

NEWSLETTER

Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange



Fun with Film in Pravets and in Texas

Encouraging Inclusion

Celebrating Spring with Volunteering

English as Empowerment

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.

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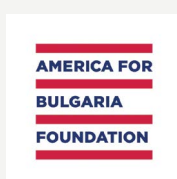
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Cover photo: Fulbright Bulgaria grantees and alumni on Volunteer Day

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Spring 2019 has been an exciting time for Fulbright, not only in Bulgaria, but around the world, as the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board unveiled the program's new logo! I had the honor of attending the official launch on May 22, 2019, in the Kennedy Caucus Room at the Russell Senate Office Building in Washington, DC. Bulgarian Ambassador to the US HE Tihomir Stoychev was one of the

international guests, while many members of congress also joined the festivities – I managed to glimpse both Bernie Sanders and Tom Cotton, which illustrates the bipartisan support Fulbright enjoys across the whole political spectrum. The brand-launch event included speeches not just by politicians, but also by Fulbright alumni who had studied and taught in all corners of the globe – their diverse and moving experiences offered powerful testimony about the crucial importance of academic and cultural exchange in the 21st century.

Around the brand-launch celebration, we also had several days of meetings with various Fulbright program stakeholders, including my fellow executive directors from the 49 commissions around the world, which was one of the first time we had all been brought together in the 70-year history of the program. I am proud to report that I was one of six EDs selected from this illustrious group to present to the members of the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board in a special session about the challenges and opportunities facing Fulbright Commissions around the world. The topics we discussed included strategies for digitalization of commissions, the European Fulbright Diversity Initiative, fund-raising and regional cooperation, among other ideas.

Back at home in Sofia, we have been busy updating our “look” as well – please come visit the 5th floor of Vitosha 12 to see the new logo installed on our welcome wall. The new branding has inspired us to imagine new programming and activities – stay tuned for news of upcoming initiatives!

Best,
Angela

Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange

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US Scholars and Student Researchers at a bread-making workshop

100 Days in Bulgaria: From Research to Rapping

by Rada Kaneva

On January 25, 2019, American Fulbrighters met in Sofia for their mid-year conference, "One Hundred Days in Bulgaria".



US Student Researcher Conor McCadden shares his research

On January 25, 2019, American Fulbrighters met in Sofia for their mid-year conference, "One Hundred Days in Bulgaria". Three scholars, four student researchers and 32 English teaching assistants came together to share their experiences and achievements so far. Special guests to the event included US Embassy representatives; partners from America for Bulgaria Foundation, which sponsors the ETA program in Bulgaria; experts from the Bulgarian Ministry of Education; and many other alumni, partners and friends.

After enjoying the scholars' and researchers' project presentations and the creative and often hilarious two-minute videos made by the ETAs, the group participated in a workshop on persuasive speaking led by Jesse Scinto, a lecturer in Columbia University's graduate Strategic Communication program. In 2018, Mr. Scinto was a US Fulbright Scholar at the American University in Bulgaria, teaching courses for AUBG's Executive MBA program. Later in the afternoon, grantees were introduced to sCool Media – the new online platform for student journalism, which launched on February 3, 2019, with over 30 essays, podcasts and videos, submitted by students from around the country.

The group split in the late afternoon, with ETAs staying for a session on Cultural Adjustment and Teen Psychology with psychologists Anna Joukivskaia and Fulbright alum Dr. Ron Harvey, while scholars and researchers enjoyed teambuilding activities at Bread House Sofia.

The event concluded with the now infamous Fulbright Party and Talent Show, which celebrated its 5th anniversary with a record number of 15 American and Bulgarian performers, one of whom was visual artist and Bulgarian Fulbright alumna Medea Yankova live-painting the event! American and Bulgarian grantees and alumni, and partners, sponsors and friends of the Fulbright program in Bulgaria celebrated the mid-year milestone and enjoyed some very talented musical jazz, pop and folk performances in Bulgarian, English, and Arabic, as well as some comedy and tricks! Patrick Harchik, ETA in Yambol, stole the show with his "Alphabet Aerobics," which involved rapping while solving not one, but two Rubik's cubes! Check out videos of this and other performances from the talent show on our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/user/BulgariaFulbright.



Participants enjoying the ETAs creative short videos



BG Alumna Medea Yankova live-painting the Fulbright Party and Talent Show



ETA Patrick Harchik performing with his assistants

Celebrating Spring

through Sharing Knowledge and Volunteering

by Maria Kostova

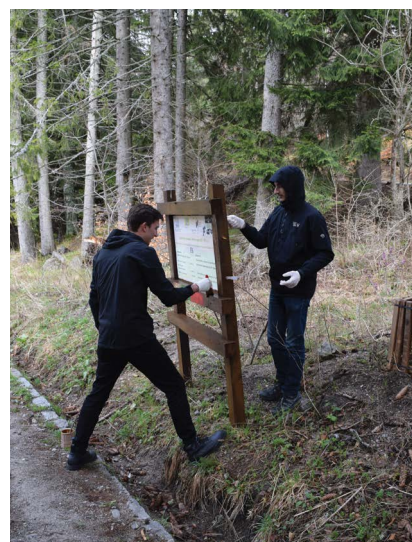
The arrival of Spring in Sofia was marked by several activities for Bulgarian and US Fulbright grantees and alumni. On April 12, 2019, two Bulgarian Fulbright alumni shared their success stories with fellow Fulbrighters.

Sociologist Dr. Shaban Darakchi's workshop was directed at young researchers and scholars who would like to gain insight into publishing in high impact-factor academic journals. Speech pathologist Professor Dobrinka Georgieva's session was directed at scholars and administrators who work in international education and who would like to learn more about the successful management and coordination of Erasmus+ and Fulbright Specialist programs. Both workshops were very well received and engaged the participants in active discussions. We hope that this initiative will encourage more Fulbright alumni to share experience, skills, and

good practices with their colleagues, and the Commission is happy to provide a forum for such activities.

In the evening after the workshops, Bulgarian and American Fulbright grantees and alumni gathered for a cocktail reception at a local restaurant. This traditional "Fulbright Happy Hour" provided a platform for Bulgarians and Americans to meet, enjoy themselves, exchange experiences and network.

On the following day, April 13, Bulgarian and American Fulbrighters participated in our third annual Fulbright Volunteer Day. A group of 30 Bulgarians and Americans went up



Fulbrighters freshening up park signage



Fulbrighters working hard to clear trails

the mountain near Sofia to Vitosha National Park, where we cleaned up hiking trails and painted signs and benches in the Zlatnite Mostove (Golden Bridges) region. Grantees and alumni, staff members and friends worked with great pleasure side by side, enjoying the opportunity to do something positive for the environment. We will continue our efforts to integrate volunteerism into our programming, recognizing not only its valuable contribution to the community at large, but also the fact that volunteers gain a greater sense of belonging to the community.

