating Students

German Studies Majors

- · Allison Bell
- Anna Duntz
- Spencer Whitney Kerfoot
- Mikayla Craven
- · Ryan Joseph Nolan

Russian Studies Majors

- · Dakota Lee Morgan
- · Armina Aliyah Raheel
- · A Schroeder
- · David Spenny
- · Dakota Morgan

German Studies Minors

- Michial Argotsinger
- · Katelyn Craft
- Samuel Fenlon
- · Kaylee Ann Schlein

Peace and Conflict Studies Minors

· Charitha Lakkireddy

Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies Minors

Mallory Davisson

Masters in Slavic Languages and Literatures

• Murad Jalilov

Second Language Studies Graduate Certificate

- · Andriyana Baran
- Marta Kapszewicz
- · Aidana Rysbek
- · Kamila Saifeeva
- Emily Tummons



Thank you to our Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistants for spending their year teaching in our department!

From left to right:
Nataliia Kasianchuk (Ukrainian),
Mahliyo Mahmudova (Tajik),
Sena Karayağız (Turkish),
Alpaslan Çiftçi (Turkish).



APRIL 28

MEET BILJANA KONATAR,

MULTI-TERM LECTUERER BOSNIAN, CROATIAN, MONTENEGRIN, SERBIAN



Tell us a bit about where you are from, how you came to the states, and your career trajectory.

I am from Montenegro – a small country of an astounding beauty on the Adriatic coast in Southeastern Europe. I first came to the United States through an exchange program during my undergraduate studies and I was truly fascinated by the teaching and learning styles at the U.S. universities, which motivated me to pursue an MA in Russian and Slavonic Studies at the University of Missouri, Columbia, where I had previously completed my exchange year. Even though the program was focused on literary studies, I was able to connect my work to linguistics, which laid the groundwork for my PhD in the department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the

University of Washington in Seattle. I am incredibly grateful for the resources, knowledge, and mentorship I received there, which have shaped my academic path. My dissertation explores the intricate sociolinguistic landscape of presentday Montenegro. My work offers an informed sociolinguistic analysis of people's attitudes toward the existing language situation in Montenegro and evaluates the power of existing ideologies thus contributing to the extremely young field of Montenegrin sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology. During my graduate studies, I had the opportunity to teach and be a teaching assistant for a variety of courses, including the Russian language courses, which inspired me to obtain a Graduate Certificate in Second and Foreign Language Teaching and Learning. In my final project for the certificate, I focused on making instructional materials for Heritage Language Learners and Speakers because authentic materials targeting the needs of this group of students are necessary as they allow them to connect both with the local community of speakers and with their own heritage culture. I have made such materials for my Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, Serbian language students at the University of Kansas as well, which greatly supported their learning.



Boka Bay in Montenegro

Why do you work in this field? What are some of your academic and teaching interests?

I am always seeking answers and this field allows me to find them. Language is deeply tied to identity, history, and culture, and studying it provides a window into understanding societies. I am particularly interested in sociolinguistics, language policy, and how language reflects and shapes societal changes and would love to teach a course on this topic in the future. As I mentioned above, I am also interested in second and heritage language teaching and learning and doing research in this field. Teaching allows me to share this passion with students and help them connect language learning to broader cultural and historical contexts. I see language as a puzzle with thousands of pieces that need to be put together gradually and this is how I present it to my students. Each puzzle piece has its place and, together, the pieces make up a story. I always aim to model to my students how rewarding and enjoyable language learning is, so I engage them with different types of authentic and timely materials and exercises. I also incorporate AI in my language teaching, and it has proven to be a very useful resource when handled with care and clarity.

What attracted you to or excited you about working with the KU Department of Slavic, German, and Eurasian Studies?

I was thrilled when I saw the job advertisement for my current position because KU's Department of Slavic, German, and Eurasian Studies is known for its dedication to promoting lesser-taught languages, including BCMS, and it is also one of the departments that has a prominent program in Slavic linguistics. I must say that I thoroughly enjoyed my job interviews - I felt supported throughout the process, and I learned that the department's vision for the South Slavic program at KU matched mine, which was a clear sign that I should take the job. As my first academic year here comes to a close, I can share that I feel like I made the right decision joining the department. The adjustment process can take some time, but my colleagues made sure to reach out throughout the year, provide support and offer insights into the student body at KU, which was very helpful for my course planning.

I was happy to see how engaged and dedicated to learning my students were and I am very proud of their achievements this year.



Biljana Konatar presenting at the Winter 2024 International Symposium organized by the Slavic and Eurasian Research Center at Hokkaido University

What are some plans for the future? Do you have research projects that you are working on or about to start? Is there a course that you are hoping to develop? Plans for outreach for your language program?

I was honored to be invited to participate in the Winter 2024 International Symposium entitled "Languages, Nations, and Standardization in Slavia: So Similar and Yet So Different", organized by the Slavic and Eurasian Research Center at Hokkaido University, and co-organized, amongst other institutions, by our very own Department of Slavic, German, and Eurasian Studies at KU. I presented a talk entitled "Linguopolitical Montenegro: One Country, Two Factions, Three Points of View", which is a part of my dissertation research, and am currently preparing it for publication. Participating at this Symposium and listening to the excellent work my colleagues are doing around the globe I became

even more motivated and inspired to continue and expand my work from multiple different perspectives.

