Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminar on Migration

Fulbright Filmmaker Dreaming Big in La La Land
A New Uchitel in Panagyurishte
Ballet in the Balkans
The Fulbright Bulgaria Newsletter is a biannual magazine published by the Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange (Fulbright) in print and electronically. Opinions expressed by the authors are their own and do not necessarily represent those of the Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange. While every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the material in this publication, the Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange does not accept liability for any errors or omissions.

**BULGARIAN-AMERICAN COMMISSION FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

- **Krassimir Valchev**
  
  Minister of Education and Science  
  Honorary Co-Chairperson

- **Eric Rubin**
  
  US Ambassador to Bulgaria  
  Honorary Co-Chairperson

**BULGARIAN MEMBERS:**

- **Professor Ivan Dimov**
  
  Deputy Minister of Education

- **Victoria Melamed**
  
  Minister Plenipotentiary, Eastern Europe and Central Asia Directorate  
  Ministry of Foreign Affairs

- **Maria Metodieva**
  
  Family Economic Success Officer  
  Trust for Social Achievement, Sofia

- **Dr. Julia Stefanova**
  
  Former Executive Director  
  Bulgarian Fulbright Commission

**AMERICAN MEMBERS:**

- **Matthew Hagengruber**
  
  Attaché for Educational and Cultural Affairs  
  U.S. Embassy

- **Thomas Higgins**
  
  CEO, Yatoto

- **Sarah Perrine**
  
  Executive Director  
  Trust for Social Achievement

- **Brian Stimmer**
  
  Counselor for Public Affairs  
  U.S. Embassy

- **Jeffery Warner**
  
  Head of Teacher Support  
  Teach for Bulgaria

**FULBRIGHT BULGARIA STAFF**

- **Angela Rodel**
  
  Executive Director  
  arodel@fulbright.bg

- **Anastassia Miteva**
  
  Financial Officer  
  amiteva@fulbright.bg

- **Tanya Petrova**
  
  Accountant/Cashier  
  tpetrova@fulbright.bg

- **Maria Kostova**
  
  Program Officer, Bulgarian Grantees  
  mkostova@fulbright.bg

- **Iliana Dimitrova**
  
  Program Officer, ETA Program  
  idimitrova@fulbright.bg

- **Rada Kaneva**
  
  Program Officer, U.S. Grantees  
  rkanova@fulbright.bg

- **Snejana Teneva**
  
  Educational Advisor  
  steneva@fulbright.bg

- **Lyra Konstantinova**
  
  Administrative Secretary  
  konstantinova@fulbright.bg

**Cover photo:** Fulbright-Hays seminar participants enjoying Bulgarian films

---

**Fulbright Bulgaria thanks its sponsors for their support:**

- [America for Bulgaria Foundation](#)
- [Optix](#)
- [Visa International](#)
- [Thanks to Scandinavia](#)
- [Acupa Meafet AA](#)
- [Contour Global Maritsa East 3](#)
- [The University of Oklahoma](#)
- [Opticoelectron](#)
Dear Fulbright alumni and friends,

Although Sofia is turning colder and the streets are slowly filling with the delicious scent of roasted peppers, we here at Fulbright Bulgaria are still warmed by wonderful summer memories – which did not include much time for beach-bumming on the Black Sea! In June our AY2016-17 US grantees shared stories, laughter and tears at the Wrap Up Seminar in Burgas, and we also sent off our new cohort of Bulgarian students and scholars to begin their Fulbright adventures in the US during the 2017-18 academic year. Besides terrific sunny weather, July also brought us a fantastic group of 16 US high school teachers on the Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminar. The month we spent learning, traveling and conversing with this intelligent, thoughtful and energizing group was certainly one of the high points of my Fulbright career to date – see the feature article in this newsletter to find out what we discovered about immigration, emigration and Bulgaria’s place with Europe and the EU.

Before we could catch our breath, it was already time for the training seminar for our incoming AY2017-18 cohort of 33 ETAs, also joined by our six US student researchers. Together the whole group studied Bulgarian, discovered shapska salata, honed their teaching skills, and learned to dance a mean прavo horo – not bad for ten short days! We wish them the best of luck in their placements and studies – stay tuned for news of their achievements in the next issue of the newsletter.

Our returning Bulgarian grantees and alumni have also been active – we thank all of them who opened their homes this September to our current US grantees for homemade meals and conversations, as part of our new initiative to build bridges between the US and Bulgarian members of our Fulbright Bulgaria community. Bulgarian alums will also have the opportunity to share their experiences more formally at our third annual “Fulbright Open Lectures” on October 30, where recently returned Fulbrighters give short TED-style presentations on their personal and professional experiences in the US.

We wish all of you a healthy, happy and productive new academic year – we look forward to hearing from you about your adventures and achievements!

Best,
Angela

---

Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange

VISITING HOURS:
Monday – Friday, 02:00 – 04:00 p.m.
12 Vitosha Blvd, 5th floor, 1000 Sofia, Bulgaria
Tel: +359 2 981 85 67 | Fax: +359 2 988 45 17
fulbright@fulbright.bg | www.fulbright.bg
In July 2017, sixteen American high schools teachers who teach subjects ranging from history to civics to special education to literature spent a month in Bulgaria as part of the Fulbright Hays Summer Seminar “Bulgaria in the Context of Migration and Challenges to European Cohesion,” organized by the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission.

Funded by the US Department of Education, the Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminar program provides short-term study and travel seminars abroad for U.S. educators in the social sciences and humanities for the purpose of improving their understanding and knowledge of the peoples and cultures of other countries. Topics and host countries of the seminars vary from year to year – in 2017, Bulgaria, Chile and Thailand were the featured countries.

The 2017 Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminar in Bulgaria introduced participants to the country’s rich cultural and political history, exploring how its past affects its current national identity. Through meetings with prominent scholars, NGO representatives, government representatives, artists and members of civil society, seminar participants investigated the country’s historical and contemporary relationship with the EU, NATO, Russia, and Turkey and how this has created opportunities and challenges for Bulgaria’s European integration.

Because Bulgaria is an EU border state on the frontlines of the recent refugee and migrant crisis, we discussed the country’s strategies for dealing with the influx of newcomers that has challenged regional and European stability. The seminar also discussed migration in a broader sense, not only addressing refugees and migrants from the Middle East and Africa, but also Bulgarian emigration to the EU and US for educational and employment opportunities. Lecturers examined how the “brain drain” of more than a million Bulgarians to the US and Europe has had a profound effect on the country demographically, economically, educationally, and culturally, while participants explored how Bulgarians experience immigration on a personal level through contemporary films and literature.

The seminar kicked off at the University of Chicago, where the two-day pre-departure orientation offered a crash course in Bulgarian history and culture, as well as a general introduction to the current refugee and migrant crisis in Europe. Since

The Opportunities and Challenges of Migration: The 2017 Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminar in Bulgaria

by Angela Rodel
Chicago is the “Bulgarian capital of the US,” participants also met with prominent Bulgarian immigrants from all walks of life and who had arrived in America at different times and for different reasons. The Fulbright-Hays group visited a Bulgarian church, had a feast at a local Bulgarian restaurant hosted by Bulgarian Consul General in Chicago Ivan Anchev, and learned to dance their first horo!

After this introduction, seminar participants were well-prepared to dive into the realities of Bulgarian life – after a short stay in Sofia and an intensive schedule of lectures, tours and cultural events, the group set off for Veliko Tarnovo, Varna and Burgas, where they visited historical and cultural sites and enjoyed lectures by local scholars, artists and NGO activists. After learning so much about migration in theory, the group spent a day in the Harmanlii refugee camp, where they helped give English lessons to children and talked to Syrian and Afghan youngsters about their experiences. Back in Sofia, their first-hand experiences with asylum seekers were put into broader context during a day-long seminar on refugee and migration issues that featured speakers from the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior, UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration, the Bulgarian Red Cross and other scholars, journalists and NGO representatives.

Since the discussion of migration inevitably brings up the topic of borders, the Fulbright-Hays group hopped across Bulgaria’s southern border with Greece and spent four days in the Thessaloniki area exploring how the refugee crisis has played out there and comparing the differences and similarities to the Bulgarian experience. Our wonderful hosts from the Greek Fulbright Commission, in addition to organizing a delicious and fascinating program that introduced us to Greek culture, history and cuisine, also arranged for a visit to the Diavata refugee camp to tour the facility, talk with staff and observe lessons.