First Alumni Scholarship Launched

by Angela Rodel

The Bulgarian Fulbright Commission is proud to announce the launch of its first-ever alumni top-up fellowship, funded solely by generous donations from Fulbrighters who would like to “pay it forward” by supporting Bulgarian student grantees. The idea for an alumni-supported grant was born in 2013, on the occasion of the Commission’s 20th anniversary, when Professor George Siedel of the University of Michigan’s Ross School of Business and a favorite lecturer at the Fulbright International Summer Institute made a generous contribution of \$1,000 to be put towards new scholarships. In 2018, the Fulbright Commission began a new campaign in honor of its 25th anniversary, urging alumni to follow Professor Siedel’s example and chip in to expand the scholarship fund.

Dozens of US and BG stepped up to make contributions, especially at a special fund-raising party hosted in Sofia in November 2018 by Fulbright alumnus and Fulbright Commission board member Tzvetomir Todorov and co-organized by Nikolay Bebov and Dr. Julia Stefanova. Inspired by this community spirit, Ms. Nellie Gencheva-Gipson matched Professor Siedel’s generous original grant. As a Fulbright scholar studying museum education in New York City, Nellie met her future husband, financier and philanthropist Robert Gipson. Their charitable work through the Tianaderrah Foundation funds numerous educational institutions and initiatives in Bulgaria, thus we are honored to have their support for the Bulgarian Fulbright program as well.



The first recipient of the Bulgarian-American Fulbright Alumni Fellowship, Denitza Vidolova, will be pursuing an MA degree in International and Comparative Education at Columbia University, NY, during AY2019-20. Denitza comes from the small Bulgarian town of Sevlievo, but her search for excellence brought her to the UK, where she completed a BA in

International Relations at the University of Exeter, and continued her professional development in the sphere of International Education at the University of Oxford as *Research on Improving Systems of Education Program* coordinator. Denitza has also taken part in Bulgarian educational programs such as Teach for Bulgaria, where she taught for two years at St. Paisii Hilendarski High School in Zlatitsa. We are certain that her new skills, acquired through the Fulbright program in Columbia University, will be of benefit to both Bulgarian and global projects on educational development.

Members of the Fulbright Bulgaria community who would like to donate to the Alumni Fellowship can make tax-deductible donations quickly and easily through the Institute of International Education’s website: <https://www.iie.org/Donate/Where-to-give/Fulbright-Assistance-Funds>. Be sure to pick the Fulbright Bulgaria Assistance Fund from the drop-down menu! Bulgarian alumni wishing to contribute are encouraged to contact the Commission directly.

Contributions were made by Fulbright alumni: Professor George Siedel, Tianaderrah Foundation (Nellie and Robert Gipson), Svetoslav Bobev, Kornelia Slavova, Ivailo Alexiev, Yantsislav Yanakiev, Boyan Dobrev, Paskal Zhelev, Dimitar Antonov, Evgeny Georgiev, Angela Rodel, Tanya Dimova, Lilyana Marinova, Katerina Klinkova, Damyanka Getova, Evgeny Minchev, Georgi Fotev, Yordanka Koleva, Laura Flor, Hannah Combe, Raelene Shippee-Rice, Susan Gunter and several anonymous donors.

The event was organized by Nikolay Bebov, Tzvetomir Todorov, and Prof. Julia Stefanova, who also contributed to the alumni grant.

Thanks to all of you for your generous support!



Participants in the Second European Fulbright Diversity Workshop in Sofia

Encouraging Inclusion:

Sofia Hosts a European Fulbright Initiative Workshop

by Angela Rodel

On February 1-2, 2019, the Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission in cooperation with the German Fulbright Commission hosted the second European Fulbright Diversity Workshop, in Sofia.

The European Fulbright Diversity Initiative launched in May 2018 and is devoted to providing institutional framework, recommendations and best practices for inclusive, equitable and safe environment for all program participants, so that they can make the most of their Fulbright experience in both academic and cultural terms.

It was a pleasure to meet so many dedicated EU Fulbright staffers, alumni and grantees, focused on inclusion, diversity and institutional improvement. In addition to inspiring discussions, the workshop yielded concrete results in the form of preliminary documents. We are hoping to see our EFDI, EU colleagues and Fulbrighters back in Sofia for more collaboration in the future!

For more information on
the EFDI and how you can
become involved, visit:
<https://diversity.fulbright.de>

English As Empowerment:

Working with the Roma Community in Bulgaria

by Christopher Curran, US Student Researcher, AY2018-19

When I arrived in Bulgaria in 2018 to start my year as a Fulbright student researcher, Bulgaria welcomed me with open arms. A lavish dinner made with love in the home of new Bulgarian friends. A vibrant public culture of sidewalk cafés and outdoor gatherings. A lush, green capital city with more park space than any other city in Europe. A society that draws from its own ancient traditions, such as beautifully complex folk music and the *horo* dance, to build and nourish social connection.



But when Bulgarian acquaintances asked about the subject of my research and I explained that I would be working on a housing rights project with Roma communities, I often noticed a change in their faces. I was surprised by how frequently I was met with reactions that I later learned had been repeated over and over in the media to create widespread myths; people I talked to from various walks of life tended to demonize the Roma and imagine them to be a primary source of Bulgaria's problems.

Even when I hadn't mentioned anything at all about my work or my reason for being in Bulgaria, people I interacted with in shops or the grocery store would take it upon themselves to warn me to "avoid Gypsies" (this term is disfavored because it is often used disparagingly to refer to Roma people). Due to social stratification, educated Bulgarians in particular may lack any personal history of meaningful interaction with anyone who is Roma. Thus, many of the Bulgarians who occupy decision-making roles in the government base their image of the Roma on negative stereotypes.

I had previously worked for five years in California as an immigrants' rights lawyer representing asylum seekers and fighting for individual clients in deportation proceedings. My desire in applying for a Fulbright research grant was to learn, from a wider perspective, how civil society can take organized action to resist

destructive social currents and to rebuild the fabric of a society fractured by ethnic separatism. My host institution in Bulgaria, the Trust for Social Achievement (TSA), is an NGO dedicated to reducing poverty and decreasing achievement gaps by creating opportunities for disadvantaged groups, with a focus on the Roma. TSA does this by funding early childhood development programs, educational initiatives, and family economic success programs, both through direct on-the-ground projects and by supporting community-based nonprofits. Programs include home visits by nurses to expectant and new mothers, English classes in small towns, a successful policy campaign to make kindergarten free for all children in Bulgaria, support for capacity-building and entrepreneurship, and the housing program on which I have focused during my Fulbright year.

