

<b>Institution: University College London (UCL)</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 25a - Area Studies: SSEES</b>
<p><b>1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy</b></p> <p><b><u>Overview</u></b></p> <p>The foundation of the School of Slavonic and East European Studies (SSEES) is deeply interwoven with the modern reshaping of the area we study. Established in 1915 by a group of academics working together with thinkers and politicians from Central Europe—most prominently Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, who three years later became first president of the new state of Czechoslovakia—SSEES was created to broaden knowledge of a complex area of Europe that at that time remained divided between the Russian, German, Habsburg and Ottoman empires. This aim of putting the variety of cultural, historical and social traditions extending from Germany into Russia ‘on the map’ of Anglo-American scholarly awareness thus predated by several years the fundamental redrawing of the political map of Europe after the First World War. As a result of this history, SSEES research and teaching covers not just Russia and Eurasia but a range of central and southeast European languages and cultures that is unmatched in the United Kingdom.</p> <p>Drawing now on more than a century of experience as an institution unique for the range of disciplines and approaches we bring to the study of Central, South, and Eastern Europe as well as Eurasia, UCL SSEES continues its tradition as an innovator in study of this region and more broadly in language-based Area Studies as an academic practice. Our scholars work across the fields of social sciences and humanities, from strongly quantitative fields such as economics, through a wide variety of branches of politics and sociology, to history and literature. In recent years SSEES academics have increasingly prioritized research addressing questions of gender equality, LGBTQ+ rights, minority discourses and transnational interaction. During the REF2014 period we undertook a range of measures not only to continue developing our tradition of excellence in the individual disciplines we pursue but also to foster innovative cross-disciplinary research. This development has deepened and expanded during the REF2021 period, as we have focussed on the theory and practice of interdisciplinarity as a central institutional priority. We naturally take pride in our many colleagues who are internationally recognized specialists in their disciplines and on areas of Europe playing crucial roles in current global developments. But SSEES has always been more than the sum of its parts. For we emphasize dialogue and exchange among our colleagues and students from across the institution: interdisciplinarity, therefore, is at the heart of what we do.</p> <p>To bolster the interdisciplinary scope and conception of our research and teaching, we have in recent years launched several initiatives to re-conceive ‘interdisciplinarity’ in theoretical and methodological terms. Central to these efforts is our commitment to the idea of ‘<b>Critical Area Studies</b>’. Too often in the past, Area Studies has been understood not simply in contrast but indeed in subordination to the traditional university disciplines, and as mere application to a particular region of the general principles formulated by the disciplines. Critical Area Studies as we understand it fundamentally challenges this conception on two fronts. First is the conviction that knowledge generated from the ‘bottom up’—that is, from particular contexts and with specialist understanding of local complexities—does not simply apply but in fact <i>alters</i> and even <i>produces</i> general principles. We regard ‘area’ and ‘discipline’ as complementary, therefore,</p>

rather than conflicting frameworks for academic inquiry. Second is the understanding that the interdisciplinary character of Critical Area Studies brings innovative perspectives that the traditional disciplines, or even multi-disciplinary combinations thereof, often overlook. Our efforts to develop a Critical Area Studies have thus allowed us to contribute in substantial fashion to current academic reflection on interdisciplinarity both across the UK and internationally, and have underlay some productive international collaborations (described below).

This broad range of research pursued at SSEES is reflected in its unique structure, whereby the School operates in cooperation with both the Faculties of Arts & Humanities and Social & Historical Sciences. Internally, SSEES encompasses four clusters that identify broad disciplinary 'families': (1) *Language & Culture* (in particular literature, film studies, visual culture, cultural theory, language-study, and linguistics in Russian and across the widest range of Central, East and Southeast European languages offered by any comparable department in the UK); (2) *Politics & Sociology* (spanning a range of quantitative and qualitative approaches and including study of corruption, authoritarianism, populisms, sexuality and gender, religion, migration, and cultural anthropology); (3) *History* (with specialism in Russia and Eurasia and across Central and South-Eastern Europe from medieval times to the present); and (4) *Economics & Business* (including innovation and technology studies, political economy, banking and finance, comparative and development economics, and macroeconomics of Europe and China). To a degree these clusters are already interdisciplinary within themselves, but we have also instigated a range of structures (described below) to maximise exchange and cooperation among colleagues in different clusters.

### **Research Strategy**

Our research strategy is embedded in the School's overarching *Strategic Operating Plan* and is built on **five principles**:

1. **Regional contextualisation of knowledge.** SSEES is leading the way in developing our understanding of how the concept of 'region' is and has been postulated, employed and contested in political conflict, economic conquests and cultural clashes. The fluidity and constructed nature of regions is particularly evident in our fields, where over recent decades the Cold War paradigm of an 'Eastern Bloc' has given way to increasing awareness of how relevant, for example, wide parts of Eurasia and China are to what we do. Our research in Critical Area Studies as described above has been central to our thinking of new ways to make regional specialisation and contextualization connect with *transferable knowledge* and *general principle-formation*.
2. **International engagement.** Our collaborations with leading universities and scholarly networks across the post-communist region allow for increasingly sophisticated and powerful comparative analyses that combine panoramic sweep with focused regional and local contextualisation. Such collaborations find expression in a number of H2020 and Marie Skłodowska-Curie projects (see Section 4), of which SSEES is/was the co-ordinating partner in each case.
3. **Multi- and interdisciplinarity.** SSEES is a leader in the pursuit of conceptual, theoretical and methodological bridges across the humanities and social sciences. Our interdisciplinary approach emphasises language-based research and is delivered through the work of individual scholars, research centres, clusters of researchers across SSEES and UCL and national and international networks, such as the SSEES-led Centre for East European Language-Based Area Studies (CEELBAS) and the 'Socialism Goes Global' (Roth-Ey),

'Polish Migration' (White), 'Trafficking Past: Exploring Sex Work and Migration in Modern History' (Hetherington) and 'Structural Reforms and European Integration' (Ji) research networks.

4. **Methodological pluralism.** Many pressing issues of today's world, such as populism and inequality, cannot be analysed with sufficient depth through the resources of a single method. Our researchers commonly develop a portfolio of methods—ranging, for example, from statistical panoramas to interpretive case studies—to provide deep cultural and social understanding.
5. **Policy relevance.** Delivering impact for public benefit, SSEES has prioritised a tight intertwining of research and public service since its founding. SSEES researchers offer their knowledge to policy makers and practitioners in many areas, including corruption and governance, asylum, and technology transfers. Building on its extensive network of partnerships in the region and beyond, SSEES seeks to enhance its policy-related impact through the further expansion of its relationships with a wide range of policy-makers, practitioners and the public. Our REF impact case studies and 'individual public engagement' (Section 4) offer a few examples of the real-life benefit of SSEES research.

### **Leadership & Management**

The above research principles are led by the **Director** and supported by the **Head of Research**, the **Head of Interdisciplinarity**—a post created in 2018 reflecting our commitment to this aim—and the **Head of Postgraduate Research**. The Head of Research is supported by the SSEES **Research Committee** (a representative group of multidisciplinary colleagues at all levels of seniority) and by our **Research Support Coordinator**. Full use is made of UCL's wider research facilitation provided by the Office of the Vice-Provost for Research. Our **School Manager** and Research Support Coordinator oversee financial planning for research activities.