The seminar finished with a trip to the lovely and historic city of Plovdiv, where participants met with city officials, explored the city’s impressive past and vibrant present, and were treated to a spectacular performance by the folk music and dance ensemble of the Academy of Dance, Music and Visual Arts in Plovdiv. Everywhere the group went, local Bulgarians were interested in finding out more about the American teachers’ work and their impressions of Bulgaria. The largest national television network, bTV, even put together a report on the Fulbright-Hays seminar: http://www btw.bg/video/shows/tazi nedelia/videos-nedelia/amerikanski uchiteli-se-obuchavat-u-nas.html.

Upon returning to Sofia, all 16 participants gave presentations about their experience and how they intend to incorporate their new knowledge into their school curriculums, which will introduce hundreds of American high school students to aspects of Bulgarian culture. One participant notes: “This experience was life changing. It informs how I teach students about current events and history and it is going to be a huge part of my instruction regarding the factors that influence identity development. Furthermore, my understanding of Eastern Europe and Bulgaria is much stronger now and that will become a part of how I teach students social-psychology - how culture effects behavior.”

The Bulgarian Fulbright Commission would like to thank our partners at the Department of Education, the University of Chicago, the Greek Fulbright Commission and our Bulgarian lecturers and presenters for helping make the 2017 Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminar in Bulgaria a success!
Na Esen s Pesen: Welcoming the 2017-18 US Grantees

By Angela Rodel and Iliana Dimitrova

Ideally, every year Bulgarian children are encouraged to greet the fall and the new school year with a song: na esen s pesen. True to this tradition, Fulbright Bulgaria also greeted fall – and our new cohort of US grantees – with a song, as well as an intensive orientation program to get the ready for the exciting year ahead.

Thirty-one Fulbright | America for Bulgaria Foundation English Teaching Assistants, six Fulbright student researchers and two corporate-sponsored Fulbright English Teaching Assistants spent the first ten days of September together in Sofia to prepare for their teaching and research projects. On their first day, they were welcomed by Commission Executive Director Angela Rodel and Natalia Miteva, Director Programs for Education at the America for Bulgaria Foundation. U.S Embassy representatives Brian Stimmler, Counselor for Public Affairs, Mathew Hagengruber, Attaché for Educational and Cultural Affair; Kate McGeary, Consular Chief and Terry Cobble, Regional Security Officer,
also spoke to the new grantees and emphasized the importance of their role as cultural ambassadors of the United States to Bulgaria. Dr. Blagorodna Makeva, Deputy Director of the National Police Directorate at the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior, was a special guest to the session and highlighted some safety and security aspects of the grantees’ stay in Bulgaria.

The orientation included daily Bulgarian language classes, cultural adjustment discussions and workshops on teaching methodology, as well as lectures on Bulgarian history, culture, politics, and demographics. Regional English Language Officer Jen Macarthur stationed in Belgrade, Serbia, was able to share her vast experience in two special sessions, Teaching Speaking and Teaching a Multilevel Classroom. Experienced Bulgarian teachers and ETA mentors introduced the new ETAs to the administrative organization of the Bulgarian school and the Bulgarian grading system. Most of the other teaching workshops, such as Lesson Planning, Classroom Management, Community Involvement, cultural adjustment discussions as well as the traditional mock lesson practice, were led by second-year ETAs, who will be serving as informal mentors to the new teachers in the coming year.

A whole day of orientation was dedicated to the presentation and training of the BEST Foundation. BEST is a Fulbright legacy organization, started in 2013 by six English teaching assistants. Today, many of the former student debaters and performers from various corners of Bulgaria are on the foundation’s management team, together with current ETAs. BEST Executive Director, Dena Popova, and Assistant Director and Fulbright|ABF ETA Hannah Combe, introduced the history, goals and achievements of the organization to over 60 ETAs and Bulgarian mentor teachers.

Part of the first cultural experiences of the young Americans were a traditional Bulgarian dinner complete with a Fire walking show, a visit to the magnificent Rila Monastery and a welcome party at the Children’s Museum MUZEIKO, hosted by the ETA program’s sponsor, the America for Bulgaria Foundation. Some new initiatives, suggested by last year’s grantees, took off quite successfully at this year’s orientation. The mini-fair with partner organizations gave them an opportunity to informally present their work and introduced grantees to ways of getting involved as volunteers while in Bulgaria. A unanimous highlight of the orientation was another new initiative of the Commission, which asked Bulgarian volunteer host families to invite new grantees to their homes for a home-made meal and getting to know each other. Media training, led by experienced journalists Lyuba Yordanova and Ivaylo Vezhenkov, was also offered to the new grantees for the first time. On the last evening, the US Fulbright grantees, program partners and supporters enjoyed a farewell cocktail with live Bulgarian folk singing and dancing – and many joined in the horo themselves! We wish all our grantees a terrific year and hope they remain “on song” during their time in Bulgaria!
As of September 2017, Fulbright ETA Aaron Ross will have the chance to make an American contribution to the town’s rich tradition of educational and civic activity by teaching at the Professional School of Industrial Technologies, Management and Tourism in Panagyurishte, thanks to support from three local companies. Three 100% Bulgarian-owned companies have partnered with the Fulbright Program for English Teaching Assistants – Assarel-Medet JSC, which is the biggest and leading Bulgarian company for open pit mining and processing of copper ores, Opticoelectron Group JSCo, the largest producer of quality optical components and OEM products on the Balkans, and OPTIX JSC, the most innovative Bulgarian company in the area of security and optical systems.

Aaron Ross has a B.S. degree in Business Administration/ Finance, Insurance and Real Estate, as well as two years of experience in Nepal as a Peace Corps volunteer. His main duty is teaching English at the Professional School of Industrial Technologies, Management and Tourism in Panagyurishte. The dual system of education at the school allows students the opportunity to gain practical professional skills in disciplines such as Mining Electro Mechanics, Auto Transport Equipment, Laser and Optical Equipment and Mechanical Systems with Digital Program Control.

Another part of Aaron’s work includes English language trainings for the employees of the three partners as well as to community members. In his first few weeks in town, Aaron has already met many new friends and colleagues and started playing pick-up basketball with students and community members at the new sports center in town. He has already held his first English language workshops with employee groups and the interest to his classes is high. In his spare time he has been training for the Sofia Marathon, which he completed successfully on October 15 together with other Fulbrighters.

“I have truly enjoyed my time so far in Panagyurishte! I believe people make a place truly great, and Panagyurishte is full of some of the nicest people that I have ever met”.

Panagyurishte, a beautiful town nestled in the Balkan foothills, has long been the home of narodni buditeli, or enlighteners of the people, and is famous for its revolutionary history, as it was the one of the centers of the 1876 April Uprising against Ottoman Rule.

A New Uchitel in Panagyurishte:
Fulbright Bulgaria Partners with Local Companies to Bring an ETA to Their Town

by Angela Rodel

Panagyurishte, a beautiful town nestled in the Balkan foothills, has long been the home of narodni buditeli, or enlighteners of the people, and is famous for its revolutionary history, as it was the one of the centers of the 1876 April Uprising against Ottoman Rule.

As of September 2017, Fulbright ETA Aaron Ross will have the chance to make an American contribution to the town’s rich tradition of educational and civic activity by teaching at the Professional School of Industrial Technologies, Management and Tourism in Panagyurishte, thanks to support from three local companies. Three 100% Bulgarian-owned companies have partnered with the Fulbright Program for English Teaching Assistants – Assarel-Medet JSC, which is the biggest and leading Bulgarian company for open pit mining and processing of copper ores, Opticoelectron Group JSCo, the largest producer of quality optical components and OEM products on the Balkans, and OPTIX JSC, the most innovative Bulgarian company in the area of security and optical systems.

Aaron Ross has a B.S. degree in Business Administration/ Finance, Insurance and Real Estate, as well as two years of experience in Nepal as a Peace Corps volunteer. His main duty is teaching English at the Professional School of Industrial Technologies, Management and Tourism in Panagyurishte. The dual system of education at the school allows students the opportunity to gain practical professional skills in disciplines such as Mining Electro Mechanics, Auto Transport Equipment, Laser and Optical Equipment and Mechanical Systems with Digital Program Control.