Why focus on housing? Unfortunately, particularly during election

campaigns, many local authorities in Bulgaria have appealed to nationalist political forces by painting the Roma as an enemy and carrying out mass evictions and home demolitions in Roma neighborhoods. This is done under the guise of cracking down on houses and entire settlements that are deemed to be illegal.

According to the letter of the law, it's true that many of the houses built in predominantly Roma neighborhoods fail to comply with zoning and other legal requirements. But a broader look at historical context shows that, while authorities now consider houses in these neighborhoods to be illegal, the policies of past governments are responsible for further marginalizing the Roma in ways that led to present-day segregated communities in areas not zoned for housing. This means that the people who have grown up and built ties in these communities for generations have no option to legalize their homes unless zoning rules are changed.

Roma people have been in Bulgaria for more than 800 years. For most of that time, they lived nomadically and supported themselves through itinerant trades such as blacksmithing, selling crafts, producing copperware and baskets, and breeding horses. Successive governments in Bulgaria forcibly settled the Roma. They were told to build houses near the factories or farms where they were required to work. When Communism ended in 1989, most Bulgarians were given private ownership of the land and property where they lived, but this did not happen for the Roma. Their settlements were ignored and treated as nonexistent and invisible on maps. Many of the factories that had employed them later closed, meaning that no stable jobs were available. Economic changes and discrimination relegated the Roma to the informal economy, excluding them from normal processes of infrastructure development and making it impossible for them to access municipal services.



Chris with fellow Fulbrighters at the Black Sea



Celebrating Thanksgiving with Bulgarian and American friends

Now, some Roma community organizations are advocating for urban planning and zoning amendments. Thanks to help from family members working abroad, many Roma residents are able and willing to pay taxes and fees to legalize their homes and to access services; they just need the neighborhoods they live in to be zoned to allow this to happen.

Recognizing the need for an intermediary NGO to facilitate between Roma community groups and municipal authorities, the Trust for Social Achievement has developed a program called “Urban Planning—Building a Better Future For All.” Through this model, communities can receive technical assistance to advocate for municipal zoning amendments and to establish a local organization capable of buying a large area of land and then administering the sale of individual plots to the families whose homes are already built on them. Families must then apply for municipal forbearance certificates to allow the homes to be legally bought, sold, or rented. This process provides income for the municipality and gives residents an incentive to pay taxes and contribute

to the local economy’s growth. The process requires multiple steps and a willingness on the part of municipal councils as well as the communities themselves. TSA has already overseen successful implementation of the model in the municipalities of Kyustendil (where a new zoning plan covers 6,000 residents), Dupnitsa (covering 144 dwellings and 600 people), and Peshtera (where negotiations also involved a private company). Each of these localities is at a different stage in working toward ownership for residents, but TSA is already envisioning ways that this model can be applied elsewhere in Bulgaria and beyond.

My role was to gain an understanding of the program from TSA Director of Institutional Development Maria Metodieva and her team of experts. Based on their written contributions, and after site visits and interviews, I worked with Maria to develop a procedural handbook that will be distributed to municipalities throughout Bulgaria. In this way, we hope to persuade authorities that urban planning through zoning amendments is a preferable alternative for addressing the issue

of illegal housing while avoiding the disastrous consequences of eviction and demolition of houses.

During my year with the Trust for Social Achievement, I have seen innumerable examples of the effectiveness of CEO Sarah Perrine’s leadership style – it is no coincidence that she is also a Fulbright Bulgaria alumna! To address deeply entrenched problems, she and the TSA staff test pioneering approaches and gather data to show how solutions can be scaled up for greater impact. My Bulgarian colleagues at TSA, some of whom are Roma and some not, bring cultural awareness, warmth, and great technical skill to their work.

Through a weekly “English for Empowerment” class that I taught online for adults, I met many NGO professionals who work at TSA partner organizations across Bulgaria. They, as well as the Roma high school students who participate in TSA’s English classes, have made me believe in the huge potential for Bulgaria as a society to heal its divisions and to tap into deep wellsprings of talent and willpower to move forward in innovative directions.

During my year as a Fulbright researcher, I have come to love Bulgaria whole-heartedly and to feel at home here. I am grateful to the many people who have offered me kindness and friendship — my TSA colleagues who are now dear friends, the phenomenal Fulbright Commission and wider Fulbright community, my accordion teacher Mihail Stavrev, my Bulgarian language teacher Radost Sabeva, the artists who infuse Sofia with their creativity, and the fierce queers of Rainbow Hub, GLAS Foundation, and Fabrika Avtonomia, who are living fabulously in the face of adversity. Thanks to all of you for this opportunity.

Film and Academia Go Hand in Hand in Texas

by Konstantin Georgiev

Roughly at this time last year, some friends and I were traveling East on the I-10, coming back from San Antonio to Houston. I remember it vividly, for it felt overwhelming. We had just spent a week in Texas Hill County, where we had roamed among deer and cacti, we had touched a dry wall replica of Stonehenge – “90% as tall as the original and 40% as wide” according to the sign – and perhaps most impressively, we had toured Mt Carmel with one of the Branch Davidians who had been inside the compound during the infamous Waco siege in 1993.

In a way this was my first major introduction to Texas. It was during that memorable trip that I fell in love with Texas despite all the prejudices I had and despite the hot humid climate and all the oil industry glorification. It was on that trip a year ago when I found the other side of it all – the indie film scene, the divey bars and the unconventional academia that seems to thrive here. The last bit, academia, is what had brought me here in the first place. For a couple of years prior to my arrival, I had been listening to Cultures of Energy – a weekly podcast produced at the Anthropology Department of Rice University, featuring hour-long interviews with some of the most prominent contemporary social scientists, philosophers and artists working at the intersections of topics such as environmental and urban studies, conservation, energy studies and a whole lot more. It was this podcast that made me quit a very enjoyable job in film and return to academia.

