

Alumni Notes

Students, Postdocs, and Visiting Scholars



Stephen Crowley

Though it was many years ago now, I remember my time at the Harriman fondly, and a number of the connections I made during that time remain. Currently I am professor of politics at Oberlin College. My latest book, *Putin's Labor Dilemma: Russian Politics between Stability and Stagnation*, was recently published by Cornell University Press. I am now turning to a research project examining the link between right-wing populism and rust-belt communities in postcommunist and advanced capitalist societies.

— **Stephen Crowley** (Postdoctoral Fellow, 1993–94)

A recipient of the Ph.D. and the Certificate of the Harriman Institute, I began in 1972 to teach courses on Soviet society in Columbia's Sociology Department and the Institute. The first American graduate student in sociology to be accepted on the IREX exchanges, I represented the University to IREX during the 1970s. In 1980 IREX asked me to join its staff as secretary to the American Council of Learned Societies–USSR Academy of Sciences Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences, and eventually I became deputy director and director of Soviet Programs at IREX. I continued to teach in the Harriman Institute until 1987, by which time changes in the Soviet Union and resulting exponential increases in my workload at IREX made it impossible for me to continue teaching. In 1993 I joined the senior founding staff of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and a decade later I became director of research at the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany



Wesley A. Fisher

(Claims Conference) and the World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO), where I continue to work to this day. Although my work now encompasses most of the world, my experience with Russia has remained relevant, most recently in regard to negotiating for the archival documentation of those who were in the Soviet Evacuation in the East and in Central Asia during World War II, to establish eligibility for German reparations.

My favorite memory of the Harriman Institute is the moment in the 1970s when the graduate students and staff gathered around a television to watch the first time a signal was received from a Soviet television satellite in Siberia. That afternoon in New York, all of us started doing *utrennaia zariadka* (morning exercises) with the physical exercise instructors on the screen. In that moment the wall between East and West that had made people lose the visual image of what life was like on the other side disappeared. Happy Diamond Anniversary!

— **Wesley A. Fisher** (Ph.D., Sociology, 1976; RI Certificate, 1977)

I received my Russian Institute Certificate in 1965 and my Ph.D. in “Public Law and Government” in 1968. After two years of teaching at Columbia College while at Zbigniew Brzezinski's Research Institute on Communist Affairs, I began teaching at the University of Michigan's wonderful Department of Political Science, from which I retired after nearly fifty years. While there, I taught or researched at the Russian State University for the

Humanities, Central European University, Hebrew and Tel Aviv Universities, the Budapest Collegium, the Davis Center at Harvard, and the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. I've written or edited 19 books and many articles, mostly on East European and Soviet politics, Jews in those areas, and Israeli politics. I'm fortunate to be still working on a few research and writing projects and occasionally teaching.

At Columbia, I was initially inspired as an undergraduate by the legendary Joseph Rothschild, Robert Belknap, Seweryn Bialer, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Alexander Dallin, and Henry Roberts. Among my cohort were Steven F. Cohen, Steve Goldstein (China), John Long, Bill Odom, Dick Robbins, Peter and Susan (Gross) Solomon, and Bill Taubman. Those were great times and great people.

— **Zvi Gitleman** (RI Certificate, 1965; Ph.D., Political Science, 1968)

I started graduate work in the History Department and in the Russian Institute in 1963. I was in Turkey, at the Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi, from January 1967 to January 1968 and then went to visit relatives in Russia. Upon my return to Columbia in spring 1968, I submitted my master's essay to the History Department and my certificate essay to the Russian Institute.

I taught at Rutgers University (Newark and New Brunswick campuses) from 1969 to 2012, attaining the rank of Professor II (Distinguished Professor in 1988), offering courses on the history of Central Asia, the Islamic Civilization, the Ottoman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, the medieval Slavic

world, and related subjects. I chaired the History Department (Newark) for eight years and was director of the Middle Eastern Studies Program (New Brunswick) during my later years. In 2019, I was elected as an honorary member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in the field of Oriental Studies. I am the author, editor, or co-editor of numerous books as well as articles in English, Russian, and Turkish.

