Europe never ceases to provide, in a phrase borrowed from Balzac, a compelling human comedy weaving together political, social, economic, and cultural threads, as well as a basis for taking a critical, comparative view of the United States. Now designated a Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence, the Institute for European Studies (EURO) at IU is devoted to addressing all these threads in a global perspective.

During the fall 2017 semester, we hosted a stimulating series of well-attended faculty-led lectures and roundtables on topics covering the contentious negotiation of Brexit (Paul Craig, Oxford University, visiting the Maurer School of Law); the use of digital technologies both to restrict and to facilitate migration to Europe from other parts of the world (Gabriel Popescu, Geography and Political Science, IU South Bend); the politics of administration at Barcelona’s Museum of Contemporary Art (Edgar Illas, Spanish and Portuguese, IUB); Angela Merkel’s political career and Germany-Russia relations (Joyce Mushaben, Political Science and Women’s Studies, University of Missouri-St. Louis); and Turkish-Greek cultural politics (Leonidas Karakatsanis, Assistant Director of the British Institute in Ankara).

In August, EURO had the notable pleasure helping the School of Global and International Studies (SGIS) welcome Jüri Ratas, Prime Minister of Estonia and sitting President of the European Union Council, whose visit anticipated the centenary of Estonian nationhood in 2018. IU is one of only a few U.S. universities that teach both the Estonian language (a non-Indo-European tongue related to Finnish) and courses on Estonian culture, all located in our Department of Central Asian and Uralic Studies (CEUS).

In both his public lecture and a smaller meeting with SGIS faculty and administrators, Prime Minister Ratas emphasized the importance of his nation to the security of the EU and NATO. In particular, he noted that Estonia invests two percent of its GDP in the transatlantic alliance, and emphasized his country’s role in containing Russian political influence and territorial encroachment while maintaining a cordial cultural exchange with Russia in order to serve the needs of Estonia’s large Russian-speaking population. Prime Minister Ratas also highlighted Estonia’s innovative role in promoting inclusive democracy by using digital technology to provide its citizens a range of social and financial services, from health care and education to secure bank transactions, simplified income tax filing, family subsidies, and voting.

As part of its mission to connect units at IU and the university to the larger Bloomington community, EURO also sponsored a series of three documentary films at the IU Cinema under the title “Destination Europe: Global Perspectives on the Refugee Crisis.” The first film, The Land Between (David Fedele, 2014), reveals the stories of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa living in the mountains near Melilla, the Spanish enclave city on the coast of northern Morocco, and hoping...
to enter Europe by any means possible. In turn, Exodus: Our Journey to Europe (James Bluemel, 2016) uses footage shot by refugees themselves on camera phones as they travel from Africa, Syria, and Afghanistan to seek asylum in the various parts of the European Union. The third film, Café Waldluft (Matthias Kossmehl, 2015), focuses on the adaptation of refugees to German culture, and the reaction of Germans to them, as they wait in a Bavarian hotel for their asylum applications to be processed. The first two films were followed by lively discussion sessions led by myself in the first case, and Abdulkader Sinno (Political Science) in the second.

On a related note, EURO is thrilled to announce its partnership with Australian National University, Canberra, the University of Canterbury, Christchurch (New Zealand), the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, and National University of Singapore on a Jean Monnet Centers Network grant titled “Politics, Policy, Culture: EU Migration and Integration.” Spread over the 2018-2021 period, the grant will fund a variety of activities (faculty and graduate student exchanges, summer courses for undergraduates, conferences, and edited volumes of essays) that address the impact of recent mass migration from other parts of the globe to the EU and facilitate dialogue between academics, politicians, administrators, and migrants themselves.

In a less formal, more local register, on October 30 EURO held its annual Halloween movie night featuring pizza and treats. This year’s film was Werner Herzog’s 1979 Nosferatu the Vampyre, an even more pessimistic reimagining of Murnau’s 1922 expressionist horror classic, with renowned actor Klaus Kinski in the title role. As an emphatic allegory of modern society’s inherently self-destructive tendencies, originally theorized by Freud as the “death drive,” and as a case study in the unwillingness of politicians to act decisively against the spread of evil, Herzog’s cautionary tale is just as relevant to contemporary Europe as was Murnau’s original to Weimar Germany in the wake of the First World War.

Amidst the ongoing refugee crisis and spread of right-wing populism supporting anti-EU sentiment, crucial events of the summer and fall included the French legislative elections held in June, the German legislative elections of September, and the crisis opposing Catalonia with the central Spanish government. Though already covered in our weekly Across the Pond blog available on the EURO website and far too complex to analyze in detail here, the results of the French and German elections were striking and merit a quick overview.

The French elections, held shortly after the election of new president Emmanuel Macron, showed a massive transfer of public support from the traditional Left, represented by the Socialist Party (280 seats in the 2012 National Assembly; only 30 in 2017) to parties of the Center-Right, most notably Macron’s La République en Marche (REM, 308 seats) and Mouvement Démocratique (42 seats), which together easily formed a majority government around Prime Minister Edouard Philippe (also of the REM). Significantly, though, the extreme-Right National Front did not capitalize on the historic success of presidential candidate Marine Le Pen (21% of the vote in the first round of that election), moving from 2 parliamentary seats in 2012 to only 8 in 2017.