Currently I am starting the second year of my PhD program here at Rice and as I reflect back on the beginnings, I cannot but wonder at the multiple ways in which all the loose threads are coming together. I came here with meager academic experience – my CV consisted predominantly of film credits and some undergraduate work. Yet – and perhaps due to Fulbright’s backing of my application – I was able to come here and I am currently working



with some of the people I used to listen to the podcast. I also interview other prominent scholars for other podcasts such as the official podcast of this year's annual meeting of the 4S conference (4S stands for Society for the Social Studies of Science). I am also back to film in some ways – Rice Media Center has entrusted me with the care of their archival collection of celluloid film. I have inspected, cleaned and repaired reels of 16 mm film, which varied from footage of the tests for the Apollo space suits to a student-made Oscar-winning documentary from the early 1970s.

And, of course, I am also working on my own doctoral project, which keeps shapeshifting and crossing disciplinary boundaries under the wise guidance of my many academic advisors who stay true to the university's motto: "Unconventional Wisdom." Perhaps it can't get more unconventional than at the Anthropology Department. Unlike students in other departments across campus who are always trying to outwit each other and are forced into competitive positions, we are encouraged to work together and share ideas and resources. It is apparently such an extraordinary academic practice that I recently saw it cited in a book on methods and pedagogy!

We also travel together. We end up in deserts, on beaches or sometimes even on boats in the Houston Ship Channel – the largest petrochemical complex in the Americas. Even here you cannot escape of proud Texan talk about the Battle at the Alamo. But you learn to love it even when you disagree with it. After all, Texas is so big and diverse that there seems to be a place for everyone here.

I cannot but wonder at the multiple ways in which all the loose threads are coming together.



Bulgarian Fulbright Grantees

Academic Year 2018-2019

VISITING SCHOLARS

Prof. Konstantin Balachev

Field of specialization: Chemistry
Home Institution: Sofia University
"St. Kliment Ohridsky"
Host Institution in the U.S.:
Worcester Polytechnic Institute,
Worcester, MA, *Fall 2018*

Assoc. Prof. Georgeta Bocheva

Field of specialization: Pharmacology
Home Institution: Medical University
of Sofia
Host Institution in the U.S.:
University of Alabama-Birmingham,
Birmingham, AL, *Fall 2018*

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Maya Cholakova

Field of specialization: Social Work
Home Institution: South-West
University, Blagoevgrad
Host Institution in the U.S.: University
of Central Florida, Orlando, FL
Spring 2019

Assoc. Prof. Svetla Danova

Field of specialization: Microbiology
Home Institution: Bulgarian Academy
of Sciences, Institute of Microbiology
Host Institution in the U.S.: The
Midwestern University Institute for
Health Innovation, Phoenix, AZ
Fall 2018

Dr. Alexander Feodorov

Field of specialization: Philosophy
Home Institution: Bulgarian Academy
of Sciences, Institute of Literature
Host Institution in the U.S.: Indiana
University-Purdue University,
Indianapolis, IN, *Spring 2019*

Dr. Georgi Marinov

Field of specialization: Military
Science
Home Institution: National Defence
Academy, Sofia
Host Institution in the U.S.: Norwich
University, Peace and War Center,
Northfield VT, *Fall 2018*

Assoc. Prof. Petko Nedyalkov

Field of specialization: Astronomy
Home Institution: University of Sofia
"St. Kliment Ohridski"
Host Institution in the U.S.:
University of Washington, Seattle, WA
Fall 2019

Dr. Sylvia Nikolova

Field of specialization: Public Health
Home Institution: Medical University
of Varna
Host Institution in the U.S.: University
of Illinois-Chicago, Chicago IL, *Fall 2018*

Prof. Todor Tanev

Field of specialization: Public Policy
Home Institution: Sofia University
"St. Kliment Ohridski"
Host Institution in the U.S.: Johns
Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD
Spring 2019

SCHOLARSHIP FOR THE STUDY OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Prof. Oleg Gochev

Field of specialization: Mural Art
Host Institution in the U.S.: National
Academy of Art, Sofia
Host Institutions: in the U.S.: San
Francisco Arts Commission, San
Francisco, CA, *Fall 2018*

Ivan Vassilev

Field of specialization: Cultural
Heritage
Host Institution in the U.S.: Balkan
Heritage Foundation
Host Institutions: in the U.S.: Institute
for Field Research, Los Angeles, CA
Spring 2019

Nikoleta Yoncheva

Field of specialization: Social Work
Host Institution in the U.S.: Friends of
Karin Dom Association
Host Institutions: in the U.S.:
University of Oregon, Eugene, OR
Fall 2018

GRADUATE STUDENTS

Konstantin Georgiev

Field of study: Anthropology
Home institution: New Bulgarian
University, Sofia
Pursued degree: PhD in Anthropology
Host Institution in the U.S.: Rice
University, Houston, TX

Peter Georgiev

Field of study: Journalism
Home institutions: Sofia University
"St Kliment Ohridski"; Newcastle
University, UK
Pursued degree: MA in Journalism
Host Institution in the U.S.:
University of Missouri-Columbia, MO

Elitsa Koeva

Thanks to Scandinavia Award
Field of study: Urban Design
Home institution: University of Tokyo,
Japan
Pursued degree: DDes in Design
Host Institution in the U.S.: Harvard
University, Cambridge, MA

U.S. Fulbright Grantees

Academic Year 2018-2019

Stoyan Madin

Thanks to Scandinavia Award

Field of study: Law

Home institution: Sofia University "St Kliment Ohridski", Department of Law

Pursued degree: LLM in Law

Host Institution in the U.S.: University of Texas at Austin, TX

Mira Stefanova

Field of study: Business Administration

Home institution: University of Twente, Netherlands

Pursued degree: MSBA in Business Analytics

Host Institution in the U.S.: Emory University- Goizueta Business School, Atlanta, GA

NON-DEGREE RESEARCH GRANTS FOR DOCTORAL STUDENTS

Iva Nedelcheva

Field of study: Communications

Home institution: Sofia University "St Kliment Ohridski"

Host Institution in the U.S.: Pratt Institute, New York, NY
Fall 2018

Delyan Rusev

Field of study: Ottoman History

Home institution: Sofia University "St Kliment Ohridski"

Host Institution in the U.S.: University of Chicago, Chicago, IL
Fall 2018

SCHOLARS

Dr. Mariya Bobina

Field of Specialization: Business

Home Institution: University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA

Host Institution in Bulgaria: Burgas Free University, Burgas

Michael Boock

Field of Specialization: Library Science

Home Institution: Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR

Host Institution in Bulgaria: University of Library Science and Information Technologies, Sofia

Edward Morgan

Field of Specialization: Theater

Home Institution: Freelance Director and Writer, Glendale, NY

Host Institution in Bulgaria: New Bulgarian University, Sofia

Timothy VanSlyke

Field of Specialization: Language Teaching

Home Institution: Chemeketa Community College, Salem, OR

Host Institution in Bulgaria: Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski", Plovdiv