Another part of Aaron’s work includes English language trainings for the employees of the three partners as well as to community members. In his first few weeks in town, Aaron has already met many new friends and colleagues and started playing pick-up basketball with students and community members at the new sports center in town. He has already held his first English language workshops with employee groups and the interest to his classes is high. In his spare time he has been training for the Sofia Marathon, which he completed successfully on October 15 together with other Fulbrighters.

“I have truly enjoyed my time so far in Panagyurishte! I believe people make a place truly great, and Panagyurishte is full of some of the nicest people that I have ever met”. 
The Fulbright Commission Project Management Program is designed to boost the career development of our alumni and keep their knowledge at the cutting edge, as the Fulbright experience lasts far beyond one year on campus. The most important industry-recognized global certification by the American Project Management Institute is now available to the Bulgarian public through our Project Management training and examination at the Fulbright Prometric Test Center.

Many thanks to PMP trainer Krzysztof Filipiuk and Training Coordinator Lyra Konstantinova for their hard work in designing and developing this new course!

The Project Management Program celebrates yet another success – in less than a year since the initiation of the program in fall of 2016, four of our PMP Exam Preparation alumni – Julius Tenev, Reni Grigorova-Rueva, Dimitar Ruev and Stefan Gospodinov – have passed their certification exam with flying colors and become the proud holders of the prestigious Project Management Professional title.

Bulgarian Fulbright alumni are welcome to contact us at pmcourses@fulbright.bg for more information on how to enroll in future project management courses.
Welcome you back to Bulgaria, Morgan! What brings you back this time?

Hi guys! Thanks for the welcome back! I just got to Sofia after spending some time in Pleven and traveling around Bulgaria a bit with friends. This time around I’m here for two reasons – the first of which is to begin some of my master’s degree research and the second is to do an internship in a related field. I’ll be here in Sofia for six weeks total.

My research is on the production and reproduction of legacies surrounding chitalishta (community centers) over time – it’ll follow a historical institutionalist analysis. I’m still in the early stages of the research, since I’m in a two-year program and this summer marks the halfway point of the degree. Essentially over the next year I will focus a lot more on Bulgarian history, chitalishta, cultural policy, community development, and institutional persistence, change, and transformation.

The other reason I’m here is an internship with the Bread Houses Network. It’s a really interesting initiative that I am looking forward to engaging with! It is a collection of social enterprises whose mission revolves around community development and building and the reduction of social exclusion through bread-making workshops.

From my time as an ETA I took away a lot of personal growth, professional experience, and insight into what I wanted to study for my master’s degree.

What did you enjoy most about being an MA student in Den Haag and what did you miss about Bulgaria?

One thing I enjoy is the spirit of my institute in Den Haag – it’s an international institute, which is part of Erasmus University Rotterdam. The institute is only for master’s and doctoral students and is small enough that you know nearly all of the other students. The student body has members from every part of the world. People have particular places, theories,
and phenomena that they are really nerdy and passionate about. For me, studying there and hearing about everyone’s lives, research focuses, and perspectives is my favorite part. It is definitely never dull!

As for Bulgaria, I definitely miss the food (namely yogurt, sirene, tarator, and tomatoes) and the language the most. I also miss my colleagues at GPChE and Pleven community members a ton – I think of them often when I’m abroad.

Together with ETAs Alex Kieselstein and Kassie Bienhoff, you were one of our most passionate Bulgarian language learners! Говориш ли още български?

What did you take away from your ETA experience in Bulgaria and what is your advice for future ETAs?

From my time as an ETA I took away a lot of personal growth, professional experience, and insight into what I wanted to study for my master’s degree. It really was a formative experience that I am still so grateful for! One particular thing that I learned was patience and flexibility. Being an ETA was extremely rewarding and extremely challenging – sometimes my planned lessons would flop and other days they would fly – being patient, flexible, adaptable, and open-minded helped me overcome the challenges! My advice is to be open, to engage with as many people in your community and school as you can, and to not fear being uncomfortable – it’s a part of growth.

What are your plans once you complete your internship program?

After I finish my internship I will be moving to Barcelona for the second year of my master’s degree program. I’ll graduate (stiskam palci) at the end of the academic year and then I’ll search for work in the fields of community development and arts and culture. I’m not sure where I’ll end up, but I have a feeling it will at least be near Bulgaria, if not in it.
August 8, 2016, lunchtime. Sofia Airport. I am accompanied by my girlfriend and two suitcases, with a head full of doubts, fear and uncertainty. I am just about to depart for the U.S. where I will pursue a LL.M. (Masters in Law) degree in international and comparative law in George Washington University Law School in Washington, D.C. This is going to be my first time living abroad for a long period of time and being away from my family and friends in Sofia. I am not ashamed to admit that I was afraid.

The financial difficulties, the possible loneliness and home sickness, the overwhelming uncertainty of how would I manage to fit into the multinational academic environment in particular, and in U.S. society in general, made my head spin. Would I be able to find a place to live, to meet friends, to demonstrate my abilities, to assert my identity and my values?

If I had only known then that what followed would be the most amazing, life-changing and difficult ten months in my life! I was lucky enough to have two fellow Bulgarian Fulbrighters onboard the same flight to Atlanta, Georgia, where we were picked up and taken to the campus of Kennesaw State University for the four-day Fulbright Gateway Orientation, where we were introduced to the basics of the American values, the ethics in the U.S. academic culture and the difficulties we might have. The orientation was greatly helpful because it allowed me to gather some preliminary impressions what a U.S. university is and how to act in an international academic environment, not to mention the great Fulbrighters I met there. I still remember the late night talks with my roommate – Maidul from Bangladesh – about the life, currency and central bank of Bangladesh (where he was working), international law and finance, and how much we are both going to miss our friends and families throughout our stay in the U.S.

Four days later, on Friday evening, there I am in D.C. with the two suitcases and a Google Maps route to the overly expensive hostel packed with drunk tourists which was going to be my home for the next ten days. Luckily, I met Guido from the Netherlands – my future classmate and roommate – that same evening. The next two weeks were gone in the blink of an eye – we walked around the Foggy Bottom area where the GW Law campus is located, looking for affordable accommodation, then we moved in, met some other classmates – including Milena (Italy), John (Sweden), the two Niharikas (India), Francisco (Chile), Federico (Uruguay), Sidd (India), Nicolo (Italy), Nasreen (Luxembourg) and others – who turned out to be some of the most amazing people I have ever met and true friends throughout the next year. The orientations, the first reading assignments prior to our classes, the evenings in the library, the lobby of the law school or the beautiful flowery courtyard, our excitement and anxiety about our first classes, the cold calls and the Socratic method – I remember everything as if it were yesterday.
GW Law is the oldest law school in Washington, D.C. and home to about 2,000 students each year, some 400 of which are international. It is located right next to the World Bank headquarters and two blocks away from the White House. The program I was enrolled in was focused on international economic law with a course in the field of international commercial and investment arbitration, public international law, international trade law, and international business transactions. I had the honour and privilege to be taught by and work with some of the most highly accomplished academics and practitioners in these areas such as Sean D. Murphy, Steve Charnovitz, John Crook, Stanimir A. Alexandrov (Bulgarian) and others. But apart from the exceptional quality of the education, what I value the most were all the great people I met during my program. I will always remember the rooftop parties with my colleagues, the long nights in the library or at someone’s home preparing for the rapidly approaching assignments and exams, the uncontrolled laughter in hard moments, the Friday nights out, all the events organized by the law schools, the long conversations with Milena and Ann about the uncertain future, the loneliness and how difficult it is to maintain proper long-distance relationships with our loved ones, the talks with Jia (Matt) from China who badly wanted to complete his PhD on the U.S. Constitution’s First Amendment, regardless of the delicate politics involved in his post-PhD career in China – these memorable moments instilled a firm belief in me that people share the same values and emotions, the same hopes for happiness and the same goodness, notwithstanding their place of origin as well as their cultural and educational background. This is the greatest lesson I learned from my experience as a Bulgarian Fulbrighter in the U.S.

I must mention one more person without whom my experience would not be the same – Brian Murphy – a former U.S. Department of State officer, Fulbright alumni and a great friend of Bulgaria. Brian tirelessly introduced me to the U.S. lifestyle and traditions with all the attention and kindness one could imagine. Together we visited Labour Day pool picnics, U.S. Army Bands concert, museum exhibitions and lectures, and professional networking activities. The great time I had with Brian learning about U.S. traditions, habits and values immensely contributed to the fullness of my Fulbright experience.