In Germany, the traditional parties of the Left—the Christian Democratic Union (200 seats) and the Social Democratic Party (153)—maintained their dominant position, but suffered significant losses to the center-right Free Democratic Party (80 seats) and to the populist, far-Right Alternative for Germany (AfD, 94 seats), neither of which had any representation in the last Bundestag. In contrast to France, this fragmentation has made forming a new coalition government around Chancellor Angela Merkel exceptionally difficult, and she has thus far unsuccessfully pursued negotiations to that end. The continued centrality of Merkel and of Germany to the success of the European Union makes this a high-priority thread to follow in the coming months.

None of our many accomplishments this semester would have been possible without the team of dedicated people who support EURO: our more than 150 affiliated faculty at IUB and beyond; Assistant Director Liese Hilgeman; Program Specialist Megan Immerzeel; and graduate assistants Rafael Macia (JD / PhD candidate in Law and Democracy), Kayla MacDavitt (MA candidate in Russian and East European Studies) and Joe Thurston (MPA candidate in School of Public & Environmental Affairs). We would all like to wish Joe well as he leaves us to take a law enforcement position in either the DEA or the Denver police department, with both options still in play at printing. Thanks also go to EURO undergraduate advisor Jolene Bergonzi and to our faculty advisory board for their input on numerous matters: Hannah Buxbaum (Law), Esther Ham (EURO / Germanic Studies), Frank Hess (EURO / Modern Greek), Hildegard Keller (Germanic Studies), Josh Malitsky (Media School), Jon Risner (Spanish & Portuguese), and Scott Shackelford (Business). Special congratulations to Hannah on her recent appointment as Vice President for Int’l Affairs.

Finally, I would like to invite all our readers to keep up with us by visiting our website (www.iub.edu/~euroinst) and to help us keep up with you by emailing us your news (euroinst@indiana.edu).

With best wishes for an enjoyable holiday season.

Butt Barts
Associate Professor of French Studies
Director, European Studies

Julie Auger, Associate Professor of French and Director of Graduate Studies, French Linguistics, was received as an honorary member of the Picardisants du Ponthieu et du Vimeu association in France. The association made possible much of Professor Auger’s work in Picard, both to her benefit and to that of her students.


Timothy Hellwig, Professor of Political Science, was named Remak Professor with the Institute for European Studies for 2017-2020.


Mark Roseman’s (Pat M Glazer Chair at the Jewish Studies Program and Professor at the Department of History) extended essay, *The Barbarians from our ‘Kulturkreis.’ Nazi Perpetrators in the Eyes of German Jews*, was published by Yad Vashem in 2016. He also published an edited book with Devin Pendas and Richard Wetzell, *Beyond the Racial State: Rethinking Nazi Germany* (Cambridge University Press, 2017). Beyond several other other publications, Professor Roseman has completed his manuscript *Rescued Lives*, which should appear in 2018.
Anya Royce, Chancellors’ Professor in the departments of Anthropology and Comparative Literature, was recently appointed Member of the Board of Trustees of the Ériu Dance Company in Dublin, Ireland, and Member of the International Advisory Board, Acta Ethnographica Hungarica. Her recent publications include *Guidxi Stine’ Ne Ca Xpanda’ Mi Pueblo y Sus Retratos* (Magisterial Lecture, Casa de la Cultura, Juchitán, Oaxaca, June 3, 2016) and *Elizabeth Cobon (1917–2016): Reflections on a Conversation* (Anthropology Southern Africa Vol. 40 Iss. 2, 2017).


Nicolas Valazza, Associate Professor of French, took part in a conference in Paris commemorating the 150th year of Charles Baudelaire’s death. His most recent article, *Presqu’un Livre: L’édition Photolithographiée des Poésies de Mallarmé*, was published in French Studies.

Reyes Vila-Belda, Associate Professor at the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, presented her new monograph, *Gloria Fuertes: Poesía contra el Silencio. Literatura, Censura y Mercado Editorial (1954–1962)*, in March at the Ateneo de Madrid. She was also invited to give a keynote presentation on Gloria Fuertes at the prestigious Cursos de Verano de El Escorial, organized by the Universidad Complutense de Madrid in July.

Kayla MacDavitt - EURO Graduate Assistant

Kayla MacDavitt is a first year graduate student in the Russian and Eastern European Institute’s MA program. Before coming to IU, she earned her B.A. in Psychology and International Relations at St. Thomas University in Miami, FL while also playing collegiate volleyball. During her senior year she worked for the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) as an intern and, after graduation, joined the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as a reservist. After completing the MA program she hopes to continue her work in the U.S. government, focusing on international affairs. Her research interests include international security issues, Russian and U.S. Relations, Russian and Soviet Intelligence and Russian language.

