

The

Gazette

News from University of Florida's Center for European Studies, a U.S. Department of Education Title VI National Resource Center
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UF UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

BIG WIN At National MODEL EU Competition

by Regina Topolinskaya
with comments by Corinne Tomasi

[Editor's note: For the first time, UF was represented at the 9th Annual Model European Union Conference, organized by the University of Pittsburgh that took place on February 20-21, 2009. We are very pleased to announce that both UF students received Best Performance Awards. Regina Topolinskaya, who played the role of Poland, won the award in the large country category, while Corinne Tomasi (Ireland), received it in the small country category. Congratulations to Regina and Corinne!]

From the moment we left Gainesville to our return, I had a great time. We landed in snow-covered Pittsburgh Friday afternoon (Corinne says, "The city of Pittsburgh was beautiful (and cold), and the University of Pittsburgh campus was in the center of the city in these striking, old buildings") and delved straight into the nuances of EU legislation.



Chris Cary photographed these antique instruments in a small museum in Wrocław, Poland.

First on the agenda was the Lisbon Strategy. Each delegate at the tournament was knowledgeable and professional, sticking to their country's policies and the rules of diplomacy. As Poland, I was able to secure a Joint Research Center in Eastern Europe after some last-minute bargaining with France, who wanted me to support putting the Union of the Mediterranean next on the agenda for discussion. The delegates also passed a number of resolutions on expanding funding for innovation while actually vetoing a well-crafted proposal that unfortunately had a small provision about changing CAP funding, a contentious topic many countries understandably did not want to address. (Corinne says, "At times we were challenged to think outside the box when other delegates brought unexpected issues and ideas to the table.")

The final topic discussed was climate control. Each country brought interesting ideas to the table, from investing more funding in solar power to France's suggestion that nuclear power be developed in more EU member-states. While we didn't have much time to discuss the topic, we passed a number of resolutions, including cutting carbon emissions by 20 percent by 2020 (the summit was simulating 2007) with a 15 percent cut for member-states who had GDP per capita below the EU average. Many of the newly admitted states were understandably pretty happy about this, and the other measures we passed

brought us one step closer to saving the environment, at least in our simulated world. (Corinne says, "The ideas and concepts we learn daily in a classroom really take a new meaning when 27 diverse countries come together and debate issues as simple as vocational education and as complex as bureaucratic reductions.")

After the debate on the Lisbon Strategy was completed, Corinne and I were able to visit the Cathedral of Learning. The cathedral, built during the Great Depression, featured numerous classrooms on the ground floor decorated by country. Wondering how anyone could concentrate in the Russian classroom resembling an old Siberian peasant home, we made our way back to the conference.

I enjoyed every minute of the conference and hope others will be able to experience Model EU like I did. (Corinne says, "After a whirlwind 48 hours, it ended on a high note when Regina and I both won top awards for our categories.") Two flights and a cup of coffee later, we were back in Gainesville with a wealth of new knowledge as well as the two awards.

I'd like to thank Professor Kostadinova. Not only did she fly, drive, and walk everywhere with us, but she also helped Corinne and I on policy and sat through hours upon hours of conference discussion. Without her this would not have happened. Also, thank you to the CES for generously providing Corinne and me with a stipend to be able to attend the conference. I can't wait to do this again at UF or on another campus.

Outreach WORKSHOP

CES Outreach Coordinator Gail Keeler attended a conference sponsored by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill entitled "K-12 Outreach Best Practices Workshop." About 20 other universities were represented to share ideas and successes with international educational programs in schools. Many of these ideas can be utilized to further enhance outreach programming at CES.



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The CES Gazette is published each semester to provide information to faculty, students, and supporters of European Studies about the activities and programs of the CES. For further information, please visit our website at www.ces.ufl.edu.

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Reflections on LIFE ABROAD

by Christopher Cary

[editor's note: Chris Cary is in Poland on a Fulbright Scholarship]

I get asked all the time: *What are you doing in Poland? What made you want to go there?* My initial reaction is to give the stock answer: a description of my project, my activities. Friends inevitably say: *Of all places—Poland? You are not Polish.* They are right; I don't have a drop of Slavic blood in me. They continue: *And why on earth would anyone subject themselves to learning the Polish language.* Well, that really is a good question. So I say: The opportunity to be a part of Jagiellonian University, the alma mater of Copernicus. And Kraków is a beautiful city... the medieval atmosphere...a true jewel of central Europe! They say: *Yeah, whatever, I looked at your facebook pictures.* But there are more bars and cafes in one market square than perhaps than anywhere in the world! *Better than downtown Gainesville?* And so it goes.... Well, the truth is a little more complicated, and a lot more nuanced. Here is what I should say:

It is really about the local culture: When I find the perfect pierogi restaurant, I think to myself...I bet this is how Ewa's grandmother made them. Or the realization that someone just spoke to me in conversational Polish and I understood everything perfectly, even if my response was somewhat of a mess. And the traditions: In the Rakowicki Cemetery on All Saints Day, I stroll in the midst of a million flowers and a hundred thousand small flames. On this solemn Polish night an orange glow is visible for miles. I think about my family and wonder... why don't we do this?