I also greatly appreciate the difficulties I faced during my program – I was not always over the moon. There were times when I felt down and lonely, when I had rebellious thoughts toward the hierarchical success system. However, I firmly believe that each failure is a building stone in our path of personal growth. As the Dalai Lama once said: “When you lose, do not lose the lesson.”

What was important was that, I was lucky enough to find great friends with whom I was able to share all my fears and doubts and to receive support.

I managed to graduate with Highest Honors at the top of our LL.M. class. I also had the great opportunity to work for the Honorable Judge Charles N. Brower and to assist him on high-profile arbitration cases. Judge Brower as well as his clerks Michael Daly and Jawad Ahmad are incredible professionals and people and also significantly contributed to my experience. We are still in touch and I receive continuous support and advice from them in my professional path.

May 25, 2017, around 4 pm. After several nights out at yet another “goodbye” party, and after a “goodbye” breakfast followed by a “goodbye” lunch, I am entering Room No. 305 of the Law School where Milena, Nicolo, John, Federico, and Sidd – most of my dearest friends – are preparing for the New York bar exam. The time to say a final goodbye has come. I am hugging each one of them, failing to hide the tears in my eyes. Milena is crying and leaves the room. The others follow me into the hallway. I turn my back and enter the elevator as my heart is torn apart. Ann sees me home and gives me a final hug. In a couple of hours Brian picks me up to take me to Dulles airport. He reminds me that we will see each other in February 2018 when he is coming in Bulgaria to teach as a Fulbright scholar.

That was my Fulbright experience at GW Law in AY 2016/2017 – a year full of memories, laughter, tears, and friends. Friends who will always have a special place in my heart. After all, this is the true Fulbright experience – to understand each other, to embrace the differences and to create friendships and long-lasting links which will change the world for the better. Diplomas and achievements will always have secondary importance.
Bulgarian Fulbright Grantees
Academic Year 2017-2018

Visiting Scholars

Dr. Petya Dimitrova
Field of specialization: Immunology
Home Institution: BAS, Institute of Microbiology
Host Institution in the U.S.: Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN
Fall 2017

Dr. Tanya Dimova
Field of specialization: Immunobiology
Home Institution: BAS, Institute of Biology
Host Institution in the U.S.: Yale University, New Haven, CT
Spring 2018

Dr. Ana Ganeva
Field of specialization: Music
Home Institution: Veliko Turnovo University
Host Institution in the U.S.: University of Washington, Seattle WA
Spring 2018

Dr. Bozhil Hristov
Field of specialization: Linguistics
Home Institution: Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridsky”
Host Institution in the U.S.: University of Texas-Austin, Austin TX
Spring 2018

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ivaylo Ivanov
Field of specialization: Medicine
Home Institution: National Reference Laboratory of HIV
Host Institution in the U.S.: University of Florida, Gainesville, FL
Spring 2018

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Jivko Kissovski
Field of specialization: Physics
Home Institution: Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridsky”
Host Institution in the U.S.: Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA
Fall 2017

Prof. Dr. Kornelia Slavova
Field of specialization: Theatre/Drama
Home Institution: Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridsky”
Host Institution in the U.S.: University of Washington, Seattle, WA
Fall 2017

Dr. Julia Stefanova
Field of specialization: Economics
Home Institution: BAS, Economic Research Institute
Host Institution in the U.S.: American University, Washington DC
Fall 2017

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ivo Topalilov
Field of specialization: Archeology
Home Institution: Shumen University “Konstantin Preslavski”
Host Institution in the U.S.: University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, NC
Spring 2018

Hubert Humphrey Fellowship

Dr. Svetla Borisova
Field of specialization: Substance Abuse Treatment
Home institution: “Sveta Marina” University Hospital, Varna
Host Institutions: in the U.S.: University of California-Davis, CA; Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
Fall 2017

Scholarship for the Study of Civil Society

Svetla Baeva
Field of specialization: Public Relations
Home Institution: Bulgarian Helsinki Committee
Host Institution in the U.S.: Change.org, New York, NY
Fall 2017

Graduate Students

Blagovest Blagoev
Field of study: Transport Engineering
Home institution: “Todor Kableshkov” University of Transport, Sofia
Pursued degree: MUPP in Urban Planning and Policy
Host Institution in the U.S.: The University of Illinois at Chicago, IL

Deniza Georgieva
Field of study: Psychology
Home institution: Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridsky”
Pursued degree: Masters in General Psychology
Host Institution in the U.S.: City College of New York, The City University of New York, NY

Evgeni Minchev
Field of study: Law
Home institution: Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridsky”
Pursued degree: LLM
Host Institution in the U.S.: Georgetown University- Law Center, Washington DC
Margaret Pavlova

Field of study: Psychology
Home institution: New Bulgarian University, Sofia
Pursued degree: PhD in Psychology
Host Institution in the U.S.: The University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS

Hristiana Videnova

Field of study: Economics
Home institution: Sofia University “St Kliment Ohridski”
Pursued degree: MAPSS in Social Sciences
Host Institution in the U.S.: University of Chicago - Division of Social Sciences, Chicago IL

Non-Degree Research Grants for Doctoral Students

Borislav Momchilov

Field of study: History
Home institution: Sofia University “St Kliment Ohridski”
Host Institution in the U.S.: Harvard University, American Studies Program, Cambridge, MA
Fall 2017

Evelina Prodanova

Field of study: Organizational Psychology
Home institution: Sofia University “St Kliment Ohridski”
Host Institution in the U.S.: University of Southern California-Marshall School of Business, Los Angeles, CA
Fall 2017

Nominations for Bulgarian Fulbright Grants 2018-19

Visiting Scholars:

Principals:
1. Todor Tanev – Public Policy
2. Georgeta Bocheva – Pharmacology
3. Sylvia Nikolova – Public Health
4. Konstantin Balachev – Chemistry
5. Petko Nedyalkov – Astronomy

Alternates:
1. Maya Cholakova – Social Work
2. Alexander Feodorov – Philosophy
3. Georgi Marinov – Military Science
4. Svetla Danova – Microbiology

Civil Society Researchers:

Principals:
1. Oleg Gochev – Mural Art
2. Nikoleta Yoncheva – Social Work
Alternate:
Ivan Vassilev – Museum Studies

Visiting Researchers:

Principals:
1. Delyan Rusev – History
2. Iva Nedelcheva - Communications

Graduate Students:

Principals:
1. Peter Georgiev – Journalism
2. Maria Grozdanova - International Relations
3. Konstantin Georgiev – Anthropology
4. Mira Stefanova – Business Administration
5. Elitsa Koeva – Urban Planning

Alternates:
1. Stoyan Madin - Law
2. Peter Petrov – Law

Scholars

Brian Murphy

Field of Specialization: Law
Home Institution: Self-Employed Attorney at Law
Host Institution in Bulgaria: Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Sofia

Jesse Scinto

Field of Specialization: Communications
Home Institution: Columbia University, New York, NY
Host Institution in Bulgaria: American University in Bulgaria, Blagoevgrad

Brenda Tooley

Field of Specialization: Literature
Home Institution: Knox College, Monmouth, IL
Host Institution in Bulgaria: Veliko Tarnovo University “St. Cyril and St Methodius”, Veliko Tarnovo

Denis Vovchenko

Field of Specialization: History and Political Science
Home Institution: Northeastern State University, Tahlequah, OK
Host Institution in Bulgaria: Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Sofia

Nancy Virginia Whitehouse

Field of Specialization: Journalism
Home Institution: Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, KY
Host Institution in Bulgaria: Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Sofia
Graduate Students

Benjamin Bush

Field of Specialization: Creative Writing
Project Title: Novel on Migration and Cultural Influence in Bulgaria
Host Institution in Bulgaria: Elizabeth Kostova Foundation, Sofia

Matthew Schueller

Field of Specialization: Archaeology
Project Title: Entertainment Venues as Network Actors in Roman Macedonia and Thrace
Host Institution in Bulgaria: Balkan Heritage Foundation, Sofia

Isabella Carey

Field of Specialization: Sociology, History
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Ruse, Bulgaria

Eliza Campbell

Field of Specialization: Political Science, Arabic
Project Title: Refugee Resettlement and Education in Bulgaria: Mapping the Field
Host Institution in Bulgaria: UNHCR and Caritas, Sofia

