



**„Ukrainian Studies Across the Borders”
CONFERENCE U-CORE / UNDIPUS
University of Luxembourg
Center for Contemporary and Digital History**



Time	Section	Presenter
9:00 - 9:15	Welcome and Opening Remarks	
9:15 - 10:45	Psychology	Moderator <i>Dr. Vitalii KLYMCHUK</i>
	➤ Trauma, Heroism, and War	<i>JP Dr. Roman DUBASEVYCH</i> Greifswald
	➤ Mental Health for Ukraine	<i>Prof. Dr. Viktoria GORBUNOVA</i> Luxembourg
11:00 - 12:30	Identities and Freedom	Moderator <i>Prof. Dr. Alexey ALEKSANDROV</i>
	➤ Delineating a Digital-Scape: A Critical Practice of Freedom during the Russian War in Ukraine	<i>Kseniia FEDOROVA</i> Luxembourg
	➤ Sexual Citizenship and Borders-Crossing	<i>Dr. Olga PLAKHOTNIK</i> Greifswald
14:00 - 15:30	Ukraine Studies Digital	Moderator <i>Dr. Kateryna ZAKHARCHUK</i>
	➤ Architecture of the Project “Ukraine. Collecting. Recording” (U-CORE)	<i>Prof. Dr. Machteld VENKEN</i> Luxembourg
	➤ VYSH-project: AI Generated Embroideries for Ukrainian Dancing Costumes	<i>Dr. Inna GANSCHOW</i> Luxembourg
15:30 - 17:00	Excursion around Belval	





Time	Section	Presenter
9:00 - 10:30	Postindustrialism	Moderator <i>Dr. Oleksiy KIRYUKHIN</i>
	➤ Exploring Anthropocene Perspectives on the Donbas(s) and Upper Silesia	<i>Dr. Oleksandr ZABIRKO and Dr. Alina STRZEMPA</i> Regensburg
	➤ Ukrainian Writers at War as Gender Models Abroad: Andrukhovych, Zabuzhko and Nadiia Savchenko in Poland	<i>Dr. Alexander CHERTENKO</i> Giessen
10:45 - 12:15	Language and History	Moderator <i>Dr. Olga KRYVETS</i> Luxembourg
	➤ Minority Languages and Education in Bessarabia	<i>PD Dr. Martin HENZELMANN</i> Greifswald
	➤ Ukrainian-Luxembourg Historical research: invariance of subjects and difference in approaches. Case study	<i>Dr. Iryna POGREBINSKA</i> Luxembourg
	➤ Andriy Melnyk: Additional Features to the Historical Portrait	<i>Dr. Zhanna SERDIUK</i>
13:30 - 15:00	Film “Luxembourg, Luxembourg”	
15:00 - 16:00	Film Discussion and Plenary Session	
16:00 - 18:00	City tour of Luxembourg	



JP Dr. Roman DUBASEVYCH

From Zero to Hero: Masculinity and War in Ukraine

Abstract

Russia's attack on Ukraine is generally explained in geopolitical or civilizational categories. While the former rationalizes its aggression as an act of necessity, survival and "self-defence", the latter tends to frame it as an inevitable Huntingtonian "clash civilizations" between a backward, oriental, and despotic Eurasia vs. free, democratic, Ukraine, "the gate of Europe" (Serhii Plokhy). However, amidst the competition between the two antagonistic metanarratives much less attention is paid to symbolic tensions preceding and fueling the conflict – the various memory, language, and, finally, religious "wars". Highlighting the multifarious dimensions of the *Kulturkampf* ahead of the military escalation, we will look instead at the role of gender, in particular at the hegemonic masculinities, organized around the image of an "unbroken", "unruled" or "undefeated" military hero.

Rather marginal in the established explanatory models, they may offer intriguing insights into the dynamics of military escalation – starting with the historical role models of the anti-fascist (Russia) vs. anti-Soviet fighters (Ukraine) extending to the more recent patterns of manhood (Hitler/Stalin vs. Churchill) that serve as a crucial interface between the identity metanarratives and political decision-making. Reflected in such Russian movies as "Brother I/II" (1997/2000) by Aleksei Balabanov or Ukrainian novels as "Black Raven" (2009) by Vasyl' Shkliar they reveal, in spite all the differences, significant structural similarities. Using psychoanalytic ideas about trauma and gender as well as memory studies, the presentation focuses on the impact of gender models, especially heroic masculinities on the escalation of the military conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

Prof. Dr. Viktoria GORBUNOVA

Universal mental health training for ukrainian frontline professionals

Abstract

Universal Mental Health Training for Frontline Professionals (UMHT) is an educational programme developed and piloted in Ukraine in 2021-2023 to bridge the mental health gap between Ukrainians' needs in support and the answers from the health system.

