



American Institute for Southeast European Studies

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AISEES Fall 2025 NEWSLETTER

Welcome from Eric De Sena, Executive Director of AISEES

Having grown up in the USA 1980s and 90s, I witnessed a world that was full of hope and opportunity. The economies of many countries in the Americas, Europe, and Asia grew exponentially. We experienced the early digital age where the world opened up to us, even if we simply sat at a desk. In the part of the world in which most of us conduct research and lead projects, the Iron Curtain was drawn open. And there were many fresh paths and opportunities for education and scholarship.

Most importantly, this was a time when we human beings cared about each other. We thought about the plight of people living in places we had never heard of that organizations like Amnesty International and celebrities like Bob Geldorf and Bono highlighted. The USA and other economically privileged nations provided billions of dollars in aid and development funds throughout the world.

In fact, in 1989, the US Congress passed the Support for Eastern European Democracy (SEED) Act, promoting the transition to free markets and democracy in former communist countries. The enterprise funds authorized under the SEED Act were funded with US tax money through the US Agency for International Development (USAID) but managed by independent, volunteer boards of directors comprised of US business executives and entrepreneurs. In all, ten funds were created in 17

countries across Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Today, organizations such as the America for Bulgaria Foundation and the Albanian-American Development Foundation support initiatives in business, academia, cultural heritage, health and well-being, and societal improvements.

In recent years, however, the world has experienced a paradigm shift in national and international politics and attitudes. We are witnessing two heartbreaking wars, including the interminable assault on Ukraine which threatens democracy and livelihoods in eastern and western Europe. American politics has never been a walk in the park, but we are experiencing increasing uncertainty, chaos, and fear. The Dept. of Education has been gutted. Federal funding for international assistance and global learning has been painfully and senselessly cut. The isolationist policies are making foreign partners apprehensive to work with us, even in academia. From the point of view of higher education and research, though, we move on because that's what we do. But the situation is far from ideal.

As I watch from the sidelines and do my best to avoid toxic news and rhetoric, I find some solace in what I do. In my full-time role as director of a study abroad office in New York State, I form partnerships with institutions throughout the world and I guide our students to those places. I was particularly pleased when some of my students studying in Europe took my advice and visited Romania and Croatia! Through AISEES, we support scholarship in 11 southeast European countries. Our community of scholars conducts

research and leads impactful projects throughout the region, while our online lectures prompt lively discussion amongst friends (old and new).

Perhaps this is part of the solution. Through scholarship in the Humanities and Social Sciences, we foster collaboration and we open channels for meaningful dialogue, contributing in a grass-roots manner toward global learning and intelligence. By doing what we do, we explore new academic and social concepts and generate knowledge. We connect with and learn from one another. We share ideas and strengthen our sense of empathy. The John Lennon-esque dreamer in me still has hope that we will all come together in the not-too-distant future.

That said, this was another fantastic year in the history of AISEES. During the 2024-25 academic year, we hosted excellent lectures in our online series by **Clement Baulot-Souckov** (Choreomusicology in Bulgaria Staged Folklore), **Vladislav Lilić** (Sever Not Their Heads, But Take Them Prisoner. Military Captivity and the Rules of War at the Ottoman-Montenegrin Frontier, 1853-1862), **Patrick McKenzie** (Waiting for the Future: Stuckness and Care in Bulgarian Reception Centers), and **Maria Alessia Rossi** and **Alice Sullivan** (The Routledge Handbook of Byzantine Visual Culture in the Danube Regions, 1300–1600). I am developing the 2025-26 lecture schedule, so please get in touch with me if you would like to present a lecture (aiseesorg@gmail.com).

Dan Weiss, the Chair of our Board of Trustees had the opportunity to spend the first half of 2025 in Warsaw, Poland, serving as the Kościuszko Foundation Visiting Professor. He taught classes in art and music history in the faculty of “Artes Liberales” at the University of Warsaw. He also conducted research on User Experience (UX) Design in the classroom, advances in visual resource management, and some groundwork for a study of UNESCO in Warsaw. He employed UX Design methods to the two classes he taught in both the manner of instruction and the students’ final projects. His time at the University of Warsaw culminated in a [Digital Humanities Roundtable](#) that involved scholars from the University of Warsaw,

University of Virginia, Duke University, Dumbarton Oaks, Lafayette College, and the Polish-Japanese Academy of Information Technology. While he was in Poland, he also focused on networking and fostered collaboration with AISEES, meeting new contacts with projects in Serbia and Montenegro as well as several Balkan archaeologists.