Allison Bailey

Field of Specialization: Political Science, French, Theatre Arts
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Vidin, Bulgaria

Hannah Combe

Field of Specialization: English
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Sofia, Bulgaria

Kristina Frye

Field of Specialization: Political Science
Project Title: Brain Drain or Brain Gain? A Comparative Study of Bulgarian and Romanian Youth Migration
Host Institution in Bulgaria: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia

Megan Dale

Field of Specialization: International Development, Spanish
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Burgas, Bulgaria

Ashlee Hart

Field of Specialization: Archaeology
Project Title: Convening Cultures in Iron Age Thrace: An examination of Indigenous Ceramics and Identity
Host Institution in Bulgaria: National Institute of Archaeology with Museum, Sofia

Emily Donlon

Field of Specialization: English
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Shumen, Bulgaria

Daniel Keifer

Field of Specialization: History
Project Title: Dissemination of Historical Experiences as an Influence on Bulgarian International Affairs
Host Institution in Bulgaria: Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Sofia

Emily Enquist

Field of Specialization: International Business, Anthropology
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Varna, Bulgaria

Faith Brown

Field of Specialization: Communications
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Haskovo, Bulgaria

Savannah Fortis

Field of Specialization: German Studies
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Sofia, Bulgaria

Boris Busov

Field of Specialization: Biomolecular Science
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Sliven, Bulgaria

Joshua Goldstein

Field of Specialization: Mathematics, Chemistry
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Varna, Bulgaria

English Teaching Assistants

Anna Brainerd

Field of Specialization: Integrative Studies
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Gabrovo, Bulgaria

Erin Combe

Field of Specialization: English
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Sofia, Bulgaria

Megan Dale

Field of Specialization: International Development, Spanish
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Burgas, Bulgaria

Emily Enquist

Field of Specialization: International Business, Anthropology
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Varna, Bulgaria

Savannah Fortis

Field of Specialization: German Studies
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Sofia, Bulgaria

Joshua Goldstein

Field of Specialization: Mathematics, Chemistry
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Varna, Bulgaria
Mirenda Gwin
**Field of Specialization:** History, Media Studies  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Burgas, Bulgaria

Megan Lough
**Field of Specialization:** English  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Vratsa, Bulgaria

Chinmayi Manjunath
**Field of Specialization:** Mathematics, Philosophy  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Montana, Bulgaria

Maureen Marsh
**Field of Specialization:** Russian Studies, Educational Studies  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Prawets, Bulgaria

Emily Paxson
**Field of Specialization:** International Studies, German  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Lovech, Bulgaria

Mari Henderson
**Field of Specialization:** Global Affairs, Political Communication  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Silistra, Bulgaria

Thomas Petrino
**Field of Specialization:** Political Science, Creative Writing  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Dobrich, Bulgaria

Anna Hernick
**Field of Specialization:** International Political Economy  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Plovdiv, Bulgaria

Aaron Ross
**Field of Specialization:** Business Administration, Finance, Insurance  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Panagyurishte, Bulgaria

Nathan Jacobson
**Field of Specialization:** Religion, Sociology  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Gotse Delchev, Bulgaria

Claire Russel
**Field of Specialization:** International Relations, French  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Razgrad, Bulgaria

Sadie James
**Field of Specialization:** Psychology, Gender Studies, Education  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Smolyan, Bulgaria

Keegan Scott
**Field of Specialization:** International Studies, Turkish  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Galabovo, Bulgaria

Amanda Mayer
**Field of Specialization:** Political Science, Diplomacy, Spanish  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Vidin, Bulgaria

Patrick Larson
**Field of Specialization:** Economics  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Kardzhali, Bulgaria

Brian Shouse
**Field of Specialization:** Political Science, History, Philosophy  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Pleven, Bulgaria

Hannah Lemberg
**Field of Specialization:** Political Science, Women and Gender Studies  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Sofia, Bulgaria

Claire Russel
**Field of Specialization:** International Relations, French  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Razgrad, Bulgaria

Hannah Lemberg
**Field of Specialization:** Political Science, Women and Gender Studies  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Sofia, Bulgaria

Mirenda Gwin
**Field of Specialization:** History, Media Studies  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Burgas, Bulgaria

Megan Lough
**Field of Specialization:** English  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Vratsa, Bulgaria

Chinmayi Manjunath
**Field of Specialization:** Mathematics, Philosophy  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Montana, Bulgaria

Maureen Marsh
**Field of Specialization:** Russian Studies, Educational Studies  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Prawets, Bulgaria

Emily Paxson
**Field of Specialization:** International Studies, German  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Lovech, Bulgaria

Mari Henderson
**Field of Specialization:** Global Affairs, Political Communication  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Silistra, Bulgaria

Thomas Petrino
**Field of Specialization:** Political Science, Creative Writing  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Dobrich, Bulgaria

Anna Hernick
**Field of Specialization:** International Political Economy  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Plovdiv, Bulgaria

Aaron Ross
**Field of Specialization:** Business Administration, Finance, Insurance  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Panagyurishte, Bulgaria

Sadie James
**Field of Specialization:** Psychology, Gender Studies, Education  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Smolyan, Bulgaria

Patrick Larson
**Field of Specialization:** Economics  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Kardzhali, Bulgaria

Brian Shouse
**Field of Specialization:** Political Science, History, Philosophy  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Pleven, Bulgaria

Hannah Lemberg
**Field of Specialization:** Political Science, Women and Gender Studies  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Sofia, Bulgaria

Mirenda Gwin
**Field of Specialization:** History, Media Studies  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Burgas, Bulgaria

Megan Lough
**Field of Specialization:** English  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Vratsa, Bulgaria

Chinmayi Manjunath
**Field of Specialization:** Mathematics, Philosophy  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Montana, Bulgaria

Maureen Marsh
**Field of Specialization:** Russian Studies, Educational Studies  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Prawets, Bulgaria

Emily Paxson
**Field of Specialization:** International Studies, German  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Lovech, Bulgaria

Mari Henderson
**Field of Specialization:** Global Affairs, Political Communication  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Silistra, Bulgaria

Thomas Petrino
**Field of Specialization:** Political Science, Creative Writing  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Dobrich, Bulgaria

Anna Hernick
**Field of Specialization:** International Political Economy  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Plovdiv, Bulgaria

Aaron Ross
**Field of Specialization:** Business Administration, Finance, Insurance  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Panagyurishte, Bulgaria

Sadie James
**Field of Specialization:** Psychology, Gender Studies, Education  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Smolyan, Bulgaria

Patrick Larson
**Field of Specialization:** Economics  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Kardzhali, Bulgaria

Brian Shouse
**Field of Specialization:** Political Science, History, Philosophy  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Pleven, Bulgaria

Hannah Lemberg
**Field of Specialization:** Political Science, Women and Gender Studies  
**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Sofia, Bulgaria
In January of 2017, I arrived in Bulgaria as a Fulbright Research Scholar to begin work on a book-length narrative nonfiction project. This undertaking was inspired by iconic travelogues of Eastern Europe such as Rebecca West’s *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* and Patrick Leigh Fermor’s *Between the Woods and the Water* and *The Broken Road*, all of which use the journey as a structuring device, weaving the authors’ travels through a particular place (and moment in history) with the cultural, literary, and social fabric of the regions they’re exploring, the larger goal of which is an attempt to not only better understand the people they encounter, but also themselves.

When I originally conceived of this project, then, I imagined I’d be visiting different parts of the country to get a sense (albeit an outsider’s perspective) of what it means to live in and travel through contemporary Bulgaria, a country whose complicated relationship to its past has always resonated with me. As someone who grew up in the post-industrial Rust Belt of the United States, I found a kinship with Bulgaria each time I visited. So I hoped to examine the ways in which history, memory, and nostalgia intersect in the daily lives of the people here; how the past remains present in tangible ways like monuments and in intangible ways like storytelling and cultural festivals; and how the place from which we come shapes both personal and collective identity, as well as shared values.

Because I am neither a historian nor a sociologist, my primary approach to this project as a writer and literary journalist has been an ethnographic one. Through my travels and interviews I’ve attempted to understand how Bulgarians are processing the complex and painful history of their country.
FOCUS ON US GRANTEE | FALL 2017

You needed the big picture, but the big picture was hidden and you slowly uncovered it by asking the right questions. For me, this approach was groundbreaking.