### **Research Structures**

In the spirit of UCL's Grand Challenges scheme, we have developed a range of new initiatives to put the interdisciplinary ideals of Critical Area Studies into practice. Key among these is the foundation of two new **Research Centres** in the current REF period, as well as the continuing development of our research **Seminar Series**, which in many cases have a long tradition in the School. The School also provides these Centres and Seminars with specific financial resources (£38K PA) to support their objectives and activities. These funds are principally used to support various events and workshops, to engage research assistants, and to support particular projects and initiatives. Further discretionary funds are available to facilitate specific research initiatives, with such funding usually targeted as **seedcorn for such projects**.

#### **Centres:**

Established in 2015, the **FRINGE Centre for the Study of Social and Cultural Complexity**, has become an intellectual conduit between SSEES and the UCL Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS). The FRINGE acronym (**F**luidity – **R**esistance – **I**nvisibility – **N**eutrality – **G**ray Zones – **E**lusiveness) encompasses the types of areas and activities that traditional disciplines too often overlook. The FRINGE Centre supports projects that challenge disciplinary frameworks through investigation of the sort of 'real-world' activities that resist clear classification and quantification. FRINGE organizes several major **conferences and workshops** per year, and has established

an Open Access **book series** at UCL Press that has published ten volumes since 2018 with ten more in preparation (details below under ‘Publications’).

Some of the themes explored in FRINGE have grown into extended **research strands**. These include (1) the ‘Global Informality Project’ (Ledeneva) which has produced a series of international launches and discussion events tying into *The Global Encyclopedia of Informality* (see under ‘Publications’), including a panel at the 2018 ASEES Conference in Boston; a presentation of the project at the 13<sup>th</sup> World Customs Organization PICARD Conference in Malatya, Turkey in October 2018; and a further book launch/discussion workshop at Sophia University in Tokyo in March 2019; (2) the interface between power and aesthetics with particular reference to the ‘Global East’ (Murawski), explored through an ongoing lecture and discussion series ‘Perverting the Power Vertical: Politics and Aesthetics in the Global East’ (website [here](#)), which brings in academics, performance artists and activists (Karol Radziszewski, Gluklya, Keti Chukhrov and others); and (3) a new seminar series ‘(Bio)Political Economies: Capitalism, Socialism, and After’ (Hetherington).

**Conference activity** includes ‘1989’s Loose Ends’, focusing on the events of 1989 from a global perspective (Ilić) rather than Soviet Bloc focus; ‘Protest, Performativity, Post-Truth’ (Zusi), revisiting the ‘performative turn’ in academic discourse in light of recent trends of the post-truth era; ‘The Palace of Ritual’ (Murawski, Ledeneva), an art, performance and discussion series on contemporary forms of ritual accompanying the 2019 Venice Biennale; ‘Theorizing Shame, Pride, and Community in Contemporary Culture’ (Bonsu and Zusi, in collaboration with University of the Arts London), on ways marginalized communities transform shame to carve out new identities; ‘Redefining Russian Diaspora’ (Rubins); ‘Informal Housing Across the Globe’ (Grashoff); ‘Revolutionary Dostoevsky: Rethinking Radicalism’ (Young), addressing the notion of ‘the radical’ as enacted in the author’s works; ‘De-Centring the City’ (Murawski, co-organized with Calvert 22 Foundation); and many more smaller discussion seminars and book launches. ‘(Re)Placing Chernobyl’, a Zoom seminar organized in June 2020 in cooperation with Kingston University and the Lithuanian Cultural Centre, examined the popular HBO miniseries ‘Chernobyl’ (2019) to explore the politics of aesthetics and the wide-ranging impacts of this cultural representation of the disaster, including relevance during the Covid pandemic. The discussion featured the **director of the miniseries Johan Renck**, had almost 500 unique, live viewers, and was live-streamed at academic institutions in Britain, Sweden, and the US.

The FRINGE Centre thus hosts a wide and unique spectrum of focused investigations while at the same time constantly reflecting and publishing on the interdisciplinary principles of Critical Area Studies. While doing so FRINGE has successfully brought together academics from across the full range of disciplines represented at SSEES—from literature to economics—in shared projects and discussions. Founded at SSEES, the FRINGE Centre quickly established its footing within the **UCL IAS**, where it forms one of the constitutive research centres and with whom the majority of its initiatives are now co-organized. The IAS initiative ‘area studies re-mapped’ is a natural partner for Critical Area Studies at SSEES, and FRINGE and SSEES academics have been closely involved in major IAS projects such as the 2018 international ‘Area Studies in Flux’ conference (Bracewell, Murawski, Zusi). Cooperation through the IAS has brought SSEES academics and research projects into closer collaboration with colleagues working in particular in Area Studies from across UCL and internationally. In this way the FRINGE Centre contributes to the broader UCL initiative to cross boundaries between

disciplines and communities, and received generous additional financial support (£51K) from the **Provost's Strategic Development Fund**.

The **UCL Centre for Comparative Studies of Emerging Economies**, also established in 2015, focuses on comparative political economy, with emphasis on the emerging economies of Central and Eastern Europe and the lessons they generate for other countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa, which have also faced difficulties in progressing from middle-income status to fully-fledged advanced economies. Middle-income economies such as the majority of Central and Eastern European economies are under-researched, since international development studies are mainly oriented towards low-income economies. Within that perspective the Centre focuses its research on five broad areas: (1) institutions, innovation, and growth; (2) financial markets, banking and financial fragility; (3) social exclusion, political participation and migration; (4) natural resources, energy, and security; and (5) statistics, in particular for the Central and East European (CEE) region.

CCSEE provides a rich and exciting research environment for UCL faculty and PhD students. Its activities include a regular [seminar series](#) and international workshops, a [Working Paper Series](#), and also financial support, on a competitive basis, for seed research for teams and individuals. CCSEE comprises 14 [co-investigators](#) and 15 affiliate members from UCL and universities in the UK and abroad (including Russia, the Czech Republic, Korea, Mexico, and others).

CCSEE has held conferences on '[Micro- and Macro-Determinants of Growth in Emerging Economies](#)', and '[Technology Upgrading in Emerging and Transition Economies](#)'. The outcome of the second conference was a special section on technology upgrading in emerging economies in the journal [Technology Forecasting and Social Change](#). CCSEE has organised workshops on [Belarus](#), on the [economic history](#) of the CEE, on [industrial and innovation policy](#) for European periphery and 'catching-up' economies, on the impact of [uncertainty shocks](#) on the global economy. CCSEE regularly organises book launches ([here](#), [here](#), [here](#)). In cooperation with the European Bank for Research and Development, CCSEE organises an annual panel event in which the EBRD Chief Economist team presents their annual Transition Reports ([here](#), [here](#), [here](#)).

CCSEE has successfully become a major focal point for research in comparative economics, as demonstrated by the fact that Centre staff currently edit three main scientific outlets. The journal of the international [Association for Comparative Economic Studies](#), *Comparative Economic Studies*, is now edited at CCSEE. The Cambridge University Press book series on *The Comparative Economics of European Integration* is also currently edited at the Centre. The Palgrave *Handbook of Comparative Economics* is edited at the Centre. This 2021 volume brings together 35 of the principal scholars in the world in this field, taking stock of existing knowledge and distilling the main elements of the future research agenda. The *Handbook* will become the main work of reference for scholarship in this area for the foreseeable future.

