

# NEWSLETTER

Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange



## Discovering the Secrets of Lyutenitsa

**Our Voices: Navigating Identities**

**A Virtual Goodbye**

**Anthropology in Unprecedented Times**

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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**Cover photo:** : US Student Researcher Theodore Charles' "Lyutenitsa 1" (see photo essay p. 8-9)

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## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



*We will all remember the spring of 2020 as an extremely challenging time – for the first time in a century, the world was faced with a global pandemic that threatened the health, education and work of millions and disrupted life as we know it, including the Fulbright program. While Fulbright Bulgaria has prepared a special edition of its*

*newsletter to highlight grantee and alumni reflections and responses to the Covid-19 pandemic, in this Spring 2020 edition we would like to celebrate the activities and achievements of our 2019-20 cohort and alumni during this period despite the pandemic, including the Second Annual Pravets Film Fest, an online wrap-up seminar and anthropological explorations, among other things!*

*Fulbright Bulgaria would also like to thank its partners and sponsors for helping support our US grantees in March 2020 – we could not have quickly and safely evacuated our US grantees and welcomed back our BG grantees without the help of our host institutions, partner schools and mentor teachers. The US Embassy in Bulgaria, IIE and the US State Department also offered crucial aid to help manage this unprecedented challenge. Our ETA program sponsors – the America for Bulgaria Foundation, Contour Global, Asarel Medet, Optix and OpticoElectron – generously continued to support US grantees as they unexpectedly transitioned back to life in the US, for which we are extremely grateful! Although the Fulbright program was cut short for many grantees in Spring 2020 due to Covid-19, we hope this is not goodbye, but rather dovizhdane – until we see you again!*

*Stay safe and keep in touch,  
Angela*

### Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange

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# “Our Voices: Navigating Identities in the Fulbright Program”: Reflections on the Amsterdam Seminar

by Andrew Kim, AY2019-20 Fulbright/ABF ETA in Stara Zagora

From February 28-March 1, 2020, the Dutch Fulbright Commission organized a seminar for US Fulbrighters from across Europe to discuss the challenges of navigating diverse identities during their exchange experience. Two ETAs from Bulgaria, Andrew Kim (Stara Zagora) and Amna Azeem (Ruse) were selected to take part in this first-of-its-kind event. Andrew shared his reflections on the experience:

On February 29, a group of Fulbright ETAs and researchers gathered in a snug backroom of the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam to discuss topics that all beckoned the same question we have been grappling with: how do our multidimensional identities manifest when we are abroad and dislocated from our home communities?

To make headway on this massive question, the moderators divvied up the discussion into six different categories: Storytelling, Intersectionality and the In-Between,

Belonging, Alterity and Power, Participation, and Courage. These categories acted as an inlet through which ETAs and researchers could ferry their Fulbright experiences so far. With each passing question, more and more Fulbrighters opened up and shared stories about their backgrounds and how they played a pivotal role in the construction of their current identities. These reflections were reflected by other Fulbrighters in a way that reminded me of a mirror looking into another mirror- two similar objects producing images vastly different from one another, but ultimately creating

one powerful image. As I sat and listened, I, too, found myself looking back on the historical actors that have molded my identity into the one I identify with now.

The seminar was also a wonderful opportunity to befriend other Fulbrighters across Europe. I met Afsheen, an ETA in Turkey who’s poised to pursue a career in acting; Mahdi, an ETA in the Netherlands with whom I shared interesting conversations about finding home in a language; and Alona, an ETA in Germany who worked as a community organizer before coming to Germany. I’m glad I got to meet these people (along with many others) and share a brief moment in time together. I look forward to the next time when I will reconnect with the seminar attendees. Until then, I’ll revisit this weekend in my memory from time to time to think and mull over the conversations I’ve had with others, finding comfort in the wisdom shared by all.

*Many thanks to the Dutch Fulbright Commission and the US State Department’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs for organizing this impactful event!*



Participants in the “Our Voices” seminar, courtesy of Fulbright The Netherlands

# A Virtual Goodbye:

## Wrap Up Meeting for the AY 2019-20 US Cohort

by Rada Kaneva



**On the eve of May 24, the Day of Slavonic alphabet, Bulgarian enlightenment and culture, Fulbright Bulgaria had the pleasure of hosting an online closing seminar for US Fulbright cohort 2019-2020, mentor teachers, principals, and partners. Saying goodbye is never easy, and was made even more difficult this year due to the sudden evacuation due to the Covid pandemic. However, this symbolic wrap up demonstrated once again that our US grantees will always carry a piece of Bulgaria in their hearts – just as all Bulgarians working with them will keep part of America in their hearts!**

The meeting opened with addresses from Dr. Tzvetomir Todorov, chair of the Fulbright Commission Board, and Nancy Schiller, president of the America for Bulgaria Foundation. Special guests also included ABF Executive Director Desislava Taliokova, ABF Program Director Natalia Miteva, and ABF Publications Director Sylvia Zareva, as well as Fulbright board members Sarah Perrine and Matt Hagengruber.

Fulbright Commission ED Angela Rodel introduced various follow-on opportunities for Fulbright alumni and gave the floor to participants in the 2019-2020 cohort to share impressions from their life and work in the country. Fred Rooney, Fulbright Scholar, talked about his work with a local NGO founding a legal incubator in Bulgaria. His moving overview of the challenges faced by underserved communities in their quest for justice

was followed by ETA in Galabovo Keegan Scott's fun and engaging Kahoot game testing seminar participants' knowledge of Bulgaria. Several other ETAs, including Prudence Salasky (Burgas), Gergana Kostadinova (Pernik), Lukas Koester (Sliven) and Andrew Kim (Stara Zagora), offered moving and creative reflections on their experiences. Fulbright student researcher Theodore Charles discussed another angle of cultural exploration – as a food anthropologist, he made us all reflect on Bulgarian cuisine as part of national identity, and how the coronavirus lockdown has affected culinary habits.

The event concluded with a piano performance of our musical star, student researcher John Thomas. He played a work by the famous Bulgarian composer Pancho Vladigerov live, using a beautiful photograph of the Ancient Roman theater in Plovdiv as background. Many participants in the meeting asked questions and commented on the presentations, while grantees and partners alike expressed their gratitude to everyone who contributed to making the past school year a happy and rewarding experience despite its abrupt end due to the Covid-19 outbreak. We would like to thank all presenters for their touching reflections on their experience as Fulbright grantees. We also extend our sincere gratitude to the entire US 2019-2020 cohort for their hard and dedicated work, as well as to our Bulgarian host institutions, Fulbright sponsors and partners for their unwavering support!