— **Peter B. Golden** (RI Certificate, 1968; Ph.D., History, 1970)

I was at the Harriman Institute as a graduate student in Russian history from 1983 to 1990, when I received my Ph.D. I am now Distinguished Professor of History at Ohio State University. I have published seven books, including *Cultivating the Masses: Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914–1939* (Cornell University Press, 2011) and *The Stalinist Era* (Cambridge University Press, 2018). My most vivid memory of the Harriman Institute is from a windy day in 1985, when the satellite dish for Soviet television blew off the roof of the International Affairs Building and shattered on the street below. Assistant Director Jonathan Saunders was irate until Kenny Schaffer, the installer of the television system, showed up claiming that all along he had planned to replace the old satellite dish with a larger one. According to him, the wind had done the Institute a favor, clearing the way for the new dish to be installed. Soon we were once again able to watch Soviet television in a small room at the Harriman Institute.

— **David L. Hoffman** (Ph.D., History, 1987; HI Certificate, 1988)



Zvi Gitleman



Peter B. Golden



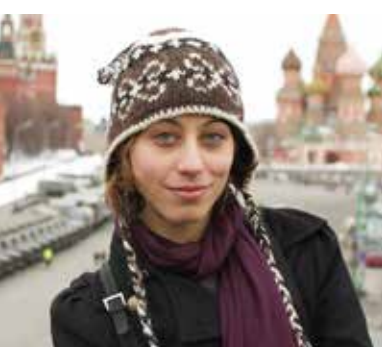
David L. Hoffman



Pamela Houghtaling



Edward Lemon



Alexis Lerner

Your email regarding the Harriman Institute's 75th anniversary led me to an enjoyable trip down memory lane. I received a certificate from the Russian Institute back in 1976. It was an exciting time to be at Columbia! I studied with Marshall Shulman and John Hazard, among other legendary scholars.

Prior to Columbia, I graduated from Princeton in 1971 with an undergraduate degree in Russian and a certificate from its Russian Studies Program. I had also attended the Russian Summer School at Middlebury College in 1969.

In 1974, with a master's degree from Columbia's School of International Affairs in hand, I moved to Washington, DC. While most of my career has been in the field of science and technology communications with private industry and the federal government, I cherish the rich and rewarding intellectual and cultural experience I had in Russian studies at Columbia.

— **Pamela Houghtaling** (M.I.A., SIPA, 1974; RI Certificate, 1976)

In 2018, after spending two years as a postdoctoral fellow at the Harriman Institute, I moved to Washington, DC. For the first two years I was a fellow at the Wilson Center, and in September 2020 I joined the Bush School of Government and Public Service's new Washington teaching site as a research assistant professor. That same year I founded a new research-focused nonprofit organization called the Oxus Society for Central Asian Affairs, which focuses on building knowledge and understanding of that region. I was delighted to form a partnership with the Harriman, which has so far sent us two wonderful research assistants to work on our projects. I continue to conduct research on security in Central Asia and

have a number of projects in various stages of completion.

— **Edward Lemon** (Postdoctoral Fellow, 2016–18)

I was a visiting scholar at the Harriman Institute from 2017 to 2019, while I was finishing my Ph.D. at the University of Toronto. My time at Columbia was indispensable: I shared my research in Tim Frye and Josh Tucker's Carnegie Postcommunist Politics Workshop, I took in all there was to offer at the annual Association for the Study of Nationalities meetings, and I benefited from the endless writing and research support resources that the University had to offer. The mentorship and scholarly community available to me at Columbia undeniably helped shape my research into what it is today.

I am currently finishing my first book, titled "Post-Soviet Graffiti: Free Speech in the Streets." It's a 10-year ethnography of how graffiti is used in the region to express political discontent and circumvent censorship (I workshopped it at the Harriman in 2018). I'm also working on an article with Andrew Gelman, whom I met during my time at the Harriman, on how to teach data science and statistics to students in non-STEM disciplines. Later this year, I'll start my position as assistant professor of political science at the United States Naval Academy, where I'll teach courses on Russian and postcommunist politics. My time at the Harriman was instrumental in preparing me both academically and professionally to take on this role.