Dr. Tamara von Albertini Vassileff

Field of Specialization: Philosophy

Home Institution: University of Hawaii, Manoa; Honolulu, HI

Host Institution in Bulgaria: Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Sofia

GRADUATE STUDENTS

Christopher Curran

Field of Specialization: Human Rights

Project Title: Empowering Members of Disadvantaged Communities

Host Institution in Bulgaria: Trust for Social Achievement, Sofia

Aleksej Demjanski

Field of Specialization: Political Science

Project Title: Transnational Diffusion in the Fight Against Corruption: Bulgaria, Romania, and the Balkans

Host Institution in Bulgaria: New Bulgarian University, Sofia

Conor McCadden

Field of Specialization: Political Science

Project Title: A View from Bulgaria: Domestic Policy Implications of the Perceptions of Russia & the West

Host Institution in Bulgaria: Center for the Study of Democracy, Sofia

Kathryn Mitchell

Field of Specialization: Music (Vocal Performance)

Project Title: Enriching Cross-Cultural Awareness through the Synergy of Bulgarian Folk Song

Host Institution in Bulgaria: Academy of Music, Dance, and Fine Arts, Plovdiv

Genevieve Ward

Field of Specialization: Art History

Project Title: Religious Syncretism and National Historiography in Bulgarian-Ottoman Architecture

Host Institution in Bulgaria: American University in Bulgaria, Sofia

U.S. Fulbright Grantees

Academic Year 2018-2019

ENGLISH TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Azlin Armstrong

Field of Specialization: English, Advertising, Broadcasting
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Kyustendil, Bulgaria

Alexa Askari

Field of Specialization: Political Science
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Ruse, Bulgaria

Molly Bernhard

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

Jonah Blumenthal

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

Thomas Bowman

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

Faith Brown

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

Tiana Brownen

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

Emily Donlon

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

Moira Duffy

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

Aidan Flanagan

Field of Specialization: Biomedical Sciences
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Gabrovo, Bulgaria

Stephanie Galen

Field of Specialization: International Economics, French
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Silistra, Bulgaria

Stephanie Gusching

Field of Specialization: Public Policy, Spanish
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Haskovo, Bulgaria

Patrick Harchik

Field of Specialization: Russian, International Studies, Security Studies
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Yambol, Bulgaria

Courtney Ibabao

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

Nathan Jacobson

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

Samantha Johnson

Field of Specialization: Environmental Science, Spanish, Political Science
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Smolyan, Bulgaria

Savannah Lusk

Field of Specialization: Exercise Physiology
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Burgas, Bulgaria

Haig Manjikian

Field of Specialization: Russian, Humanities
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Vratsa, Bulgaria

Olivia Melodia

Field of Specialization: Philosophy, Hispanic Studies, Theatre
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria

U.S. Fulbright Grantees

Academic Year 2018-2019

Isaac Miller

Field of Specialization: History, Russian, East European Studies
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Dimitrovgrad, Bulgaria

Keana Mirmajlesi

Field of Specialization: Biomedical Engineering, Psychology
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Varna, Bulgaria

Tajia Moertle

Field of Specialization: English Literature
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Stara Zagora, Bulgaria

Thomas Petrino

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

Jesse Potestas

Field of Specialization: Global Health
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Panagyurishte, Bulgaria

Shauna Ricketts

Field of Specialization: Sociology, Political Science, Urban Studies
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Pravets, Bulgaria

Ian Rush

Field of Specialization: International Relations, History
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Lovech, Bulgaria

Keegan Scott

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

Yuliya Shyrokonis

Field of Specialization: Psychology, Studio Art
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Burgas, Bulgaria

Michael Sowell

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

Margaret Sullivan

Field of Specialization: International Affairs, Gender and Women's Studies
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Silistra, Bulgaria

William Theodorou

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

Meghan Walters

Field of Specialization: International Relations, Public Relations
Project Title: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Sliven, Bulgaria

BULGARIAN FULBRIGHT SCHOLAR NOMINEES 2020-21

VISITING SCHOLARS:

Alexandra Glavanakova
English Literature (Sofia University)

Eliza Ivanova
Psychology (Sofia University)

Denitsa Topchiyska
Law (New Bulgarian University)

Kristina Todorova
Economics (University of National and World Economy)

Iskren Ivanov
Political Science (Sofia University)

Gergana Georgieva
History (Veliko Turnovo University)

BULGARIAN FULBRIGHT STUDENT NOMINEES 2020-21

GRADUATE STUDENTS:

Mariya Ivanova – *Linguistics*
Tsvetelina Bayraktarova – *Law*
Murad Kassim – *MBA*
Lazar Lazarov – *MBA*
Vesela Petrova – *Architecture*

VISITING RESEARCHERS:

Bilyana Manova
Law (SouthWest University)

Polly Petkova
Linguistics (Plovdiv University)

Cultivating Cultural Humility

By Dr. Maya Tcholakova, Professor of Social Work at Southwestern University



"Now I perceive cultural humility as a way of being, inextricably linked to our willingness to acknowledge the limitations of our culturally shaped knowledge and perceptions about the world and to strive to connect with people in an open and teachable manner."

My entire professional career has been connected to studying cultural diversity in the fields of education and social work. Thanks to the support of the Bulgarian-American Commission Fulbright I went to the United States as a visiting scholar to explore the concept of cultural humility in the domain of social work. I soon became aware that, although contested, the perspective of cultural humility has implications for this and many other fields.

I also realized that the debate about cultural humility is only a part of the long and perhaps never-ending journey to looking for more just and humane ways for mutual understanding and coexistence. Now I perceive cultural humility as a way of being, inextricably linked to our willingness to acknowledge the limitations of our culturally shaped knowledge and perceptions about the world and to strive to connect with people in an open and teachable manner.



Everyone asked me, "Why here?" The University of Central Florida has been considered one of the largest and fastest-growing universities in the nation. I imagined it as a fertile place to collect data on cultural diversity, and I was right. When I first found myself on campus, I felt humbled to be a small part of this huge academic enterprise in this extremely diverse community. The main campus itself is like a circle, and at the center of the circle is the Student Union - as a metaphor for the meaning of university education - the young people in whom a smart nation wisely invests.

I was so excited and proud to hold in my hands the hard copies of

books I had only dreamed of – such as Barbara Solomon’s *Black Empowerment*, which, along with Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, inspired me to examine the concept of empowerment in the field of social work. I had the opportunity to draw on the exceptional contributions to the multicultural practice of social work by Derald Wing Sue and his colleagues, and to reflect on cultural humility, just as Hook, Gallardo, and many other authors understood and interpreted it. The UCF library is grand - as impressive as everything around it and full of not only resources but also students. I was thinking of how lucky the Knights are with this priceless treasure!