Participants in the 2020 EU/NATO Seminar, courtesy of Fulbright Belgium

# Exploring EU and NATO Institutions Alongside Belgian Waffles and Delirium Beer

by Gergana Kostadinova

**Thank you to the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission for selecting me to represent Fulbright Bulgaria at the Seminar. I sincerely appreciate the opportunity! And a huge thank you to Erica Lutes and Elisabeth Bloxam of the Fulbright Commission in Brussels - the two are women of many talents! Their hard work and dedication to the Seminar made the entire experience unforgettable for all of the participants.**

As a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in Bulgaria, I have enjoyed all the new experiences that come with adjusting to life as a teacher in a new city. I have become familiar with the quirks of each of my classes, I enjoy catching up with and learning from my colleagues, and I know where to get the best банички near my school.

In the midst of these new routines, it was interesting to step away for a week during the term break – the week after the U.K. formally left the E.U. - to attend the 2020 EU – NATO Seminar organized by the Fulbright Commission in Brussels. On paper, the EU- NATO Seminar promised to be four days full of learning and exploring through presentations,

visits, and networking opportunities. And yes, I definitely gained a better understanding of the role and importance of both the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In reality, the Seminar proved to be so much more than that, and I know that this experience will stay with me well beyond my time as a Fulbright ETA.



Fulbright Bulgaria seminar participant Gergana Kostadinova



Seminar participants at the European Court of Justice

It was fascinating to absorb all of this information through the perspective of a Bulgarian- American temporarily living back in Bulgaria. Having studied global political and economic development, I know that the United States should never take existing alliances for granted, and needs to actively maintain and invest in these mutually-beneficial partnerships. The Seminar certainly reaffirmed this belief, especially when we spoke with representatives from the U.S. Mission to the E.U. and the U.S. Mission to N.A.T.O. We also had the opportunity to speak with Dr. Paul Nihoul, a Judge in the General Court of the European Court of Justice and a Fulbright

alumnus. It was truly inspiring to hear Dr. Nihoul discuss his trust in the institutions of the E.U. and his determination to serve its citizens by ensuring that they feel heard and understood. As a dedicated public servant himself, he reminded us to have faith in our own democratic institutions as our country takes on unprecedented challenges.

The Seminar emphasized the importance of each and every member state and their contribution to the overall success of the E.U. and N.A.T.O. Living in Bulgaria, I am aware of the country's strategic role in both of these organizations

during renewed tensions between “the West” and Russia. I also often see signs attributing renovations or projects to E.U. funding, or read about the impact of E.U. policies throughout the country. For example, the Simeon Radev Foreign Language School in Pernik where I teach has been the recipient of various educational grants. While I was in Belgium and Luxembourg, these “sponsored by the E.U.” signs took on a whole new meaning when considered in the broader context of E.U. priorities to strengthen a shared European identity through Erasmus+ exchanges, or to invest in the revitalization of regions that have faced economic downturns.

The E.U.'s biggest challenges currently include migration, economic and social inequality, climate change, and accelerating technological change and hyperconnectivity. All of these challenges take on a new meaning when considered on a regional versus a single-country perspective. Taking some of these observations to my students, it was interesting to hear their micro-level perspectives based on their lived experiences, compared to the macro-level overviews that I received.

Just as valuable as the educational aspects of the Seminar, was the opportunity to connect with other Fulbrighter grantees who are placed throughout Europe. It was very eye-opening to hear about their research projects or Master's programs, and to compare teaching experiences with the other ETAs. Everyone brought such unique perspectives to the Seminar, either from their current work, or from their previous experiences in the U.S. I hope that these friendships, which were forged over long bus rides, Nutella-covered Belgian waffles and Delirium beer, hot yoga, and while wandering the streets of Brussels entranced by its history and architecture, will continue to connect us in the future, regardless of where we find ourselves.

# My Way to Dartmouth: A Success Story

by Kristabel Konta



Kristabel (standing, third from left) with friends from her OF cohort

My name is Kristabel Konta, and I am one of the Dartmouth 24s, as we are called. The thought of this is just as incredible as the long way any student should go in order to get to their dream school. I was born and raised in Sofia, Bulgaria and learned from a very young age what value does an international outlook hold. After spending seven years in a Russian school /133 rd Al. S. Pushkin/, I was admitted to the American College of Sofia with a full scholarship for the duration of my education. It is hard for me to synthesise all the benefits I received from studying at this high school, but here are those that brought me to EducationUSA at the Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission and my dream of studying at Dartmouth.



Kristabel acing a mock college interview with Fulbright ED Angela Rodel

Ever since I set foot at ACS, I knew that your high school years are not simply the time to identify your interests but also to do your best to pursue them from early age. Among the extracurriculars that I had the chance to take part in, I learned that there are indeed many options to choose from both in and outside of the classroom, yet if you don't find the place where you would fit in the most - create it. I created a club at ACS, a club through which I organized two editions of an event that was new for Bulgaria, and during every single college interview I had this club as one of the main topics. Admissions officers and alumni love to hear about how you have benefited from the already existing, but also

what have you done when you haven't found what you were looking for.

Jumping onto the application process - it began for me in Grade 11 when I became a part of the Opportunity Funds-Bulgaria Program at the Fulbright Commission\*. This was the time when I attended visits by College reps, binge watched tons of online campus tours, and stalked their social media accounts. The time I invested in these activities was the reason why I was certain that my final college list was a reflection of what I hope to experience in my undergraduate studies. I attended all three one-week sessions of the Opportunity Funds-Bulgaria Program, and they prepared me not only for the college academic expectations for a competitive applicant, but I also got to see first-hand what it was to fill-in financial documents, write college application essays, participate in interviews and many more. Here I would like to add that these camps were just as professional as they were friendly and fun, and the memories and friends you make there have the full potential to become long-lasting.

However, regardless of the hours you spend working during the camps or the college presentations you attend, in the end everything is in your own hands and depends on the time during which you are committed to editing essays, seeking opportunities for interviews, and communicating with the Admissions office. I have to admit that it is hard (still not impossible) to complete all work in the Fall. Applications are indeed important, yet in order for them to be of the highest quality you need to keep a good academic record, which could be put at risk if you start juggling between school and college work in the middle of October. Please, write as many essays as possible in the summer :)

As much as applying is stressful and you hope to complete everything

on time, believe me- waiting for the results of your work is harder. Never start doubting yourself during these times- you have poured your emotions in every single one of your applications, and the admissions officers will see it. March is the month of revelations with the Ivies coming out always in the very last days, but do your best not to focus your full

attention on the upcoming results - this would cause you unnecessary anxiety.

In the end - believe in yourself. This whole process is hard to believe or forget, but it is always unquestionably worthy - you will learn much about yourself, draw some conclusions about your past, and find your goals for the future.



The 2018-2019 Opportunity Funds cohort

#### Here are some of my final tips:

- if you are struggling to see yourself in a certain university, try contacting current students → they have the most recent experience to share with you;
- for questions such as: What three words describe you?, ask your closest friends for suggestions → they have seen the most true side of you;
- if you think that a certain activity is not that impressive as you have described it → don't try to exaggerate your achievements, rather talk not only about what you did but also why you invested so much in doing it; let them see the purpose behind your decisions.

