“Conducting this research gave me more insight into how settler colonialism informs the media and, by extension, people’s perspective on the world around them. Seeing settler colonialism in action is very different from learning about it in the classroom.”

– Bailey Britton, pg. 36

“When we left Haiti, we never looked back—but the paradise we expected to find waiting for us on the other side didn’t exist.”

– Teri Jacques, pg. 4
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An immigrant story about intergenerational trauma, and personal growth. Most of all, this is a story about family dynamics, and this is a family that is warm and healing. Tina's sadness is palpable, due to the separation from the home she loved and also the horror she endured, but also she is lifted by the love of her family. Tina feels alienated from our family and is anxious about the future. Lost in the memories of a traumatic past and driven by guilt and self-deprecation, she tries desperately to find her purpose in the world, yet the way out seems steeper every day. "Home" here means Haiti, but also family, which can survive exile.
The storm is illuminating the sky. My siblings and I, lying close together on the floor, are immersed in the book before us. The electricity was out, and the candlelight between us reflected our shadow on the floor. Daniel, my little brother, came closer to my side, taking a little bit more of the sheet covering our toes.

“Petit con, arrête de bouger.” (Jerk, stop moving around.) My sister Ade exclaims in an annoyed voice. Daniel clicks his tongue, and I gently dap him behind the head.

“Stop moving.” I repeat. He listens this time.

We go back to the book, and my voice raises and lowers, reading the unfolding scene to give it more effect, “Don’t run. The mistress says. I will take care of you. Suddenly, there’s a noise, the tree shakes on its own and dark blue eyes surface behind. Who are you? The deep voice says.

The mistress, to protect the child, steps forward. Do not touch him. She cries out.”

My siblings are focused, curious eyes fixating on my mouth, awaiting my next words. I keep reading, delighted by their innocent admiration. We are young here. A year before we unknowingly left our home in the Caribbean to immerse ourselves in the chaos of America. I would cherish home more then, if I knew we would be scattered away from our land, leaving this childish innocence and ignorance behind.

Suddenly we hear the shotguns. My brother, the youngest and most frightened, hides under my arm. “Oh my god! They’re coming!” he says in a creolized French that has become the language of obscuring our fear under the guise of “better” sounding words. Our creole becoming too “black”, “too blunt”, leading us to hide behind a language that was never for us, but a subjugated people, now resilient, can only whisper when our very own is the oppressor.
Another shotgun and my sister shoots me a panicked look. “Do you think they’ll come for us?” I laugh to calm her down. “No, idiot. The door is closed. How are they going to get in?” Her face takes on a painful grimace before joining my brother under my arm and making me their shelter.

“I hate it here” she whispers. And I know what she means.

She means, “I hate that they’re scar-ing us away from our home. I hate that we don’t matter. I hate that Vivian, the long curly-haired, blue-eyed girl we go to school with, might not be hearing those fright-en ing shotguns above the hills where the house she lives in protects her from the cha-os.” She meant, “I hate that I want to leave. I hate that the future I know I deserve is not offered to me at home.”

When we left Haiti, we never looked back—but the paradise we expected to find waiting for us on the other side didn’t exist.

I quickly close my notebook when I hear Amara’s voice down the hallway and turn back to face my computer, putting my fingers on the keyboard to pretend like I am concentrating on a task. I hear her approach, and without even looking up, I feel her disapproval.

“Hum hum. Nope. Don’t do that. I already know you were writing your romance instead of working. You should hide your notebook better next time.” She sits in the empty chair on the other side of the desk and waits for me to face her. Which I do with an embarrassing smile.

“Hi, Amara” I say innocently. “I thought you wouldn’t be back till Friday.”

She doesn’t answer, staring me down instead with a hand under her chin. I almost laugh at her attempt at intimida-tion as her warm eyes and playful features fail her.

A mentor, friend, and sometimes, a confidant, Amara is my middle-aged boss who hired me after she heard me recite
poetry at a corner bar in Little Haiti. That night, as I stood on the stage for the millionth time as an indie poet in Mano's “bar of excellence” (that’s what the man calls his business, and really, who the hell am I to ever call it any other way) Amara walked in with her hippie friends and sat at the table closest to the tiny stage, which in turn, was even more clustered with the variety of instruments left behind by the local konpa band who performed before me. Unfamiliar with the new faces, I felt a faint rush of anxiety when I noticed them that night, but as usual, the moment I walked on stage, my mouth and body took on a life of their own, resonating through the small space accompanied by Mano’s appeasing and relentless humming. At the end of my performance, Amara came to find me at the bar.

“You’re Haitian, right” she said. “I picked up your accent. My dad’s Haitian. Nice to meet you.” She offered me her hand, which I took with no hesitation, albeit a little surprised.

“Yes, I am. And great, nice to meet you.” I answered politely.