And at the end of August, Dan attended and presented a talk "Amplifying Southeast European Voices across the Ocean" at the II Conference of the Association of Critical Heritage Studies, Central and Eastern European Chapter at the [University of Warsaw](#), Poland. The conference was organized by the Faculty of Political Science and International Studies, Faculty of Artes Liberales, and the [UNESCO](#) Chair on Intangible Cultural Heritage in Public and Global Governance. He was able to engage with scholars from all over Central and Eastern Europe, represent the [University of Virginia](#), promote the mission of [American Institute for Southeast European Studies \(AISEES\)](#), and learn more about the state of the field of Critical Heritage Studies in the region.

In 2025, we welcomed five new AISEES Fellows to our growing community of scholars: **Lindita Camaj** (2025 Lynn Roller Fellow) - University of Florida, Gainesville. Building Media Trust and Resilience in Albania: The role of news engagement on Instant Messaging Apps; **Ehlimana Memišević** (2025 Lynn Roller Fellow) - University of Sarajevo. Fragments of Justice: Wartime Rape and Accountability in Bosnia and Kosovo; **Alexey Kotelvas** (2025-26 Fellow) - University of Florida. Showing Moldova: Romanian-speaking Tourist Guides as Actors of Identity Politics (1965-1989); **Ermal Hoxha** (2025-26 Fellow) - University of Missouri - Columbia. Kosova Youth Lived Experiences: Learning How to Be and Do Across Ethnic Lines in Post/Ongoing-Conflict Kosova; and, **Nicoletta Rousseva** (2025-26 Fellow) - Indiana University. Bad Comrades: Art and Answerability after Socialism.

We supported two SE European scholars with their travel expenses to attend international conferences: **Dren Gërguri** (University of

Pristina) presented “Hybrid Populism in the Global East: Evidence from Visual Campaigning on Facebook in the Era of COVID-19” at the ICA Conference in Denver, Colorado in June 2025. **Zala Pavsic** (Central European University, Budapest) presented “CommYunity: narratives of friendship in the disintegration of Yugoslavia” at the Association for the Study of Nationalism (ASN) World Convention at the Harriman Institute in May 2025.

We are able to accomplish all of this thanks the generosity of 62 donors and members, which include 17 Institutional Members as well as the Disney Corporation! The annual fees remain unchanged since we recruited our first members: Institutional (\$250), Regular (\$50), and Student (\$25) membership. The funds are used to support our programs. Among the benefits of membership is the ability to apply for our funded programs. Institutional members are especially important

since they support the efforts of AISEES to become a member of the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC).

If you are already a member of AISEES – Thank You! If not, please consider joining us and/or help us spread the word about AISEES. This is your Institute, and we look forward to hearing from you. For information on how to become a member of AISEES or renew your membership, please visit:

www.aisees.org/membership

One final note, Trustee **Mary Neuburger** (University of Texas at Austin), who has been a supporter of AISEES for more than 15 years, has decided to step down from the Board, given her increased professional responsibilities. Mary will continue serving as UT Austin’s Institutional Representative to AISEES. We thank Mary for her service and support!