— **Alexis Lerner** (Visiting Scholar, 2017–19)

I am a professor of communications at Tirana University, and I saw the opportunity to spend a year at the Harriman Institute as a Fulbright scholar as a way to expand the interdisciplinary approach in my

field. I was very excited when I received Professor Timothy Frye's approval, as I knew it would be an unparalleled experience. During the months at the Institute, I found a welcoming environment and helpful colleagues willing to discuss and share ideas and suggestions. My experience there led me to rethink my research proposal. With the information and insights that I gathered at the Harriman not only did I complete my research, but I also put together and published a book titled *Get the Media—Conspiratorial Approaches for International Media Consumption: Crimea and Kosovo*. In academic terms, my experience at the Harriman Institute was exceptional and exemplary. As a lecturer of the course Media and Diplomacy, I follow the example that I witnessed at the Institute, where my students produce a newspaper on international affairs every semester. I also encourage my students to dive into interdisciplinary approaches and attend classes in international relations and history, a practice that I believe will help them gain as journalists a deeper understanding of international issues. My experience at the Harriman Institute influences my research and academic endeavors in general.

— **Eva Londo** (Fulbright Visiting Scholar, 2014–15)

I earned my master of arts in regional studies from the Harriman Institute in May 2018. From the interesting conferences, film screenings, and lectures to the encouragement and financial support to pursue internship opportunities at Human Rights Watch and UNICEF and conduct research with Russian Orthodox Church educators and priests in Moscow and St. Petersburg, I greatly cherish the time I spent at the Harriman Institute. Among my most favorite memories is the time our small, close-knit group of

students presented our thesis research at Harvard University. It was so exciting and rewarding to present to colleagues, professors, and students the research and topics that had captured our attention and further spurred our interest in the region.

After graduation, I worked for two years as a corporate legal assistant at Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP. I now am a J.D. candidate at Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law. I know that the communication, research, and writing skills I gained at the Harriman Institute significantly contributed to the opportunities I have received thus far in law school, including an internship with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission and a spot on volume 43 of the *Cardozo Law Review*.

— **Kerri Matulis** (MARS-REERS, 2018)

Long ago, between 1985 and 1988, I roamed the halls of the Harriman Institute and seemed to live in the library. During those years, I often had the feeling I was at the center of the universe for people interested in studying the Soviet Union.

Here's the brief version of what happened afterward: pre- and postdocs that took me to Cornell, Stanford, and Princeton, followed by a year working for the National Democratic Institute in Moscow. I taught briefly at SUNY Albany; ran a Carnegie Corporation-funded project for Jack Snyder with a lot of Harriman folks, assessing democracy assistance in Eastern Europe (*Power and Limits of NGOs*, Columbia University Press, 2002); taught at the Fletcher School; left that tenure-track job early (husband in DC); and then settled for a decade at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, where I was a senior fellow in the Russia and Eurasia Program. Then, in 2007, I launched and ran its Human Rights Initiative.

I served in the Obama administration at USAID as deputy assistant administrator



Eva Londo



Kerri Matulis



Sarah Mendelson

in the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance, from 2010 to 2014, and then back to New York as the U.S. representative to the UN's ECOSOC, from 2015 to 2017. Since 2018, I have been Distinguished Service Professor of Public Policy at Carnegie Mellon and head of CMU's Heinz College in DC. My current work centers on the Sustainable Development Goals.

Happy Anniversary!

— **Sarah Mendelson** (M.A., Political Science, 1988; HI Certificate and M.Phil., Political Science, 1990; Ph.D., Political Science, 1993)



Kate Schecter

I have been the president and CEO of an international development organization called World Neighbors for the past seven years. We work in rural communities in 13 countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Haiti. I haven't been able to travel to Eastern Europe or the former Soviet countries for the past seven years, but I've had amazing experiences traveling to the far reaches of the globe. I worked on health care development in the FSU and Eastern Europe from 1997 to 2014. Despite venturing into new parts of the world, my experience at the Harriman Institute and Columbia has stayed with me, and I still have several close friends from those years.

— **Kate Schecter** (M.A., Political Science, 1988; HI Certificate and M.Phil., Political Science, 1991; Ph.D., Political Science, 1992)

Columbia served my family and me well over my long career. After graduating West Point in 1975, followed by eight years in artillery units, I started at SIPA and the Harriman in 1983 for two years and then continued on in the Harriman and GSAS while teaching Soviet politics and government at West Point. I spent

two tours in the Moscow embassy in the 1990s during the early Yeltsin and early Putin eras; worked Russian issues at the OSCE in Vienna; commanded DTRA arms control inspections in Europe throughout the former Warsaw Pact countries; and finished my Army career as commandant of the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California, in 2005. Since then, I've worked continuously in support of the DoD and State Department on Russia and other foreign policy/security-related issues, including spending two years in Iraq and Afghanistan. My experience at Columbia and the Harriman was put to good use throughout my career, thanks in particular to the breadth and rigor of courses with Professors Robert Jervis, Jack Snyder, and Warner Schilling (RIP). One of my daughters graduated from Columbia College in 2002.