\* The Fulbright Commission and EducationUSA launched the U.S. State Department-funded Opportunity Funds program in Bulgaria in February 2016. The program provides financial resources to highly qualified, yet economically challenged, Bulgarian students to cover the up-front costs of applying to U.S. universities, such as testing, application fees, or airfare. In addition to their impressive academic achievements, Opportunity students also bring cultural and socio-economic diversity to U.S. campuses.



Tryphon 1- Velko prunes grape vines on Saint Tryphon's Day

# Discovering the Secrets of Lyutenitsa:

A Fulbrighter Explores Traditional Bulgarian Foodways

by Theodore Charles, US Student Researcher, AY 2019-20



My arms began to ache, so I readjusted my grip on the giant wooden spoon, angling my body away from the fire while continuing to stir. The cauldron sat on a repurposed stove cover, the flames beneath hungrily crackling as they consumed an old window sill. I continued stirring, knowing that if I stopped for too long the pureed vegetables would stick and burn, ruining days of hard work. The smell of cooking peppers and tomatoes soaked into my clothing, the sweet mist rising from the cauldron mixing with smoke before escaping through a gap in the ceiling above. I was in the village of Popintsi near Pazardzhik learning how to make lyutenitsa, a food that has become emblematic of my research to better understand how traditional foods in Bulgaria are evolving.

I am a food anthropologist pursuing my PhD at SOAS, the University of London. Over the course of the year I am traveling around Bulgaria, utilizing my skills as a documentary photographer to tell the stories of people engaging with depopulation, heritage preservation, and economic instability through food. Popintsi is a village where I have been fortunate to spend a great deal of time, pruning grapes for Saint Tryphon's Day and making rakia and lyutenitsa in the Fall. I seek to capture the past in the present, depicting Bulgaria's rich history and optimistic future through people's stomachs.

**Lyutenitsa 1** (See cover photo) - A group of ladies clean and slice tomatoes to make lyutenitsa in the village of Kurtovo Konare near Plovdiv. Every year, during September, the village hosts a Queens of Lyutenitsa competition where locals compete in a blind tasting to see who makes the most delicious lyutenitsa. Bulgaria hosts a large number of food festivals each year, serving as a way to celebrate and preserve local traditions.

**Lyutenitsa 2** - In the village of Popintsi, Maria tests to see if her homemade lyutenitsa is finished by watching to see if water seeps from it onto a plate. Once all the water has evaporated the lyutenitsa will be ready. Many Bulgarian food practices only exist in the minds of people who have spent lifetimes perfecting them, and can only be passed down through the physical act of cooking.

**Tryphon 1** - Velko prunes grape vines on Saint Tryphon's Day. February 14 is the annual pruning of the grapes, when people bundle up and head to the vineyards to prepare their plants for Spring growth. The process includes pouring a bottle of homemade wine back into the earth from which it came to insure a good

harvest in the coming Fall.

I seek to capture the past in the present, depicting Bulgaria's rich history and optimistic future through people's stomachs.

**Tryphon 2** - As part of the Saint Tryphon's Day celebrations in Popintsi, the village elders teach the younger generations the art of making *tutmanik*, a local specialty made from the layering of orbs of dough, cheese, and oil together into one massive pastry. It is a dish that is hard to find outside of homes and because of its deliciousness, it is something that people are excited to preserve and pass on to future generations.



Lyutenitsa 2 - Maria tests her homemade lyutenitsa



Tryphon 2 - Making tutmanik

# From Quasars to Blunders:

## Fulbright Open Lectures Celebrates Its Fifth Anniversary

by Maria Kostova

On February 21, 2020, the Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission held its annual Open Lectures for the fifth year in a row, highlighting the breadth and depth of knowledge and talent of Bulgarian and US Fulbright alumni.



Fulbright Visiting Researcher Iva Simeonova (AY 2018-19, Pratt Institute, NY) shares best practices in communications

On the day of their arrival, all Returnees from the Bulgarian exchange programs and US guest lecturers shared their specific expertise in brief, informative presentations on a number of topics ranging from quasars in the Andromeda Galaxy, blundering as a sign of intellectual development, humility as a basis for social dialogue, new dimensions of industrialization, NATO military logistics training, a Bulgarian mural in San Francisco, revival of Bulgarian villages, the 15th century perception of Balkan nations, early childhood prevention, and credibility of the media in the 21st century. After sampling this diverse intellectual buffet, participants moved to a nearby restaurant to enjoy a more material buffet of food and drinks and to continue their discussions informally.

We are grateful to all the wonderful scholars who welcomed us into their spheres of competence, and to all the attendants who supported the event with their enthusiastic turnout.

# Doing Anthropology in “Unprecedented Times”: Waste as a Challenge and a Resource

by Velislava Petrova, AY2019-20 Visiting Fulbright Scholar

I am writing this essay while on the plane returning to my home country. This is the first time in two and a half months that I am surrounded by so many people, tightly packed together and staring at our screens.



A photo from our first visit to San Francisco

We are flying from California, where most of the counties are hesitantly reopening for the second stage, to Sofia where, according to my friends, everything is pretty much “as before.” The flight still feels like a return to some forgotten past but also a journey into an uncertain future. If nothing else, the pandemic has made us realize to what extent our efforts to control and plan are vulnerable to the forces of nature. In the same way, while trying to adapt to the new reality, I was also trying to figure out how to continue my planned research under the new circumstances and in the context of a full shift in my research approach.

On January 12, 2020, I arrived at San Francisco airport, accompanied by my husband and two kids. We were savoring the big American adventure for which we had carefully prepared for almost two years, contemplating the beautiful Bay Area from the car, without having even a hint of what was going to happen in just two months.

Arriving at ISEES at UC Berkeley was like a dream come true, since perhaps for the first time in my adult life I was working on research that I am passionate about without any

distraction, with all the possible resources on hand and great minds all around. I was consulting fascinating researchers and doing my field work. In just two weeks, first rumors, then official information about the new COVID-19 started to circulate. We meticulously started washing our hands, planned for seminars and continued working. I even flew to Kansas City for an interesting enrichment seminar at the beginning of March. There, we were still joking about the pandemic, greeting one another from a distance and continuing to meticulously wash our hands. It was indeed strange flying out of the almost-empty Harvey Milk terminal at San Francisco Airport and being on a half-empty plane, but still things were pretty normal as I even attended a house party organized for us.

And then, suddenly, just about a week after my return from Kansas, the borders closed, Governor Newsom ordered Californians to shelter-in-place, people started hoarding food, sanitizers and toilet paper, schools closed for the first time in decades and everything went on Zoom overnight. Gradually UC Berkeley also closed, with us researchers being the last ones to stay on the empty campus.