The study aims to assess the feasibility of the UMHT as a public mental health promotion and prevention intervention.

Research questions

1. **Demand:** to what extent is the UMHT likely to be used?
2. **Acceptability:** to what extent is the UMHT suitable, satisfying and attractive to programme deliverers and recipients?
3. **Adaptability:** to what extent is the UMHT suitable for adjusting content and procedure to new formats and working with different population groups?

Methodology

To assess feasibility we used statistics on the actual use of the programme and data from satisfaction and usability surveying.

Preliminary findings

Programme's demand increased through years of implementation in the numbers of events (27 → 35 → 90), trained professionals (596 → 779 → 1548) and involved donors (1 → 4 → 9). The acceptability of the UMHT content and delivery is 4.8 out of 5. The preparedness to use trained skills is 4.5 out of 5. The highest rates of adaptability were found for educators, police officers, and social workers.

Conclusions

The UMHT offers a universal frame of interaction with people with mental health conditions for frontline professionals. Assessment of the UMHT feasibility shows the programme's potential for further development and implementation.

Kseniia FEDOROVA

Delineating a Digital-Scape: A Critical Practice of Freedom during the Russian War in Ukraine

Abstract

One of the paradoxes of the Russian War in Ukraine lies in the juxtaposition of battlefield horrors and the unseen level of digital technology deployment, allowing boundaries between virtual and real to blur. Although technology has become an integral part of warfare, its impact on humans remains indistinct.

The rapid proliferation of digital interactions has prompted a reconsideration of the traditional and accepted ways of conceiving 'freedom.' Consequently, this study aims to explore the specific configurations of freedom in regard to digital practices and to acknowledge a new form of experience: the 'practice of freedom' achieved through actively coping with circumstances rather than achieving a state of independence from external influences.

This investigation entails in-depth explorations of complex issues in real-life settings; thus, case study methodology, data collection and sampling, and conceptual analysis were applied.

The study demonstrated that specific digital actions by Ukrainian citizens enable the 'practice of freedom' in the sense of critical reflection of the present, revealing a specific part of the self, which in turn affects military development. Furthermore, the intertwining of the real and virtual is presented as a digital-scape, wherein the individual and the environment co-construct and co-influence through digital activism.

In conclusion, the study reflects on how the impact of digital technologies does not necessarily negate human freedom but rather establishes it as a condition for the active practice of freedom.

Dr. Olga PLAKHOTNIK

Sexual Citizenship and Borders-Crossing

Abstract

What does sex/ sexuality have to do with the state and its institutions? In the growing area of "sexual citizenship" studies, citizenship is seen not as mere membership but rather as a performative political process of "doing citizenship" and "becoming" political subjects. In Ukraine, studies on sexual citizenship are scarce and focus predominantly on governmentalization (i.e., the state policies directed towards so-called sexual minorities). My research, on the contrary, explores how sexual citizenship is being made "from below": how LGBT+ communities in Ukraine imagine their relationships with the state and its institution and translate their claims into the language of rights.

The study combines two methodological perspectives. A queer feminist methodology/ critical discourse analysis allows identifying the normative model of sexual citizenship as the struggle for inclusion into the nation-state as "good citizens" without problematizing the capitalist/neoliberal/racist state politics. Approaching the topic from the decolonial option helps to zoom out and see how the location of Ukraine on the fringes of two imperial formations, namely the (generalized) West and Russian imperialism, shapes LGBT+ politics and the imaginary of sexual citizenship. Finally, the decolonial concepts of "borderland" and "border thinking" (Anzaldúa 1999) seem heuristic for grasping the dynamics of sexual citizenship during the full-scale Russian war on Ukraine.

Prof. Dr. Machteld VENKEN

Architecture of the Project “Ukraine. Collecting. Recording” (U-CORE)

Abstract

This presentation provides an insight into the first research activities within the project ‘Researching the Collecting, Preserving, Analysing and Disclosing of Ukrainian Testimonies of the War (U-CORE)’, which started in January 2024 and is funded by the Luxembourg Fund for Scientific Research and the Polish National Science Center. The project moves from the spontaneous documenting of the wartime and refugee experiences of Ukrainians in Ukraine, Poland, and Luxembourg to scientific data collection and well-structured empirical content analysis. The main research question is: How to build a methodological and ethical toolbox, as well as a digital environment for processing, analysing, preserving, and disclosing in two stages conducted born-digital testimonies of the war by means of a digital hermeneutics of practice consisting of source criticism, tool criticism and visualisation criticism? During the first three months, this author has been occupied with assuring a suitable framework for legal and data protection within the project. While discussing the informed consent form, application for the ethical board and data sharing agreement, the author reflects upon the similarities and differences in expectations and negotiation practices between the Polish, Ukrainian and Luxembourgish partners.