The easy answer, of course, is nationalism. This isn’t new. In fact, the communists vigorously supported folk dancing and folk singing in Bulgaria, creating national groups to tour the country and beyond the borders, manufacturing and codifying cultural identity in this fashion. On a more complex level, however, I wonder if something else might be at work. What might everyday citizens be finding—or, more importantly, what might they be actively seeking—here that they feel is meaningful? Is the desire to return to the past a way of guarding against future disappointments, particularly when recent promises of a better future haven’t necessarily materialized? Or, might the desire to celebrate the past and this proud moment in history be an attempt to push back against the narrative of Bulgaria being the most abandoned country in the E.U.? Regardless, what are the larger consequences of this trend? Might a desire to look beyond the recent past (the communist one, say) and the desire to remember another (the revolutionary one) ignore a past that still needs to be reckoned with? Or is it a means to begin overcoming trauma? Perhaps both. Perhaps neither. Either way, I am most interested in trying to understand how we are taught and reproduce what it means to be part of a particular culture—in this case, Bulgarian—and what this complex intersection of history, performance, and identity reveals about being human.

as it’s emerged from behind the Iron Curtain and entered the dual experiments of both democracy and E.U. membership. In doing so, my hope has been to examine how the narratives we shape from our past can help us envision and inhabit the future, as well as how uncertainty about the future might compel individuals to seek too much meaning from the past. Bulgaria’s struggles with this latter point feels particularly relevant, insofar as it offers a microcosm of the experiences of other “small” E.U. countries, many of whom similarly struggle with how to be European without losing a sense of their individual cultural heritage and identity in the process.

What I hadn’t expected, however, was exactly how fraught Bulgaria’s relationship to the past has become in recent years. I first became aware of this tension in the summer of 2015, after traveling to the Buzludzha monument for a second time. Three years earlier, when I’d first visited the site, someone had painted the phrase “FORGET YOUR PAST” in enormous, blocky, red letters above the entrance. Upon my return, I found someone had added the word “NEVER” in front of the phrase. This conflict between remembering and letting go of the past is one of the most profound human dilemmas. For what shapes us more deeply than where we come from? And yet, how do we decide (as both individuals and cultures) which elements of our pasts define us and which do not? For as William Faulkner famously said of the fraught history of the American South, “The past isn’t dead; it isn’t even past.”

I wonder, though, what Faulkner would say about which past. Because in the last decade, I’ve noticed an ever-increasing interest in celebrating and remembering the late-nineteenth century, when Bulgaria gained its independence from the Ottoman Empire. The imagery of the noble peasant and the tweed-wearing revolutionary has come to increasingly dominate a sense of Bulgarian heritage and notions of identity since I first began traveling here. Not for all Bulgarians, of course—I don’t wish to essentialize the culture or slip into the trap of the single story. But I see it more frequently in the souvenir stores, in the political rhetoric, and in the silhouettes of those iconic heroes spray painted on apartment buildings. Folk festivals abound with high school students dressed in traditional peasant costumes dancing traditional folk dances, or singing folk music. Yet who is this performance of identity for? I’d originally discounted it as kitsch, as a way to sell tourist trinkets and souvenirs, skara and beer. And whenever I told Bulgarian friends I’d be traveling to one of these festivals, I’d be warned that it wasn’t “authentic.” But I’ve since begun to wonder if something else isn’t happening here.
Where Dreams Are a Full-Time Job

by Maria Androushko

If you’ve seen the Damien Chazelle movie from last year—*La La Land*, then you already have some idea of what Los Angeles is all about. The opening scene shows an iconic image of LA: people stuck in traffic, trying to navigate the vast, concrete labyrinthine structure of freeways towards their dreams. No, they do not break into song, and they usually do not look like Emma Stone or Ryan Gosling. They are people you’d never meet, except in the brief moment when you impatiently honk at each other, quickly deducing that the other person is an idiot that just doesn’t understand that your business, whatever it is, is much more important and you have the right to be in a hurry.

Historically the film industry in the US has had two seats: New York and Los Angeles. In the past couple of decades, however, Los Angeles has progressively become the hub for movie-making. There are some very practical reasons for this. First of all, you can shoot year-round in California. Los Angeles is warm (when it is not scorchingly hot) and dry all year. A shoot is almost never cancelled because of weather. Second, Los Angeles is a sprawling, urban landscape, and there is space for large studios with enormous backlots. Third, the nature of LA is such that every city (LA county is, in fact, divided into different cities) offers a different look and feel—downtown LA can easily look like every other skyscraper jungle, whereas the San Fernando Valley is more suburban and small townish. LA is surrounded by mountains, the ocean is nearby, and within driving distance one can find breathtaking and almost alien landscapes. Joshua Tree, a national park in the desert, looks like another planet. So does Death Valley, where Antonioni shot his famous *Zabriskie Point*. Next to Death Valley is Sequoia National Park, harboring gigantic ancient trees—perfect for a prehistoric look.

I try my hardest to explore the gorgeous natural landscape of golden California as much as possible. I often hike, but think about my projects on your script, because he went to CalArts and studied screenwriting. Everyone flocks to Los Angeles because the *Industry* (Hollywood) is here and the way to make it is to be here. That is Lesson One.

Other times you become slightly more aware that everyone in LA has a dream when your Uber driver tells you that he works three jobs and wants to be a musician, or a filmmaker, or a writer, or all of the above, and hands you his business card; when your barista discusses movies with you, or a stranger on the street ends up giving you advice on your script, because he went to CalArts and studied screenwriting. Everyone flocks to Los Angeles because the *Industry* (Hollywood) is here and the way to make it is to be here. That is Lesson One.
An extremely intense two-year degree that spans 16 months, as opposed to 24. Throughout we write two feature film scripts, two television spec scripts (one drama and one comedy), one original TV pilot script and a series bible, numerous treatments (developed outlines for feature films and TV), and a thesis project (two drafts of a feature film script or TV pilot and a series bible).

Our professors come from the best film schools (USC, UCLA, AFI, NYU, Columbia), and they bring not only the knowledge they have gained in those long-established programs, but also their experience from working in the industry, which translates into innovative classes. NYFA has the only screenwriting program that I know of that focuses on Transmedia—the telling of a story across multiple media platforms.

For our transmedia class, which spans two semesters, we write a webseries pilot episode, which we also produce, and a webseries bible (containing the world, characters, and future episodes). The importance of YouTube, where one can find a variety of webseries, should not be underestimated, as multiple online projects can and have been picked up for TV. One example is NYFA alumna, Issa Rae, whose YouTube series got picked up by HBO and is now developed by and streamed on the prime cable network. One of our professors, Jenni Powell, produced the “Lizzie Bennet Diaries,” a modern webseries retelling of Pride and Prejudice, which won an Emmy.

My transmedia project is a “trippy comedy” (according to my classmates) about four puppet black cats, who manipulate the media so as to change public opinion about them, while continually running into problems. Twitch is the main character, and he is a conspiracy theorist—think Brad Pitt in 12 Monkeys. Pancake is the oldest and a military strategist. He is on wheels, as he was ‘pancaked’ by a car years ago. Astra is a condescending female cat, who thinks she is too good for this, and Button the Glutton is a hipster, who is constantly forced to dress up or do “cute” and funny things for the videos the cats post...while all he wants to do is be a gourmet chef.

In the final semester of the program, for Transmedia, we expand the narrative of our webseries story by writing a graphic novel and designing a game. In my case, my graphic novel will be a series of stories about how black cats were worshipped or persecuted throughout history. The game will be a ‘tamagochi’-style mobile application, where you need to make your cat Instagram popular, or it will turn dissatisfied and evil.

I love to write comedy and make people laugh. That is something I really discovered about myself in the program and ideally, in the future, I would like to write and produce comedy and/or stop-motion animation. This is where I feel most myself, even though I also love visual and compelling psychological thrillers and science fiction—which I have been writing for my feature classes and my thesis.

What has facilitated my self-awakening, personally and creatively, is not only the wonderful faculty, but my amazing classmates. Every class is a workshop class, in which we give each other notes. I have become a better writer because of my classmates, their feedback, and my engagement with their stories. At this point we are truly like a family and I cannot imagine what my experience would have been like without them. Here is one last very important lesson: whatever you might think, the film industry is a collaborative medium.