“Is that what you do? Singing poetry at Mano’s old ass bar every night?” her question caught me off guard. First, what did she mean by “singing poetry?” Mano’s humming was merely a wave I used to let my rhythm and words flow. That’s why I didn’t choose the loud grunting of the guitar or the soaring hymn of the piano. Mano’s humming was subtle, like a fermented buzz that sat in the back of my mind while my words transported me back to the beautiful mountains of home. With that thought, as I was about to retaliate, she held up her hand. “I am not judging or anything, even though I am sure my tone suggested otherwise. I need to work on that…. But what I am asking is—is that your job or is it a hobby? Do you go to school? Where are your parents? You look young.” I was young, only eighteen years old and she was starting to scare the hell out of me. I didn’t know this woman, yet she kept asking question after question. I was
honestly just about to walk away when she stopped me again.

“I am aware that you’re terrified right now, but I promise you there’s a point to this” she laughed. I didn’t. Instead, I took two steps back and said “Get to it fast then.”

But this conversation led me here…

Behind a desk where her wide eyes are looking at me, ready to give me a pep talk.

“I know. I know. But I promise I finished all my tasks. I just had to write an idea down before I lost it.” She released a long, exasperated breath before leaning forward.

“Why are you even still here? Almost everyone else is gone. The only person still here is Jason, but that is not a surprise. So, explain yourself. Now.”

She knows the reason why I don’t want to go home, but Amara’s philosophy is that you have to talk through your problems for them to weigh less on your conscience. And so I tell her. I tell her about the fact that my siblings are flying in this afternoon, and as always, every time I have to face my parents in their presence, my embarrassment builds like a storm brewing on the horizon. I tell her that my younger siblings’ success and their well-organized lives feel like a painful reflection of my failure and the fact that I have dedicated my twenties to nostalgic poetry and a job that barely allows me to provide for myself in this economy. Amara listens and empathizes, but ultimately does not find the right words to calm my nerves. With my anxiety unresolved, I get up from my seat, exit the office, and head home to the efficiency studio I’d been renting from my parents.

When I enter the living room, the smell of my mother’s flavorful cooking
slaps me in the face, and the sound of her breezy laugh at something my dad said draws me in the kitchen, I find them sitting around the island, accompanied by Ade and Daniel, who arrived sooner than expected. I steady myself, calming the trembling of my hands when I approach them, feeling like an outsider.

“Hi!” I shout; my voice coming out breathier than I expected. Ade acknowledges my greeting first, jumping off the bar stool to come meet me with open arms. I catch her as she surrounds me, her coffee smell filling up my nostrils. I smile when Daniel joins the hug, placing a soft kiss on my cheek.

“Tina. We missed you.” Ade exclaims, and I believe her. They let me go and as they walk away, I find myself observing them, not because there was anything exceptional in their aura or their presence, but because my older sister instinct kicks in. My eyes scan for anything unusual in their smile, their walk, their face just to reassure myself that they are doing fine on their own. It seems like they are. Ade’s colorful braids gracefully fall on her back as she takes her seat next to my father, who has a wide smile on his face and is watching our interaction. Daniel grabs my left arm and pulls me toward the rest of the family, as I was still sort of standing by the entrance. I’m surprised at his strength and the fact that my little brother is now twice my height. They don’t need me anymore.

“Damn petit con. When did you get so tall?” I say and he laughs. The conversation picks up after all the greetings and I realize that my anxiety is not as palpable as it was earlier.

“Did you just come from work? Or from Mano’s bar?” My brother asks.

“From work.” I give a brief answer to move on from the topic of my job, but he continues. “What do you do again?” I see the genuine curiosity in his eyes, but my brain picks up the invisible judgment in his voice and I shift uncomfortably in my chair.

“I teach poetry at the library as part of a special program they have for Haitian kids in the foster care system.” The words come out fast, as if they didn’t really want to be said out loud.

My brother nods, with a smile on his lips. “That sounds so chill. Nothing like medical school at all.”

“Well, at least medical school will eventually pay off and allow you to live a decent life.” My mother says in a creole that comes off rawer above her grave tone. I realize it is the first time she’s spoken since I entered the room. Everybody keeps quiet after that, either because they thought the same thing or because they just didn’t want to drag the topic further. During dinner, I ate my fried plantains and rice, with extra pikliz, just to focus on the spicy taste of the food instead of my sweaty hands.

My siblings went upstairs after eating. Ade wanted to take a shower and get
out of her airplane clothes, while Daniel, as always, just wanted to go to sleep. My father and I are the only ones left in the kitchen by the time the sun goes down. He’s cleaning the counter and the stovetop while I wash the dishes. After a long silence, he finally speaks.

“You know we’re proud of you, right?” he says with the soft voice that used to make me fall asleep when I was younger. He’s lying. I know that. But I smile when he looks at me, awaiting an answer.

“I know Dad. Don’t worry.” I answer.

“Good. We just want you to be happy, and if doing what you do allows that, that’s all that matters.” he says, before he hangs the towel above the sink and joins my mother on the porch.