My colleagues at the School of Social Work assisted me so that I was able to meet my research goals. I enjoyed helpful meetings and candid conversations with people who were familiar with the concept of cultural humility or used it in their work with students. It was no surprise to discover that diversity and inclusion are an integral part of the university’s policy and structure. I found it professionally and personally enriching to participate in workshops organized by the Diversity and Inclusion Office, where I learned that issues of power, privilege, racism and other related issues are an essential part of people’s daily experiences and they constantly reflect on them.

As a Fulbrighter, I have been incredibly fortunate to meet people whom I now take to embody my idea of cultural humility. They were open and curious about my culture as they tried to present theirs through those markers of cultural identification that make people feel belonging. I am thankful to everyone I interacted with during this short and sometimes

challenging period. I am especially grateful for the precious moments we had with Michele Upvall and Karen Biraimah, both Fulbright alumni and hearty, open-minded and wonderful individuals whom I can call my friends. Finally, I will never forget my host Esperanza and her family, where I stayed and celebrated my national holidays, which made me feel at home. Three months is not enough to really get to know such a different world, especially when you are there for the first time. When a friend of mine asked me, “Is this the America you imagined?” I

couldn’t answer. For a long time I could not find the answer to this question. I now identify America with the words that shine on the wall at the National Museum of American History- “The Nation We Build Together.” These words are somehow the quintessence of the meaning of my Fulbright. I now perceive America as the unique way in which the efforts of all can be united and directed at building the prosperity of a society that is able to value both the contribution and the rights of everyone, regardless of race, gender, religion, and other differences.





Shooting Stars:

The Pravets Film Festival

By Iliana Dimitrova

On May 31, 2019, the *chitalishte* in the tiny town of Pravets was unusually busy. While noisy teenagers were leaving the building in droves after their favorite pop star's concert, a well-dressed mixed crowd was waiting its turn to enter the concert hall.



There was a buzz of excitement, people holding flower bouquets and wine glasses, while a beautiful young woman in red was ushering guests in, chatting to newcomers and inviting them to take pictures on what seemed like... wait, a red carpet! What was going on?

Few at the Aleko Konstantinov Foreign Language School expected that their new English teaching assistant, Shauna Ricketts, a New York state native, would bring her idea of starting a film festival for youth to fruition. Yet there we all were- competitors, judges, official guests, and spectators, eagerly awaiting an evening of shared joy and appreciation of youth art. After almost a year in Bulgaria, Shauna's initial idea of starting a film festival for short documentaries created by students had evolved into the desire to provide them with a wider platform to exercise their creativity, while having the opportunity to receive feedback from experts in the field. To make the festival as beneficial as possible for the students, Shauna recruited judges who were filmmakers, artists, photographers, screenwriters or people who work in the film industry. There were a total of 15 judges from all over the world, including Bulgaria, the United States, France, Canada and Germany.

The prompt was simple and left everything to students' imagination – they had to create a three-to- four minute film that incorporates three elements from a list of 20. The elements, ranging from “doll house,” “perfume,” and “low battery” to “bird’s eye view” and “flashback,” were meant to be interpreted freely. The organizers ended up receiving seven entries from all over the country: Blagoevgrad, Pravets, Etropole, Varna, Gotse Delchev, and Razgrad. A keynote speaker flew in from Heidelberg, Germany, to address the young artists- Max Forster, a student of philosophy and an experimental artist, was coincidentally also a 2019-2020 Fulbrighter at UNC Chapel Hill. Shauna and he met in Berlin, while both attending the Berlin Seminar for American Grantees, and immediately clicked. Fascinated by the connection between film and politics, Max delivered a passionate and thought-provoking speech.

The short films surprised jury and audience alike with their wide range of ideas and cinematographic skill. The young film makers thought of everything: stories, scene sequence, characters, perspective, sound. We all had our favorite entries, and the audience often burst into applause and encouraging shout-outs. But there had to be only four winners!

Co-hosting the event was Will Theodorou, a Fulbright English teaching assistant in Razgrad. Together with Shauna they presented the awards for Best Story, The Runner Up for Best Picture, and Best Picture. A separate award in memory of Boris Nikolov, a filmmaker, director and cinematographer who attended the Aleko Konstantinov FLHS in Pravets, was presented by alumni of the National Academy for Theater and Film Arts, who had studied film with Boris.

And the winners were:

Best Picture: *The Idea*, Varna

Best Story and Runner Up for Best Picture: *The Grape Yard*, Gotse Delchev

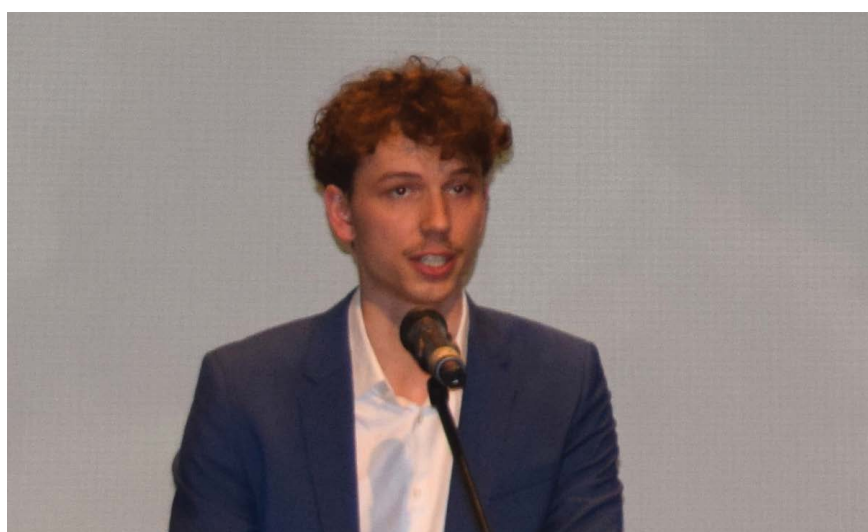
Boris Nikolov Award for Cinematography: *Above the Limit*, Pravets

I won't tell you which one was my favorite, but I'll just say – it went far beyond my expectations!

With special thanks to: ETAs Shauna Ricketts, Will Theodorou and Ian Rush; ETA mentor teacher Stefka Atanasova; the administration of Aleko Konstantinov FLHS, Pravets, and the Pravets Municipality. The Pravets Film Festival project was funded by a mini-grant from the Fulbright Commission and the America for Bulgaria Foundation.