At that time, I was surrounded by a lot of Eastern Europeans and we felt as if we were reliving a very intense déjà vu from the 1980s-1990s with closed borders, empty supermarkets and some invisible menace. For my research I was planning to interview people who work in waste facilities, to accompany them on an everyday basis, which overnight was not an option anymore. So, like everyone else, I turned to the Internet, having lost all the tools I normally use in my fieldwork. Luckily, waste has always accompanied human civilization and



The Institute for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies, UC Berkeley

even a pandemic wasn't going to stop it. Quite the opposite, it intensified and even offered new ways of approaching the subject.

Waste is an important part of the material impact we produce on our living environment. At the beginning of the pandemic people were fascinated with the effect the lockdown had on global warming. Everyone shared data about decreased air pollution, carless cities and even fake news about dolphins swimming in the canals of Venice. But soon it also became clear that regardless of the effects on global warming, the pandemic was

producing another very potent side effect: an unprecedented increase in waste related to personal protective materials, as oceans became flooded with masks. A humble virus made people realize for the first time on a mass scale that we are living in the Anthropocene. As a friend of mine, a brilliant Fulbrighter joked: "That virus obtained bigger results than any environmental activist in just a week." So, in the time of COVID 19, waste was again revealed as a challenge.

But waste revealed its potential as a resource, too. In fact, waste is a liminal category, very potent in drawing but

also fluidifying boundaries. Waste materials are private matters disposed of in the public space. Rathje's classical study, the so-called Garbage Project, (Rathje, 2001), is a 20-year archaeological study of consumer practices through municipal waste. The main legacy of this project lies not so much in understanding the degree of prestige of certain types of consumption, but in focusing on waste as a research tool. This is gradually turning waste into a valuable information resource that remains hidden from the general public.

However, waste also returned with greater force to the current COVID 19 situation with the data published in an article on the levels of detection of the SARS-Cov-2 virus (Wu et al., 2020), which was also mentioned in other media reports on a network of researchers from the Netherlands, the United States and Sweden. There is a small private company in Massachusetts that does epidemiological research on wastewater; they have experience collecting data for the opioid crisis and currently they are tracking the concentration of COVID 19 antibodies in wastewater, perhaps revealing a different pattern of the disease.

This case shows another very important characteristic of waste as a resource that enhances its value. It is a product of the private and intimate sphere, but once in the public sphere we lose power over it, without it losing its potential to reveal information about us. Moreover, this information can be traded.

The extended shelter-in-place order made me realize how important physical spaces are for interaction both for research and education. We rely a lot on the interaction we have in extended personal contacts with people in anthropological places.

**Waste revealed its potential as a resource, too. In fact, waste is a liminal category, very potent in drawing but also fluidifying boundaries. Waste materials are private matters disposed of in the public space.**

According to Marc Augé, these are places that engender history, social relations and identity. However, my main issue was how to reshape my research, as I needed to completely change my methodology in a very short time while navigating through homeschooling our kids and dealing with the increased anxiety that the uncertainty of the pandemic brought. And I believe it is important to speak about those challenges, not only to look for the silver lining, because this is what makes us social beings and humans.



Participants at the Fulbright Enrichment Seminar



On our return flight to Sofia



Rumen Cholakov with fellow Fulbrighters at the Pre-Departure Orientation

# Living in History:

## Reflections from New York City during the Covid Crisis

by Rumen Cholakov, AY2019-20 Bulgarian LLM Student at Columbia University

All of my life I have been in love with history. As a kid, I read history novels. Gore Vidal was a favourite. Getting a B in history was a tragedy when a D in biology was irrelevant to me. My family was not surprised that I chose History for my undergraduate degree in Cambridge. Although I was surprised that a professor there shared my love for Vidal's *Julian* – and found it equally difficult to escape from the book to study the emperor.



But I never quite realised what it felt like to live in one of those truly historical moments. To be in one of those stories of trial and sacrifice from the dusty books or black-and-white documentaries that were so ancient and unreal. That is the privilege of a millennial born in the nineties, a child of the sweet summer of human progress.

I write these words from New York City during the COVID-19 crisis. One

of my favourite places in the world, for many simply the best. But today, the focus of horror headlines and dramatic numbers are broadcast all over the globe. Never did I imagine Broadway would close, the bars would fall silent, and the streets would be deserted.

Maria, the angel coordinator of the Fulbright program in Sofia, asked me to share how I have coped with this new reality. My friends know that I

am a cynic and do not take life too seriously. I live on a diet of sarcasm and it is often a bit edgy. Why else would I ever have ventured into Bulgarian politics?

But the truth is that deep inside, every true cynic is a hopeless optimist. My graduation was cancelled, most of my classmates have gone back home with barely a goodbye, and those who are left are mostly bunkered in their rooms. Not the ending of this year that I expected.

And yet, what a year it was. Columbia is an incredible university, because it is yours to make what you want of it. And I had a handful. As a student, I stood up in front of two senior Second Circuit judges at the Thurgood Marshall Courthouse and argued a case currently pending in front of the U.S. Supreme Court. As a lawyer, I stood up for the prosecution, appearing on behalf of the People of the State of New York to deliver justice to real criminals. As a humanitarian, I stood up for better opportunities for impoverished communities at the United Nations Development Programme. As a millennial, I stood up at countless parties and made tons of friends from all over the globe.

So is it the ending that I expected? Definitely not. But was the year much more than I expected? For sure yes.

Looking at the world, I am also an optimist. The crisis is horrible today. People are losing their lives and the economic consequences are yet unimaginable. But human life has never been worth so much as it is today. Never in our history have governments done so much to protect the most elderly, the most vulnerable. This is a cause for great joy.

And I believe that we will come out of this time stronger and wiser. New people with new priorities. Two horrible world wars in the Twentieth Century made us finally cherish peace and cooperation after millennia of nothing but bloodshed and slaughter. We must not forget that. This decade will bring health to the forefront. The real,

meaningful things in life: love and friendship. And sustainability over consumerism. It will defeat cheap leadership and bring back idealism. I am sure of that.

Tomorrow will be better. We will be stronger. And to those who will no longer be with us, it will be our duty to make their loss meaningful.