Updates from Dan Weiss, Chair, Board of Trustees, AISEES

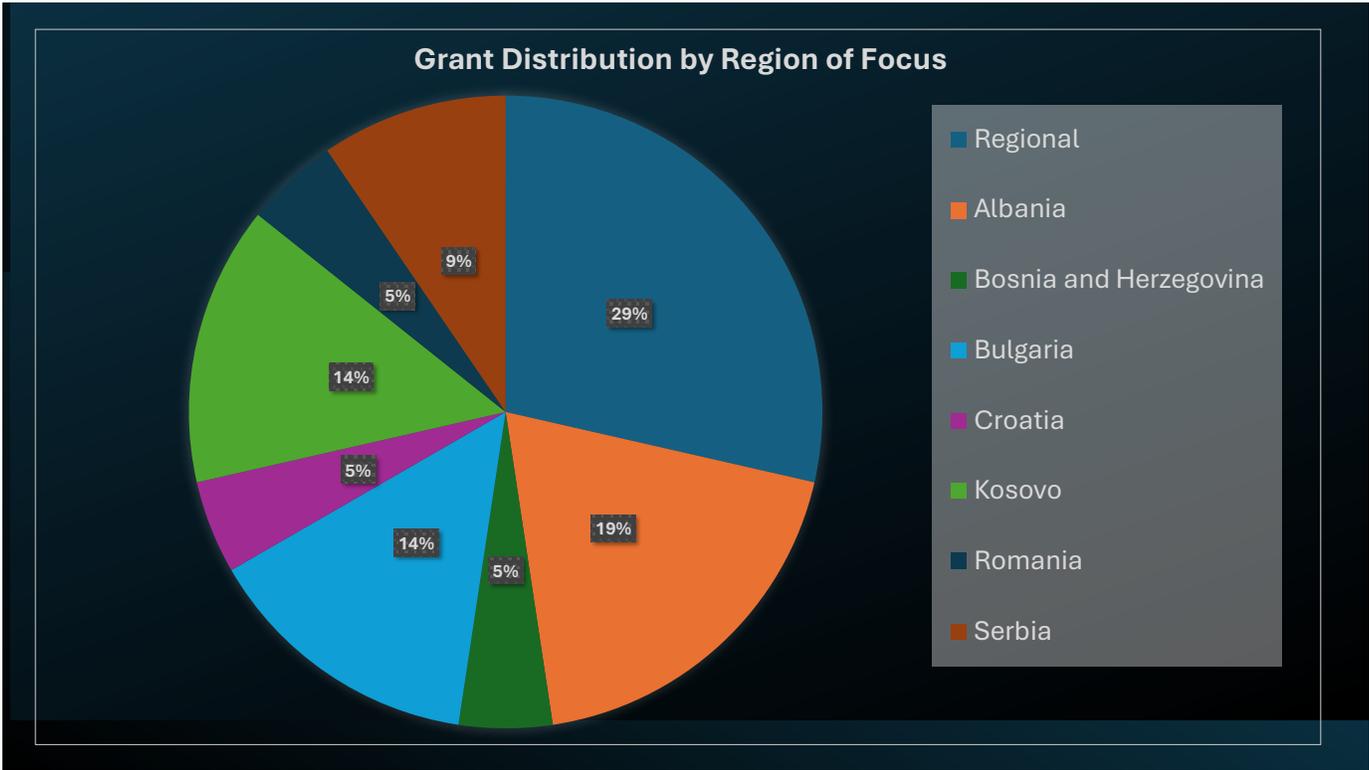
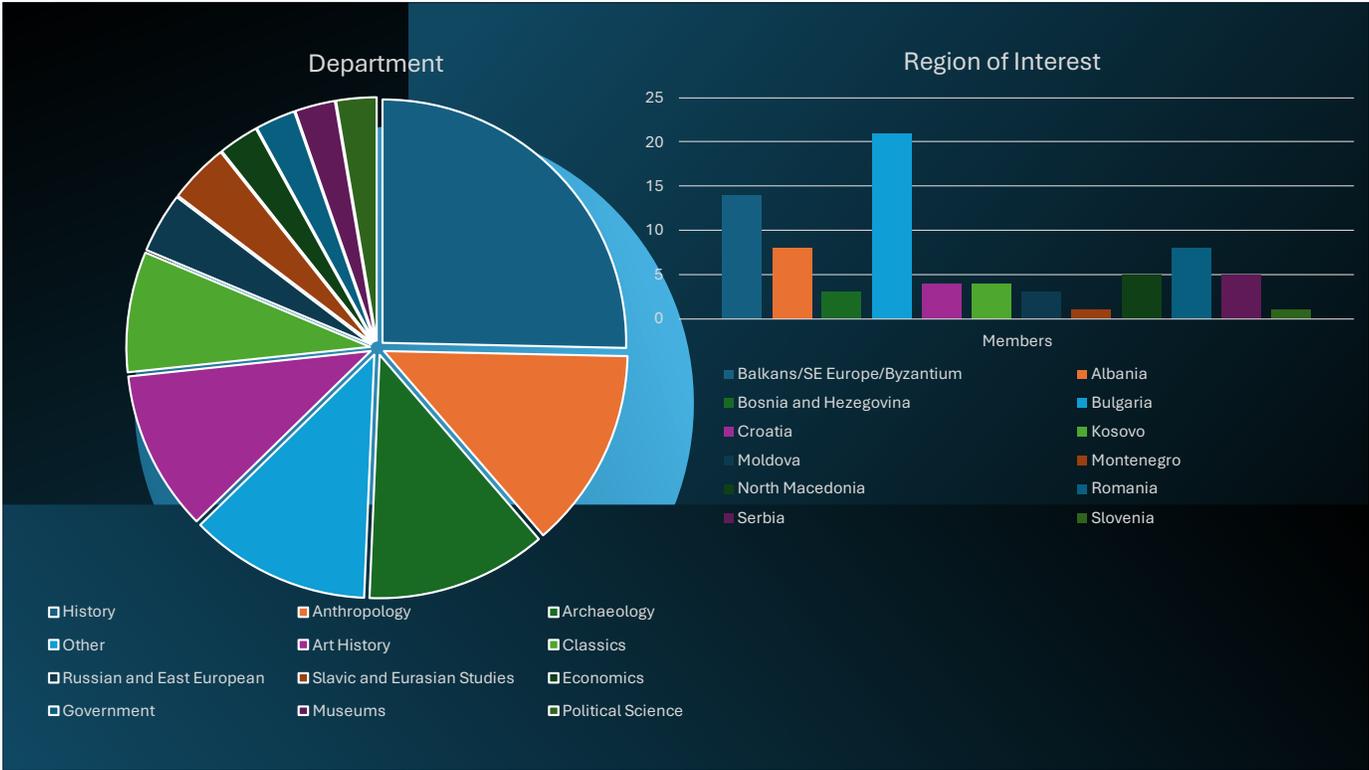
Greetings and salutations! I was fortunate to have spent much of 2025 in Warsaw, Poland where I was honored to be the Kościuszko Foundation Visiting Professor. I taught classes in art and music history at the University of Warsaw and learned about User Experience (UX) Design to enhance teaching.