There’s nothing worse than wanting to prove your abilities to everyone when you don’t even believe in them yourself. While being sad and not belonging might make for a good poem, in the real world, that shit makes you stand out like a sore thumb. You become a laughingstock. The awkward, lazy one. The one that doesn’t have much to offer. The one who feels and feels and feels, but ultimately realizes that nobody cares about your feelings. My siblings were good at math and science, so one became an economist and the other went to medical school. They have skills that are needed in the real world, where their abilities and knowledge re what makes a difference. I was only skilled with emotions, words, and a giant lack of confidence that kept me trapped in a dark corner of my mind. I’d start projects and never finish them and write poems to only read them in front of the same people every Sunday night, because my fear of the future feels bigger than my failure now.
I enter my studio, eager to get my hands on my notebook. The place is small, and everything is in one space: the bedroom, the semi-living room, the small kitchen, and the makeshift corner that is my office. My parents did really well for themselves after upping their lives in the Caribbean to move to America. The main house was big, so much so that this little studio doesn’t even feel like it’s part of it. When we left Haiti, I was fourteen, Ade was twelve, and Daniel, ten. “Home is not safe anymore.” Mom and Dad said. My siblings jumped and sang and danced, happy that their nightmares were finally over.

But I remember the moment they no longer wanted to stay.

Mom’s best friend, Natou, had just lost her son—Fanfan, we used to call him. He was sixteen years old with golden dark skin that glistened under the Caribbean sun. I remember he was tall and made fun of my height. He used to say, “You’re a lil mouse” and laughed out loud, sometimes until I would cry. But I loved him. I said to my sister once that I would marry him and carry his babies and he would love me forever. She told me to stop dreaming, but I didn’t care.

When his mother knocked desperately on the door that night, I was the only one in our living room playing dress up at 1 a.m. I heard her plaintive cry behind the door, like a soft humming out in the night. She said “Lulu, open!”

Lulu was my mother’s nickname, but people rarely used it, except for her. When I heard

Natou’s voice, I didn’t think twice and went to open the door, even though I was not allowed to. As soon as she entered the house, she fell to the floor. The most painful cry came out of her. I can still hear it now, the way she said her son’s name. “Lulu, Fanfan ale.” (Lulu, Fanfan is gone.) She kept crying, even though it was just me and her in the living room.

My parents, upon hearing her cries, came a few minutes later and for a second, I saw my mom’s lips quiver and dad’s hands tremble. He sat on the nearby chair and put his hands on his knees, looking at them. Meanwhile, my mom took her place on the floor next to her best friend, steadying and inviting her to lean onto her. I watched the scene, and I felt the grief, but what stayed with me was her humming. It said all the words she couldn’t say. She hummed “Fanfan, Fanfan” all night long, like the name of her son was all she had left.

Fanfan got killed by a notorious gang chief in the city. Apparently, he was with the wrong crew at the wrong time and got shot at alongside all his friends. He was the only one that died. Sometimes, I can still see his charming smile that used to make my heart flutter, and I can’t help but feel guilty. Fanfan’s story has become the norm at home, where a young man gets shot on their way home from school. As if their life didn’t have any value. As if their
mother and father don’t wake up every day, uneasy and restless, trying to survive. As if poverty and famine are not already something they have to deal with. As if these people haven’t gone through enough.

My guilt turns into embarrassment. If any of those kids had the opportunities that I have now, they wouldn’t be stuck reminiscing about a country that once was. They would make the most out of it and find practical ways to succeed, just like my parents did when they came here. I often think about moving away to a small town, where I can have my own place, a garden, and some animals. Yet every time I think about leaving the kids I work with here, to whom poetry has also become a passion, I remind myself that it is worth it. I might not be a future doctor or hold some fancy position at a bank in NYC, but I am serving my community. Even if things back home are worse, what I do to help those here is enough for now.

Tani comes at my feet, and gently pets my leg with her head. I bend down and grab her to put her on my desk. She meows and sticks her tongue out to lick my nose. I guess she missed me. I have been out of the house since seven in the morning. Although cats don’t require a lot of attention like dogs or other pets, I still feel a twinge of guilt when she looks at me with her sassy eyes. I know she’s probably cussing me out.
“I am sorry,” I say. She ignores me and jumps off the desk to join her spot on my two-seat couch.

“Wow, I thought Tani died. Isn’t she like...super old?” My sister's voice startles me, but then

I realize what she said. My face takes on an offended grimace.

“Why would you say that? She’s not that old.” I reprimand her. She laughs and goes to sit by

Tani on the couch, who moves away when she tries to pet her.

“Well, alright old bitch. Your loss. I am fantastic.” she insults the cat and I let out a laugh. “

Just leave my poor cat alone please.” She listens.

She focuses on me then, and I feel a shift in the air to a serious conversation. I break the silence first, afraid that it might last.

“How’s your job going?” I ask, genuinely curious.

Now that I am looking more closely at her, she seems to have lost weight. Her caramel skin is paler, like she hasn’t been taking her vitamins or something. I worry more when she shifts uncomfortably on the couch, but sends a wavering smile my way.

“It’s okay. Been trying for a promotion.” She doesn’t sound too thrilled when she says that.