#### **Seminars:**

While FRINGE and CCSEE were founded through capital investment from SSEES within this current REF period, we continue to run a range of **research seminar series** that have a long-

established place in the intellectual life of the School. These seminars cut across disciplines, providing a discussion venue to colleagues from different fields in SSEES and attracting scholars and postgraduate researchers of diverse backgrounds, reinforcing the interdisciplinary environment at SSEES. They have provided the starting point for a range of larger conferences, publications, and public-impact events. The need for on-line events during the COVID-19 pandemic has brought the advantage of geographical and numerical expansion of participants and audiences.

The **Russian Studies Seminar** series has for many years hosted events and talks by high-profile and emerging scholars on all the areas of expertise in the Russian sphere of influence covered by SSEES: literature and culture, history, politics, and sociology. Seminars generally attract an audience of 30-50, including students, academic staff and members of the public from across the London region. Prominent recent speakers have included Katerina Clark (Yale), Steve Smith (Oxford) and Alexandra Harrington (Durham). The seminar series includes several themed tracks: (1) 'The Culture and Society of Contemporary Russia' has hosted contemporary Russian writers (Aleksandr Snegirev, Elena Chizhova and Igor Shaitanov, and a rare interview recording with Venedikt Erofeev); (2) 'Modern Russian History' has attracted prominent speakers such as Sheila Fitzpatrick (Sydney and Chicago), Peter Waldron (UEA), Sarah Badcock (Nottingham), Yanni Kotsonis (NYU) and Daniel Beer (Royal Holloway). Special events have included the 'Borders of Biopolitics' conference (Hetherington and Kotsonis [NYU]), and a Centenary panel on Andrei Belyi's novel *Petersburg*. Other events have been co-sponsored with the Post-Soviet Press Group, such as talks by Bridget Kendall and Edward Lucas, and with the Russian Cinema Research Group, including a paper by Catriona Kelly (Oxford).

The **Russian Cinema Research Group** (RCRG) was established at SSEES in 2002 and is the only research group of its kind in the world. The RCRG organizes around six seminars per year, featuring work-in-progress by specialists from universities, research centres, film archives and museums across the globe, and supporting new research agendas, doctoral student development, and scholarly networking. In 2014 RCRG co-hosted a major, two-day international conference, 'New Directions in Russian and Soviet Cinema', at Trinity College, Cambridge. The group has cultivated links with the Russian Embassy; Pushkin House; the Calvert-22 Foundation; the Gallery of Russian Art and Design (GRAD); Academia Rossica; the organizers of the annual Russian Film Festival; the Kino Klassika Foundation; and the Great Britain-Russia Society. RCRG seminars are open to the public, and its activities include important public events such as round-table discussions of recent cinematic releases; public screenings of rare archival discoveries; and workshops by contemporary filmmakers. During the 2015 SSEES Centenary celebrations the RCRG organized a film festival with screenings of films from the SSEES region, each introduced by a relevant expert. In 2019, in collaboration with Queen Mary and Greenwich University, the RCRG hosted the London premiere of Dziga Vertov's 'Anniversary of the Revolution', the first compilation documentary by this world-renowned director (until recently regarded as irretrievably lost). The RCRG has also provided speakers for public events organized by other London cultural organizations, including: *Documenting Ukraine*, a two-day festival organized by Open City Docs and the London Frontline Club (2015); *Unexpected Eisenstein*, a 2016 lecture series accompanying an exhibition at the Gallery of Russian Art and Design; the 2016 *Russia and the Arts* International Conference linked to a National Portrait Gallery exhibition; and the 2019 screening of Askol'd Kurov's *The Trial*, co-hosted by the RCRG and PEN International, dedicated to the imprisoned Ukrainian filmmaker Oleg Sentsov.

The **Study of Central Europe Seminar Series** was founded in SSEES to cement the School's reputation as the premier academic forum for British and International scholars working on all aspects of the history, culture, economics and politics of the lands that lie between Germany and Russia. The Seminar hosts around four evening seminars per term, generally attracting audiences of 30 to 50, made up of academics, students, government officials and the wider community. The Seminar has an informal connection with the SSEES-based journal *Central Europe* (see under 'Publications'). During the current REF cycle the Seminar has hosted academics from as far afield as Asia and the United States, such as Ivan Krastev, one of the highest-profile public intellectuals specializing on Central and Eastern Europe. The Seminar occasionally organizes larger events, such as 'Raising the Velvet Curtain: Slovak Literature since 1989', introduced by the Slovak Ambassador, which was covered on Slovak national radio. Events are regularly attended by regional experts from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, members of numerous think tanks and NGOs connected to the region, as well as representatives of various diplomatic postings in London, including the ambassadors of both Slovakia and Hungary. The Seminar thus disseminates expertise, influences domestic and international opinion, and builds partnerships with key stakeholders shaping Great Britain's relationship with the region.

The **South-East European Studies Seminar** presents cutting-edge research both from SSEES academics (such as studies of informality and corruption by the INFORM project, a Horizon 2020 project coordinated by SSEES) as well as established academics in the fields of ethnography (Renata Jambrešić on women in Balkan revolutionary movements), political science (Natasha Wunsch on democratic 'backsliding', Andi Hoxhaj on corruption), economics (Geoffrey Pugh on ethnic diversity and income), and history (Jelena Obradović-Wochnik on refugee flows). The seminars consistently draw large audiences of university staff and students, members of the London diplomatic community, and interested members of the public. The move to online activity in 2020 allowed a larger geographic base for both presenters and audience, and swift response to unfolding current events, including a panel on the rise of left movements in the Balkans featuring an academic who had just been elected to the Croatian parliament (Danijela Dolenc), and a panel on the Covid-19 crisis in the Balkans. The Seminar draws on SSEES's outstanding resources on the region, including the Moses Gaster collection of old Romanian books; the Sir Arthur Evans collection; the Seton-Watson archive; the Naçi collection; and the wartime archive of King Zog of Albania. It works in close collaboration with the SSEES **Alexander Nash Albanian Studies Programme**, a leading centre for Albanian studies established through Alexander Nash's bequest.

The **SSEES Politics & Sociology Seminar Series**—formerly the *Centre for European Politics, Security and Integration*—showcases the most innovative research relating to the SSEES region in the fields of Politics and Sociology produced at UCL and elsewhere, bringing together a diverse group of both established and early career researchers. The seminar presents eight events annually and was relaunched in 2019 with a very timely presentation by Professor Mark Galeotti on the Russian National Guard as a complex actor, attracting an audience of approximately 65 people. Other events included papers on migration and Brexit; legality and the rights of non-citizens; populism; *Russia Today's* visual representation of China's Belt and Road Initiative; civic duty and voting under autocracy; the latest developments in the war in Ukraine and voting behaviour; Russia's policy in Africa; the future of NATO; the role of games in international relations; corruption and informal practices; national identity and xenophobia in

Russia; migration and Russia; and security reforms. In 2015-2016, the seminar partnered with the *Slavonic and East European Review* to present a series of seminars under the title 'Innovations in Corruption Studies in Europe and Beyond' (see 'Publications' below). In 2015, the seminar hosted a joint event with *The Guardian* newspaper, titled 'Guardian Gaming Night: Video Games, the Military and Morality', examining the socio-political responsibility of the game developers community.