In our program—we work together. We are taught to do so. We write, produce, shoot, act, direct, together. We are put into and try out different roles, helping each other create our individual visions. Forget the image of the solitary genius; in Hollywood it is the collective genius. And this is the magic of LA LA Land—all these nameless millions navigating around—together, with their dreams and hard work—they make it happen. They are the vital blood that flows in the concrete veins of the city and make it live.

Finally, I would like to thank the Fulbright Commission and the New York Film Academy for making it possible for me to receive this invaluable education. Without the support of the Fulbright Commission, I would still be one of the many who dream from afar, and do not even have the chance to put in the hard work.
Studying at the University of Economics – Varna means choosing high quality education, internationally recognized degree and successful career development

by the International Office, Varna University of Economics

In its nearly 100 years of history the University of Economics – Varna has trained over 123,000 economists, both Bulgarian and international students coming from over 60 countries. Currently the university hosts over 11,000 Bulgarian and foreign students and is constantly strengthening its reputation as a leading school in the country. The University of Economics – Varna has been accredited and certified as an academic and research organization as per ISO 9001:2008.

The University of Economics – Varna embraces projects that facilitate academic and research exchange with international academic centers. Students of UE-Varna have the opportunity to study abroad for one or two semesters on exchange programs such as ERASMUS+, CEEPUS, etc. UE-Varna’s well developed exchange practices with over 150 partner universities across Europe and Asia allow students to gain priceless knowledge, improve or learn a foreign language, and discover new countries and cultures. The University of Economics – Varna is proud of its heritage and anticipates its future as a prominent European university with its high academic quality, competent professors, and educational documentation that complies with European educational standards and incorporates the best educational expertise and business practices.

UE-Varna strives to maintain and further develop its scholastic and research potential as a leading educational institution in order to strengthen its competitiveness and appeal to academic members internationally. UE-Varna operates in a responsible manner in generating its students’ key knowledge areas, skills and competencies and in stimulating sustainable development. We constantly evaluate, improve
UE – Varna strives to maintain and further develop its scholastic and research potential as a leading educational institution in order to strengthen its competitiveness and appeal to academic members internationally.

UE – Varna offers 20 accredited Bachelor’s programs taught in Bulgarian, one Bachelor’s program in International Business in English and International Tourism in Russian. At the Master’s level, we have 30 programs, including Computer Science in English. The university is proud to offer two joint master programs – International Business and Management in English together with Nottingham Trent University, UK, and International Business and Economics, also in English, together with the Universal Business School – Mumbai, India.

The cooperation between UE–Varna and the Fulbright program is mutually beneficial and offers diverse opportunities for personal and professional development to our students and faculty. Within the framework of this collaboration, Professor David Austill from Union University, US Fulbright Scholar, held an intensive course in International Business Law at UE-Varna in April 2017. The course emphasized the study of law relevant to persons, business entities, organizations, and governments in matters concerning doing business globally.

In July 2017 UE-Varna was one of the host institutions for the Fulbright Hays Summer Seminar “Bulgaria in the Context of Migration and Challenges to European Cohesion.” As part of the seminar a group of sixteen American high schools teachers visited the university and attended a lecture by Chief Assistant Professor Aleksandar Shivarov, PhD, on the topic “Economic and Cultural Ties between Bulgaria, Russia, and the EU.”
In August 2017, Fulbright Specialist Danita Emma joined Marian’s Ballet School as a teacher and mentor for the young talents who participated in this year’s edition of the Academy. Ballet Academy Marian is a two-week summer school for children from seven to 18 years of age, who wish to improve their skills in the field of classical ballet and learn from the most experienced artists and teachers in Bulgaria.

The school takes place in Marian, a small village in the Elena area of the Balkan range. The initiator of the school is Diliana Nikiforova, Prima Ballerina at the National Opera and Ballet. The Academy is supported by the America for Bulgaria Foundation, and the local municipalities. Each year, about 40 children take part. Since 2011, a total of 235 children have passed through the school, with more than half of the advanced group being admitted to various ballet universities around the world.
Fulbright Specialist Danita Emma brought to the school her experience as a ballet teacher, coach, choreographer, adjudicator, and producer. Ms. Emma’s career has been shaped and inspired by her lifelong relationship with her mentor, the world-renowned Madame Darvash. She has taught company classes for the National Opera and Ballet of Bulgaria (Sofia), Burgas Opera (Bulgaria), Ailey II and Atlanta Ballet. She served as audition teacher and adjudicator for the Oakland Ballet. She has taught for studios, performing arts high schools, colleges, festivals, regional companies and various auditions throughout the Eastern Seaboard. She has held positions at Hobart and William Smith College, Syracuse University, Brenau University and University of Georgia. She designed and launched pre-professional summer dance intensives at SUNY Binghamton and Syracuse University.

The two-week intensive training concluded with two performances: one in the village of Marian, and one in the city of Elena. The two gala concerts included joint performances by children who participated in the Academy, and performances by professional ballet artists, guests of the Academy. The Executive Director of the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission, Angela Rodel, and the Program Officer responsible for the Fulbright Specialist Program, Rada Kaneva, had the absolute pleasure of watching the gala performance in the community center of Elena.

The Program included fragments from “La Bayadère (Kingdom of the Shades),” “Paquita (Grand Pas),” and short scenes from “Sleeping Beauty,” among others. After the performance, Diliana Nikiforova noted: “Ms. Emma’s most important achievement was the chance she gave to the students to work in a different way and to get a taste of a different school than what they are used to, which is primary the Russian ballet school. She has been very inspiring as a teacher and the result of her work was obvious in the dancers’ final performances.” We would like to sincerely congratulate the young talents, their incredible mentors, and the organizers for the success of this project, and we look forward to collaborating in the field of arts with the incredible Bulgarian talents, and to welcoming more outstanding US Specialists like Ms Danita Emma.
We came up with the idea that the best present would be for her to be able to immerse herself in Bulgarian folklore. In the two weeks the students had to complete the project, we had a lot of fun editing online, discussing grammar structures, funny vocabulary, drawing and exploring not only the English language but Bulgarian as well.

The stories that were chosen were some of the most popular ones that the Bulgarian kids had grown up with, but there were also those rare gems that were not as popular. The actual project presentation was a short review of the stories (who are the main characters; where does the action take place; what is the moral of the story), so that students were able to foster interest in reading the stories amongst their peers as well as to offer a sneak peek to Ms. Alexa, who was surprised and delighted: “I love having this unique way to share my experience as an ETA in Bulgaria with family and friends. It is clear how hard Desi and the 10A students worked to convey Bulgarian culture and values within these stories. It truly was ‘a gift from the heart’, and I feel so grateful to have been placed in Silistra with the wonderful teachers and students of Atanas Burov.”
Three brothers left their home to go work abroad. They reached a crossroad. The oldest brother said: “We will split here. I’ll take the right road. You take the left road,” he said to the middle brother. “And you take the middle road,” he said to the youngest brother.

“After three years, on St. Dimitar’s Day we will meet here at the same place and we will see what everyone earned. Shall we?” said the oldest brother.

“Let’s do it,” said the other two brothers, kissed the hand of the oldest brother and said goodbye to each other. The oldest brother went to a city where he became a baker. After three years he had earned a full bag of golden coins.

The middle brother opened a pub next to a bridge. He was selling wine mixed with water. He was selling until he filled his pockets with golden coins. The little brother worked for a good man – an old shepherd. Three years had passed, so the boy went to the shepherd to ask for his payment.

The shepherd said:

“I am an old and sick man and I can’t run after the sheep any more. Thank God you came, otherwise my herd would have been lost. I am very thankful that we worked together. I am giving you this money
or these three walnuts. I don't feel good giving you money because it is like fire: a man can easily burn his hands with it. But I am giving you these walnuts with joy. You have to choose whether to take the money or the walnuts."

The boy thought for a while and took the walnuts.

"I will take the walnuts because you are giving them from your heart."

The little brother kissed the shepherd's hand and went away. On St. Dimitar's Day the three brothers met at the same crossroad as they had arranged. The oldest brother said: "Have you earned anything?"

"Yes, we have," answered the middle brother.

"OK. Let's see! But first see what I got!"

He untied his bag and the middle brother took out his bag, too.

"You haven't been lazy, though," said the oldest brother.

The little one was last showing his three walnuts.

"Is that what you have earned for three years?"