I also invested time networking with scholars and professionals in order to develop the AISEES community. Several times, I was asked to present formal lectures about AISEES and in developing my presentation, I analyzed quantitative and qualitative data to demonstrate the growth of our institute and how broadly our program of fellowships and travel grants has assisted scholars working in the region.

Not surprisingly, the vast majority of our members (students, professionals, and institutions who pay annual dues) are based in the USA, but we have seen growth in Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania. The research and/or professional activities of our members focus upon all eleven countries attached to our Mission, while our fellowships and travel grants have supported scholarship in nine countries. Of particular note, many projects cross borders to consider themes that reflect intercultural realities.

I am very proud of what AISEES has accomplished in a relatively brief period of time and see a bright future based upon collaborations with overseas partners.





Meet the 2025-26 AISEES Fellows and Travel Grant Awardees

Ehlimana Memišević (2025 Lynn Roller Fellow) is a professor in the Faculty of Law, University of Sarajevo. Her project is *Fragments of Justice: Wartime Rape and Accountability in Bosnia and Kosovo*.



The wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992–1995) and Kosovo (1998–1999) were marked by systematic campaigns of persecution in which sexual violence was used as a weapon of war. In Bosnia, between 20,000 and 50,000 women – predominantly Bosniak – were raped, many held in “rape camps,” forcibly impregnated, and prevented from seeking abortions. Towns such as Foča and Višegrad became epicenters of sexual violence, which the UN Commission of Experts described as committed with “extreme brutality and savagery” to terrorize populations and enforce permanent displacement. Similar patterns of sexual violence were documented in Kosovo, where Albanian women suffered abuses at the hands of Serbian forces, and Serb and Roma women became targets of post-war reprisals.

This research examines the prosecution of wartime sexual violence and the obstacles

survivors face in achieving justice. It also addresses the marginalization of these crimes in collective memory. As Australian-Bosnian scholar Hariz Halilovich notes, a ‘hierarchy of suffering’ often shapes the collective memory of victimized groups, within which crimes against women are frequently overlooked or diminished.

This project seeks to challenge such silencing by documenting survivors’ experiences, analyzing patterns of prosecution, and foregrounding women’s contributions to truth-telling, advocacy, and accountability. In confronting denial and neglect, it amplifies survivors’ voices, addresses enduring gaps in historical justice, and situates these crimes within both regional and comparative frameworks.

