

Baltic Fund News

Year End 1995

Home
Program Info
Program History
Baltic Links
Courses
Newsletter
Lectures & Events
Multimedia
Encyclopedia
Program Fund
Guest Book

The Baltic Languages Program 1994-1996: Two Successful Years of Instruction in Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian

Few could have foreseen the enthusiasm with which University of Washington students greeted the new program in Baltic languages. Since Autumn Quarter 1994, over forty students have studied in the program with some twenty students enrolled each quarter. In 1994-95, basic instruction was offered in all three languages. A group of students also studied Latvian at an advanced level. In 1995-96, the three languages were taught at the second-year level and instruction continued in advanced Latvian.

The University of Washington's Department of Scandinavian Studies, in conjunction with the Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies Center of the Jackson School are pleased with the progress and popularity of the Baltic language program. With the help of supporters in Washington state and throughout the country, we hope to make these languages a permanent part of the University's curriculum.

Students Enrolled in the Baltic Languages Program, 1994-96

Estonian:

Ene-Liis Arrowsmith, Maris Berzins, Christina Carmichael, Aurora Case, Meghan MacKrell, Kristi Magee, Amy Neugebauer, Tiia Reinvald, Daniel Ryan, Robert Smurr, Charles Tait, Sonia Wichmann.

Latvian:

Markus Andrejevs, Erika Bandrevics, Girts Beitlers, Maris Berzins, Erik Copeland, Larisa Copeland, Zane Elksnitis, Laila Galins, Erik Gaudins, Anna Johnson, John Johnson, Andrew Knudsen, Vija Ozols, Dagnija Paskovskis, Diana Petersons, Valdis Riekstins, Amy Swanson, Charles Tait, Dzidra Razevska-Upans, Karen Wennerstrom, Kathrine Young, Keoki Young, Kristine Young.

Lithuanian:

Eugenija Bertulis, Stephen Liffick, Nikola Litven, Carol Loretz, Timothy Miller, Toni Pulikas, Bre Sakas, Laurie Swift.

The Second Annual BALSSI a Success

By all accounts, the 1995 Baltic Studies Summer Institute ([BALSSI](#)) at the University of Washington proved a success: greater even than the first annual BALSSI, mounted at the University in the summer of 1994. A core course in intensive Lithuanian was accompanied by supplementary courses in Baltic History, Baltic culture, Baltic and Nordic folklore, and Baltic-Nordic political relations. The sixty Institute participants included students, local citizens, and professionals who traveled from as far as California, Missouri, and Illinois.

BALSSI is funded by a consortium of American universities committed to promoting the study of Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian in the United States during the summer. The five member consortium, created through the efforts of Prof. Daniel Waugh, Chair of the University of Washington's Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies Program and a key organizer of the University's Baltic Studies initiative, includes Indiana University, the University of Illinois at Chicago, the University of Michigan, the University of Wisconsin, and the University of Washington. Several more schools have expressed interest in joining the consortium. Member institutions pool federal resources to insure the teaching of these crucial languages at one institution each summer. The 1994 and 1995 pilot efforts were hosted by the University of Washington, which supplied the bulk of the funding for the courses and programming. Generous grants from the World Lithuanian Community Foundation and the Social Science Research Council made both years' programs possible. The 1996 BALSSI will be hosted by the University of Illinois at Chicago. Contact Guntis Smidchens or Thomas DuBois at the Scandinavian Department (206 543-0645) for details.



Ambassador Toomas Ilves (left) welcomes President Lennart Meri (right) to the podium at a fund raising dinner held for the Baltic Studies Program, October 31, 1996.

A Distinguished Array of Visitors

The Baltic program has been fortunate to host excellent scholars and leaders from the Baltic nations as well as the field of Baltic studies. Most prominent of these was President **Lennart Meri** of Estonia, who visited the University to signal his support for the Baltic program. President Meri addressed a group of University faculty and students about his ethnographic work and made a public address regarding his country's foreign and domestic relations. He also spoke at a fund-raising dinner hosted by the University and the Boeing Company in support of the Baltic program.