Rumen visiting the United Nations' headquarters in New York



Rumen with friends from Columbia University, pre-pandemic

# Bulgarian Fulbright Grantees

Academic Year 2019-2020

## GRADUATE STUDENTS

### Denitsa Vidolova

**Columbia University, Teachers College** – MA International and Comparative Education

### Stela Gavrilova

**Cornell - Johnson School**, One Year MBA

### Stoimen Iliev

**Cornell - Johnson School**, One Year MBA

### Rumen Cholakov

**Columbia University, Columbia Law School**, Master of Laws (LL.M)

### Olga Ouzunova

**Fordham University** – MA in Public Media

## VISITING RESEARCHERS

### Atanas Pekanov – Economics

**Home Institution:** Austrian Institute of Economic Research  
**Host Institution:** Harvard University, Department of Economics  
**Project Title:** Evaluation and Effectiveness of Fiscal Policy at the Macro Level

## VISITING SCHOLARS

### Hristomir Yordanov – Telecommunications

**Home Institution:** Technical University  
**Host Institution:** University of California—Berkeley  
**Project Title:** High Gain Integrated Millimeter Wave and Terahertz Antennas

### Mira Arsova-Tzvetkova – Special Education

**Home Institution:** Sofia University  
**Host Institution:** CUNY-Hunter College, New York  
**Project Title:** Development of Social Skills and Social Competences, and Managing Challenging Behaviors in Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) through Different Educational Strategies, Approaches and Therapies

### Mihail Todorov – Mathematics

**Home Institution:** Technical University, Sofia  
**Host Institution:** San Diego State University, CA  
**Project Title:** Soliton Dynamics of Nonlinear Integrable and Nonintegrable Systems

### Velislava Petrova – Cultural Studies

**Home Institution:** Sofia University  
**Host Institution:** University of California, Santa Cruz, CA  
**Project Title:** Materialities of Dirt and Economies of Waste. Bringing Different Cultural Perspectives Together

### Miroslava Nedyalkova – Chemistry

**Home Institution:** Sofia University  
**Host institution:** University of Maryland—Baltimore, MD  
**Project Title:** Application of the Drude Polarizable Force Field to Green Organics Solvent- Ecotoxicology and Environmental Safety

### Elena Stoykova – Optics

**Home Institution:** Bulgarian Academy of Sciences  
**Host Institution:** University of Dayton, OH  
**Project Title:** Computer Generation of Holograms for Holographic Imaging and Coherent Optical Metrology

## CIVIL SOCIETY RESEARCHERS

### Venelin Stoychev – Social Work

**Home Institution:** LARGO Association  
**Host Institution:** Kansas Appleseed Center for Law and Justice  
**Project Title:** A FRIEND IN NEED IS A FRIEND INDEED (Best Practices in Conducting Advocacy Campaigns)

### Yana Buhner Tavanier – Civil Society Development

**Home Institution:** Bulgarian Helsinki Committee / Fine Acts  
**Host Institution:** Amnesty International USA, New York City  
**Project Title:** Human Right Innovation in the Context of Shrinking Civil Space