Confusion fills me. Is she not happy? I always thought she loved her job, which I repeat to her.

“No, no. I do. It’s just…my boss…. Hum, well… I. don’t like the way he looks at me.” The doubt in her voice makes my skin crawl. She never mentioned that on our late Friday night calls. Every time I asked her how she was, she always gave me an enthusiastic answer, as if she was doing perfectly well. But now… she’s pinching her jeans and biting at her fingernails, just like she does when she’s nervous or conflicted. My fear, or maybe it’s anger, grows.

“What is it about the way he looks at you that you don’t like, Ade?” She finally faces me when she hears the heat emanating from my voice. She’s suddenly next to me by the desk.

“No, no, he does that to all the girls. He’s just a creep” she says.

“I am sorry. What the fuck? What do you mean he does that to all the girls? Y’all need to report his ass.” I say, almost screaming at this point. Ade signals me to be quiet.

“Report whose ass? Ade’s boss? I’ve been telling her.” Daniel’s voice comes up behind Ade. I move her out of the way to face him.

“You knew about this?” I ask.

“I live with her. She comes home every day, complaining about this man. I’ve told her to report him multiple times, but she just won’t listen. Med school is kicking my butt right now. I got my own stuff going on and Ade’s grown. She needs
to stand up for herself.” He says all that while squatting to grab Tani. “Damn Tani, you’re still alive?”

“Tina. Please, don’t tell Mom and Dad.” Ade begs. Her eyes are sad and fearful. My eyes go back and forth between them, the layers of my heart being revealed. as my mind takes me back to a time when these two were my entire life. I have always been terrible at making friends, so my life always revolved around my siblings. Now that I am 28 and they are full-grown adults, I realized that I have let myself become a sad little thing—tuck in my own mind, blaming my problems on their success, and forgetting that they might be struggling too.

Sadness bubbles in my throat, and before I know it, my eyes are teary, and my hands are shaking.

“I am sorry. I understand why you felt like you couldn’t tell me. I have been an asshole to you guys.” My entire face is wet now, and my voice comes out creaky and slow. Both my siblings approach me, not at all surprised at my outburst of emotions.

“Oh my God! Tina, please don’t be dramatic. See, this is why I didn’t want to tell you.” Ade gets on her knees in front of me, taking my hands. “I promise you, the moment this man becomes a real danger to me, I am sending the whole NYPD after his ass. But you both are right. I will report him, although I doubt he’ll be held accountable.” Her eyes are no longer fearful, but more appeased now that she had chosen to take our advice.
“Okay, now pay up.” Daniel says standing over my shoulder, his palm open toward Ade.

The latter stands up and takes a twenty out of her pocket and hands the bill to him.

“What’s happening right now?” I look at them, one by one, confused.

“Oh, I told Ade you’d cry at some point, when you saw us. She said you wouldn’t. We bet $20 on it. And of course, I won.” Daniel explains that proudly while I make an offended face. “You guys are assholes.” Their laughs envelop me, slowly piecing me back together and reminding me that they always make me whole. It always seems like in their presence, my isolation become a mere figment of my imagination. Ade and Daniel pour life into me, extracting me from the obscure recesses of my mind where I often allow myself to reside.
Sunflower Roots

Naomi Galindo
senior | modern languages, international studies

Abstract

Homage to the state of Kansas, my home, which saw me grow up into the person that I am today. This piece was written by me in high school. It began with a photography project capturing small towns in Kansas.
A gleam of hope
Is found above
The wind blows
I don’t know where I will be.

It guides me in a gentle flow
Not knowing my fortune
I have yet to see
The wonders of my home.

The meadowlark
That sits on the highest bark
Watched me every step of the way
And heard me say.

“Everything is possible”
Even though I am scared
The white, puffy clouds
Assured me; they are proud.

This is my home
Where the buffalo roam
To the beat of my heart
Right from the start.

Its golden fields of wheat
That makes me feel complete
It is quiet and serene
Which makes me feel seen.
This is my home:  
A field of sunflowers smile  
With every mile  
That I walk even if it’s unknown.

Running through the streets  
Those cobblestone paths  
They were never discreet  
When shouting where I was.

Turned me from a stranger  
Gave me shelter  
Safe from danger  
There is nowhere I’d rather be.

The cotton candy sunsets  
Which blessed the skies  
From Cheyenne to Labette  
Always captured my eyes.

A tribute to my ethnicity  
was always captured in Wichita  
A gesture of simplicity  
Always left me in awe.

My identity was never erased  
but rather embraced  
By those who also called it  
Their home.