The **Post-Soviet Press Group** was founded in 1988 by SSEES Professors Geoffrey Hosking and Robert Service, to bring together a diverse group of people—students, academics, journalists, and the occasional diplomat—to discuss the rapid developments taking place in the Soviet Union during *perestroika*. The Group continues to meet regularly to discuss developments across the now-former Soviet states, often featuring notable guest speakers, including Maria Alyokhina (founding member of Pussy Riot), Boris Akunin (writer), Owen Matthews (contributing editor and former Moscow bureau chief of *Newsweek*), Vladislav Inozemtsev (economist and political commentator), Edward Lucas (former senior editor at *The Economist*), and SSEES alumna Amie Ferris-Rotman (Moscow correspondent for *Washington Post*). Central to the Group's mission is attention to sources, with critical discussions regarding how the same event is covered by different actors, both within and outside the region. News summaries presented at the meetings are written up and circulated through a weekly email *Bulletin* read by hundreds of recipients in academia, business and government. The Group also produces a blog, the *Post-Soviet Brief*, allowing both students and academics to write longer reflections on developments in the post-Soviet region. The Group is coordinated by academics (Noble, Duncan, Ledeneva, Wilson) and aided by a team of postgraduate editorial assistants, who help edit the weekly email, as well as propose ideas for, and help run, special events. The Group also hosts book launches for high-profile publications related to the 'SSEES region' – for example, Joanna Lillis' 2018 *Dark Shadows: Inside the Secret World of Kazakhstan*, and Sam Greene and Graeme Robertson's 2019 *Putin v. the People: The Perilous Politics of a Divided Russia*.

SSEES includes a **multidisciplinary research cluster on Polish migration**. Drawing on a research allowance from the Grabowski Fund, Prof. White has built up SSEES as the hub for Polish migration studies in the UK, and the only such centre outside Poland. These activities have been further enhanced by Kubal (from 2019), Mole, and Zechenter, as well as PhD students and a postdoc (the latter funded from the first UCL European Institute Jean Monnet grant). Biannual two-day international and multidisciplinary conferences on Polish migration (2015, 2017 and 2019) have attracted some of the leading researchers from the UK, Poland and third countries, and the [Polish Migration Website](#) serves as a resource for scholars, students and the public. Monthly newsletters reach a network of about 160 scholars. As a particularly lively sub-field of migration studies, Polish migration research in many respects leads the way in research into the 'EU mobility laboratory', developing concepts such as social remittances, transnational identities, youth migration and migrant masculinities. White has also organised one-day workshops on EU migration in general, and Romanian migration in particular. The relevance of these activities to pressing contemporary social and political questions is obvious. The Cluster also organises annual multidisciplinary Polish studies conferences on a range of political, social and historical topics, which complement Polish events organized elsewhere within SSEES, such as the 2018 conference '[Poland Restored, Reborn, Regained: One Hundred Years On](#)' (Butterwick-Pawlikowski), co-funded by the Polish Embassy.

Our '**SSEESing**' panel discussions, occurring once each teaching term, present complex, topical issues to a large audience, reinforcing the School's engagement with the wider public. Events have included: '*McMafia: The Reality*', analyzing the BBC television series, *McMafia*; 'SSEESing Putin', discussing the 2018 Russian presidential election; 'SSEESing Salisbury', examining context and fallout from the poisoning of the Skripals; and 'SSEESing Brexit', assessing the impact of Brexit on the SSEES region. Ad hoc '**SSEESing NOW**' panels respond to breaking issues in the SSEES region such as 'Will Ukraine bring down Trump?'; 'Poland at a crossroads? Analysing the 2019 parliamentary elections'; and a Zoom webinar on the 2020 Polish abortion ruling. These events (coordinated by Noble) are included on media advisories circulated by UCL Media Relations before the events, and post-event press briefings are circulated to journalists, summarising key points in easily digestible format.

## 2. People

### Staffing Strategy

Since REF 2014, SSEES has **expanded and further diversified its faculty** in support of our strategy and mission. We are reporting **47.35 FTE** for REF2021 (up from 39.36 FTE in REF2014). Our recent appointments have been made with an eye not only to excellence within the given discipline but also to demonstrated **commitment to innovative and interdisciplinary perspectives**. All of the following posts address the need for specialisations crossing the usual geographical and disciplinary boundaries through which the region is often analysed, strengthening lines of communication among the fields represented at SSEES and adding to our traditional strengths an emphasis on broader, interdisciplinary research agendas. Several appointments reflect increased awareness of the deep interconnections among eastern Europe, Russia, Eurasia and China. Appointments also reflect our strong commitment to equity in leadership and scholarship in regard to gender, sexual orientation, and race. Our staff profile is distinctly international, with 20 out of 48 research-active staff native to the SSEES region, and a further 11 coming from outside the UK.

#### Directors:

Prof. Diane P. Koenker joined the School from the University of Illinois in January 2018 as **Director and Professor of Russian and Soviet History**. Prof. Koenker is a distinguished social and cultural historian of the USSR and received the ASEES award for Distinguished Contributions to Slavic Studies in 2018. Prof. Koenker's predecessor, Prof. Jan Kubik, was appointed **Director and Professor of Slavonic and East European Studies** in 2014, from Rutgers University, and is a leading scholar of the politics and sociology of populism, with particular focus on cultural dimensions thereof and on Eastern Europe. Prof. Kubik currently holds a joint appointment at Rutgers and SSEES. Both Directors are past presidents of [ASEES](#), the most prominent international scholarly body for Slavic, East European and Eurasian studies.

#### Chairs:

Recent senior appointments reflect our commitment to anchoring the SSEES region within the broader contemporary European context. Prof. Anne White joined the School as **Professor of Polish Studies** in 2014, a post partially funded by the MB Grabowski Fund. White has made migration studies a major research hub at SSEES (see 'research seminars' above) and also provides consulting to journalists, government officials and other academics in the UK and abroad. We appointed Prof. Nauro Ferreira Campos from Brunel University as **Professor in Economics** in 2019; he has particular specialization in macroeconomics, political economy and

European integration (monetary and fiscal) and has been a major contributor to public debate about the economic effects of Brexit.

#### Transnational and Interdisciplinary Posts:

We created several positions in 2015 to address the transnational implications of the SSEES region: Dr Diana Georgescu as **Lecturer in Transnational & Comparative Southeast European Studies**, Dr Philippa Hetherington as **Lecturer in Modern Eurasian History**, and Dr Yuemei Ji as **Lecturer in Economics**. Georgescu works on transnational histories of childhood and youth, memory studies and oral history, travel and consumption, gender history and comparative nationalisms. Hetherington works on cultural, social and legal history of imperial Russia and the early Soviet Union in a global and transnational context, comparative legal history, and feminist and queer theory. Ji works on international macroeconomics, with emphasis on European monetary union during the post-crisis period; behavioural macroeconomics; and the Chinese economy, with focus on financial development and governmental and debt problems. In 2018 we hired Dr Michał Murawski as our first **interdisciplinary Lecturer in Critical Area Studies**. Dr Murawski works across anthropology, cultural studies, and architecture/visual culture in a manner uniquely suited to strengthening our agenda of Critical Area Studies. Dr Aglaya Snetkov was appointed (2017) as **Lecturer in International Politics of Russia**, bringing significant expertise in the international relations of Russia and the Eurasian states, in particular researching the growth of China as a regional actor. Dr Ben Noble joined the School as **Lecturer in Russian Politics** (2017); recipient of a British Academy Rising Star Engagement Award, Noble is an expert on legislative procedures in authoritarian regimes. He joined us from Oxford, where he held a British Academy fellowship. Dr Agnieszka Kubal joined as **Lecturer in Sociology** (2019), bringing a multidisciplinary approach to the study of law and migration, analysing migration streams and experiences from the Middle East through Russia and into Western Europe and strengthening the School's 'migration' expertise. In 2019 we appointed Dr Jakob Beneš as **Lecturer in Central European History**; Beneš's specialisation in the late Habsburg period and the early successor states (the historical conjuncture from which SSEES emerged) focuses on one of the most complex multicultural periods in our region of study.