Rafael Macía - EURO Graduate Assistant

Rafael Macía is currently in his fifth year of a joint J.D. / PhD. in Law and Democracy through IU’s Maurer School of Law and the Center for Constitutional Democracy. Prior to coming to Indiana, he obtained an undergraduate law degree from the University of Navarra in his native country, Spain, where he also played for his university’s soccer team. Rafael’s research focuses on the effects of populist methods of governance on democratic stability through the impact of such methods on constitutional institutions and the rule of law. In particular, he is interested in the effects of processes of constitutional change that deviate from constitutionally-entrenched reform mechanisms. Beyond the U.S. and Europe, Rafael’s work has taken him to India, Myanmar, and Thailand. His interests range from literature and music to traveling and practicing sports.

Joe Thurston - EURO Graduate Assistant

Joe Thurston is a dual M.A. and M.P.A. graduate student through EURO and SPEA with an anticipated graduation date of May 2018. Joe has focused his studies both in EURO and in SPEA on U.S. and European security and is currently studying Russian as his language of choice. Prior to beginning his dual masters program, Joe graduated from Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis in 2014, with a B.S. in Criminal Justice and a minor in Public Safety Management. In his spare time Joe enjoys traveling, camping, and watching sports.

**All updates are self-reported. If you have an update you would like included in our next newsletter, please email us at euroinst@indiana.edu**
PRESENTATION BY PROF. JOYCE MUSHABEN
Immovable Object - Unstopabble Force

By Kayla MacDavitt

On October 2nd, the Institute for European Studies hosted Joyce Mushaben for a discussion about the personal relationship between Angela Merkel and Vladimir Putin. Professor Mushaben, who received her Ph.D. from Indiana University and is currently Curators’ Distinguished Professor of Comparative Politics & Gender Studies at the University of Missouri St. Louis, talked about her latest book, Becoming Madam Chancellor: Angela Merkel and the Berlin Republic (Cambridge University Press, 2017). Professor Mushaben provided an in-depth understanding of the complexities underlying the Merkel-Putin relationship.

In order to describe that relationship, Professor Mushaben used the “unstoppable force” paradox as an explanatory metaphor. This paradox asks the question “What happens when an unstoppable force meets an immovable object?” She compared Putin to the former and Merkel to the latter. While Merkel looks at the bigger picture and seeks to channel the different energies at play, Putin uses force and attacks weaker powers, as occurred during the Georgian, Ukrainian, and Crimean conflicts. Putin is, however, vulnerable when it comes to Russia’s economy, and Merkel knows this is where she can rein him in via sanctions. Professor Mushaben states that even President Obama understood their complex relationship and turned to Merkel to help handle Putin after the Crimean invasion.

Professor Mushaben also discussed both leaders’ similar backgrounds and other nuances of their relationship, describing how Merkel and Putin are on a first name basis with each other and stressing the importance of them both being able to speak the other’s native language. It should be interesting to see how Russia and Germany’s relationship evolves now that Angela Merkel may be going into her fourth term as Chancellor and Putin goes up for re-election in 2018.

BREXIT REVISITED

By Rafael Macía

On Monday, September 11, the Institute for European Studies hosted a presentation on the development and implications of Brexit a little over a year after the UK’s vote to withdraw from the EU. Paul Craig, Professor of English Law at the University of Oxford and visiting professor at Indiana University, acted as the keynote speaker for the event, and provided an insightful overview of the most important Brexit-related developments since the referendum. According to Professor Craig, these include the Lancaster House Speech and the discussion over soft versus hard Brexit options; the legal challenge against the UK government’s ability to trigger Article 50 without parliamentary preapproval; the unsuccessful attempt at establishing parallel negotiations with the EU on withdrawal, on the one hand, and on future relations (especially in terms of the single market), on the other; and the debate surrounding the EU Withdrawal Bill. Tim Hellwig (IU Political Science), in turn, spoke about the different elections involved in the Brexit process—namely the 2010 election (whose results were crucial in leading then Prime Minister Cameron to make an exit referendum part of his platform), the Brexit vote itself, and the election called by Prime Minister May in a losing gamble to gain a broad mandate for the negotiations stage. Sameeksha Desai (SPEA) then concluded with an analysis of Brexit’s impact on third-party countries, especially in terms of direct trade, financial transactions, and international development.
ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Katherine Kessler

In December of 2016, I completed my Master’s thesis on Jean Cocteau and Franz Kafka, analyzing how these authors subvert the Bildungsroman genre, and how crises of early modernity, particularly alienation and estrangement, are represented in their early literary works. Six months later, in August of 2017, I completed the basic intelligence officer course at Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas, and was assigned to the 48th Operations Support Squadron (OSS), at RAF Lakenheath, England. Needless to say, it’s been quite the year!

Although I have only been working in the OSS for a few months, I am constantly using knowledge gained from my previous studies on a daily basis. Cultural, political, and historical context is important when looking at current events and trying to determine what does and does not fit a pattern, as well as event significance. I cannot stress enough how important having a thorough understanding of (military) history and politics is to this endeavor, given the primary task of the OSS, which provides support for the various squadrons of fighter aircraft (F-15C’s and F-15E’s) assigned to RAF Lakenheath. These fighter squadrons operate in several tense geopolitical regions, and as such, it is important to have a thorough understanding of these regions and current events/threats. Additionally, the OSS provides intelligence to the wing commander regarding current operations, potential enemy courses of action, and their respective impact(s) on the 48th Fighter Wing.