"That's it - three walnuts, but they are given from the heart," answered the little brother. "An old man gave them to me. A shepherd I worked for. He took care of me like a father."

The other two brothers were furious: "We've seen stupid people, but we've never seen in the entire world someone as stupid as you are. For three walnuts, you've spent three years working as an apprentice, that's unacceptable! Go back to the shepherd and ask for the money he owes you, and don't dare come back home without it," said the older brother.

The boy felt pity, but headed back to the shepherd's. He felt sorry for his deed.

"I thought," he told himself, "that a gift from the heart is the best thing in the world, and what came of it!"

He reached a village fountain and leaned towards it to drink some water, but only swallowed a bit, because he was hungry. He reached for his bag, but there wasn't even a little bit of bread left.

"I will break the walnuts to stay my hunger, even for a while!" thought the boy.

He broke the first walnut and a miracle happened. In a moment the broken walnut grew, it became as large as barrel. Sheep, rams and even lambs all with bells on their necks came out of its nutshell. There was a whole herd coming out of the broken nutshell. The boy didn't know what to do, so he started herding the sheep back to his home.

Walking back towards his home village he thought: "I should break open the second walnut to see what's inside it," and so he broke it open. As soon as he broke the second walnut, two oxen with big horns came out, and soon after a cart with an iron plough came out as well.

"Whoa!" the boy hit his forehead in amazement, he took the oxen's chains and started herding them back to the village. Just as he was near his village, he broke open the last walnut, a girl more beautiful than any he had ever seen came out of the nutshell.

"Lead me to your house," she said "I'm unborn, assigned by fate to be your wife."

The youngest brother helped the girl into the cart, led the oxen and the bells of the herd were singing. When he arrived at his home and as soon as his brothers saw the herd, the new cart and the girl, they swallowed their tongues in amazement. It was then that they understood what a gift from the heart means!
In Bulgaria for the Long Haul: Fulbrighters Run in the Sofia Marathon

Interview by Iliana Dimitrova

Five Fulbright English Teaching Assistants – Mirenda Gwin (Burgas), Erica Boden (Silistra), Hannah Combe (Sofia), Isabella Carey (Ruse) and Aaron Ross (Panagyurishte), and one Fulbright researcher, Kristina Frye (Sofia), participated in the 34th Sofia Marathon on Sunday, October 15, 2017, running the half or full course. This is not the first time Fulbrighters have braved an athletic challenge – back in 2013 ETAs Shelby Carvalho and Cassandra Bodkin ran marathons in Bulgaria, Romania and Greece, and just last year Fulbright| ABF ETAs Emily Paxson, Boris Busov and Andrew Malin successfully completed the half-marathon in Plovdiv. This year, the Sofia Marathon gathered a record number of 4,410 runners from five continents, including participants from Japan and Australia, who arrived specifically for the event. The participation of over 30 elite athletes from six African countries additionally raised the event’s profile.

Kristina and Erica, you ranked number 54 and 60 among all female half-marathon runners. How did that feel?

Erica: It was really fun because Kristina and I ran a few miles together early on: good Fulbright bonds for the win! Truly though, I usually just run to have fun. There’s something so thrilling about seeing a new city through running and, lucky for us, the course was flat and the weather was a perfect day to cruise through Sofia!

How did you prepare for the marathon?

Mirenda: Aaron and I trained pretty intensely for a little over a month. We did three long runs pre-race (15, 18, and 22 miles), with speed work, pace work, and tempo runs mixed in between. We both did cross training as well to avoid injury - lots of yoga and pilates. We definitely ran a lot this past month. I will have a lot more time to dedicate to my students now that the training is over!

Was there ever a time when you thought “I can’t go on”?

Isabella: Running in this was so interesting for me because I never really understood the “mental” part of running. Even just doing the half got me excited for future long-distance running. It also inspired me to get over some mental blocks with my Bulgarian!

Mirenda: The ‘wall’ they talk about hitting during a marathon is SO REAL. I hit mile 23 and it felt like I was wading through wet cement.

Erica: Without Mirenda, as well as support from the rest of this crew on race day, I might still be on the course. Lost and scared. After mile 23, at every point, I was thinking I couldn’t go on. Even when I saw the finish line, I was so delirious I didn’t believe it.

How did it feel to be part of this event, running together with over 4,000 other people?

Erica: One of the things I love most about running is the community aspect -- it is so fun getting to run alongside so many different people at one time. I had never done an international race before, and it was an incredible opportunity to explore a new city with people from all across the world.

Mirenda: Even getting lapped by the elite runners was really exciting! I especially loved seeing the women in front absolutely crushing it.

Isabella: I’d never participated in any organized run or race before and the energy that surrounded the event was incredible. I think one of my favorite moments was running alongside a 70-year-old woman smiling doing her 205th marathon!
Prof. Ana Proykova, Fulbright alumna in Physics, was elected the chair of the European Strategy Forum of Research and Infrastructure at the European Commission. The Strategy Working Group on Data, Computing and Digital Research analyses the scientific aspects of research infrastructures, monitors scientific developments and emerging challenges and addresses the issues of innovation and socio-economic impact. Prof. Proykova was also appointed as Head of the High Performance Computing Laboratory in Sofia Tech Park, created to boost the development of research, innovation and technological capabilities of Bulgaria through the implementation of scientific projects.

Mr. Petko Bahovski, investment banker and 1997 Fulbright alumnus, published two books: “An introduction to investment funds” (230 pages book, covering 30 types of investment funds), and “How to choose a private bank” (152 pages book, published in English, Russian and Bulgarian). In 2017 Mr. Bahovski, who works at a Swiss bank, was invited as a guest lecturer at the University of National and World Economy, Sofia, and taught a course in Wealth Management.

Amy Kuiken, AY2007-08 Fulbright ETA in Burgas, who is currently an adjunct professor of French, received the Innovative and Non-Traditional Teaching Award at the 2017 Teacher Recognition and Effectiveness Committee (TREC) Awards Ceremony of Wilkes University. The student-nominated award recognizes a teacher who successfully incorporates innovative or nontraditional strategies into at least one class. Teaching innovation includes effective small group, collaborative methods; advanced use of technology in the classroom; consistent student-centered, interactive classroom experience; engagement in outside-the-classroom learning experiences that enrich student mastery of concepts and theories; and engaging students in joint faculty-student research projects.

Sarah Perrine, AY2002-2003 US Student Researcher, founded the NGO Trust for Social Achievement in 2012 to support disadvantaged and Roma communities in Bulgaria. This October she travelled to the United Nations Headquarters in New York to receive an Outstanding Contribution Award from the United Nations for its project “Urban Planning — Everybody Wins.” The Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements Awards is an annual worldwide prize awarded by Global Forum on Human Settlements and supported by UNEP. TSA’s project promotes slum regulation, access to land, basic services, and infrastructure, and urban legislation. Moreover, TSA’s work to zone and legalize Roma neighborhoods includes community-based action groups, introduction of green and public spaces into urban planning and access to basic services such as safe drinking water, sewage systems, and waste removal. These are important first steps toward the creation of socially inclusive, resilient, and economically prosperous towns and cities.

Lilyana Marinova, AY2013-2014 Fulbright Visiting Researcher at the University of Michigan, Ross School of Business and at the Stony Brook University, College of Business, successfully completed her PhD in May 2017 at the University of National and World Economy in Sofia. The topic of her thesis, “The Impact of Volatility Risk on Firm Value”, was very well received both at home and internationally. The thesis finds that volatility risk negatively affects the value of firms, but this value discount may differ based on the firm’s fundamental characteristics like profitability, liquidity and working capital, as well as the industry in which the firm operates. The acknowledgements section of the thesis gives special thanks to the Fulbright Commission.

Kate Conklin, AY2001-2002 Fulbright Student Researcher at the Academy for Music, Dance and Fine Arts in Plovdiv, contributed a chapter to a book that was just published. *Galvanizing Performance: The Alexander Technique as a Catalyst for Excellence* focuses on the new developments within the Alexander Technique and its application to the performing arts. The book is available on Amazon.

In May 2017, Daniel Goldberg, AY2014-15 Fulbright student researcher at the Academy for Music, Dance, and Fine Arts in Plovdiv, received a PhD in music theory from Yale University, with a dissertation based largely on the research that he did during his Fulbright fellowship. Dan is currently teaching full time as an Assistant Professor in Residence of Music Theory at the University of Connecticut.