Dren Gërguri, Ph.D. (AISEES Travel Grant Awardee) is a scholar from Kosovo, a former TV journalist, and a Fulbright scholar. He is a lecturer in the Department of Journalism at the University of Prishtina, where his research focuses on the intersection of disinformation, political communication, and journalism. He serves as Associate Editor at the *Central European Journal of Communication* and is the author of four books, three book chapters, ten scientific articles, and dozens of op-eds in the field of media. Several of his op-eds have been translated into more than ten languages, including English, German, French, Russian, and Japanese. His personal blog is www.drenerguri.com.

With the generous support of AISEES, I had the opportunity to present a study I developed during my Fulbright experience in the United States. This research examines political visual communication in the Western Balkans, a region often overlooked in comparative scholarship. Specifically, the study analyzes how political actors in Albania and Kosovo used visual messages on Facebook during the pandemic to mobilize voters, with a focus on both cognitive and emotional dimensions of populist communication.



This research advances the literature by moving beyond textual analyses and demonstrating how hybrid populist messages are expressed visually in non-Western contexts. By proposing conceptual and empirical indicators of hybrid populism, the study shows how these strategies shape online engagement and voter mobilization in transitional democracies.

I am deeply grateful to AISEES for supporting my participation, which enabled me to share my findings with an international scholarly community and to engage in enriching discussions on disinformation, populism, and visual political communication.

Lindita Camaj (2025 Lynn Roller Fellow) is an Associate Professor in the College of Journalism and Communications at the University of Florida, with a research agenda at the intersection of journalism, politics, and technology. With a Ph.D. in Mass Communication from Indiana University, her research examines structural and individual factors that determine how citizens engage with news in digital spaces and how that shapes their communication patterns, perceptions and behaviors. Her academic journey has been shaped by a deep commitment to understanding the role of media in democratic development, particularly in Southeast Europe. She has authored over 40

publications in leading journals—including the International Journal of Press/Politics, Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly, Digital Journalism, and The International Journal of Public Opinion Research—and has been recognized with numerous awards and fellowships for her impactful scholarship.



Dr. Camaj’s current research, funded by the American Institute for Southeast European Studies (AISEES) through the Lynn Roller Research Fellowship, investigates the intersection of news engagement and trust among users of mobile instant messaging (MIM) apps in Albania. In a media landscape marked by democratic backsliding and declining public trust, this project explores how platforms like WhatsApp and Viber—used by over 98% of mobile phone users in Albania—can serve as spaces for meaningful news engagement. Using the innovative Messaging App Diary method, the study collects qualitative data from young adults (ages 18–25) to understand their daily news consumption habits within MIM environments. Rather than focusing on the “dark side” of messaging apps, this research highlights their potential to foster social capital and build resilience against misinformation.

This project contributes to the broader literature by offering a ground-up empirical exploration of media trust in fragile democracies and aims to inform both scholarly discourse and practical strategies for news organizations seeking to rebuild public trust in journalism.

Ermal Hoxha (AISEES Fellow) is a Doctoral Candidate, College of Education and Human Development, University of Missouri – Columbia.



I am a critical ethnographer and educator dedicated to fostering equitable, socially just, and transformative educational environments. My work spans various roles in education—including educator, researcher, and mentor—with a primary focus on language and literacy, content area literacies, and teacher education. Over the past five years, I have worked with pre-service secondary education teachers exploring expansive understandings of literacy across content areas, youth literacies, the interplay of literacy and

power, and deficit adolescence/its discourses in educational texts, spaces, and beyond.

In my research, I draw on critical sociocultural learning theory to explore how young people engage in learning within out-of-school contexts, such as youth empowerment organizations. I particularly examine how young people critically interrogate structures of participation, navigate and respond to the power relations/structures across learning contexts after “empowerment” experiences.

For my dissertation, supported by AISEES, I explore how young people in Kosova utilize social media, for what purposes, and how they engage in online and offline activism, challenge segregationist ideologies in the post/ongoing context of Kosova, cultivate inter-ethnic solidarities, and imagine inclusive futures both locally and transnationally. The findings also point to significantly different experiences with and of social media for Kosova youth based on their ethnic and geographical background.

Methodologically, my research is grounded in critical ethnographic and participatory research methodologies. I am also invested in researching qualitative methodologies themselves. Preliminary findings from my dissertation suggest that social media platforms can play a pivotal role in facilitating and deepening researcher–participant trust, supporting idiosyncratic forms of reciprocity, and opening new research avenues for participatory research with and alongside youth.