Outside work, living in England has given me a first-hand look at the Brexit process, and the many debates surrounding Britain’s withdrawal, including complications with Scotland, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland. Living in England has also opened my eyes even further to the complexities of the European Union and the European political system, rife with its multiple of political parties and issues.

Although I completed my degree just under one year ago, I think it is already starting to reap benefits. I think having completed this program made me a stronger applicant for opportunities such as the Language Enabled Airman Program (LEAP), and directly led to my selection into this program for German. In order to be selected, an applicant must have moderate to high levels of language proficiency in a language listed on the Air Force Strategic Language List (SLL), as well as complete a battery of other tests. Certain scores are required based on rank and language, as well as academic background. LEAP itself is designed to develop a core group of military members who have cross-cultural competency and are able to communicate in multiple languages. As the world is becoming increasingly interconnected, it is more and more important to communicate clearly with other countries and international actors such as coalition partners.

Being selected for LEAP is particularly exciting, as I may have the opportunity to participate in German language courses and immersion experiences, as well as potentially cross-train into another language. I think that the opportunities IU provided in conjunction with my program of study made me a more competitive applicant. Studying German as part of my Master’s program directly helped me maintain the language proficiency level required to be selected for this program. More significantly, many intelligence officers who are selected for LEAP become Regional Area Strategists (RAS) and Political Area Strategist (PAS) officers. My primary long-term goal with respect to a potential career in the Air Force is to become a RAS, a subset of the broader Foreign Area Officer (FAO) program, and work overseas as an attaché. RAS officers are required to have both regional and linguistic expertise, as both are a necessity in the various roles a RAS officer may hold, including serving as a defense attaché, liaison officer, or as a military personnel exchange program (MPEP) officer to other host nations and coalition partners. Selections for this program usually open between seven and ten years of service.

As I am currently sitting squarely at two years, this application is still a bit of a ways off. The application has many requirements, two of which, however, are holding an advanced degree in a specific region, and having extended language background/proficiency. My master’s degree helps to fulfill both of these requirements, as it was focused Western Europe (history, politics, culture, literature, with a slice of Russia) and the German language. I can use my degree as a stepping stone to continue to improve my regional knowledge, which will hopefully make me a more competitive candidate for the RAS program. More importantly, however, it will enable me to do my job as an intelligence officer more thoroughly and effectively.

Where I find myself in the Air Force two to ten years from now is truly anyone’s guess. However, I do know that while I do not have direct control over my future in the military, I can certainly vector myself in the direction I wish to go, no small part in thanks to my language abilities and education background. I am thankful for my time at Indiana University, and know that my degree will continue to be of assistance as I go forward.
Currently the Director of the Dutch program at Indiana University (the largest in the United States), Esther Ham has been teaching at IU for sixteen years now. A native from the Netherlands, she attended university in Utrecht, where she also taught Dutch as a second language, ultimately building a career as a language instructor. And, even after forty years of teaching, she does not get bored by it; she especially enjoys her courses with first-year college students, most of whom are being exposed to Dutch for the first time. It is those early learning stages that she finds most exciting, since students are just beginning to explore the new language and learn its nuances and particularities. But she also teaches other years, as well as online courses; she was in fact the Director of Online Language Education at IU for the last three years. One of the things she appreciates from her online courses is the commitment of students to learning the language: those participating usually do so out of genuine interest, since they are not necessarily operating under credit requirements. She therefore strongly disagrees with those who argue that languages cannot be learned online, even though she concedes that having a shared physical setting makes things somewhat easier.

Although a passionate language instructor, Professor Ham does not only teach languages, but also several other courses, most of them related to Dutch culture in a variety of settings. Thus, she teaches classes on Dutch film and literature, the Dutch Golden Age, and contemporary Dutch culture. She even teaches a course on “Dutch Footprints” as part of the South East Asia minor, focusing on Dutch influence in places like Indonesia. In general, Professor Ham loves history and culture, and is particularly fascinated by the differences between places such as the United States and the Netherlands, which although sharing similar Western foundations are nonetheless separated by a myriad of cultural distinctions and nuances. She is also interested in the ways through which immigrant culture becomes embedded in a particular society, having learnt to appreciate the influence of immigrants in the Netherlands on things as diverse as cuisine and literature. This latter aspect, literature, is one that Professor Ham holds particularly dear, and once every few years she teaches a “literature in translation” class at IU. The next one will actually be taking place this coming Spring, and she is currently planning on bringing to class a poet from the Netherlands in order to add to the depth of the course.