Ad astra per aspera  
These are my roots  
Where I chose to pursue  
My sunflower roots.
How Corruption is Systematized in Russia

Alexa Scheer
senior | political science

Abstract

Russia suffers from widespread corruption while simultaneously maintaining a high degree of administrative control, indicating that certain forms of corruption in Russia do not weaken the administrative hierarchy, but in many cases serves to reinforce it. Rather than being a symptom of inefficient bureaucratic institutions, political corruption in Russia acts as a mechanism for the Kremlin to spread its influence into Russia’s formal and informal institutions alike. This is exhibited through the state’s exploitation of unwritten rules, its selective enforcement of certain standards, its incoherencies in policy, and its informal economic agreements. The overarching system of informality that this corruption creates is a key component in maintaining Russia’s empowered political and economic regimes.
From his prison cell, Russian opposition leader and founder of the Anti-Corruption Foundation, Alexei Navalny, proclaimed, “I still consider corruption a main problem of Russia, corroding the country, depriving people of a future and hindering any reform. It is the basis of the current government.” Navalny laments how an industrial, well-educated, developed nation like The Russian Federation could fail to counter corruption on such a massive scale. However, corruption in this case is not a failure of weak bureaucratic institutions, but an important aspect of Russia’s state capacity. This function of corruption is achieved through systematized informality, which permits the state to exploit every sector of Russian society, from the loyalties of influential oligarchs to the activities of ordinary Russian citizens. Corruption in Russia is a crucial element of its formal and informal institutions and serves to reinforce the empowered political and economic regimes.

In addition to examining institutionalized corruption within Russia, this paper is supplemented by three brief explorations of the nature of ethics within a society. These philosophical asides contribute to a more holistic analysis of the effects of degenerative societal formations, as well as the potential orders that might contribute to a more ethical society.
Corruption: Defect or Device?

Corruption in Russia is significant compared to other Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nations, and even the many underdeveloped nations. In 2021, Russia received a score of 29/100 on Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), far below the minimum score to indicate a serious corruption problem and ranked 136th out of 180 countries measured. Moreover, the World Bank’s 2019 survey of Russia’s private sector firms revealed corruption to be a significant obstacle to doing business in Russia. According to business owners and managers, in 19.8% of public transactions “...a gift or informal payment was requested,” 31.7% of firms expected “...to give gifts in meetings with tax officials,” and 35.3% of firms expected “...to give gifts to get a construction permit.” These indicators of corruption are more than triple the average rate of Europe & Central Asian countries.

Despite its exceptionally high rank on multiple international corruption measures, there has been no negative correlation between the prevalence of corruption in Russia and Russia’s ability to govern, also known as its state capacity. In a 2008 study, Keith Darden revealed that Russia ranks far above average in its ability to extract taxes from its population, and after correlating the percent of GDP extracted as tax revenue to the Corruption Perceptions Index, Darden determines that, contrary to popular perception, there is not an inverse relationship between Russia’s corruption levels and both its extractive capacity and government expenditures. Russia suffers from severe corruption while maintaining an efficient state with a high degree of administrative control, indicating that Russia’s form of corruption does not weaken the functioning of the administrative hierarchy, but reinforces it. This relationship is found in cases where informal contracts exist that provide illicit gains between the state administration and subordinates, especially in societies with barriers to the maintenance of stable, bureaucratic institutions. Darden states, “In such cases, widespread deviations from the law may signal the presence of robust, informal hierarchical institutions rather than the breakdown of the administrative hierarchy.” These findings indicate that corruption in Russia is not a failure of its formal institutions, but a mechanism for its informal institutions to reinforce the state and ensure compliance through illegitimate means.

Consequently, the boundary between Russia’s legitimate and illegitimate forms of influence becomes blurred as both constitute an essential role in maintaining its current regime. This is a result of multiple aspects of Russia’s formal institutions that are designed to compel Russians to operate outside of the formal system. In How Russia really works, Alena Ledeneva demonstrates how corruption
was institutionalized in the post-soviet era of the 1990s. Ledeneva finds that the same non-transparency and defected institutional framework which hindered the success of shock therapy created an economy that relied on a scheme of unwritten rules. These unwritten rules were capitalized on by the Russian system to correct for its incoherencies: “The incoherence of formal rules compels almost all Russians, willingly or unwillingly, to violate them and to play by rules introduced and negotiated outside formal institutions.”

Deficiencies in banking, property protections, land codes, tax codes, and other aspects of the market system forced Russians to break the formal rules and follow the unwritten ones, leading to the selective enforcement and selective punishment of rule violations. Ledeneva states that out of these unwritten rules, informal institutions are formed, defining informal institutions as “…socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside officially sanctioned channels.” These exploitations of formal institutions and informality’s purpose of compensating for the incoherencies of the formal institutions encompass much of the logic of corruption that is exercised under the current system. The proliferation of informality within the system enables those who can selectively enforce standards and selectively impose punishments, otherwise known as the administrative regime of Russia.