#### Staff Development & Progression

Over the current REF period, the School has significantly enhanced its support for its academic community. New academic colleagues benefit from a comprehensive **induction programme**, including information on key policies and procedures, applying for research grants, arrangements and expectations for promotion, and School strategy and support available for their development, including UCL's extensive programme of in-house training and development courses. This dovetails with UCL's institutional induction arrangements and enables new colleagues to interact with peers in other departments across UCL.

New colleagues are allocated a **mentor** from within the School, who provides one-to-one support and advice during their probationary period and acts as sounding board and advocate for them.

In line with UCL policy, all academic staff are **appraised annually**, setting clear objectives for the year ahead to enable colleagues to develop their research agenda and academic profiles, and also identifying specific development needs and objectives. Following appraisal, these

needs are reviewed and inform both the use of the School's dedicated Staff Development Fund and UCL's wider training provision. Appraisals help identify and support prospective applications for promotion.

Also in line with UCL policy, the School provides academic staff with **paid sabbatical leave**. Colleagues are entitled to one term's leave every three years, or one year for every seven years of service. Sabbatical leave provides time and space to focus on personal research objectives and has been facilitated via generous resources for teaching cover. Upon completion of their sabbatical, colleagues participate in a **Sabbatical Leave Research Seminar**, where they present to colleagues and doctoral students the work they completed over their sabbatical. Colleagues are also supported to take leave for external fellowships and similar engagements that enhance their research and development.

We also encourage peer support among colleagues through monthly **Interdisciplinary Research Workshops**, where colleagues circulate in advance a work-in-progress for discussion by colleagues from across the SSEES disciplines.

### **Early Career Training & Development**

Through our **Early Career Researcher** development, SSEES plays a major role in training the next generation of leaders in our fields. The School consistently attracts postdoctoral researchers of the highest calibre, principally funded by the Mellon Foundation, British Academy, Leverhulme and Marie Curie foundations, and by the Alexander Nash Fellowship in Albanian Studies. Doctoral students are integrated fully into the School's research environment, whilst also benefiting from the School's PhD seminar series, specialist training opportunities (e.g. media engagement), organising and presenting at the SSEES Biennial International Postgraduate Conference, publishing *Slovo* (the School's PhD journal) etc. Career trajectories of our early career alumni demonstrate their success:

#### **Mellon Fellows**

- Joanna Szostek (2013- 2015): subsequently Leverhulme Fellow at Royal Holloway, London; currently Lecturer in Political Communication at the University of Glasgow.
- Michał Murawski (2014- 2016): subsequently Leverhulme Fellow at Queen Mary, London; currently Lecturer in Critical Area Studies at SSEES.
- Ivan Rajkovic (2015- 2017): currently Research Fellow, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle.
- Rory Archer (2016-2018): currently Post-Doctoral Researcher, Chair of History of Eastern Europe, University of Konstanz.
- Matthias Battis (2017-2018): currently Research Fellow, Institute for Modern and Contemporary Historical Research, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna.

#### **Alexander Nash Fellows in Albanian Studies**

- Gëzim Krasniqi (2014- 2016): currently Lecturer in Nationalism and Political Sociology at the University of Edinburgh.
- Nevila Pahumi (2016-2018): Independent scholar.
- Luca Jacopa Uberti (2018-20): currently Post-Doctoral Researcher, University of Luxembourg.

#### **Leverhulme Fellows**

- Andy Willimott (2012-2015): currently Senior Lecturer in Modern Russian History, Queen Mary University.
- Elisabeth Schimpfössl (2015-2017): currently Lecturer in Sociology and Policy at Aston University, Birmingham.
- Marko Ilić (2017-2020): currently Associate Lecturer at the Courtauld Institute of Art.
- Benjamin Abrams: current Leverhulme Fellow.

### **PGR Training & Development**

SSEES provides a tailored training programme for doctoral students to equip them with the skills and knowledge to become world-leading interdisciplinary researchers. Support is supplemented by the **CEELBAS AHRC BGP 2 Centre for Doctoral Training**—a SSEES-led partnership with the universities of Cambridge, Manchester and Oxford—and by the **UCL Doctoral School**. SSEES also draws upon resources from the **London ESRC** and the **London Arts & Humanities Partnership AHRC DTP**. In the current REF period SSEES has **awarded 74 PhDs**. Students annually present work and receive feedback from peers on their research; attend training events and courses, often including external specialists; and receive support for the student-led in-house journal, *S/ovo*. Our training programme strongly emphasizes skills such as media engagement.

All PGR students are assigned **two supervisors**, chosen to ensure students receive both disciplinary and region-based expertise. Supervisors are responsible for training, guidance and monitoring of research progress and setting targets for completion, and for ensuring that projects receive ethics approval. PGR students complete a **Training Needs Analysis** with their supervisors to identify the specific theoretical and empirical knowledge, research design, linguistic and methodological skills required to complete the research project and disseminate its results.

While PGR students receive in-depth training in their chosen research methodologies, they are encouraged to **develop wider expertise** in humanities and social science methodologies, to prepare for research projects beyond the PhD. All PGR students attend training workshops on research design, literature review, carrying out fieldwork, academic writing, etc.

PGR students have their own **Postgraduate Research Seminar**. All students present their work at some point during their dissertation research, and attend workshops conducted by their peers across SSEES's disciplines, inculcating an interdisciplinary research ethos at postgraduate level; academic staff regularly attend as well. SSEES provides funding (£5K PA) to support this PGR seminar series, an **international biennial conference**, the journal *S/ovo* and other events and training programmes.

### **Equality & Diversity**

SSEES is committed to supporting diversity and inclusion in all forms, and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives are central to School policies, procedures and practices. Our EDI Lead is now recognized as a senior role, attending Management Committee and Staff-Student Consultative Committee.

In 2018 we established an **EDI Committee**, chaired by the Director and EDI Lead and including members from all grades and job families, including ECRs, to provide a forum to discuss EDI

issues across our activities from staffing, intellectual exchange and research, to teaching and everyday workplace cultures. The Committee comprehensively reviewed the character and dynamics of the School's academic staffing profile in relation to EDI indicators, prioritising improving gender parity at certain levels, such as Professor, but also progression and demographic challenges between levels, and investigating EDI issues related to dignity-at-work and workplace culture. The School is now preparing its **Athena Swan bronze application**, based on comprehensive self-assessment of SSEES's profile.

Recognizing the well-documented negative impact caring responsibilities have on career progression, particularly for women, the School proactively **supports academic staff taking maternity, paternity and caring leave**, with additional one-term paid sabbatical leave provided to such colleagues to support their return and progression of their research agendas. The School also supports flexible workloads, and endeavours to schedule meetings and other key academic events during regular working hours, to support a healthy work-life balance and combat the tacit exclusion of staff with caring responsibilities.

We have engaged closely with **UCL's EDI Unit** to draw upon the training and support they offer to further embed EDI considerations across the School. This includes training to prevent bullying and harassment. We have encouraged SSEES academic staff to participate on UCL's training programmes for emerging female and BAME leaders, and comparable development opportunities.