As might be guessed from such an enthusiast of language and culture, Professor Ham is herself a polyglot, being fluent, beyond English and Dutch, in Afrikaans, Frisian, French, and German, and having even some reading knowledge of Swedish and Italian. As she readily admits, to speak about a country like the Netherlands, with its small size, is to put it in the context of a multitude of other languages and cultural influences, of which Professor Ham has herself participated. Globalization is thus not a new phenomenon there, and Professor Ham has taken full advantage of it. Indeed, her initial exposure to Afrikaans was through visiting teachers who travelled to Utrecht to learn more about shared Dutch roots. She reciprocated these visits through trips of her own to South Africa, during which her knowledge of Afrikaans was perfected and an enduring love for that most meridional of African countries was born. She has been teaching Dutch there no less than five times, and she has also spent time travelling and exploring the country, which she considers the most beautiful in the world. In general, Professor Ham is a passionate traveler, and is especially fascinated by nature, which is one of the reasons why she likes the United States so much (although New York is another reason). In addition, she also appreciates the benefits of travel-abroad opportunities for students, and her plans for the summer of 2018 include taking a group of about twenty students to The Hague and Amsterdam as part of a course on World War II in the Netherlands.

That trip, however, is not her only academic-related plan for this summer. Beyond her teaching role, Professor Ham also serves as the President of the American Association for Netherlandic Studies, which on June will be hosting its 19th Biennial Interdisciplinary Conference on Netherlandic Studies (ICNS). The conference will take place at the IU campus in Bloomington, under the theme of “The Changing Lowlands.” It will include a variety of participants (both faculty and graduate students) from different fields, and will consist of a series of 90-minute sessions in which authors will present their pa-
pers and participate in a Q&A session. Papers will address different topics, but ICNS specially encourages submissions on Dutch literature and its international circulation, Dutch/Flemish art, Dutch linguistics, and the (art) history of the Low Countries and colonial regions. As president of the host organization, Professor Ham has of course been heavily involved in setting up this exciting event.

Beyond this summer, however, Professor Ham also has ambitious, if long-term, hopes for the Dutch Program at IU. Her dream is to eventually expand the program in order to include Afrikaans, Frisian, and Middle Dutch as part the teaching curriculum. These are all languages that she speaks and loves, and she is convinced that their inclusion would add to Bloomington’s already-rich language program. Next year, the world expert in Middle Dutch will be coming to Indiana to serve as the keynote speaker for one of the events planned by the Dutch department. Professor Ham remains hopeful that this will be but the first step in the fulfillment of her dream.

**19th Biannual Interdisciplinary Conference on Netherlandic Studies:**

**“The Changing Lowlands”**

(American Association for Netherlandic Studies)

June 1 - 2, 2018

IU Bloomington

Global & International Studies Building


https://euro.indiana.edu/news-events/icns-conference/index.html

On August 29, 2017, Indiana University was honored to receive the visit of Estonian Prime Minister Jüri Ratas, as part of his U.S. tour in preparation for the country’s upcoming centenary celebrations. One of the main topics addressed by the Prime Minister before an audience crowding the SGIS Auditorium was the state of European-Russian relations, currently not at their historical best.

Prime Minister Ratas expressed Estonia’s willingness to have a productive dialogue with Russia. Nevertheless, he was quick to admit that any such dialogue with Putin’s government has been increasingly challenging after the Russian annexation of Crimea. For that reason, Prime Minister Ratas advocated for a unified European-American stance in dealing with his country’s Eastern neighbor, something that could be challenging under the current U.S. administration, considering its high praises for Putin and its questioning of NATO members for not contributing their fair share of the defense spending.

“EU relations with Russia is another widely discussed topic. It is quite often on the table in my meetings with different state leaders and also frequently asked about by journalists. Russia is our neighbour and naturally we would wish to have good relations based on the same values and principles. Unfortunately, Russia has shown over the years by attacking independent states such as Georgia and Ukraine that it does not follow the principles of international law nor respect the norms and principles that it committed itself to in the early post-Soviet era. Therefore, dialogue with Russia is only possible in limited areas with clear understanding of our interests and values. We, be it the EU or the United States, should convey a common message when we engage in bilateral contacts with Russia.”

Regardless of the productivity of any potential discussions with Russia, however, Estonia’s stakes in maintaining peaceful relations are very high, and the country is likely to play a vital role in European security in the years to come.

By Joe Thurston

Estonian Prime Minister Visits IU
Lotus World Music & Arts Festival

By Rafael Macía

The Institute for European Studies was once again a community sponsor of this year’s Lotus World Music & Arts Festival, now in its 24th edition. The festival brings together musicians and artists from around the world for a weekend of performances in downtown Bloomington. This year, EURO was proud to sponsor two of the performers, Iberi Choir and Rachel Sermanni.

Iberi is a polyphonic choir from Tbilisi, Georgia, whose name derives from their country’s original denomination, Iberia. The choir’s performances featured six singers, dressed in dark traditional costumes that might have given them an almost-monastic aspect had it not been for the long knives hanging from their belts. The singers sang mostly a capella, but made occasional use of instrumental accompaniment in the form of a lute, a pair of traditional recorders (played simultaneously by the same player) and a Georgian bagpipe (gudastviri). Some songs also included clapping and dancing. With voices perfectly tuned to one another, the members of the choir sang mostly traditional secular songs from different parts of Georgia, some of which were nevertheless reminiscent of ancient sacred music and religious rites. The song that culminated their performance, however, was a highly spirited and joyful one that invited the audience to join in the celebratory mood of the occasion.