Philosopher Thomas Hobbes establishes the purpose of formal rules enforced by an authoritative state in his groundbreaking work *Leviathan*. According to Hobbes’s philosophy, security requires one to attain more power than all rivals, and conquest over others is necessary to maintain that power. Therefore, a man has the right to have dominion over others in pursuit of security. In this condition, every man is in a state of war, hindering innovation, culture, and society. This is a result of a lack of security over one's possessions or one's life. However, the actions of men within the state of nature are not immoral, and only when a law is created to police these actions do they become immoral. The condition of war can be seen in groups of people that lack the rule of a government. Therefore, a coercive, absolute power must exist to remove the fear of the state of war and facilitate justice though the threat of punishment. The justice that results will allow for the ownership of property in a commonwealth. While Russia maintains a monopoly on legitimate violence over its constituents, the informality in its rules weakens the benefits of government described by Hobbes, casting doubt on the right to property and security ideally maintained by formal law.

**Economy of Favors**

Since the 1990s, Putin has increasingly shifted Russia’s formal institutions
towards a self-reinforcing system of informality. After his election in 2000, Putin worked to restructure the oligarchic class, ousting Yeltsin’s elites, and instituting his own loyalists. His practice of exchanging rents for the loyalty of his cronies cemented the presence of informal hierarchical institutions, reorienting Russia’s economy and political system into a strict hierarchical structure. This is evidenced by the leaked document *Reform of the Administration of the President of the Russian Federation*, where Putin outlined his intentions to overrule and reorient the “self-regulating” market.

Institutionalized corruption through unwritten rules in Russia has been shown to be a useful tool used by Putin to straighten his power vertical and achieve his policy goals. Namely, through interference in Russia’s economy and partiality in who receives the benefits of government cooperation. Author of *Politics In Russia: A Reader*, Joel Ostrow, explains the expansion of corporate capitalism due to institutional corruption by asserting, “Economic status is based largely on informal rules resulting from individual connections, one of unequal favors and access in an environment in which state involvement in the
The discriminatory treatment of certain individuals when assigning state contracts is a form of corruption that encouraged the monumental shift towards kleptocracy that has occurred during Putin’s regime. Informal contracts and unequal favors between the state and big business is another key instance of corruption and informality being incorporated as an integral part of the system. These informal economic agreements created an environment of non-transparency where the formal institutions would purposely obfuscate privatization policy. This is because if the state had created definite, consistently enforced rules for tax policy, the oligarchs would become “liberalized” in a formal market, therefore restricting the state’s ability to use informal institutions to coerce the oligarch class. The Kremlin relies on this informal advantage to maintain the loyalty of oligarchs and preserve political power at the top. This further clarifies how Russia is able to achieve high state capacity while corruption and informality increase.

One of the most important examples of this occurrence is the rise of Rosneft and Gazprom as the major oil and gas producers in Russia. In Dawisha’s analysis of the development of Putin’s Kleptocracy, she analyzes the extent to which Gazprom has benefited from informal institutions and what effect it has had on the health of Russian society. The state-owned energy cooperation contributed 8% of Russia’s GDP in 2011, however, around 70% of Gazprom’s capital expenditures constitute “value destruction” due to their nontransparent and extraneous nature. These favored companies who received exclusive, lucrative state contracts infamously move their money abroad, operating as private entities in foreign tax havens by selling state-owned assets. Dawisha contextualizes this ecosystem of state contracts and Gazprom’s capital flight, stating, “In any Western country, this would be called criminal malfeasance. In Russia it is called government.” This practice destroys any value the Russian taxpayer is owed, further contributing to the stalling development of their society.

While Putin’s exploitation of informal rules to further the economic interest of private entities might be viewed as unjust within the classical liberal school of thought, Karl Marx provides a unique commentary on where exploitative practices of capitalism like these might fall under his model of justice. According to Allen Wood’s analysis of the Marxian theory of justice, these essential elements of capitalism cannot be unjust because they entirely correspond to the logic of capitalism. For example, if a capitalist (or the Russian oligarch) were to provide the laborer with the full value of their labor power, then the capitalist would never be able to accumulate more capital. Furthermore, providing the laborer with the entire value of their labor would be unjust under
a capitalist mode of production because it violates the function of capital as private property, and therefore the rights of the capital owner. Marx does not conceive of justice as a universal law or moral imperative that supersedes material conditions, but rather as something that is contextual and subject to the mode of production. Whether or not the economy of favors propagated in Russia is ethically consistent with their underlying economic system, it is clear that the rampant exploitation of public goods for private gain is contributing to degenerative social structures.