An important milestone came in 2018, when **SSEES appointed its first female Director**, Prof. Koenker. Overall within SSEES, the **share of female professors** is 37.5% (6/10), a figure mirroring the overall gender balance among staff. Moreover, the visibility of women increased significantly in several SSEES disciplines where women are commonly under-represented. In 2013, Politics & Sociology had one permanent female academic, but since then has appointed three women—a fourfold increase. Equally striking, women constituted half the staff in Economics in 2013 and a majority (5F:4M) in 2020. With our appointment of a Chinese female lecturer, SSEES has increased the number of BAME research-active staff in SSEES to three (1F:2M).

In recent years SSEES researchers have focussed increasingly on social-historical and sociological research, contributing to the EDI environment at SSEES. New colleagues work, for example, on migrants, Jews, children, sexual minorities, industrial workers and sex workers. Correspondingly, we attract more PhD students interested in topics related to (in)equality and diversity, fortifying SSEES's reputation as a centre for studying these aspects of CEE.

Our research culture is shaped by the **diverse, international profile** of our staff, reflecting our global recruitment strategy (see 'staff strategy'). Selection panels for all appointments are representative in terms of seniority, gender and ethnicity.

During output selection for REF2021, the School has implemented UCL's Code of Practice. All research-active staff are being submitted. The School communicated clearly the process for seeking mitigation, resulting in output reductions for some staff. The **Review and Selection Group** comprised six staff members, diverse in gender, nationality, discipline, and LGBTQ+. All received EDI and bias training in order to select outputs fairly, reflecting quality and distribution across the School's multiple disciplines. UCL's equality impact assessments confirms that our selection is inclusive. Women are strongly represented: of individuals submitting five outputs, 2

are women, and 3 are men. Of individuals for whom only one output was selected, 7 are women and 14 are men. Staff have been informed by the Director and Head of Research that these selection procedures are completely distinct from performance management.

### 3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

#### Income Profile

In an increasingly competitive environment, SSEES **increased its research income success** during this assessment period, securing **over £4.67 million** from major funding bodies (£1.3 million more than in REF2014). In particular, new and junior academic colleagues have experienced increased success in securing grant income, enhancing their career development.

We achieved exceptional success with **European Union funding**, via Framework Project 7/Horizon 2020, which accounts for 51% of total research awards (£2,406,544). Our successful Marie Curie bid demonstrates the strength of our partnerships with leading research universities across the SSEES region and the relevance of our research to current dynamics shaping European economic, social and political development.

- **FATIGUE: (Marie Skłodowska-Curie Innovative Training Network, £821,779, PI: Mole)** 'Delayed Transformational Fatigue in Central and Eastern Europe: Responding to the Rise of Populism' (2018-21). SSEES-led ITN awarded €3,500,000 to train the next generation of populism scholars. Fifteen Early Stage Researchers are based at SSEES and five partner universities: Belgrade University, Charles University, Corvinus University of Budapest, Jagiellonian University in Cracow and the University of Tartu.
- **POPREBEL: (H2020, £548,363, PI: Kubik)** 'Populist rebellion against modernity in 21C Eastern Europe: Neo-traditionalism and neo-feudalism' (2019-21). SSEES-led consortium awarded €3,000,000 to fund 35 projects conducted by SSEES and six European partners on the rise of populism in Central and Eastern Europe.
- **INFORM: (H2020, £476,681, PI: Gordy)** Research project (2016-19) with teams from nine European countries (Albania, Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo, Latvia, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia and the UK) to conduct multidisciplinary social science research on formal and informal institutions in the Balkans.
- **Politics of Difference: (FP7, £231,000, PI: Ledeneva)** Grant awarded for study of child marriage and prestige consumption among Romanian Gabor Roma, with special focus on post-socialist transformation.
- **GROWINPRO: (H2020, £192,000, PI: Radosevic)** Large-scale project (2019-2022) analysing the causes of anaemic growth performance observed in Europe during recent decades (in particular after the Great Recession). SSEES team works in close cooperation with the UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose as one of the partners of a large European consortium.
- **SmartEIZ: (H2020, £135,795, PI: Radosevic)** A capacity-building twinning project (2016-2018) designed to strengthen scientific and research capacity, narrow networking gaps and deficiencies at the Institute of Economics, Zagreb (EIZ) in Croatia.

We continue to secure grants from **UK funding sources**, in particular from **ESRC (£239,713)** and **AHRC (£577,566)**, which includes both further funding towards the **SSEES-led CEELBAS Centre for Doctoral Training consortium** (£289,560 in the current REF period) and grants for more junior colleagues often partnering with other leading institutions; as well as from the **Leverhulme Trust (£314,578)** and the **British Academy (£395,720)**, highlighting the attractiveness of the SSEES research environment and support, particularly for Early Career Researchers. Two colleagues secured grants in this REF period with 2020/21 start periods: Morley (Leverhulme, £54,984); and Beneš (AHRC, £208,265).

Additionally, we have secured funding from prestigious **international sources** not generally targeted towards UK institutions, e.g., Bracewell's award from the Andrew Mellon Foundation for

a 2012-17 Post-Doctoral Fellowship Programme (£461,678), and Georgescu's 2019 Fulbright Scholar Fellowship (£15,214).

SSEES staff have also received internal **UCL support** from the **Global Engagement Office** (total £16,533) and **Grand Challenges programme** (£2,920).

### **Grant Capture Support**

To support our research grant portfolio and achieve income per academic colleague within the upper quartile of the Russell Group, we have enhanced our research support provision over the current REF period. Our dedicated **Research Support Coordinator** works with the Head of Research to provide end-to-end support and advice to staff on grant applications. The Coordinator is the principal bridge with **UCL's extensive institutional support** for research grant capture, including the team of Research Development Facilitators based within the Office of the Vice-Provost for Research.

Regular **horizon-scanning** of funding opportunities is conducted and fed into an annual schedule of schemes and opportunities, which is disseminated to academic colleagues. Research support briefings and workshops are held to share the latest developments and opportunities, and to discuss strategy. The Coordinator provides **research grant writing support** to prospective PIs, sharing good examples and similar resources. **Peer review procedures** have been introduced for grants over a certain size and/or where this is identified as beneficial, particularly for new junior academic colleagues, and this is now the norm. Applications are assessed in a supportive and constructive manner and, where available, incorporate feedback from funders for future learning.

The School leverages its own resources (financial and otherwise) to **support research grant capture**. Workload planning supports successful PIs with released time from teaching.

### **Individual Research Support**

In addition to resources available through the Research Centres and Seminars (see above) academic colleagues have an annual **Personal Research Allowance** to support research and engagement activities, including attendance at conferences and workshops. Over the current REF period the allowance increased by 25%, to £1,250 PA, to ensure colleagues have appropriate resources to meet their research objectives. This rate has been maintained during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Library**

SSEES has one of the most extensive dedicated research libraries for Russian and East European studies in the UK. It is located in the heart of our building, providing easy access for researchers and students. Together with the British Library just a few streets away, as well as further rich library resources at UCL and the University of London's Senate House, SSEES researchers have extraordinary resources of information on the region.