Rachel Sermanni, in turn, was able to present a powerful and moving performance despite being the only person featured on stage. A lone singer, accompanied by nothing more than her guitar, the Scottish songwriter treated the attendees with her emotive voice, beautiful lyrics, and slow, soulful music affected by a tinge of melancholy. As she explained in one of the many stories intersecting her songs, she is used to going it alone, which might explain the ease with which she kept the audience captivated throughout her solo performance of over an hour. Her constant engagement with the audience, both during and in between her singing, added a welcome degree of proximity between performer and public, creating a sense of intimacy and ease that made the evening all the more enjoyable.

Overall, the EURO-sponsored performances, as well as the Lotus Festival more generally, were generously attended by an enthusiastic crowd that got to enjoy a multicultural experience of music, food, and festivities, all of it accompanied by beautiful Fall weather and a wonderful atmosphere of celebration reigning over the entire event. The 2017 Lotus Festival was, without question, a resounding success.
On October 26, the secession crisis in Catalonia reached a seeming watershed moment when, after the failure of last-minute informal negotiations, the Catalan Parliament unilaterally declared independence. Almost immediately afterwards, the Spanish Senate approved the application of Article 155 of the Constitution, which allows the central government to take administrative control over a region whose leaders are acting outside of the constitutional boundaries. Within hours, the Executive led by Mariano Rajoy had announced the particular measures to be implemented: the sacking of the regional government, including its President Carles Puigdemont, the dissolution of the Catalan Parliament, the intervention of the regional police, and the scheduling of snap elections for December 21. These measures came as somewhat of a surprise for Spaniards, in part because they deviated from initial speculations that the central government would take interim control of the region for a longer period, of around six months. But most importantly, and that was perhaps at the core of the government’s calculation, the measures came as a surprise for the secessionist leadership. Suddenly, Puigdemont and his allies were forced to quickly decide whether they would participate in the elections (thus implicitly acknowledging Spanish sovereignty and the application of Article 155) or boycott them as an external imposition (which would deprive secessionists of any chance of retaining power). The independentist coalition ultimately opted for the former route, and announced that it would run for the elections. Thus, the central government seemingly achieved an important victory, forcing the Catalan leadership to acknowledge the Spanish legal system while avoiding the impression of a Madrid-driven suppression of regional autonomy. The expected narrative of “external occupation” had been preemptively invalidated, and, with a swift stroke, Rajoy had re-appropriated the discourse of “democracy” by calling Catalans to the polls, this time in a legal manner. The (now deposed) Catalan government had little choice but to comply, or else risk being labeled as undemocratic.
That, however, was not the end of the drama. In another unexpected turn of events, Puigdemont decided to “flee” to Brussels (although he was of course perfectly free to travel there) in order to seek international support for his cause and form a sort of “government in exile” along with some of his ex-ministers (consellers). Others, including the deposed vice-president, Oriol Junqueras, stayed behind to manage the situation from the ground. Under these conditions, however, it became immediately evident that the newly-proclaimed Catalan Republic was nowhere in existence. On the contrary, the reaction from the Spanish state institutions against the independence declaration was quick and forceful: central government ministries took over the direction of the Catalan administration in order to ensure a smooth continuation of public services in Catalonia, at the same time as the justice system began investigating possible criminal liabilities among secessionist leaders. Criminal complaints have been brought by the public prosecutor against the members of the Catalan government and the parliamentary leadership, under charges of rebellion, sedition, and misuse of public funds. With Puigdemont and part of his cabinet in Belgium and refusing to appear before court, the remaining members were brought to declare and face charges before either the Supreme Tribunal or the National High Court (depending on who held jurisdiction over the particular defendant). In all cases but one, the prosecution requested pre-trial detention as a precautionary measure based on the possibility of flight and the risk of continued criminal activity; and while the High Court granted the request, sending among others deposed Vice-President Junqueras to jail, the Supreme Tribunal decided to set its own defendants free under bail.