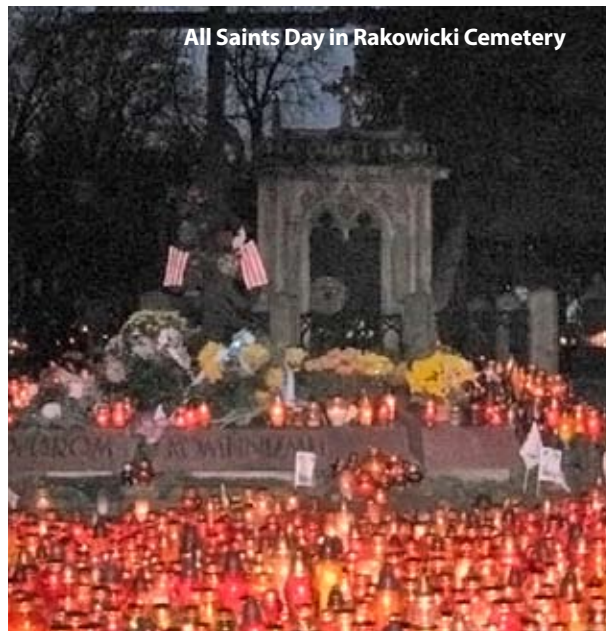
It is about the history: My attic flat is high above the outer rim of the Rynek. Here I work on my project and when I want to take a break, I walk down my street to a café. Wawel Castle towers above the horizon, rising from the banks of the Wisła River. The hidden chambers within the medieval edifice reveal an illustrious legacy. Kazimierz the Great rests here, and so does the legendary bard Adam Mickiewicz. The castle overlooks the same winding river where miles away and years ago Russian troops watched from the banks as a German regiment razed a city into smoldering ash. Could it be? On my way to dinner, I pause and stand beneath the window where Pope John Paul II inspired a nation and changed the course of history. Weeks later, in the Gdańsk shipyards, I help the Poles celebrate twenty years of free elections. A legendary German rock band sings "Winds of Change" to a hundred thousand clothed in red and white flags. Images of Lech Wałęsa and Solidarność occupy the huge video screens. Shipyard cranes dominate the illuminated coastal horizon.

Perhaps the real reason is travel and nature: I sojourn to Turkey on my own orient express. With my thoughts floating on the Bosphorous breeze...I am seeing the world. After returning, as I walk the familiar streets of the Rynek, I think, yes, this is becoming a home to me. In the Tatra Mountains, Poland's natural jewel and a source of artistic inspiration for myriad Polish artists, there is a latent spirituality that Karłowicz and Szymanowski perceived...and so did Kilar and Górecki. Standing on a frozen lake, drinking in a rustic pub in Zakopane, listening to a Highlander folk band play,

hiking alone on a winding trail with a breathtaking view...I perceive it too.

Maybe it is about the literature and arts: In the National Gallery, I look at the wildly fantastic paintings of the insatiable Witkacy. After a pilgrimage to Częstochowa, I view the miraculous Black Madonna. I then walk down the street to a nondescript museum, and plunge into the depths of Beksiński's subconscious—a startling and sometimes comic dream world. I see the brush strokes, colors, details...the limitless imagination, an exploration of darkened corridors of the human mind. How terrifying it must be to see clearly what is lurking just around the corner! In Warsaw, I stand next to a pillar in the Holy Cross Church—a pillar like all the others, except that this one houses the physical heart of Chopin, and the metaphoric heart of the Polish people. In Kraków, I listen to the youthful Dorota discuss *Snow White, Russian Red*—and I begin to see how it represents the disillusionment of a new generation in a new world. In Alchemia, the famous café in the former Jewish Quarter, I listen to jazz and klezmer music. I read Miłosz, Symborszka and Zagajewski. I read Lem and Grabiński. There are endless avenues to explore...and suddenly a year does not seem like nearly enough time. Then I relax. This is just a beginning.

But for me, it is really about Polish music...and the need to get a glimpse into the Slavic soul, because I feel that I must understand one to understand the other. Celebrating the 75th birthday with one of the greatest musical geniuses of our time, I watch as Krzysztof Penderecki conducts his own music, breathing life into notes on his score. I spend time with composer



All Saints Day in Rakowicki Cemetery

Wojciech Widłak as he walks me through his *Earthsumption* for symphony orchestra and organ. He reveals that it is really a subtle homage to 9/11. So this is how he approaches his art. So this is true education. And later, in the Filharmonia after Mykietyń's *Passion according to St. Mark* with its quasi-rock instrumentation, I realize that I am witnessing a new generation of composers materialize before my eyes. The crowd is on their feet, chanting "Paweł, Paweł, Paweł." I didn't think that Polish audiences would ever do that.

My odyssey began years ago when on a flight at 35,000 feet, I heard for the first time a recording of Dawn Upshaw singing Henryk Górecki's *Symphony of Sorrowful Songs*. Her voice was soaring higher than our plane, and I wondered... what is that radiant voice trying to express? The work has since come to represent for many the collective hope and mourning of a century past. It is a summation of sorts, and I wanted to understand it more fully...to know it from the source. Sitting in the Filharmonia weeks ago, the familiar work began to take on a new significance—a universal meaning just beginning to become local. But can I ever really understand what it means to the Poles?