Dr. Inna GANSCHOW,

AI Generated Embroideries for Ukrainian Dancing Costumes - The Intersection of Artificial Intelligence and Cultural Preservation

Abstract

The VYSH ball project aims to innovate by focusing on creating unique embroidery designs for the stage costumes of the Luxembourg-based dance group Berehyni. Berehyni is a group popularizing Ukrainian historical dances, especially in the context of supporting Ukrainian refugees in Luxembourg. This project, driven by the need to create original costumes for an expanding dance group of mostly Ukrainian refugees, utilized two AI technologies, Stable Diffusion and Midjourney. They were used to explore the possibility of combining traditional Ukrainian embroidery patterns into a single design suitable for both stage visibility and preserving folk authenticity.

However, initial hopes of creating a single Ukrainian pattern based on different regional patterns using artificial intelligence faced challenges, including both historical accuracy and aesthetic requirements for the stage. The project strategy was changed to prioritize detailed verbal cues over graphical unification of patterns, leading to more successful results. This approach facilitated the creation of embroidery designs that matched the intended cultural representation and were subsequently converted into machine recognizable formats for production.

The final result of the VYSH project was the creation of 14 embroidered blouses. This endeavor highlights the potential of artificial intelligence in improving cultural heritage projects, emphasizing the importance of human experience, its taste and education, which cannot be replaced when evaluating results and selecting successful designs. This experience provides insights into the adaptive methodologies required when merging technology with traditional art forms, and suggests avenues for future research in digital cultural preservation.

Dr. Alina STRZEMPA, Dr. Oleksandr ZABIRKO

Exploring Anthropocene Perspectives on the Donbas and Upper Silesia

Abstract

Literary portrayals of industrial landscapes and the societal ethos of mining communities can be analyzed through a framework spanning pre-industrial, industrial, and post-industrial eras. These communities are characterized by common types of production, working conditions, the scale of communal activities, entertainment, and knowledge (including religious and political aspects), as well as education. However, concerns about humanity's impact on the planet challenge this analytical framework, particularly in the Anthropocene era. This era blurs assumptions of societal purposefulness, prompting a re-evaluation of historical narratives. Geological markers like the Industrial Revolution and the Great Acceleration now signify human impact. Despite their promise of progress, these historical phenomena require scrutiny for their changing relationship with nature.

In our contribution, we aim to bring together perspectives from the Anthropocene and regional literatures from the two major East European mining areas, the Donbas and Upper Silesia, during the Great Acceleration (from the 1930s to the 1960s). By analyzing literary texts, we intend to contrast these different perspectives on issues related to industrial infrastructure, juxtaposing the notion of purposefulness with experiences such as alienation and suffering. By engaging with the perspectives of the Anthropocene, our intention is to highlight an alternative, ecocritical approach in relation to both regions.

Dr. Alexander CHERTENKO

Ukrainian Writers at War as Gender Models Abroad: Andrukhovych, Zabuzhko and Nadiia Savchenko in Poland

Abstract

In my talk, I will deal with the gender projections of the image of Ukraine after 2014, which can be found in Polish books of interviews with the “representatives of Ukrainian culture” such as Yuriy Andrukhovych (2014) and Nadiya Savchenko (2017), with Oksana Zabuzhko’s interview volume (2013) serving as a pre-war pendant. The talk will focus on the rhetorical strategies that inscribe catastrophic upheavals in Ukraine with their bloody reality and ideological excesses into the framework of Polish national traumas and (meta)historiographical patterns. In particular, I will show how the hidebound discourse on the so-called Kresy Wschodnie—former Polish borderlands in Ukraine and Belarus—determines the stylization of Ukrainian “cultural figures” to (variously understood) bearers of “wildness” and how this “wildness” is being differentiated geographically and culturally according to the “phantom borders” from the previous epochs. Basing on this, I will also elaborate on the connections between the development of those “alien” gender models from the depictions of “female intellectual” (Zabuzhko), through cultural “father” (Andrukhovych) to a “woman warrior” and “female Cossack” (Savchenko) and the intensification of the “restaurative nostalgia” (Boym) within the Polish culture under the sign of war.

PD Dr. Martin HENZELMANN

Minority Languages and Education in Bessarabia

Abstract

The historical region of Bessarabia largely coincides with the borders of today's Republic of Moldova, with a smaller part belonging to Ukraine. The south of this historical region (betterknown as Budzhak) is particularly interesting from an ethnographic and linguistic point of view, as very different minority languages are spoken on both sides of the Moldovan-Ukrainian borderland. These include, e.g., Bulgarian and Gagauz, as well as Albanian in Ukraine. Minority languages were integrated into the education system of the respective places to varying degrees. The presentation gives examples of how speakers of minority languages managed to establish their local languages in the education system, and it highlights particular problems that still exist.