— **Michael R. Simone** (M.I.A., SIPA, 1985; M.Phil., GSAS, 1989; HI Certificate, 1989)

I attended the Harriman from 1985 to 1987, having spent an undergraduate year at the Pushkin Institute. It was a heady time. Ken Schaffer had just put his satellite on the roof of the SIPA building, and we spent days watching Soviet TV. I went to Moscow twice during those two years; once as an interpreter with Colette Shulman for a conference with the Soviet Women's Committee. The highlight was meeting Valentina Tereshkova, who asked me why I wasn't married and branded me "razborchivaia" (picky).

After graduation I worked as a reporter-researcher for *Time* magazine in NYC and Vienna; then in 1989, I landed an NYU fellowship to write for pro-glasnost *Moscow News*. I became the first American member of the Union of Soviet Journalists and helped found *Moscow Magazine*, the USSR's first Western-style glossy. I stayed in Moscow until 1995, covering the coup, the



Michael R. Simone (right)
Correction: We mistakenly stated Michael Simone's degree as Ph.D. when it is M.Phil.

war in Chechnya, and civil strife in Georgia and writing about general post-Soviet upheaval for the Associated Press, *Daily Telegraph*, and *Christian Science Monitor*.

In 1995 I moved to London to work on the foreign desk of the *Telegraph*, eventually freelancing for magazines and newspapers for more than a decade. In 2010 I joined London Metropolitan University, the UK's most diverse university, where I now head up the Journalism Department as an associate professor. Two years ago, I spent a month in Moscow on assignment for the *British Journalism Review*, and had the pandemic not happened, I'd be traveling to the motherland again.

— **Wendy Sloane** (M.I.A., SIPA, 1987)

Between time spent on my Fulbright scholarship in Poland and before joining the Harriman, I took the opportunity to work in public service in my home state of New Jersey. I quickly missed engaging with the region, and continuing my studies at Columbia University provided me the intellectual immersion in all things Eastern Europe I desired. Although my year at the Harriman flew by quickly, my peers, the Institute staff, and the Butler stacks were integral to the time I spent there.

As the Ukrainian Revolution unfolded in 2014, my research brought me back to Ukraine, this time to interview officials and witness the ongoing regime changes. It was (and still is) a fascinating time to explore the region, and I always knew that I wanted to connect my professional career in some way.

After Columbia, I joined Goldman Sachs in New York, without any previous inclination of starting a career in financial services, and spent five years in Financial Crime Compliance investigating and solving complex global financial crime, reputational and conduct matters. Like many others, I used the extra time during the pandemic to reflect on my

life and career and decided to start a new opportunity in our firm's Consumer and Wealth Management division this year, a division focused on helping our clients achieve their investment goals and financial well-being.

Now, as chair of the Harriman Alumni Network, and together with our National Advisory Council, I continue to focus on identifying ways that Harriman can remain a resource and hub for students and professionals long after their graduation and on how best to evolve our Institute and mission to meet our changing and globalized world.

May Harriman continue to lead the study and discussion on the region for years to come!

— **Stephen Szypulski** (MARS-REERS, 2015)

After brief stints in government and consulting, I returned to my earlier interest in the arts; now I publish as both a poet and translator of Russophone literature. My prose translations of Akram Aylisli's *Farewell, Aylis*—which to this day is banned in Azerbaijan (Aylisli himself lives under de facto house arrest in Baku)—and Anna Starobinets's *Look at Him* (2018 NatsBest finalist) join award-winning translations of poetry by Inna Kabysch, Xenia Emelyanova, and many others. My first collection of poetry, *Day of the Border Guards* (2014 Miller Williams Arkansas Poetry Prize Finalist), is set entirely in Russia and the former Soviet Union, while my second collection, *Woman Drinking Absinthe*, draws on two years' study of Russian poetry that I undertook in Moscow in the 1990s. In 2017, I was named an NEA translation fellow, and I served from 2016 to 2018 as the inaugural poet laureate for Arlington, VA.

katherine-young-poet.com

— **Katherine E. Young** (M.I.A., SIPA, 1985)



Wendy Sloane



Stephen Szypulski



Katherine E. Young