I am reminded of my solitary trip to the Majdanek concentration camp. In the cold and leaden atmosphere—oppressive still beyond all imaginings—I tried in vain to comprehend the incomprehensible. On my way back, riding on the train, I saw an elderly woman who looked to be in her nineties. Our eyes met as she prepared to get off at her stop. She paused, looked directly at me and half smiled. I couldn't help but wonder...after nearly a century, how many things those eyes must have seen.

What a privilege it is to open a door into another world... what a pleasure it is to walk through it. Here I have the opportunity to see how others live, absorb the contours of another culture—to reflect, get away from my comfortable life. Not evaluate. Just experience. How different we are. How we are exactly the same. And in the process learn so much about myself. Mutual understanding is the foundation of the Fulbright mission, and for many people their time spent abroad becomes the experience of a lifetime. This is the real reason that I came to Poland...to have the experience of a lifetime.

But people keep asking those questions: *What is it that you like so much about Polish music?* And I give them my stock answer...but I think to myself of a famous old bluesman. When asked about his music, he just smiled and said: *You can't describe it or talk about it...you have got to live it. And Son, if you can't live it, you ain't never gonna understand.*

CES Receives Turkish Studies Grant

The Turkish Studies Program within the CES led by faculty member Dr. Sinan Ciddi, has been awarded two grants from the Institute of Turkish Studies. The first grant will support a four-part multidisciplinary speakers series program on “Turkey and the West” in 2009–2010 and the second will fund the purchase of new library resources related to Turkish Studies. In addition, the US Fulbright Commission has awarded a Fulbright Language Teaching Assistant to the Turkish Studies program for 2009–2010. One speaker has already been scheduled for March 24, Ayhan Kaya, from Bilgi University in Turkey.

These initiatives will serve to significantly strengthen the development of the Turkish Studies program and support future grant initiatives within CES. For more information on the Turkish Studies program please visit the website www.ces.ufl.edu/turkish/.

As always, the CES thanks the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the Research and Graduate Program, and the Office of the Provost for their continued support.

Fall of the Wall Collaborative Events

Do you remember November 1989, when the Berlin Wall was symbolically and literally destroyed, heralding the beginning of the end of communism? The CES will partner with the Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art to present programs that will address, in a very broad way, those tumultuous times. Some of the planned events include: “Project Europa: Imagining the (Im)possible” exhibition at the Harn, a speaker series, a cinema series of avant-garde European films, co-sponsored with the Film and Media Studies Program, a symposium, “Art and Democracy”, a website for the program, a teacher workshop for Alachua County public school teachers, and contests and projects with the School Board of Alachua County.

German Studies and the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures are organizing events such as a symposium and a public speaking contest. See more on www.clas.ufl.edu/events/wall/.

Upcoming Events

September 9, CES Lecture Series: From the Iron Curtain to the EU: 20 Years after 1989, *Hungary: Twenty Years after the Regime-Change, Five Years after EU Accession*, István Hegedűs, Central European University

October 13, CES Lecture Series: From the Iron Curtain to the EU: 20 Years after 1989, *Changes in Landscapes and University Life in the ex-DDR since the Wende*, Cesar Caviedes, Geography Department, UF

November 19, CES Lecture Series: From the Iron Curtain to the EU: 20 Years after 1989, *Title TBA*, Anna Grzymala-Busse, University of Michigan

September 14, Lecture Series: Faithful Narratives: The Challenge of Religion in History, *Religion and Gender in Enlightenment England: The Problem of Agency*, Phyllis Mack, Rutgers University, Co-sponsored with the Department of History

September 15, Teacher Workshop: World Heritage Sites, Produced with the Asian Studies Program, the Center for Latin American Studies, and the Center for African Studies

September 30, Teacher Workshop: Migration and Global Perspective, part of the *Engaging Migration in Europe Project*



Student assistants Jessi Axe and Eddy Grodin talked to a summer camp group at the Florida Museum of Natural History about “Europe: Its History, Geography, and Languages.”

Graduate Student Brownbag Series

Graduate students in any discipline, whose research focuses on Europe, are encouraged to submit a 150-word proposal of their research project and its relevance to European studies, via e-mail to Petia Kostadinova (petiak@ces.ufl.edu) or hard copy to: CES Speakers Committee, Re: Graduate Student Brownbag Series, 3324 Turlington Hall, PO Box 117342, Gainesville FL 32611-7342. Students whose proposals are selected will be invited to present their research at the weekly brownbag series. There is no deadline for submissions.

Recent Events

CES Director Amie Kreppel spoke to two local business groups—Kiwans Club of the University City and Downtown Rotary Club. Her topic was *History of the Title VI National Resource Center (NRC) Program and the University of Florida Center for European Studies*. This outreach to businesses is an important part of our mission as a federally funded NRC.

On the Cover:

Tile detail from the Topkapı Palace, Istanbul. Photo courtesy [conbon33](https://www.flickr.com/photos/conbon33/) on www.flickr.com.