The UCL SSEES Library provides print and electronic books, journals, archive collections and other resources to support the study of the whole of Central and Eastern Europe and Russia. Holdings include **400,000 print volumes**, plus **220 archive collections** and a unique audio-visual resource, the **Bain Graffy Collection**—one of the best collections of film and cinema from Russia and Eastern Europe in Europe—which comprises well in excess of 10,000 feature films and documentaries relating to Russia and the countries of Eastern Europe. Library users have access to major business databases such as *Datastream* and *Amadeus*, and also to *Eastview*, *CEEOL* and *BBC Monitoring*, numerous collections of historical material digitized by Brill, and a comprehensive set of digital resources on Russian cinema, which complement the Bain Graffy film collection. The majority of the Library's collections are housed in the SSEES

building, purpose-built in 2004 to hold c.250,000 volumes on open access, a rare books and archive store, and 175 study spaces. Twelve study carrels are reserved for SSEES PhD students.

The strong collections of the Library attract large numbers of PhD students and academic staff from beyond UCL, including research staff and students from abroad. We regularly welcome archive researchers from across the SSEES region, as well as from the USA, Canada, and Western Europe. The **RW Seton-Watson collection** is the most heavily used archive; recent donations of similar stature came from the estates of Lord Bethell and Sir Isaiah Berlin.

The Library has a dedicated team of specialist subject staff (Area Liaison Librarians) to support the staff and students of the School. This specialist staff has produced a number of **online research guides**. The most recent ones were developed in collaboration with SSEES PhD students and were part of the UCL European Institute's Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence Programme 2016-19.

Large parts of the Library's rare book, historic map and image collections have been **digitised** and are available through the UCL Digital Collections and Europeana Travel websites. Recently digitised materials include the Sir James Wolfe Murray album, the Sir John Hanbury-Williams collection and the Countess Brasova photograph albums. Library users also benefit from the Open Science platform, developed and promoted by UCL Library Services (Open Access, UCL Press, Research Data Management) and UCL SSEES Library has been an active contributor to this initiative.

The Library maintains close links with research institutions such as the British Library, and is an active member of COSEELIS (the Council for Slavonic and East European Library and Information Services), with two members of library staff serving on the committee. This places SSEES Library in a strong position to influence the development of Slavonic and East European library collections in the UK.

### **Publications**

SSEES hosts several prestigious, international, peer-reviewed publication venues, both journals and book series. Since many of the fields we work in are quite specialized, we have supported the maintenance of rigorous publishing venues for our fields, which also encourage interdisciplinary and Critical Area Studies research.

#### **Journals:**

Founded in 1922, the ***Slavonic and East European Review*** (*SEER*) is the oldest and one of the most prestigious English-language journals for research on the region. A quarterly published by the Modern Humanities Research Association, *SEER* contains scholarly articles on all subjects related to Russia, Central and Eastern Europe—languages and linguistics, literature, art, cinema, theatre, music, history, politics, social sciences, economics, anthropology—as well as reviews of new books in the field. *SEER* publishes regular special issues, including:

- ***1917 and Beyond: Continuity, Rupture and Memory in Russian Music***, eds Philip Ross Bullock and Pauline Fairclough, 97.1 (2019), also published as a book (ISBN 978-1781889534)
- ***Writing Russian Lives: The Poetics and Politics of Biography in Modern Russian Culture***, ed. Polly Jones, 96.1 (2018), also published as a book (ISBN 978-1781889107)
- ***Innovations in Corruption Studies***, eds Alena Ledeneva, Roxana Bratu and Philipp Köker, 95.1 (2017), also published as a book (ISBN 978-1781886311)
- ***New Perspectives on Censorship under Communism***, ed. Samantha Sherry, 96.4 (2018) (130-page special section)

SSEES academics founded the journal **Central Europe** in 2003 to publish original research on the history, literature, visual arts, and music of the region, from the Middle Ages to the present. The journal is unique in covering the broad range of languages and cultures studied at SSEES, from German to south and west Slavonic to Romanian, Hungarian and Ukrainian. *Central Europe* has published major reflections on the conception of 'central Europe' and contributions that cross over linguistic, ethnic, and cultural boundaries within the region, with emphasis on interdisciplinary approaches. Recent special issues have included 'Cultures of Bohemia in the Twentieth Century' (13.1-2 [2015], ed. Zusi); and 'The Central European Archaeology of Knowledge: Exploring Polish and Ukrainian Literature (1989-2014)' (15.1-2 [2017], external guest editors).

**Slovo** is a bi-annual, interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed research journal, founded in 1988, that is edited and managed by SSEES postgraduate students, with an emphasis on publication of exceptional work by postgraduate students.

Several SSEES staff **edit external journals** and **book series**:

- *East European Politics and Societies* (Bracewell, journal co-editor)
- *Comparative Economic Studies* (Campos, journal editor-in-chief)
- *Cambridge Elements on the Economics of European Integration* (Campos, Book Series Editor)

#### **Book Series:**

The **FRINGE Book Series**, founded in 2017 and edited by Ledeneva and Zusi, is published by UCL Press. All volumes are **Open Access**, thus **supporting UCL's Open Research commitment**, and are available either for free download in .PDF format or as well designed, high-quality print-volumes. The Series publishes work that has grown out of activities hosted by the FRINGE Centre or that have been submitted externally but fit the FRINGE agenda. Volumes published by the **FRINGE Series** include the 1000-page, [two-volume \*Global Encyclopedia of Informality\*](#) (Ledeneva), with a third volume currently in preparation; [Socialism, Capitalism and Alternatives: Area Studies and Global Theories](#) (eds Duncan and Schimpfössl); [Re-Centring the City: Global Mutations of Socialist Modernity](#) (eds Murawski and Bach); Francisco Martinez, [Remains of the Soviet Past in Estonia: An Anthropology of Forgetting, Repair and Urban Traces; Medical Humanities and Inhumanity in the German-Speaking World](#) (eds Davies and Shamdasani); [Comparative Approaches to Informal Housing Around the Globe](#) (ed. Grashoff); [Queer Migration and Asylum in Europe](#) (ed. Mole); and [Reframing Russian Literary Diaspora 1920-2020](#) (ed. Rubins). Volumes in preparation include *An Anti-Atlas of Critical Area Studies* (eds Beasley-Murray, Bracewell, and Murawski), *Writing Resistance: Revolutionary Memoirs of Schlissel'burg Prison, 1884-1905* (ed. Young), and *Formal and Informal Institutions in the Balkans* (ed. Gordy). Volumes published in the Series have achieved broad impact: the first two volumes of *The Global Encyclopedia* have achieved over 85,000 hits, and Martinez's *Remains of the Soviet Past*, awarded the EASA early career award for 2018, has achieved nearly 13,000 hits. The Series is currently the most active in the entire UCL Press.

#### **Other:**

SSEES maintains an active **Research Blog** to which many of our colleagues contribute from across the range of our disciplines. Our social media profile is vibrant, with active accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, as well as a public [Newsletter](#) that not only provides general information but allows people to sign up for alerts relating to the activities of specific research seminars (see above).

#### **Academic Visitors Scheme**

In 2019, SSEES established a scheme to encourage and support academic visitors to the School. The two-tier scheme offers funded opportunities for **short and longer-term visitors** to the School, capitalizing on our position as an academic focal point among the unparalleled

resources that attract international scholars to London. **Visiting Scholars**, of whom we host 3-6 per year, receive an allowance of £250 per week for stays of two to four weeks, while **Visiting Fellows**, receive £1,000 per month for stays of up to three months. Visiting scholars and fellows take part in the intellectual life at the School, delivering a seminar or lecture related to their research and attending and participating in one or more of our research seminar series. The scheme serves both to enrich our research culture and to develop and promote links with scholars and universities internationally. The programme has proven extremely attractive and highly competitive, with an acceptance rate for applications in the area of 15%.