The jailing of part of the deposed Catalan government sparked an immediate controversy, with a large part of the public opinion in Catalonia denouncing what it perceived as the incarceration of “political prisoners” by an authoritarian government that is using the court system against its political rivals. This claim is certainly misplaced: few criminal systems among Western democracies would permit a public official’s open and flagrant breach of the constitution and the laws to go unpunished. The Spanish judiciary is an independent institution within a well-functioning democracy that operates under the rule of law. This is in part confirmed by the fact that two different courts have reached separate conclusions on the pre-trial detention issue; moreover, it is likely that the, for now, more lenient Supreme Tribunal will assume the entirety of the investigation. What is more doubtful, however, is the appropriateness of the prosecutor’s decision to call for the application of the full force of the law against the defendants. To begin with, it is not clear that the crime of rebellion (which requires the use or threat of violence) is applicable in this case, and, considering the political situation, it might have been better to leave out those charges that do not neatly fit the events under investigation, even if some degree of legal maneuvering may make them relevant to the case. And, more importantly, the request for pre-trial detention was a blunder by any measurements, and an unnecessary one for that matter. The imprisonment of part of the Catalan leadership in the midst of an electoral campaign is certain to inflame passions among secessionist supporters and even among moderate Catalan nationalists, and will conveniently feed a narrative of victimization and oppression constantly resorted to by the independentist coalition. And there is little justification for such a harsh (and unwise) preventive measure in this case: the regional leadership’s decision to participate in the new elections will arguably dissuade them from becoming fugitives, and holding the flight of some members of the deposed government against those who decided to stay sounds somewhat preposterous. In this regard, the more experienced and higher ranked judge conducting the investigation for the Supreme Tribunal appears to have made the better decision in granting bail to his defendants.
Rafael Macía’s “Catalonia: The Latest Developments” - Continued

The decision to request that the Belgian authorities turn in Puigdemont and his “exiled” government, on the other hand, appears to be appropriate, given their unwillingness to voluntarily appear before court. In addition, their immediate abandonment of Catalonia after having no less than declared its independence brings their leadership into question. Nevertheless, the party that until recently headed the Catalan government has decided to place the deposed president at the top of their ballot. Indeed, part of the idea behind Puigdemont’s Belgian journey may have been to try to force an extradition at the climatic point of an electoral campaign he could very well win. This would further polarize Catalan public opinion and show a wider rift between the Catalan people and the Spanish government (given the possibility that the person whom Catalans could vote into office would be just sitting in detention).

The possibility that the very same actors that have played (on both sides) a key role in the present crisis will be the ones taking part in the upcoming election is a troubling one, beyond the mere curious possibility of having a jailed official elected. This is because a continuity of players will likely mean a continuity of the same policies that have led to the current situation. Right now, all evidence suggests that the election will be a very close one, so a secessionist victory is not a given; among other things, pro-secessionist parties have failed to reach an agreement and run as a united ticket, although they could still form a post-electoral coalition similar to the one that initially brought them to power. But one thing is clear: if the political and institutional leadership remains unchanged, there will have to be at least a change of approach, or else the impasse will irremediably continue, leaving Spaniards and Catalans with no solution in sight. Part of that change will have to come from secessionist leaders themselves. Puigdemont may have provided some room for hope when he recently signaled that there may exist some alternative way out from the existing confrontation other than independence, although the nature of that alternative remains to be seen. But the central government’s discourse must also show a greater degree of openness to dialogue and willingness to engage in reform, even if it remains constant (as it should) in its defense of the rule of law.

One avenue for such reform will be the newly-established parliamentary commission charged with studying the current system of territorial autonomy. This commission, presided as it is by a member of the opposition Socialist Party, should propose the necessary constitutional amendments to provide the basis for an agreement between the contending sides, in a manner that acknowledges the supremacy of the Constitution while at the same time recognizing the necessity of a constitutional change that follows the legally-established procedures. Part of that change could include the transformation of Spain into a formally federal system, the devolution of greater powers to the regions, or even the recognition of the “nations” that comprise Spain and their ability to decide their status within the larger Spanish nation. This would not only address some of the concerns expressed by discontented regional groups; it would also signal a shift in the current government’s stance to one that is more tolerant of minority demands, thus making alternatives to radical separation more palatable. Unfortunately, the ruling Popular Party has already expressed its skepticism towards constitutional reform, and this positioning is unlikely to contribute to an improvement of the situation. Similarly, the Basque and Catalan nationalist parties in the Spanish legislature have refused to participate in the commission, thus showing a lack of willingness to genuinely engage in the kind of dialogue that they so often demand. Given how things stand right now, this unwillingness to compromise by so many relevant players will only make matters worse. Political actors should not shield themselves behind the uncertainty of the upcoming elections, and should seek to actively engage with the other side in a manner that makes a mutually-agreeable solution possible, and that makes the electoral outcome less decisive. Because, regardless of who wins on December 21, one thing is clear: without evidence of good will and sensibility from both sides, there can be no hope of a long-term solution to the crisis.

Catalan Parliament declares independence in the absence of unionist MPs. (EFE)

This piece (from November 16, 2017) was the last of a series of three posts covering and analyzing the secessionist crisis in Catalonia. The views expressed are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect EURO’s stance on the issue. For access to the earlier posts, please visit EURO’s Accross the Pond Blog at https://iuwest.wordpress.com/.
Faculty Speaker Profile: Gabriel Popescu

Associate Professor of Geography
Director, Master of Public Affairs
Indiana University South Bend

Gabriel Popescu is associate professor of geography in the department of political science, and the director of the Master of Public Affairs program at Indiana University South Bend. Professor Popescu is originally from Romania, where he attended the University of Bucharest during the 1990s momentous social and political transformations in Eastern Europe. He graduated with B.A. and M.A. degrees in geography, and following a short stint at Romania’s National Commission for Statistics in Bucharest he decided to continue his graduate studies at Kent State University in Ohio, and later at Florida State University in Tallahassee, from where he earned M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in geography.