Other speakers over the last two years have included **Andrejs Plakans, Toivo Raun and Alfred Senn**, historians of the Baltic region; **Algirdas Eidintas** and **Toomas Ilves**, Ambassadors of Lithuania and Estonia to the United States; **Aapo Pöhlö**, Deputy Ambassador of Finland to the United States; **Violeta Kelertas**, chair of Lithuanian Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago, **Halters Nollendorfs** (University of Wisconsin) and **Tiina Kirss** (Mercer University), specialists in Baltic literature.

Our next guest is **Paul Goble**, a prominent specialist in nationality issues in post-Soviet states. He will speak on Friday, February 9, 1996 at 11:30 in Thompson Hall 325 on the topic: "The Contemporary Political and Economic Situation in Scandinavia and the Baltic States." On the same day, he will speak a second time at 2:30 in Balmer Hall 202 on the topic: "The Russian Empire: Past, Present, and Future." Visits by such figures enrich the lives of both University faculty and students and the general public of the Northwest, who are always cordially invited to all University colloquia and addresses. We look forward to working with the local Baltic-American communities to continue making the Baltic nations and Baltic studies accessible in the Great Northwest.

American Collegiate Consortium Exchange

In Autumn 1994, when Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian were added to the University of Washington curriculum, students taking these languages qualified to apply for the American Collegiate Consortium Exchange, a highly competitive program which places American students in universities throughout the territory of the Former Soviet Union.

Two Baltic language students were awarded scholarships to travel to the Baltic: two of only three scholarships awarded the University of Washington this year. John Johnson, a double major in Botany and Slavic Languages and Literature, is presently studying in Riga, at the University of Latvia. Tiia Reinvald, majoring in Comparative Literature and Art, is enrolled in courses at Tartu University in Estonia. We congratulate them both for their fine work and perseverance.

Profile: Three Graduate Students Studying Estonian

Sonia Wichmann graduated from Columbia University (New York) in 1994, with a B.A. degree in Literature and Linguistics. She took courses at the University of Helsinki in Spring and Summer of 1994, then began studies at the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature at UW. She currently teaches first-year Finnish at the Department. She also speaks Swedish, Russian and French and received the American Scandinavian Foundation Translation Prize in 1995 for her translation of Hagar Olsson's novel Chitambo. Sonia wishes to do comparative research in the area of Swedish, Finnish and Estonian literature and began studying Estonian last year. She has visited Estonia twice (1993 and 1994) and plans to travel there again once she has learned the language.

Robert Smurr received a B.A. in Political Science from the University of California at Davis in 1984. He studied Russian at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California, in 1984-86, and served in the U.S. Army in Augsburg, Germany, from 1986 to 1990. He received an M.A. in International Studies from the University of Washington's Jackson School of International Studies in 1992, and in 1995 passed the doctoral candidacy examinations in the University's Department of History. He has traveled to Russia four times, but has not yet visited Estonia, where he plans to travel on an academic exchange once he has learned the language. In the 1995-96 academic year, Robert was awarded a Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship to study Estonian in our program. He intends to write his dissertation on the Estonian environmental movement and its relation to the drive for national independence.

Daniel Ryan received a B.A. in History and Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies in 1995 from the University of Iowa. He is presently a first-year graduate student in the Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies Program at the Jackson School of International Studies. His current research interests center on Russia and the former Soviet Union, particularly during the era of Gorbachev. He plans to study the Baltic national movements during this historical period.

Latvian Drama at the UW

In 1995, students in the advanced Latvian class read a play by the Latvian author Mara Zalite and decided to prepare a performance of this play. They were joined by the students of second-year Latvian. "Pilna Maras istabina" ("Mara's Room is Full") was first performed in Riga in 1982. The play retells an old Latvian folktale about the magic tablecloth always bedecked with food, the seven-league boots and the cap of invisibility. These items, symbols of prosperity, are given to three brothers by Mara, a character from Latvian mythology. Do they acquire happiness? Come see for yourself! The students plan to perform the play (in Latvian) during the first months of 1996.