# U.S. Fulbright Grantees

Academic Year 2019-2020

## HUBERT HUMPHREY FELLOWSHIPS

### Verginiya Mincheva-Rousseva – Law and Human Rights

**Home Institution:** Sofia City Court,  
Judge

**Host Institution:** American University,

### Ognyan Georgiev – Urban and Regional Planning

**Home Institution:** Capital Weekly,  
Managing Editor

**Host Institution:** Massachusetts  
Institute of Technology, Cambridge,  
MA

## SCHOLARS

### Dr. Victor Busov

**Field of Specialization:** Genetics

**Home Institution:** Michigan  
Technological University, Houghton,  
MI

**Host Institution in Bulgaria:**  
University of Forestry, Sofia

### Dr. Benjamin Goldberg

**Field of Specialization:** Philosophy

**Home Institution:** University of South  
Florida, Tampa, FL

**Host Institution in Bulgaria:**  
American University in Bulgaria,  
Blagoevgrad

### Dr. Boyko Gyurov

**Field of Specialization:** Mathematics

**Home Institution:** Georgia Gwinnett  
College, Lawrenceville, GA

**Host Institution in Bulgaria:** South-  
West University, Blagoevgrad

### Dr. Naomi Martisius

**Field of Specialization:** Archaeology

**Home Institution:** University of  
California, Davis, CA

**Host Institution in Bulgaria:** New  
Bulgarian University, Sofia

### Dr. Mariofanna Milanova

**Field of Specialization:** Information  
Sciences

**Home Institution:** University of  
Arkansas, Little Rock, AR

**Host Institution in Bulgaria:** Technical  
University, Sofia

### Frederick Rooney

**Field of Specialization:** Law

**Home Institution:** Consortium for  
Access to Justice, Soquel, CA

**Host Institution in Bulgaria:** Equal  
Opportunities Association, Sofia

## GRADUATE STUDENTS

### Theodore Charles

**Field of Specialization:** Anthropology

**Project Title:** Crossing Borders; The  
Evolution of Food Traditions in Post-  
Ottoman Thrace

**Host Institution in Bulgaria:** New  
Bulgarian University, Sofia

### Abby Durick

**Field of Specialization:** Archaeology

**Project Title:** Funerary Prestige:  
Migration and Influences from  
Mycenaean Greece to Iron Age Thrace

**Host Institution in Bulgaria:** Balkan  
Heritage Foundation, Sofia

### Danielle Nutting

**Field of Specialization:** Music (Flute)

**Project Title:** Exploring Artistry:  
Epistemologies of Flute Performance  
and Pedagogy in Bulgaria

**Host Institution in Bulgaria:** Union of  
Bulgarian Composers, Sofia

### Ashley Page

**Field of Specialization:** Water  
Management

**Project Title:** Dynamic Hydro-Social  
Analysis of Sustainable Transboundary  
Water Policy in Bulgaria-Greece

**Host Institution in Bulgaria:**  
American University in Bulgaria,  
Blagoevgrad

### Lorenzo Rodriguez

**Field of Specialization:** Anthropology

**Project Title:** Health Care in Bulgaria  
**Host Institution in Bulgaria:** Pink  
Foundation, Sofia

### John Thomas

**Field of Specialization:** Music (Piano)

**Project Title:** Music without Borders:  
Bulgaria and America in Melody,  
Harmony and Rhythm

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

# U.S. Fulbright Grantees

Academic Year 2019-2020

## ENGLISH TEACHING ASSISTANTS

### Samaah Al-Najjar

**Field of Specialization:** Political Science, Anthropology

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Sofia, Bulgaria

### Azlin Armstrong

**Field of Specialization:** English, Advertising, Broadcasting

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Kyustendil, Bulgaria

### Caroline Arnold

**Field of Specialization:** Sociology, French

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Sofia, Bulgaria

### Amna Azeem

**Field of Specialization:** Philosophy, Politics, Economics

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Ruse, Bulgaria

### Katherine Beaver

**Field of Specialization:** History, Education

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Kardzhali, Bulgaria

### Casey Brinegar

**Field of Specialization:** Leisure, Sport, Tourism Studies

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Varna, Bulgaria

### Tiana Brownen

**Field of Specialization:**

Communication, English

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Sofia, Bulgaria

### Alexandra Carey

**Field of Specialization:** Elementary and Special Education

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Sofia, Bulgaria

### Alessandro Cocito-Monoc

**Field of Specialization:** Government and Legal Studies

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Montana, Bulgaria

### Jordan Cynewski

**Field of Specialization:** Government, Russian, History

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Burgas, Bulgaria

### Katelyn Egan

**Field of Specialization:** Bassoon Performance

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Panagyurishte, Bulgaria

### Emilie Ehrman

**Field of Specialization:** Public Relations

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Yambol, Bulgaria

### Aidan Flanagan

**Field of Specialization:** Biomedical Sciences

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Gabrovo, Bulgaria

### Danielle Harris

**Field of Specialization:** History, Social Science, Education

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Burgas, Bulgaria

### Sara Huzar

**Field of Specialization:** History and Global Affairs

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Dimitrovgrad, Bulgaria

### Nicholas Iwata

**Field of Specialization:** Biology, Philosophy

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Dobrich, Bulgaria

### Samantha Johnson

**Field of Specialization:** Environmental Science, Spanish, Political Science

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Smolyan, Bulgaria

### Nia Kapitanova

**Field of Specialization:** Spanish, Chemistry

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Plovdiv, Bulgaria

### Andrew Kim

**Field of Specialization:** Mathematics, History

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Stara Zagora, Bulgaria

# U.S. Fulbright Grantees

Academic Year 2019-2020

## Lukas Koester

**Field of Specialization:** Film and Media Studies

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Sliven, Bulgaria

## Gergana Kostadinova

**Field of Specialization:** International Studies

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Pernik, Bulgaria

## Mathew Lauer

**Field of Specialization:** Cultural Studies, Comparative Literature

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Ruse, Bulgaria

## Sophie Louaillier

**Field of Specialization:** Anthropology, Religion

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Pravets, Bulgaria

## Olivia Melodia

**Field of Specialization:** Philosophy, Hispanic Studies, Theatre

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria

## Allison Rice

**Field of Specialization:** Biblical and Theological Studies, English

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Lovech, Bulgaria

## Prudence Salasky

**Field of Specialization:** Applied Linguistics

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Burgas, Bulgaria

## Krysta Scriven

**Field of Specialization:** Professional Writing

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Vidin, Bulgaria

## Sophie Shoultz

**Field of Specialization:** S & T, International Affairs

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Varna, Bulgaria

## Parker Smythe

**Field of Specialization:** Criminal Justice, Psychology

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Silistra, Bulgaria

## Eleanor Stern

**Field of Specialization:** English, Creative Writing

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Razgrad, Bulgaria

## Keegan Scott

**Field of Specialization:** International Studies, Turkish

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Galabovo, Bulgaria

## Deena Whitwam

**Field of Specialization:** Management, Entrepreneurship

**Project Title:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Haskovo, Bulgaria

## NOMINEES FOR THE AY 2021-22 FULBRIGHT COMPETITION

### SCHOLARS:

**Ivan Dimov**

Bulgarian Academy of Sciences  
*Applied Math*

**Yulia Radanova**

University of National  
and World Economy  
*Law*

**Elitsa Pavlova**

Sofia University  
*Biology*

**Iva Boneva**

Sofia University  
*Education*

### CIVIL SOCIETY:

**Mira Todorova**

*DNK Dance Space*

Alternate: **Yulia Dimitrova**

*Tuk-Tam*

### GRADUATE STUDENTS:

**Dimo Grozdev**

*Law*

**Iglika Atanassova**

*Education*

**Martina Novakova**

*Theater*

**Dimitar Kirilov**

*Computer Science*

**Lyubomir Avdjiski**

*Law*

### VISITING RESEARCHERS:

**Javor Gardev**

*Performing Arts*

**Velislava Todorova**

*Philosophy*

# Celebrating Cinema in Pandemic Times:

## The Second Annual Pravets Film Festival

Interview by Iliana Dimitrova

The second edition of the Pravets Film Festival took place in Chitalishte Zarya on June 12, 2020, showcasing 10 short movies made by Bulgarian high school students from all over the country. The creator of the event is Shauna Ricketts, the Fulbright|ABF ETA at the Aleko Konstantinov Foreign Language School in Pravets in 2018-2019. This year she navigated the organization of the festival remotely from New York, with the help of her mentor teacher Stefka Atanasova, her colleague Tsanko Tzolov, and this year's ETA in Pravets, Sophie Louaillier. Shauna worked at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival and has been writing and producing short films since returning from Bulgaria. Currently she works in New York as an associate producer for the documentary film, *Instant Life*, which is funded by A24.

**Shauna, what makes you passionate about film as a medium for creative expression?**

I have always been fascinated by the way that people interact with each other, their environments and their feelings. I tend to notice the visual subtleties of behavior and how those behaviors reflect larger ideas. The symbolism and depth that films are able to cover in a short period of time is absolutely astonishing. Every decision that goes into making a film is significant, from the colors of clothing to the repetition of a specific word from a certain character, and contributes to what the audience absorbs.

**What were the main challenges of organizing the film festival remotely this year?**



Fulbright reps with Stefka Atanasova and Tsanko Tzolov

As you can imagine, managing all of the moving parts of the Pravets Film Festival remotely during a global pandemic presented a few challenges. While planning the festival, I was also working for my job in New York and the time difference presented limitations in terms of when we could meet. I basically had to be available at all times to make sure that everything was running smoothly and that students felt supported throughout

their filmmaking process. COVID-19 made planning the festival logistics even more complicated. We were unsure if the festival would happen in real life or if it would just be digital. Staying up to date on the COVID-19 guidelines in Bulgaria was critical, while also making sure that the festival itself and the filmmaking didn't cause any harm to the community. The call to go through with the Pravets Film Festival involved a lot of thought and care.



Festival founder Shauna Ricketts joined virtually



ED Angela Rodel with festival organizers

**What were some topics students chose to explore in their films this year, and what were the main criteria for the judges when choosing the best picture?**

Some students used the corona virus and quarantine as a premise for their films, exploring what life and relationships in the future might be like as a result of the global pandemic. Other filmmakers incorporated topics that included crime investigations, extreme sports, stream of consciousness, artistic processes, the life of a teenage acrobatic, fulfillment in life, bullying and guilt. We had 16 international judges this year. I started recruiting judges informally in January and February when I was in Utah at the Sundance Film Festival. Judges were given a specific set of criteria to rank the films. The categories the films were ranked in were originality/creativity, story, cinematography, performances, sound/music, and integration of selected elements from element list. I am grateful to all of the judges who took time out of their lives to help our filmmakers grow.