ETAs Will Theodorou and Shauna Ricketts announcing the winners



German Fulbright alum Max Forster delivers his keynote address

The Aprilov National High School in Gabrovo

by Iliana Dimitrova

In this issue of our newsletter we would like to introduce another partner, a school with a long and proud history: the Aprilov National High School in Gabrovo. Aprilov National School was the first modern secular school in Bulgaria. It was opened on 2 January 1835, when Bulgaria was still part of the Ottoman Empire, with the financial help of Vasil Aprilov, Nikolay Palauzov, Vasil Rasheev and other educated and wealthy Bulgarians, many of whom were living in Odessa. The school was based on the Bell-Lancaster method, and text books and teaching aids were created especially for the school's needs, later serving as examples to be used by many educators. Humbly named the Gabrovo School at first, the school took the name of its principal benefactor, Vasil Aprilov, in 1889.



Who was Vasil Aprilov, and why was he so passionate about education? Aprilov was born in Gabrovo in 1789. At 11 years old, his merchant brother took him along to Moscow, where he completed his primary education. He then went on to continue his studies in Braşov, Romania, and then pursued a medical degree in Vienna. The Aprilov brothers had a successful alcohol and sugar trading business, soon opening their own factories and a large store in Odessa. Aprilov generously supported the volunteers who wanted to join the Greek 1821 uprising. But what seriously influenced his political and world views was a book he read in 1831 by Russian slavist, folklorist, ethnographer and philologist, Yuriy Venelin, best known for his research on Bulgarian language, history and culture. The book, *Old and Contemporary Bulgarians in Their Political, Ethnographic, Historical and Religious Relations to the Russians*, was published in three volumes from 1829 to 1841, and it has been credited for popularizing Bulgarian culture and history in the Russian Empire and influencing the national feelings of many Bulgarian emigrants. The book inspired Aprilov to devote himself to the cause of Bulgarian cultural and educational enlightenment and progress. In 1836 Aprilov made the personal acquaintance of Venelin, and the two maintained active correspondence. It is Venelin who convinced Aprilov to start collecting traditional Bulgarian folk songs and preserve them as a national cultural heritage.

Coached by Fulbright ETAs, the school's BEST English speech and debate team has won multiple awards at regional and national competitions.

In 1872, the Aprilov school became the first “full” Bulgarian school, offering a full course of education from 1st-12th grades (the grades’ structure was different in those days). A new stage in the school’s development began in the 1980s and 90s, when the Ministry of Culture, Science and Education gave it the status of a national state school, profiled in the humanities – archeology, ethnography, linguistics, journalism, rhetoric, theatre, history of culture, etc. Encouraged by interest on part of students, the school now offers intensive foreign language instruction in English, German and French language. Ninety-five percent of the school’s alumni are accepted for graduate studies in Bulgaria or abroad.

Aprilov National School has been the gracious host of seven generations of Fulbright| America for Bulgaria English Teaching Assistants – Erica Langston, Carolyn Fado, Christine Pardue (for two consecutive years), Anna Brainerd (for two consecutive years), and now – Aidan Flanagan (in his second year as a TA in AY 2019-2020). Coached by Fulbright ETAs, the school’s BEST English speech and debate team has won multiple awards at regional and national competitions. With Flanagan’s support last year the school’s BEST team utilized a mini-grant from the Fulbright Commission to organize a public debate between joint teams of the Aprilov National High School and Gabrovo’s High School of Mathematics and Natural Sciences. The event was held in Gabrovo’s Town Hall, and local businesses were invited to sell items at the event in exchange for donating a portion of their earnings to Gabrovo’s Daycare Center for Children and Young Adults with Disabilities.



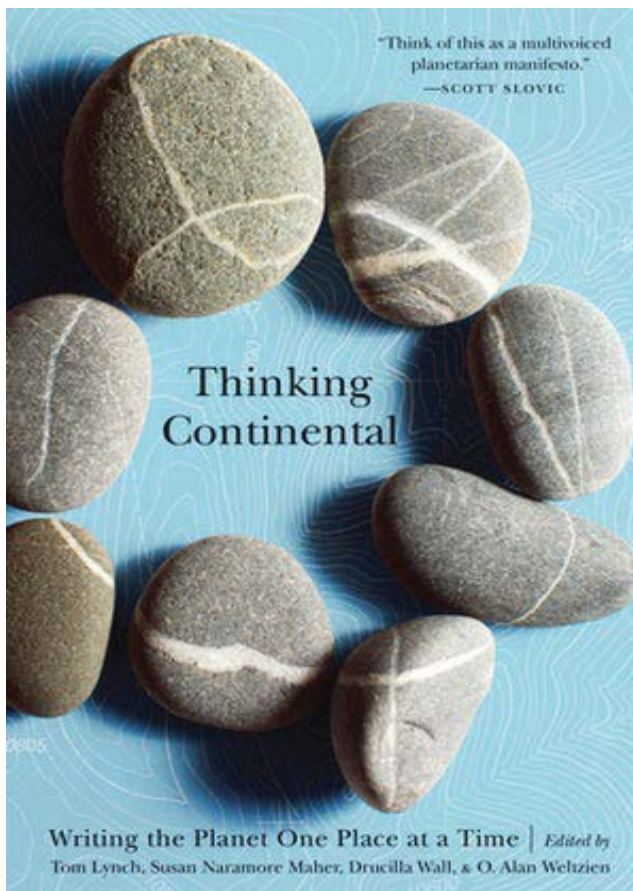
Aprilov National High School with a statue of its benefactor



Aprilov students debating in front of a panel of judges



The Aprilov high school's gorgeous new wing



Alan Weltzien (Fulbright Scholar, Sofia University, 1997-1998), published two new books this past year:

- 1) Thinking Continental: Writing the Planet One Place at a Time (Univ. Nebraska Press, co-editor)
 - 2) The Comfort Pathway: Walking and Writing Through Death and Grief (FootHills Publishing).
- <https://www.amazon.com/Thinking-Continental-Writing-Planet-Place/dp/0803299583>



In 2018, **Kate Conklin** (Fulbright Student Researcher, Academy for Music, Dance and Fine Arts, 2001-2002) launched a series of online, international courses for extraordinary performers. Kate was also featured in Voyage LA, in which she talks about living in Bulgaria, singing in Cirque du Soleil, and coaching expert performers all over the world. <http://voyagela.com/interview/meet-kate-conklin-kate-conklin-performance-coach-voice-alexander-technique-santa-monica/>



Dr. Julia Stefanova, (Fulbright Scholar at American University, Washington DC, Department of Economics, 2017-2018) delivered lectures in financial and security markets at Thai Nguyen International School University, Vietnam, using some of the research on capital markets carried out during her Fulbright grant. She is also a regular contributor to Fulbright academic events and meetings.