Nicoletta Rousseva (2025 AISEES Fellow) is Visiting Assistant Professor of South Slavic Culture and Michael Henry Heim Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures at Indiana University, Bloomington. Prior to joining the Slavic Department at IU, Nicoletta completed a PhD in Art History with an interdepartmental concentration in Central and East European Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her research focuses on modern and contemporary art in Southeastern Europe.

The fall semester is in full swing at Bloomington, Indiana. As evening temperatures dip into the 40s, the invigorating thrills of summer fieldwork yields to the steady rhythms of writing and teaching. At least the tan on my skin from the hot Southern European sun is still (slightly) there. A reminder that I too was there, and not so long ago! I am grateful to AISEES for supporting five weeks of research in Serbia and Bulgaria related to my book project, *Bad Comrades: Art and Answerability after Socialism*. In lieu of a list-like summary, I'll share a discovery from this summer in Bulgaria that is taking my research in new and exciting directions.



The concluding section of *Bad Comrades* takes a personal turn, exploring the question of answerability in relation to my family's history in Bulgaria. While interviewing my father for the book, I learned that my grandfather and great-grandfather were imprisoned at the camps in Belene and Asenovgrad, respectively. I was not able to visit Belene this summer (I plan do so in March 2026), but did visit two camps outside Asenovgrad. The more remarkable of the two was

the site of a former camp at the 14th century monastery of Saints Kirik and Julita.



Fig. Nnarthex of church of Sts. Kirik and Julita with names of prisoners etched into fresco of the river of fire separating the saved from the damned in the Last Judgement

In 1943, the monastery was briefly converted into a concentration camp for Socialist intellectuals. I didn't expect to find much at the site. Perhaps a plaque referencing this history with, at best, the names of a few notable prisoners. What I found is captured in the lousy image below—lousy because a nun requested that I not take pictures, so I snapped one photo quickly as she walked away. In the narthex of the church, on a water-damaged fresco of the last judgement, on the side of the “damned,” prisoners etched their names into the plaster wall and possibly their birth years. The marks appear like testaments to their existence and records of their plight. A nun confirmed that the names indeed belonged to the prisoners. I was not able to find my great-grandfather's name among the dozens on the wall. But plan to return next year to study the site more

carefully, hopefully with the consent of the nuns. Beyond the coda for *Bad Comrades*, I see this discovery as the laying the groundwork for a second book project that weaves together personal history, carceral aesthetics, and histories of incarceration in Southeastern Europe.

Alexey Kotelvas (AISEES Fellow) is a PhD candidate at the University of Florida. His PhD dissertation explores Romanian-Moldovan tourism and cultural diplomacy (1965-1989).



Although both were socialist countries, Romania and the Soviet Union had complicated relations. Romania, starting in the mid-1960s, tried to pursue an independent foreign policy, which caused displeasure in Moscow and gave rise to conspiracy hypotheses about a possible Romanian threat. The situation was even more difficult in Soviet Moldova, which was part of Romania in the pre-war period and where a significant part of the population spoke Romanian. The propaganda of the so-called Moldovan language (Romanian in Cyrillic spelling) was only

part of the Soviet measures to ensure information security. Special attention was paid to the historical narrative, as well as to the control of Romanian citizens entering the Moldovan SSR.

The ongoing debates on the reunification of Moldova with Romania and the prospects of Moldovan European Integration necessitate a retrospective examination of the problems of cultural transactions between these territories. To a large extent, my research contributes to the denaturalization of old ideological constructions that are still relevant through the study of their historical roots. I consider tourism and cultural diplomacy as forms of implementing the policy of identity differentiation between the two countries. The shift of focus from Moscow to the Moldovan SSR within the framework of the Soviet component of the study contributes to the construction of an alternative historical narrative in which representatives of the Moldovan SSR find their agency. This shift is also necessary because Moldovan identity was different from the common Soviet one.

Zala Pavsic (AISEES Travel Grant Awardee) is a scholar based at CEU, Budapest. My current research evolves around the narratives of friendship in the disintegration of Yugoslavia. I trace how the motif of multiethnicity echoing the policy of brotherhood and unity policy is gradually transformed into narrative of ethnic tension, how these narratives often turned into enmity in order to mobilize public emotions in wartime, and how after the war, they again turn towards emphasizing multiethnicity through narratives of reconciliation.