**The film festival is strongly supported by the Pravets community, your host school,**

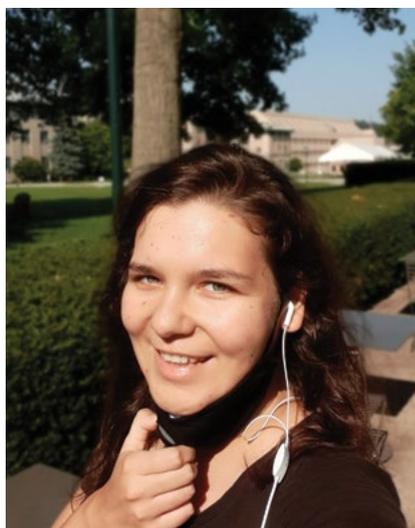
**the local cultural center, and the municipality – do you see a third edition taking place next year?**

There will absolutely be a third year of the Pravets Film Festival!! The festival has developed a lot from the first festival to the second festival. The international address that was presented at the festival was born this year due to remote planning and I would like to incorporate that again next year. We were able to include an additional award this year to promote innovation and that will remain as an award next year! I am working on creating a scholarship fund through the Pravets Film Festival platform to assist students who otherwise cannot attend university due to financial reasons. There is a lot of potential for the Pravets Film Festival to expand, specifically by having workshops, involving Eastern European filmmakers and having Q&As with our student filmmakers. The future of the Pravets Film Festival is looking very bright!!! We also welcome anyone that has ideas or wants to get involved to contact [pravetsfilmfestival@gmail.com](mailto:pravetsfilmfestival@gmail.com)

**What keeps you connected to Bulgaria and the small town of Pravets?**

Though I am across the world, I still feel extremely connected to Pravets. When COVID-19 led to remote learning in Bulgaria, I reached out to see if there was anything I could do to help out the English teachers. I ended up creating a video for the 9th graders explaining what life in New York was like at the peak of COVID-19 and how I was spending my time during quarantine. Knowing that the 12th graders were disappointed about having their senior year taken away from them, I talked about my high school experience in the United States and went through some old yearbook photos in a video that I made for them. All of the students who watched my videos wrote letters to me. It was really nice to hear what was going on with them. Stefka is always sending me updates about things that are happening in Pravets and including me in things that are going on in the school. She invited me to a zoom call where 12a presented their digital stories. I am thankful for Facebook for allowing me to stay connected with her and everyone else in Pravets. Organizing the festival is just another way that I can stay close to Pravets! I plan to come back to Bulgaria at some point to visit Pravets (maybe the next film festival?)!

# Language Lessons to Promote Tolerance: Mariya Ivanova Wins the Second Annual Fulbright Alumni Fellowship



**Congratulations to Mariya Ivanova, a Bulgarian Fulbright student in Applied Linguistics at Carnegie Mellon University and winner of the Second Annual Fulbright Alumni Fellowship! For two years, Mariya taught English to students in a village near Sofia as part of the Teach for Bulgaria program.**

Inspired by this challenge as well as her own experience learning to speak Slovak as a child, Mariya will focus her MA studies on practical language acquisition methods – more specifically, how teachers can use projects and games to improve students’ language abilities in the most effective ways, ensuring that they will be able to use their newly gained knowledge and to remember it in the long-term.

In the future, Mariya would like to pursue a PhD in Bulgaria with a focus on language acquisition and developing a systematic approach to teaching foreign languages that not only includes subject knowledge, but also communication skills, the ability to reflect on one’s own learning process and to set clear and achievable goals. As she notes: “language lessons should also aim to promote tolerance between cultures and offer the opportunity to engage in discussions on diverse topics. I believe that the format of foreign language instruction lessons should be changed

on a national level and I would like to be involved in policy making related to the school curriculum.” The Fulbright Bulgaria community wishes Mariya the best of luck as she embarks on this exciting plan of study!

The second annual Fulbright Bulgaria Alumni Fellowship has been funded solely by generous donations from Fulbrighters who would like to “pay it forward” by supporting Bulgarian student grantees. If you would like to become involved, tax-deductible donations can be made 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. *Thank you very much to all our alumni who contributed and we hope you will continue to support this fellowship in the future!*



## New Life for Old Equipment: Helping the Community during the Covid-19 Epidemic

This month the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission took part in an exciting initiative by the Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance, AMALIPE. Amalipe is a leading Roma organization, working for the equal integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society. This month Amalipe announced its campaign “Old Equipment for a New Beginning,” aiming to include more Roma students in distant learning programs with the help of donated computers and other electronic devices. The computers provided by the Fulbright Commission will give 16 students from the St. Kliment Ohridski primary school in the village of Pet Mogili near Sliven access to online education. The school also provided a USB device with unlimited Internet for every donated desktop.



**Jesse Scinto, Fulbright Scholar, American University in Bulgaria, AY 2017-2018**

Jesse Scinto started his own business, Public Sphere, focused on speaker training and presentation consulting [www.publicsphere.llc](http://www.publicsphere.llc). He has also been busy with many activities, including talks for the American for Bulgaria Foundation, the Hungarian Consulate's Taste of Fulbright, the Long Island University Left Forum, Columbia Alumni Leaders Weekend and a PRWeek/IBM Roundtable featuring industry leaders from IBM, PRSA, PR Council, and others. His article "The Camera Never Lies" was published in *Toastmaster* magazine (8/2019).



**Professor Boyan Dobrev, Fulbright Scholar, Chicago Institute of Art, AY 1997-1998 and California Art Institute, AY 2006-2007**

Boyan Dobrev officially unveiled two murals in the new Sofia Metro Stations NDK2 and Krasno Selo. His vision of historical figures such as the poet-revolutionary Hristo Botev and King Boris III combines deep understanding of the past with an unmistakable feeling of the dynamic present. Deputy Mayor of Sofia Dr. Todor Chobanov, Fulbright ED Angela Rodel, and Fulbright board members and alumni were present at the opening. More of Professor Dobrev's artistic contributions to the urban environment of the capital are expected in the near future.



**Dr. Julia Stefanova, Fulbright Scholar, American University in Washington, DC, AY 2017-2018**

Dr. Julia Stefanova from the Economic Research Institute at BAS is engaged in two international conferences, in Bucharest and Bulgaria, on topics of sustainable financing in captured democracies and of climate changes and adaptation to the new normal of peripheral stock markets in the EU (such as the Bulgarian one). We are also looking forward to her contribution to the larger project of the critical assessment of the comparative advantages of Bulgarian foreign trade.



**Diane Wawrejko, Fulbright Scholar, National Academy of Theatre and Film Arts, AY 2006-2007**

Dr. Diane Wawrejko is a professor in the Humanities department at the College of DuPage. Her photo essay

"Daniel Nagrin's *Man of Action: Dancing Jewish through a Photographic Lens*" with five shots by photographer Marcus Blechman was published in the Association for Jewish Studies' journal *Perspectives*, Fall 2019. She also published in Israel's *Mahol Achshav* (Dance Today), issue 36 Sept 26 2019, p 59-64 <https://www.israeldance-diaries.co.il/en/> Dr. Wawrejko also presented a peer-reviewed paper presented at the International Conference on Jews and Jewishness in the Dance World at Arizona State University, Oct 2018.