### UCL European Institute

Intellectual and physical proximity has resulted in particularly close collaboration between SSEES and the UCL European Institute (EI), hosted at SSEES for nearly a decade. The EI works to entrench and advance the position of UCL as one of the world's leading centres for the study of Europe broadly defined, and forms part of the university's investment in and institutional strategy on European expertise and UK-EU relations. Further, the EI has played a key role in formulating UCL's Brexit Mitigation Strategy and in developing a national response. In the current REF period SSEES-EI collaboration has created a dynamic, interconnected environment for research on Central and Eastern Europe. A European Commission-designated **Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence** since 2016, the EI facilitated and funded a research project on *LGBTQ Migration and Asylum in the EU* (Mole). It also enabled research (White) to update anthropologist Keith Sword's 1980s *Polish Migration Project*, archived in the SSEES Library, and create new resource guides for the SSEES library. Both projects have led to publications. The EI works to facilitate SSEES interaction with other faculties and the UCL Global Engagement Strategy in informal and formal venues. It also seeks to enhance the relevance and impact of SSEES research, drawing on its contacts to co-curate the SSEES flagship Centenary event (Thomas Piketty and Naomi Klein, 2015). It instigated and co-curated events led by SSEES academics responding to current affairs and anniversaries, for example *Russia and the West* (Hosking), hosted by UK law firm Clifford Chance (2015). The EI also regularly includes SSEES experts in policy and diplomatic engagement activities, such as a meeting with the Rector of the Central European University (2018) or the FCO.

## 4. Collaboration and contribution to the research base, economy and society

### Research Collaborations

International engagement and collaboration is a top strategic priority. SSEES has developed extensive research networks and long-term partnerships with other institutions internationally, which have resulted in a range of joint research initiatives. Several of these networks are linked to **major external funding**, especially from EU sources (see 'Income Profile' above), though SSEES has developed further significant collaborations with **UK and international partners**:

- **British Association of Slavonic & East European Studies:** SSEES is an institutional member of BASEES. Many SSEES staff organize and attend panels and other events at the annual BASEES conference, the primary venue in the UK for study of the history, culture, and politics of the region. Sikk and White served on the BASEES Committee during the current REF period; White co-founded the BASEES Polish Studies Group in 2018; Noble is Politics Stream Organizer for BASEES; and Zusi co-founded in 2017 the BASEES study group 'Forum for Czech and Slovak Studies in the UK'.
- **Munich-Regensburg Graduate School for East and South East European Studies:** Over the past five years, we have had an extensive collaboration with one of the largest comparable research institutions in Continental Europe, the GS-OSSES. One SSEES academic (Zusi) is a member of their Advisory Board, and in 2017 we were co-organizers of their fourth annual conference held in Regensburg titled 'The End of the Liberal Order? Central, East, and South-East European Populism in Comparative Perspective'; then-director of SSEES Jan Kubik gave a keynote address and a cohort of SSEES colleagues (Gordy, Sikk, Zusi) also gave presentations at the conference. Our current director Diane

Koenker gave the keynote address at their fifth annual conference 'Studying East and Southeast Europe as Area Studies: Paradigms – Themes – Methods for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century', held in Munich in 2018.

- **Slavic-Eurasian Research Centre, University of Hokkaido:** SSEES has recently signed a 5-year Memorandum of Understanding with the largest research centre for Slavic studies in Asia. This collaboration foresees, *inter alia*, joint organization of conferences and seminars, staff and PGR student exchanges, and joint preparation of books and other publications.
- **University of Graz:** In early 2020 SSEES joined an externally-funded, interdisciplinary doctoral programme on 'Europeanization Processes in Southeastern Europe' in coordination with the Centre for Southeastern European Studies in Graz.

### **Public Conferences & Symposia**

A major research institution like SSEES naturally supports an ongoing stream of conferences, seminars and workshops (most organized through our 'Research Centres and Seminars', above), but in the current REF period SSEES has also organized a number of major public conferences, often in connection with significant historical anniversaries or strategic alliances with diplomatic partners based in London:

- **Capitalism, Socialism, and the Alternatives:** A major interdisciplinary conference serving as the capstone event for our centenary year in 2015, this conference, which was open to the general public, brought in high-profile keynote speakers such as Thomas Piketty, Naomi Klein, Paul Mason and Chantal Mouffe. It generated significant press coverage (BBC Newsnight; BBC World News; BBC Radio 4: *Sunday Times News Review*; *Huffington Post*; and more). The conference led to publication of an edited volume in the FRINGE Series (see 'Publications', above).
- **Russia's Revolutionary Century 1917-2017:** International, cross-disciplinary conference examining continuing legacies of the Russian Revolution and its centennial commemorations.
- **Baltic Symposia and Central Europe Symposia:** Biannual events, held in alternate years, organized in conjunction with London embassies from the regions themselves. With the establishment of these symposia we have capitalized on our position within the 'global university' of UCL and within London as a major capital city, close to centres of both 'hard' and 'soft' political and diplomatic power. The day-long symposia provide opportunities for exchange among academics, diplomats, and other public figures, and attract audiences that are not otherwise typical for any of these institutions on their own.
- **International Council for Central and East European Studies:** SSEES, together with BASEES, won the bid to host the 2025 World Congress of the ICCEES at UCL. This will be the first time this World Congress has ever been held in London.
- **Biannual International Polish Migration conferences and EU migration workshops:** These two-day, multidisciplinary Polish Migration conferences, held in 2015, 2017 and 2019, have brought together scholars at all career stages from Poland, the UK and other countries such as Sweden and Norway.

### **Individual Public Engagement**

Many SSEES staff routinely apply their expertise towards wider public and policy engagement, so two examples must stand for many. **Dr Ben Noble**, Lecturer in Russian Politics, has been collaborating throughout 2020 with the Russia and Eurasia Programme at Chatham House (Royal Institute of International Affairs), providing expert analysis of Russia's constitutional reform programme; this has led to his recent appointment as an Associate Fellow of Chatham House. **Dr Alexandra Bulat**, who completed her PhD at SSEES in 2020 and is now Research Associate at the University of Strathclyde, has emerged as an influential spokesperson for EU migrants' rights in the UK, co-chairing [@the3million](#), giving numerous television and radio interviews, and becoming a prominent [voice](#) on social media. She won the 2020 UCL Provost Public Engagement Award for the category 'Find Your Voice'.

**Conclusion | Area Studies Without Borders**

While a premier institution in the study of a particular part of the world, SSEES strives to see beyond its own borders. One way we do this is by researching and rethinking not just 'our' region, but Area Studies as a whole. Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Area Studies entered a turbulent period, as geopolitical changes challenged long-standing institutional structures and funding sources. Currently, however, we are witnessing an extraordinary regeneration of Area Studies across the globe—and SSEES, with its central commitment to Critical Area Studies, is at the forefront of that regeneration. The structures described above show how CAS informs not simply the research agendas of particular scholars but our research environment as a whole, from staff development to postgraduate community to international collaborations. But we challenge borders in another way by crossing the boundaries of the academy to create impact in the real world. This takes place through policy guidance and governmental and institutional advising, but also through public engagement and dissemination of knowledge about the cultures, history and societies of some of Britain's closest neighbours. Developments in, as well as myths and misconceptions about, Central and Eastern Europe have played a baleful role in recent years, lending fresh urgency to what we do. We have endeavoured to create a research environment that allows us to have the most positive impact possible on the environment that surrounds us.