Dr. Katerina Kokinova (Fulbright Visiting Researcher in comparative literature at UC Berkeley and NYU, 2014-2015) published her translation of *Cosmos* by Witold Gombrowicz from Polish into Bulgarian with Panorama Publishers.

In November 2017, **Randall Baker** (Fulbright Scholar, New Bulgarian University, 2000-2001) published his latest book *Изгубените Балкани* which is the story of the discovery of three boxes of photographs from a British series of expeditions to the South Balkans between 1927 and 1937 showing some of the remotest parts and most isolated communities in the mountain areas of the region. The book was published in Bulgarian by Bulgaria's largest publisher *Ciela*.



Larry DiMatteo (Fulbright Scholar, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences-Institute for Legal Studies, 2011-2012) recently published two books, *Smart Contracts and Blockchain Technology: Role of Contract Law* (Cambridge University Press, 2019) and *Chinese Contract Law: Civil and Common Perspectives* (Cambridge University Press 2018, with co-author Chen Lei), in addition to numerous articles.

He has also given numerous international lectures at Jagiellonian University (Cracow, Poland); Mohyla Academy (Kiev, Ukraine); University of Turin (Italy); University of Trieste (Italy); University of Rijeka (Croatia); Catholic University Lyon (France); Kutafin Moscow State Law University (Moscow, Russia); Belorussian State University, School of Law (Minsk, Belarus).



Anna Chernova (Fulbright Student Researcher, Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, 2001-2002) is Oxfam's senior policy adviser on humanitarian issues. She provides policy expertise on rights, democracy and humanitarian issues in fragile and conflict affected contexts including Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and others. Anna specializes in human security and the political economy of humanitarian crises. With over 15 years experience in the sector, Anna has managed large scale humanitarian operations in Russia's Chechnya, advised UNHCR Bulgaria on European integration and civic engagement and has worked in parliamentary, multi-lateral diplomacy for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). At the OSCE, she directed the work of the Assembly on humanitarian issues, democracy and rule of law – with a particular focus on Eastern Europe and Central Asia. In this capacity she has staffed over 20 election observation missions across OSCE area. Anna is from Boston, US. She graduated from Boston College, and is a Fulbright and IREX scholar, having studied refugee and minority rights in Bulgaria and conflict resolution in Russia. She also serves as a Research Fellow with the Foreign Policy Centre in the UK. Bilingual in English and Russian, she is actively learning Farsi.

Nancy Bartley (Fulbright Scholar, American University in Bulgaria, 2012) is a fourth-year doctoral candidate at the University of Washington. She leads a panel and will speak on "Doors to Democracy: Challenges to Global Press Freedom," at the national Fulbright conference this month (October). It will concern her work in Bulgaria. She is also included in a panel at the Modern Language Association conference in January. She will present a paper on Seattle's visual culture and the Goodwill Games, which followed the collapse of the Soviet Union.

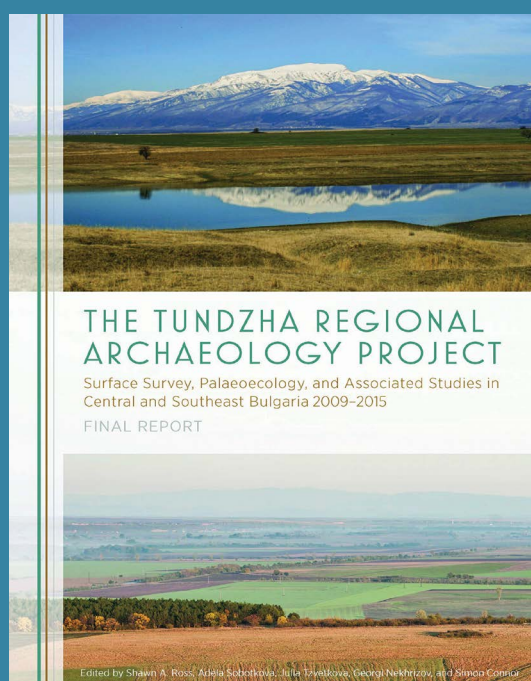


Dr. Brian Farrell (with his colleague Fulbright Scholar, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, 2012-13) was selected by the Association of American Law Schools Clinical Section as a Bellow Scholar along with his colleague Prof. Daria Fisher Page. The program recognizes and supports innovative research proposals designed to improve the quality of justice in communities, enhance the delivery of legal services, and promote economic and social justice. Brian and Daria's project looks at rural access to justice in Iowa.

Benjamin Bush (Fulbright Student Researcher, Elizabeth Kostova Foundation, 2017-2018) received a fellowship to Vermont Studio Center for January 2019. The Vermont Studio Center was founded by artists in 1984, and over the last 30 years, has grown to become the largest international artists' and writers' residency program in the United States.



Dan Fellner (Fulbright Scholar, American University in Bulgaria, 2015) was named a Fulbright Specialist to the Republic of North Macedonia in 2019, where he taught intercultural communications at the country's largest university, Saints Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje. He also was a guest-lecturer at two other universities in North Macedonia.



Dr. Shawn Ross (Fulbright Scholar, American University in Bulgaria, 2005), along with international colleagues, edited and published a new research collection entitled *The Tundzha Regional Archaeology Project* on Oxbow Books in 2018. This volume presents the results of diachronic archaeological and palaeoecological research conducted in two study areas: the intermontane Kazanlak Valley along the Upper Tundzha River of central Bulgaria, and the Thracian Plain along the Middle Tundzha River south of the city of Yambol in southeastern Bulgaria. The Tundzha Regional Archaeology Project (TRAP), a cooperative effort including Australian, Bulgarian, and Czech investigators, undertook archaeological survey and environmental sampling between 2009-2011.



On 29 September 2019, **Kristalina Georgieva** (Fulbright Scholar, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1991-92), was named Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund. This is the crowning achievement in her brilliant career, which has included service as Bulgaria's European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management (2010-2014), Vice-President of the European Commission (2014 to 2016), and Chief Executive of the World Bank (2017-2019). Dr. Georgieva was the keynote speaker at Fulbright Bulgaria's 20th Anniversary celebration in 2013. (Featured here with fellow Fulbright Bulgaria alumnus and former Bulgarian Minister of Education, Professor Todor Tanev.)



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