Contemporary historians in the region have only recently begun to pay attention to friendship research, mainly through the prism of cultural exchange, diplomatic history during the socialist period in Yugoslavia, and examining official narratives related to the non-alignment movement. Similarly, historical-sociological research has been confined to the notions of brotherhood and comradeship, either as explorations of Yugonostalgia among YPA soldiers or as research on combat motivations of

veterans in the Yugoslav wars. My ongoing research project entitled CommYUnity is the first project in the region which places friendship as its central conceptualization and concern. It is uniquely positioned in the setting of the disintegration of Yugoslavia and is innovative for its attempt to discuss the relationship between

nationalism, state dissolution/state building and friendship. It upgrades the existing scholarship by including both male and female narratives of friendship, taking into consideration the assumption that both men and women are affected by nationalism.

Notes from AISEES Scholars and Members

Lynn Roller (AISEES Treasurer and Professor Emerita, University of California, Davis) has been invited to deliver the AIA Ettinghausen Lecture at Princeton University on April 13, 2026. She will speak on her recent work at Gluhite Kamani, the Thracian rock-cut cult complex in southeastern Bulgaria where she has worked with a team of Bulgarian colleagues since 2011. She last visited Gluhite Kamani in August and September 2024 as part of a team review, supported by a grant from the Bulgarian National Science Foundation. Lectures sponsored by the Archaeological Institute of America are free and open to the public, so any AISEES supporter or interested person in the greater New York/New Jersey/Philadelphia area is welcome to come. For more information, please see the link below:

<https://artandarchaeology.princeton.edu/whats/events/thracian-rock-monuments-cult-complex-gluhite-kamani-se-bulgaria>

Sterling Wright (Arizona State University and 2022-23 AISEES Fellow) is the lead author of an article “SANA-Biome: A Protocol for a Cross-Sectional Study on Oral Health, Diet, and the Oral Microbiome in Romania” published in the open access journal, *Healthcare* (2025): <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare13172133>

Abstract: Periodontal disease is a widespread chronic condition linked to systemic illnesses such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and adverse pregnancy outcomes. Despite its global burden, population-specific studies on its risk factors remain limited, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe. The SANA-biome Project is

a cross-sectional, community-based study designed to investigate the biological and social determinants of periodontal disease in Romania, a country with disproportionately high oral disease rates and minimal microbiome data. This protocol will integrate metagenomic, proteomic, and metabolomic data of the oral microbiome from saliva and dental calculus samples with detailed sociodemographic and lifestyle data collected through a structured 44-question survey. This study is grounded in two complementary frameworks: the IMPEDE model, which conceptualizes inflammation as both a driver and a consequence of microbial dysbiosis, and Ecosocial Theory, which situates disease within social and structural contexts. Our aims are as follows: (1) to identify lifestyle and behavioral predictors of periodontal disease; (2) to characterize the oral microbiome in individuals with and without periodontal disease; and (3) to evaluate the predictive value of combined microbial and sociodemographic features using statistical and machine learning approaches. Power calculations based on pilot data indicate a target enrollment of 120 participants. This integrative approach will help disentangle the complex interplay between microbiological and structural determinants of periodontal disease and inform culturally relevant prevention strategies. By focusing on an underrepresented population, this work contributes to a more equitable and interdisciplinary model of oral health research and supports the development of future precision public health interventions.

Jelena Bogdanović (Associate Professor at Vanderbilt University and 2023 AISEES “Lynn Roller” Fellow) was nominated and elected to serve on the College Art Association Board of Directors. Her service began in May 2025 and will conclude in May 2029. As the CAA Director, she also serves as a liaison for the CAA Committee on Design, fulfilling her passion in assisting visual arts professionals and scholars of art and architecture in developing their personal journeys. After a decade of intense work and research, a massive project, *The Bloomsbury Global Encyclopedia of Women in Architecture 1960-2020*, general eds. Lori A. Brown and Karen Burns was just published online, and its printed version is scheduled for 2026. Bogdanović is the area editor for Eastern Europe. In addition to writing an introductory essay that presents a historical survey of women architects active in Eastern Europe ca. 1890 until the 2020s, Bogdanović was responsible for coordinating additional 100 entries related to women architects in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Ukraine.