I am currently also preparing the entry on Serbo-Croatian for the Encyclopedia of Slavic Languages and Linguistics, for which our very own Professor Marc Greenberg serves as Editor-in-Chief. This has been an exciting project, and I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to it.

During my graduate studies, I started doing research on Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, Serbian Heritage and Second Language Learners' second-position clitic placement in unrehearsed narration, and I also plan to continue working on that in the coming academic year.

When it comes to teaching, I am currently working on developing and preparing an intensive first-year BCMS course for the Summer Language Institute at the University of Pittsburgh, where I will be teaching this summer. This is a wonderful opportunity for BCMS outreach, and I look forward to meeting my students and colleagues there.

Over the summer, I will also be developing an advanced BCMS course for the fall semester, refreshing my first- and second- year BCMS courses with new material, and making some updates to my SLAV 230: Vampires in Literature, Film, and Television course to include some more South-Slavic examples that I think my students would find engaging. I am also hoping to develop a sociolinguistics course examining the issues I have been focusing on in my research.

In terms of outreach, I am excited to continue organizing the BCMS Language Table in the department and to establishing connections with the BCMS-speaking communities in Kansas. I have already met a few people from the community and am currently shaping ideas on organizing a few South Slavic-related events in the coming academic year and involving my students in the process.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Professor Stephen Dickey, who joined me in organizing a BCMSthemed picnic for my BCMS students. We had burek, student-made sarma, and a variety of cakes from the region, which was very enjoyable. We are already looking forward to hosting a similar event at the beginning of the fall semester. This will be a great advertisement for the students who are thinking about/interested in taking BCMS courses.



Konatar outside the Yahiko Shrine in Nakajima Park in Sapporo, Japan.

Why do you think students should pursue Slavic Studies? What cultural and/or professional horizons does the language/field open up for students?

Slavic Studies offer unique insights into the histories, cultures, and societies of some of the most diverse and dynamic regions of Europe and Eurasia. Pursuing Slavic Studies not only deepens cultural understanding but also enhances career opportunities in international relations, global business, academia, intelligence, technology, translation studies, humanitarian work/NGOs, and many more. It is a fact that language learning is a door to different worlds, cultures, ways of thinking and meaning, and, in my opinion, it is essential for living in today's world which depends on international and intercultural connections.

I am going to address students and say: Take BCMS – not only will it make your CV stand out, but it will immerse you in a fascinating world of languages, cultures, and history. You'll gain unique insights into Southeastern Europe, a region so rich in diversity and complexity, and you will develop skills

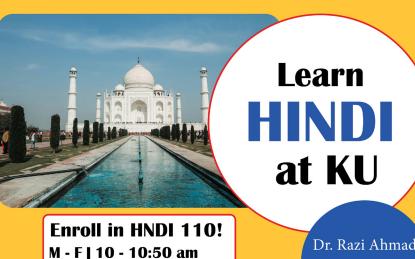
that will allow you to find your place in many different fields. Also – who wouldn't want to do a study abroad in the region?! Beautiful nature, great food, and friendly people. Sign me up!

On a more personal note: Is there something about Lawrence or KU that you've come to love (outside of our department, of course)? Any hidden gems that you have found so far?

I like the coziness that Lawrence offers. I love going to the happy hour at 715—they serve great food AND they often play German and BCMS music. It's an unexpected combination, to say the least, but I love it!

I have also enjoyed going to the concerts organized by the Bales Choral Society and regular walks at Clinton Park.





Dr. Razi Ahmad r.ahmad@ku.edu Hindi and Urdu, mutually comprehensible sister languages and collectively known as Hindustani. are spoken by over 800 million people worldwide.

Hindi and Urdu are key languages for professionals in international affairs.



Department of Slavic, German, and Eurasian Studies

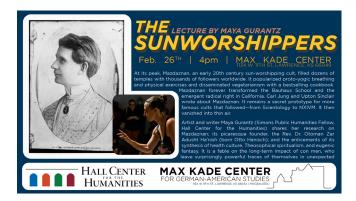
SGES will start offering Hindi-Urdu starting in the Fall 2025! The courses will be taught by a Fulbright Foriegn Language Teaching Assistant under the supervison of Dr. Razi Ahmad.

Frasier 227

EVENT RE-CAP

Maya Gurantz

On February 26, the Max Kade Center Studies hosted a talk by writer and artist Maya Gurantz, this year's Simons Paul Humanities Fellow at the Hall Center for the Humanities titled. In her talk, titled "The Sun Worshippers, Gurantz shared her research on Mazdaznan, an early twentieth-century sun-worshipping cult developed by Rev. Dr. Otoman Zar Adusht Ha'nish (born Otto Hanisch). Gurantz explored the popularity and influence of Mazdaznan, which filled dozens of temples with thousands of followers worldwide in its heyday and had a transformative effect on the Bauhaus school.