Professor Popescu first moved to Indiana in 2005 for an appointment as an ABD at Ball State University, and after the defense of his dissertation the following year he joined the Indiana University South Bend faculty to teach political geography. In his research, Professor Popescu has long been interested in the ongoing influence of space/geography on the relationships between politics and social life. Considering that the nation-state has been commonly imagined as the main political entity to divide the globe, national territories have become taken for granted as discrete containers of social relations and as natural divisions between people. Professor Popescu’s research agenda has been to understand how actors beyond the nation-state actively shape social interaction in space. Earlier in his career, he has published on the connections between ethnic identity and geopolitics, examining how transnational actors such as diasporas are influencing international politics, and on the influence of local cross-border cooperation on state sovereignty.

His recent scholarship focuses on examining how new developments in information technology are redefining the nature of contemporary borders and territorial institutions, and how these transformations affect citizenship rights, identity, and the ways in which people relate to space. He is studying the circumstances in which biometric and wireless technologies are routinely embedded into bodies, travel documents, phones, and drones in order to enable the circulation of flows and to achieve control of mobility at the smallest possible scale. He finds that the new kinds of political and social geographies that are emerging today can be better understood by employing notions of topological space, defined by nodes, connections, and “portals”, which is qualitatively different from the modern notion of Euclidean space defined by proximity and distance decay.

Professor Popescu has examined the connections between digitization and topology in his book Bordering and Ordering the Twenty-First Century: Understanding Borders (Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), and during a subsequent sabbatical residency at the Mediterranean Institute of Advanced Studies in Marseille, France. There, he conducted a study entitled “Rearticulating Border Spaces: Technology, Bodies and Networks in the Age of Mobility” and became involved in the “AntiAtlas of Borders” project, an interdisciplinary research program driven by an approach at the arts-science interface. The project is based on the idea that the ways in which we draw borders on maps structure the ways we think and act upon the world. Collaborations between scientists and artists in academic seminars and art exhibitions illustrate technologically-enabled flows and instantaneous time-space connections in ways that go beyond drawing borderlines around territories on world maps.

Professor Popescu’s latest project investigates the movement of refugees unfolding in Europe, and refugees’ unprecedented reliance on digital technologies such as GPS, cellular phones, and social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp, that help them navigate European space and decode a maze of European borders.

In pursuit of his research interests, Professor Popescu has travelled widely around the world and has secured grants from various national and European Union institutions. In this sense, he has been a visiting professor at universities in Grenoble and Toulon, France; Hamburg, Germany; and a research fellow at the Center for the Study of Populations and Socio-economic Policies in Luxembourg. Professor Popescu says that Indiana University has played a key role in supporting his scholarship, providing access to grants and exchange programs that have enabled him to stay connected with networks of international scholars. He is a member of both the Institute for European Studies and the Russian and East European Institute.
Faculty Speaker Profile: Gabriel Popescu - Continued

At IUSB, Professor Popescu has taught a variety of courses ranging from undergraduate classes to graduate seminars, and has led study abroad programs to Mexico. His lectures on Political, Economic, World, and Human Geography, as well as his seminars on Global Cities and Networks, and on International Public Affairs and Global Governance, incorporate his research interests as much as possible. In classroom interactions with his students he seeks to help them gain knowledge about other places and cultures, as he believes that familiarity with difference is essential to foster critical thinking about their own place in the world, and to understand how their daily lives are inextricably connected with others in faraway places. The biggest rewards of all in his teaching is when he sees his students using the information they acquire to make sense of their own topics of interest, and when students’ questions about various issues they learn about in his classes make him think of a certain topic in a new way.

Professor Popescu’s talk, “Digital Topologies of Migration in Europe,” was hosted by EURO on October 16, 2017.
A Base for Your Activities in Europe
The IU Europe Gateway Office is housed at the new Council on International Educational Exchange Global Institute (CIEE)—Berlin. With an office suite and access to space within the CIEE building, the Gateway offers:

- office space for visiting faculty and administrators
- meeting space for conferences and workshops, student recruitment activities, and alumni events
- classrooms and student housing for short-term study abroad programs
- open space for lectures, receptions, and concerts

Funding
IU’s Office of the Vice President for International Affairs offers matching funds of up to $5,000 in commitments from other IU units to support activities at the Gateway.

Contact: Hannah L. Buxbaum, Academic Director
hbuxbaum@indiana.edu  812.855.4350

IU’s Global Gateway Network
The IU Global Gateway Network promotes and supports the engagement of IU’s faculty, students and alumni with the world through global gateway offices that help the IU community.

http://global.iu.edu

Institute for European Studies
GA 4004
355 North Jordan Avenue
Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana 47405-1105

Midwest Model European Union April 5-7 2018
Registration is open!

What EU country will your delegation represent?

For registration and more information, please visit https://euro.indiana.edu/news-events/mmeu/index.html