Alice Isabella Sullivan (University of Michigan) announces two publications in the field of Byzantine/Medieval Studies:

Alice Isabella Sullivan, *Europe’s Eastern Christian Frontier* (Past Imperfect) (York: Arc Humanities Press, 2024). Within the shifting political landscapes of Eastern Europe during the late Middle Ages, the principality of Moldavia (extending over today’s northeastern third of Romania and the Republic of Moldova) emerged as an eastern Christian frontier—indeed, a bastion, a “gate of Christianity”—in the face of the advancing Ottoman armies and Tatar forces. Moldavia’s leaders—among them Peter I Mușat, Alexander I, and Stephen III—established political, military, and economic contacts in efforts to strengthen and protect their domain, and, by extension, the rest of Europe. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Moldavia under Stephen III also refashioned Byzantine traditions in a new context, thereby preserving and transforming the legacies of the former Byzantine Empire to the

north of the Danube River. This book argues for Moldavia’s central role in the political, military, economic, and cultural spheres of Eastern Europe from the second half of the fourteenth century to the turn of the sixteenth century. <https://www.arc-humanities.org/9781641890793/europes-eastern-christian-frontier/>

Vladimir Ivanovici and Alice Isabella Sullivan, eds., *Artificial Light in Medieval Churches* (Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450-1450, Volume: 98) (Leiden: Brill, 2025). This volume examines the economy of artificial light in medieval churches across Eastern Europe, the Mediterranean region, and the broader medieval spheres. Whether innovative or inspired by the more established Latin and Byzantine traditions, the chapters explore local customs in order to understand how artificial light was used in ecclesiastical spaces, and how it brought together aspects of the architecture, decoration, objects, and rituals, while implicating the celebrants and the faithful gathered within the spaces. This volume complements the publication *Natural Light in Medieval Churches* (Brill, 2023). <https://brill.com/edcollbook/title/73439>

Alice also published a blog explaining how this project relates to her 2023 monograph: <https://www.arc-humanities.org/blog/2024/06/23/discover-medieval-moldavia-through-europes-eastern-christian-frontier/>

Stefan Peychev (New Europe College, Romania) is proud to announce the publication of a book, *The Nature of the Ottoman City. Water and Urban Space in Sofia, 1380s–1910s* (Cambridge University Press, 2025).

In this innovative interdisciplinary work, Stefan Peychev problematizes the dominant narrative of decline and stagnation in Ottoman Sofia. Drawing on a range of sources and perspectives, including environmental and urban history, archaeology and anthropology, he examines the creation and experience of urban space and place. By employing a *longue durée* framework and considering empire-wide developments, this work challenges the

epistemological boundaries that have traditionally separated Ottoman from post-Ottoman space and the Middle East from Southeast Europe. Peychev argues instead for an integrated understanding of

Sofia's water infrastructure, in which Ottoman ideas of the built environment fused with local cultural and technological traditions to create an efficient and long-lasting system.

AISEES 2026 Fellowship and Grant Programs

AISEES 2026 “Lynn Roller” Fellowships for Senior US and Southeast European Faculty and Scholars

AISEES offers two fellowships for senior scholars, defined as someone who is more than five years beyond the Ph.D. One fellowship of \$5000 will be awarded to a university faculty member or independent scholar based in the USA, and one fellowship of \$3000 will be awarded to a faculty member or independent scholar based in southeastern Europe. The fellowships will be used to support research in southeastern Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, and Slovenia). Projects in fields within the Social Sciences, Humanities, and related disciplines are eligible. The deadline is **December 31, 2025**. For more information, see:

<https://aisees.org/fellowships-grants/lynn-roller-research-fellowships/>

AISEES 2026-27 Junior Scholar Fellowships

AISEES offers three fellowships for graduate students and early postdoctoral scholars based in the United States to support research in southeastern Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, and Slovenia). The 2026-27

AISEES Fellows will be awarded \$3000 each. Projects in fields within the Social Sciences, Humanities, and related disciplines are eligible. The deadline is **January 20, 2026**. For more information, see:

<https://aisees.org/graduate-postdoctoral-fellowships>

AISEES 2026 Travel Grants

We invite applications for the AISEES Travel Grant Program (deadline on **February 28, 2026**). The travel grants are for the travel expenses of advanced students or scholars living in and traveling from southeastern Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, and Slovenia) to present original research at a professional conference or symposium of international importance within the domains of the Humanities and Social Sciences. The conference/symposium must take place outside the scholar's country of residence and must be of international importance (for example, European Association of Archaeology, American Anthropological Association, ASEEES, Byzantine Studies Association). The travel grant may be used for a one-time or recurring conferences/symposia hosted by a university or an academic institute. For more information, see:

<https://aisees.org/travel-grants>

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