**Effect on Civil Society**

Many of the most critical effects of institutionalized corruption are found in its impact on Russian citizens and civil society. Formal institutions at every level of the bureaucracy rely on informal means as a way to make up for an absence of adequate resources provided from the top. One noteworthy way that these informal means of “getting things done” are tracked is through the Global Informality Project, an encyclopedia of unwritten rules curated from a multitude of regional experts. Through this encyclopedia’s analysis of Soviet and Post-Soviet informal practices in Russia, an “economy of favors” becomes apparent. This is an economy that distributes resources and connections on the basis on personal favors. One important concept of normalized corruption in Russia is *blat*, which is the practice of
Using sociability and personal networks to access influence or resources. While commonly associated with the period of the Soviet Union, Ledeneva argues that blat actually increased after the collapse of the USSR's centralized formal institutions and the rise of privatization, writing, “In transitional economies, the defects of markets are compensated for by informal networks; low levels of impersonal trust in state institutions shifts the emphasis onto interpersonal trust.” Beyond blat, the Global Informality Project highlights many other methods of coercion that are used by all levels of state officials and bureaucrats against citizens to compensate for institutional failures. For instance, Otkat was prolific in the 2000s as a means for bureaucrats to overcharge persons for a product or service and embezzle the remainder. Compromising materials, or Kompromat, is a well-known tool for officials to coerce and eliminate economic and political competition. Lastly, Vzyatkoemkost, or “corruptogenic potential,” is a type of law that creates an opportunity for exploitation and bribery by granting administrators increased discretionary power. This is often strategically proposed by lawmakers to facilitate the capture of private markets for personal gain. All of these corrupt practices of informality employed by formal institutions create many opportunities for additional burdens to be passed down from high-ranking administrators to the common citizen.

Due to the inherent structure of Russia’s institutions, the average Russian is as equally as intertwined with informality as is the Russian state. One-third of Russians, or 25 million people, are a part of the informal economy. This is typically through the practice of compensating employees with “black” and “gray” salaries. Those who receive black salaries are not registered employees and do not pay taxes on their compensation. Furthermore, many receive gray salaries, meaning they work in the formal sector but informally receive unreported “cash in the envelope” payments. Bribes often compose a portion of these informal payments, particularly for state workers who are poorly compensated by the Russian government. This “second salary” for Russian state workers constitutes an additional tax of the average Russian, aggregating to about 2000 USD per Russian, equal to the size of the entire Russian budget.

Even Russia’s civil society does not evade the effects of institutionalized corruption, as Russians have comparably less trust in their social structures. According to an article by the Harvard Business Review, only 40-50% of Russians were reported to be trusting of their social institution. Often if a civil society operates in an environment of prolific corruption in its formal institutions, corruption is more prominent throughout that civil society and its Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).
Philosopher John Rawls in *The Idea of Public Reason Revisited* upholds reasonable public discourse between free and equal citizens as fundamental to a well ordered constitutional democratic society, an arrangement greatly undermined by Russia’s degenerating trust in their civil society. According to Rawls, the concept of “public reason” is necessary for political liberalism to function as intended. In short, public reason is a concept of political liberalism that necessitates that people who wish to participate in public discourse justify their ideas with reasons that are evidenced by rationale outside of a comprehensive doctrine. The idea of public reason rests on the connections between the government of a constitutional democracy and the citizens, also known as the political relation. This public relation must be defined by a certain type of moral and political reasoning and embody the criterion of reciprocity. This particular conceptualization of a public relation is public reason. Furthermore, citizenship is inherently a form of public relation, and is entered by the citizen when they are born into a society that allows for equal, collective use of political power. Public reason is a requirement for a deliberative democracy where citizens reasonably discuss their plurality of viewpoints on certain political questions. According to Rawls, this is part of one’s duty of civility. However, Russians lack of trust in both their government and social structures damages the criterion of reciprocity and therefore public reason. This greatly impairs Russia’s approach to a well-ordered constitutional democracy.
Conclusion

Institutional corruption in Russia permeates every aspect of its society. It is tactically employed through non-transparency and unwritten rules in Russia’s formal institutions to create a self-reinforcing system of informality. This informality is key to maintaining the administrative hierarchies of Russia’s regime, its coercive power over favored oligarchs, influence within its geopolitical competitors, and its exploitation of the Russian people. These outcomes of corruption when exercised through informality significantly limit the autonomy of Russian citizens while simultaneously increasing the capacities of the systems that repress them.

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Bleak Blooms
Jordan Stegeman
senior | fine arts

Abstract

In my painting, “Bleak Blooms,” I represent the harsh reality of anxiety. I wanted the bright flowers to represent how others see an anxious individual along with a muted and jagged background to represent how that individual views themselves internally. The idea is to convey the sense of agitation and restlessness that a person with anxiety can experience, particularly as a college student, which I have heard from many friends not only here at K-State, but from around the world as well.
Settler Colonialism and Education: What Haven’t We Learned?

Bailey Britton
graduated | english, journalism

Abstract

The U.S. education system appears to be set up to not teach students about the dark side of colonialism. It tells the story of the colonizers, not the colonized. We see the effects of settler colonialism in our everyday lives, but we don’t even realize it because from a young age, we are educated to ignore it. Through this paper, I discuss my experiences as a student and a researcher and apply the theory of settler colonialism to monuments in the state of Kansas that reinforce settler colonial ideals.
When I took the class ENGL420 “Indigneous Films” with Dr. Lisa Tatonetti, I thought I was enrolling in an easy class. I expected to watch movies and enjoy them, not to have my perspective about colonialism and the education system changed. Growing up in western Kansas, my education on Indigenous people usually revolved around Buffalo Bill and his Wild West show. I vaguely remember a fifth-grade project where each student was assigned an Indigenous group to report on. I had watched many westerns as a kid with my grandpa, which also informed my education on Indigenous people. It wasn’t until I took the Indigneous Films class that I realized the education system had set me up to not learn about Indigenous people. Dr. Tatonetti taught us on the first day of that class that most educational standards in the United States don’t teach about Indigenous people in a post-1900 context. The more I learned about settler colonialism, the more I realized that the education system is not set up to teach about the colonization of the United States and the subsequent murder, removal, and erasure of Indigenous people. A lot of my education on the subject occurred outside of the classroom through my own determination and assistance from faculty and staff at K-State. That isn’t how it should be. However, settler colonialism is why the education system is set up this way.