Dr. Iryna POGREBYNSKA

Ukrainian-Luxembourg Historical Research: invariance of subjects – difference in approaches. Case Study

Abstract

This report examines narratives and interpretations of the history of Holocaust in Luxembourg and Ukraine. Holocaust research is crucial for several reasons: it provides a deeper understanding of the darkest periods of human history and raises awareness about the dangers of discrimination, prejudice and genocide, serving as a reminder of the catastrophic consequences of hatred and intolerance. Researching the Shoah one honors the memories of victims and tributes to the resilience of survivals.

The purpose of this report is to compare research approaches and methods and instruments of Holocaust studies in Luxembourg and Ukraine, defining the general and the special in the historical perspective. To achieve this purpose it is proposed to consider the following issues: establish a chronological framework for research, historically and historiographically, highlight the main research areas inherent to each country, characterize the body of sources and the completeness of their use to date; emphasize the relevance and potential impact of the research findings, and, as a result, consider the prospects of joint research based on specific historical material.

To conduct this research the followings methods are used: identifying the research topics, periods and events; reviewing existing literature, while paying attention to the key debates and interpretations and analyzing the latter; evaluating historiographical trends, identifying key historians and trends and contextualizing historical debates; synthesizing findings and observations to identify common themes, trends and areas of consensus and disagreement within the historiography.

Analysis of literature and sources allowed to reach several preliminary findings, namely, in both countries there is a gradual abandonment of the German-centric conceptualization of Shoah; this trend is intensifying thanks to several factors such as expanding the range of sources, increasing opportunities for scientific exchange. There are topics that are deeply and comprehensively covered in historical literature of both countries, namely, with regard to periodization, location of events, participants and perpetrators. Also it can be stated the similarity in the coverage and interpretation of such sensitive issues as collaborationism, “standing by” and the role played by the Judenraete. However, it should be noted that there are issues that are covered disproportionately by scholars of one country or another. Here, first of all, such an innovative project as Digital Shoah Memorial in Luxembourg, created by Luxembourg university and the *Fondation luxembourgeoise pour la Mémoire de la Shoah*. Secondly, the digitalization of sources in Luxembourg is at the qualitatively higher level which in turn is reflected both in the speed of processing sources and in the degree of objectivity in their interpretation. On the other hand, work with historical memory is carried out more systematically in Ukraine.

All in all, this review without claiming to be a complete study of the issue, is a kind of router and an attempt to combine two research practices based on mutual enrichment and a proactive search for modern approaches.

Dr. Zhanna SERDIUK

Andriy Melnyk: Additional Features to the Historical Portrait

Abstract

The figure of Andriy Melnyk is known both in Ukraine and abroad mainly to historians. Numerous publications of his biography are available to the public, where the widely mentioned and presented facts often contradict each other, leaving significant gaps. In particular his relationship with and disavowal of Stepan Bandera - leading to a split of the OUN in 1940 - still has many grey areas - which are outside the scope of my research. Biographical publications present A. Melnyk as a military officer, political leader, and politician, leaving out considerations of him as an ordinary man. Meanwhile, Melnyk's fate is interesting for historians because it reflects in detail the specifics and drama of the era in which he lived and acted.

The relevance of the topic results from the lack of a full-fledged scientific study of Andriy Melnyk's biography, as well as the need to draw public attention to the history of the liberation struggle of the Ukrainian people, given Russia's current war against Ukraine.

The purpose of the study is to objectively present and supplement the biography of Andriy Melnyk with little-known facts about the period of his life in exile. The focus is on the period of his life in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg in the years 1946-1964. It is also crucial to bring to light the figure of his wife, Sofia Fedak-Melnyk.

The research highlights a little-known period in the life of the leader of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, Andriy Melnyk, and his wife, Sofia Fedak. After being forced to emigrate from Ukraine during the Second World War, their family found refuge in Luxembourg. Until the end of their lives, they continued their political activities to restore the independence of Ukraine.

The study uses yet unpublished documents from the National Archives of Luxembourg, as well as the archives of some local communes.

In conclusion, Andriy Melnyk dedicated his life to serving the Ukrainian nation struggling for self-determination. An era where a peaceful and tranquil life was impossible left him no choice. Even at the end of his life, in the safety of Luxembourg, he continued his political activity despite the bans. His dream of uniting Ukrainians scattered all over the world came true in 1967 with the founding of the World Congress of Free Ukrainians.