**Amy Kuiken, Fulbright English Teaching Assistant, Burgas, AY 2007-2008**

Amy Kuiken presented a paper at the Ohio Valley Philosophy of Education Society 2019 Conference in Nashville, Indiana. The paper was titled, “A Pedagogy of Guilt: A Freirean Critique of a Hegemonic Ethos in the Foreign Language Classroom.” Amy is working her way toward an Ed.D in Educational Leadership at Wilkes University while also teaching ESL and leadership skills to resettled families in Pennsylvania.



**Nancy J. Scannell, Fulbright Scholar, Sofia University, AY 1998-1999**

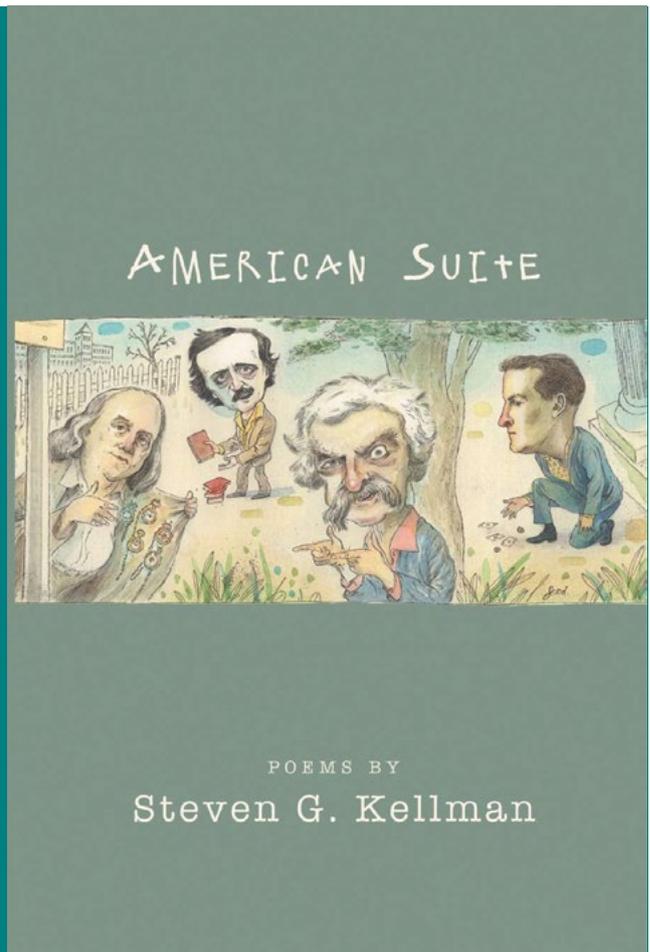
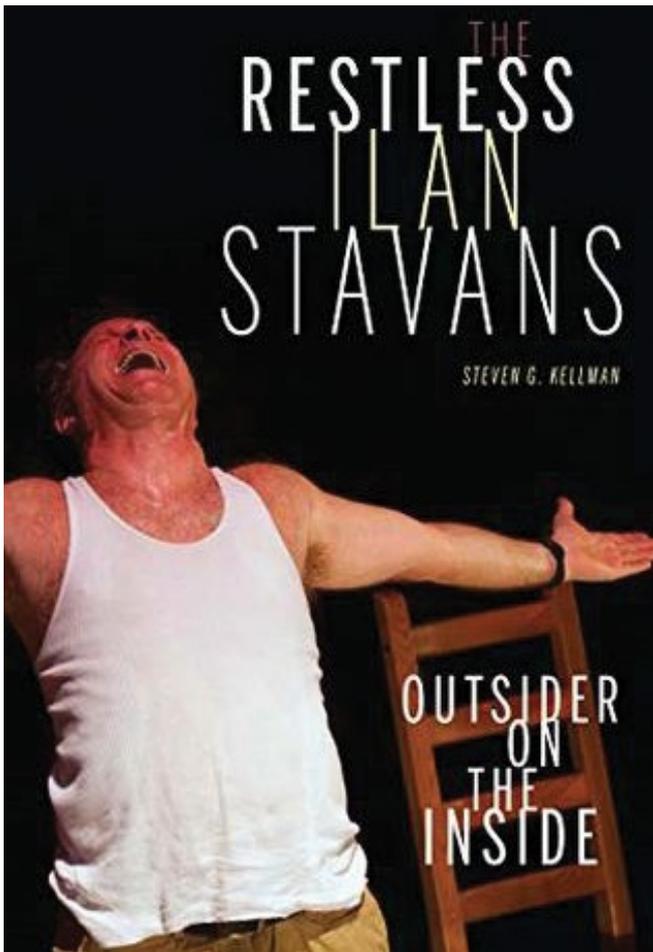
Dr. Nancy J. Scannell, Associate Professor of Business Administration, was invited to serve as a Fulbright Specialist at Irkutsk State University (ISU) in Russia. Thanks to her hard work and support, a select cohort of students from ISU distinguished themselves by each earning a micro-credential\* in Financial Literacy, issued by the University of Illinois System. Nancy posited that among the most satisfying outcomes for an educator, in the aftermath of delivering a business workshop is to witness the emergence of commercial start-ups led by student entrepreneurs. ISU students did not disappoint; Nancy was delighted to share the exciting news that two of her workshop graduates teamed up to deliver tourism services in their region.

*/Photo: Business Dean (center) recognizes ISU Students who earned the University of Illinois System.*



**Jeremiah Chamberlin, Fulbright Scholar, Sofia University, AY 2016-2017**

Jeremiah Chamberlin was named a Fulbright Specialist with a three-year mandate (2018-2021) and returned to Sofia in May of 2019 to teach a series of creative writing workshops for high school students in collaboration with the Elizabeth Kostova Foundation and the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission. Last spring he moderated a panel on issues related to literary translation at the AWP Writers Conference in Portland, Oregon, entitled “Getting Beyond 3%: International Literature and US Literary Culture.” His most recent non-fiction appears in the fall issue of the *Michigan Quarterly Review*. This special issue, which is titled “What Does Europe Want Now?” focuses on the state of Europe on the thirtieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. His interview with fiction writer Danielle Lazarin also appears in the Fall issue of *Glimmer Train Stories*.



**Steven G. Kellman, Fulbright Scholar, Sofia University, AY 2000-2001**

Steven G. Kellman is professor of comparative literature at the University of Texas at San Antonio. He is the author of *Redemption: The Life of Henry Roth*, *The Translingual Imagination* and other books, and has published two new books within the past year: *The Restless Ilan Stavans: Outsider on the Inside* (University of Pittsburgh Press) and *American Suite* (Finishing Line Press).



**Laura Geier, Fulbright Student Researcher, Academy of Music, Dance, and Fine Arts, AY 2010-2011**

Laura Geier continues to perform music from Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova. She recently performed a set of music with colleague, Igor Iachimciuc, at the World Village Festival in Boise, ID.



**FULBRIGHT**  
Bulgaria

BULGARIAN-AMERICAN COMMISSION  
FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE



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