Schülerkongress

For the second year in a row after the event's return to an in-person format, we hosted the Kansas Association of Teachers of German's (KATG) annual *Schülerkongress*, at which middle and high school students across Kansas gather to celebrate the German language, participate in German language competitions, and learn more about German. Our faculty served as judges for the language competitions. We are looking forward to hosting the event again next year and look forward to hosting KATG's *Deutsches Wochenende* (immersive

experience for German teachers) at the Max Kade Center in September.

Tim Nunan

Timothy Nunan, Professor of Transregional Cultures of Knowledge in the Department for Interdisciplinary and Multiscalar Area Studies at the University of Regensburg, visited the Max Kade Center on April 9, and gave a presentation titled "Sick Man of Europe: German Politics and German-American Relations after the 2025 Elections." Professor Nunan's talk was one of several he gave at KU while in residence as a visiting scholar supported by the Leibniz ScienceCampus at the University of Regensburg.



PONSORED BY: SLAVIC, GERMAN, AND EURASIAN STUDIES | INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS | CENTER FOR RUSSIAN, EAST EUROPEAN, AND EURASIAN STUDIES

Shiva Ahmadi

The Peace and Conflict Studies Minor proudly hosted acclaimed artist Shiva Ahmadi for a campus visit this spring. Known for her vibrant, politically charged works that address themes of violence, displacement, and cultural identity, Ahmadi engaged with students and faculty through a public lecture. Her talk explored how art can serve as a powerful tool for resistance and dialogue, drawing on her own experiences as an Iranian-American artist. The visit sparked meaningful conversations about global conflict, the role of art in activism, and the importance of cross-cultural

understanding in promoting peace. This interdisciplinary talk was supported by the Spencer Museum of Art, Kress Foundation Department of Art History, Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies, Max Kade Center for German-American Studies, Center for Global and International Studies, Department of Environmental Studies, and Department of Geography and Atmospheric Science.

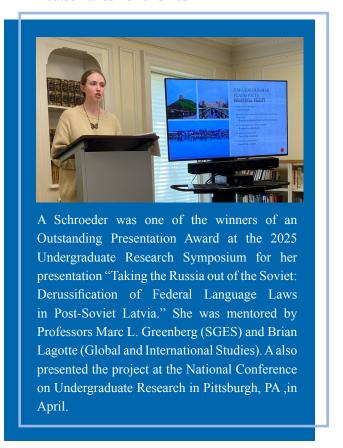


Capstone Symposium

The capstone course for the Bachelors in Slavic, German, and Eurasian Studies was taught as a combined research methods course, where students wrote an advanced research paper on a topic of their choosing. This course brought students from all concentrations of the major into a single course under the instruction of Director of Undergraduate Studies, Dr. Ari Linden. At the end of the semester, the students presented their papers at a symposium held at the Max Kade Center. The titles of their papers are below.

- → Allison Bell, "Gender-Inclusive Language in German Political Discourse: Examining Language Use in the 2025 German Election"
- → Anna Duntz, "@socoolalter: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Kiezdeutsch and Jugendsprache on TikTok"
- → A Schroeder, "Russian Language in the Baltic States: Status and Perspectives."

- → Armina Raheel, "Weaponizing Virtual Worlds: The Russian Government's Utilization of Video Games for Sociopolitical Conditioning"
- → Mikayla Craven, "How Germany Didn't Get Hooked: Lessons from Germany's Resistance to the Opioid Epidemic"
- → Spencer Kerfoot, "The Businessperson's Case for Marx's Communism: An Epistemic-Causal Synthesis at Societal Value" / "Des Geschäftsmenschen Eintreten für Marx' Kommunismus: Eine epistemisch-kausale Synthese an gesellschaftlichem Wert"
- → David Spenny, "From Soviet Legacy to Russian Modern Warfare: The Change of Russian Army Training and Doctrine from 1950 to 2025"
- → Ryan Nolan, "Adjunct to the Whirlwind: Foreign Volunteers in German Service During the Second World War"
- → Michael Otipoby, "Germany's Terrorism" / "Deutschlands Terrorismus"



This edition of the SGES Newsletter was edited by Dr. Marike Janzen and Wyatt Haywood.

GIVE & SUPPORT

If you are so inclined and able, please consider donating to the department or the Center. Donor funds greatly enable the support we give students, faculty research, outreach and events, and so much more. Your donations help us provide scholarships and conference funding for both our undergraduate and graduate students. They are vital for covering various expenses such as bringing in guest speakers like Maya Gurantz, Tim Nunan, and Shiva Ahmadi, that benefit not only our students but the KU community as a whole. The work that is done at the Max Kade Center for German-American Studies relies entirely on donor-gifted funds, which allows us to hire student workers and interns, maintain the Sudler house and annex, preserve our collections, and host events. To

support the department, visit sges.ku.edu or the use the QR code below to learn about our four major funds and how to donate to the department and Center.