New Course: Scand 345/SISRE 345 "Baltic Cultures"

Guntis Smidchens will teach a new course during the Spring quarter, 1996, entitled "Baltic Cultures." Cross-listed between the Department of Scandinavian Studies and the Jackson School's program in Russian and East European Studies, the course will provide a broad introduction to the cultures of the Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians. Baltic literature, art and film will be studied in their historical contexts, exploring the relation between people and culture in the Baltic states. No knowledge of Baltic languages is required. The class will meet on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 12:30-1:50 pm in the Chemistry Library Building, Room 015. Remember that the University of Washington offers access to non-matriculated students through the University of Washington Extension. Call (206) 543-2300 for details!

A Growing Library Collection

The University of Washington's Baltic collections continue to grow, thanks to the ongoing exchanges of library materials that the University conducts with institutions in the region and to generous gifts from benefactors in the greater Seattle Baltic communities. The Library's main exchange partners include the Estonian and Lithuanian Academies of Science, Tartu University

Library, and the Latvian National Library, all of which supply a number of books and periodical subscriptions each year. Current collecting priorities include the national bibliographies, statistical yearbooks, general reference materials, and basic publications in language and literature. The exchange with Tartu University brings the University of Washington some materials on Estonian folklore, as well as the publications of the renowned Tartu semiotic school. During the past year, the Library also substantially upgraded its holdings in Latvian literature through the purchase of a collection of some one hundred volumes from the Latvian Studies Center Library in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Library staff are keeping abreast of the progress being made toward establishing a permanent Baltic studies program, in order to gauge the extent to which collection building will need to intensify in the future.

Michael Biggins, Slavic and East European Librarian

Finnish Ministry of Education Funding: An Inspiring Example

In recognition of the University's efforts to teach Finnish language and culture, the Finnish Ministry of Education sent a delegation in December 1995, to negotiate a permanent Finnish lectureship at the University of Washington. Finnish was added to the Scandinavian Department's roster of languages in 1991 and has remained a part of the Department's curriculum ever since. Taught by Prof. Thomas DuBois and/or a graduate teaching assistant, the elementary course attracts some twenty students each year, making it one of the largest university Finnish courses in the country. A second-year course was added to the curriculum in 1994.

In the 1970s, the Finnish Ministry of Education created a Council of Finnish for Foreigners (UKAN), an advisory organization that helps promote and sometimes finance Finnish courses in more than twenty countries around the world. UKAN provides a valuable service for both foreign universities and the Finnish people, who benefit from the increased familiarity with Finland which such foreign institutions and programs insure. In the United States, UKAN sponsors lectureships at Indiana University and Columbia University. The addition of the University of Washington raises the University to a select group of institutions recognized as providing meritorious service to Finland.

We in the Baltic Initiative see the Finnish case as an inspiring and heartening example of what may develop over time in our teaching of Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian. We believe that our sustained commitment to these languages will result in broad recognition of the value of our Baltic program, recognition reflected in substantive investment through private donations and foundation grants. Although the Baltic governments are in no position to help us in the way that Finland can at the current time, the *people* of the Baltics, both in the Baltic nations and especially here in the United States can certainly help make this program a permanent part of Baltic-

Committee for the Baltic Program at the University of Washington

Ina Berltulyte-Bray National Academic Committee, Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.

Irena Blekys Board Representative, Washington Chapter, Lithuanian-American Community

Professor Thomas DuBois Department of Scandinavian Studies, University of Washington

Tracey Hinkle Development and External Affairs, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Washington

Professor Terje Leiren Chair, Department of Scandinavian Studies, University of Washington

Bruno Morkūnas Lithuanian Community Representative

Professor Emeritus Endrik Nõges Department of Electrical Engineering, University of Washington; Estonian Community Representative

Linda Norkool Administrative Assistant, Department of Scandinavian Studies, University of Washington

Vija Ozols Latvian Association of the State of Washington

Professor Vidmantas Raisys Department of Laboratory Medicine, University of Washington; Lithuanian Community Representative

Andris Rogainis Latvian Association of the State of Washington

Minis Rogainis Grant and Contract Accounting, University of Washington; Latvian Association of the State of Washington

Visiting Lecturer Guntis Smidchens Department of Scandinavian Studies, University of Washington

Kristi Urv-Wong President, Seattle Estonian Society

Professor Daniel Waugh Director, Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies Center, University of Washington

Assistant Dean David Wu Development and External Affairs, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Washington

[Top of Page](#)

Send comments or questions to: uwscand@u.washington.edu