Scholar Lorenzo Veracini says settler colonialism is a type of colonialism that attempts to erase itself. Veracini says erasure is how settler colonialism “covers its tracks and operates towards its self-supersession.” Self-supersession—the erasure of the colonial act, or invasion—results in a structure to replace the Indigenous culture with settler culture. For example, the colonists dominate the Indigenous group, and then force them to assimilate, leave the occupied area, or die. The colonists then replace their colonial government or way of living—which is the complete control of the Indigenous population—with a different system of their creation that is no longer colonial. The new system would be deemed fair and equal to all people by the colonists, and there would be no separation of colonized and colonizer. However, it is not fair and equal to all.

The settlers force the Indigenous people to comply, and the settlers work towards the end goal, where there is no need for a colonial government exerting power over the Indigenous groups. This is why settler colonialism is not usually successful—the Indigenous people don’t see the end point of colonization. There is always colonization of their people and culture. The settler colonialists continue to push out the Indigenous people who, as long as they are still resisting, prove that the colonial event of domination, murder, and forced removal took place. After the Indigenous people are “gone”—either from murder, removal, or assimilation—
the story of what occurred can be changed to fit the settler’s needs for domination. However, there are still Indigenous people in the United States and around the world who resist and tell the history of colonization of their people. Settler colonialism continues to this day in the United States through white-washed histories, appropriation of Indigenous nation names in the names of states like Kansas, and resistance to tribal sovereignty. In Kansas (and elsewhere), the appropriation of names is also used in sports teams’ names, such as the Kansas City Chiefs or the Manhattan High School Indians, and monuments like Johnny Kaw, Blue Earth Plaza, and “Peace Offering on the Blue” in Manhattan, Kansas.

Over the summers of 2021 and 2022, I researched settler colonialism in Kansas monuments with assistance from Dr. Lisa Tatonetti, Dr. Abby Knoblauch, and the McNair Scholars Program. I was inspired to conduct this research because I was angry that I hadn’t learned about the Indigenous history of Kansas before, specifically about the Kanza people, who the state of Kansas are named after. I also wanted to bring that history to light for other people. Research was a way for me to learn more about the world I grew up in, and also use my privilege as a student at K-State to show others what I’ve learned.

The Kanza people lived in what is now Kansas beginning in the 1500s. According to “A Timeline History,” their historic lands include what is now northern Missouri and Kansas, and southern Nebraska, and consisted of approximately 20 million acres. Traditionally, the Kanza lived semi-nomadically, following the bison for hunting. However, when white settlers arrived in the area, their way of life changed. The U.S. Government forced them onto reservations, resulting in drastic lifestyle changes for the Kanza. The U.S. government initially restricted the Kanza to a 2-million-acre reservation west of Topeka in 1825. Then, in 1847, the government moved the Kanza to a 256,000-acre reservation near present-day Council Grove. In 1849, the government once again reduced the Kanza reservation, leaving them with only 80,620 acres of their original 20 million.
White settlers and the U.S. government agents treated the Kanza terribly, often tricking the Kanza into paying for things they could not afford, resulting in debts they would attempt to pay off with their annuity money, buffalo hides, and ponies, to no avail.\(^7\) In addition to continually reducing the size of the reservations, settlers often homestead on the Kanza 1847-1859 reservation lands near present-day Council Grove.\(^8\) Finally, in 1873, the U.S. government forcibly removed the Kanza to “Indian Territory” in Oklahoma.\(^9\) Despite the Kaw name being used for names of places around Kansas, the Kaw Nation’s historic claim to the land is not acknowledged.

My first research project, titled “Media Discourse about In´zhúje´waxóbe: Rhetorical Sovereignty Subverts Settler Colonialism,” researched rhetoric around the Kaw Nation sacred item In´zhúje´waxóbe, which currently stands in Lawrence, Kansas, and is a monument to the “pioneers of Kansas.” The Kaw Nation is now headquartered in Kaw City, Oklahoma. After the U.S. government removed the Kanza people to Oklahoma in 1873, they did not have access to In´zhúje´waxóbe. In 1929, the city of Lawrence stole In´zhúje´waxóbe.

The discourse in news articles from 1929 to the early 2000s was distinctly colonial, and often dismissed the city’s culpability in the theft of In´zhúje´waxóbe. Early news reports did not mention that the Kaw Nation claimed In´zhúje´waxóbe even though it would have been common knowledge at the time, according to Ron Parks in his book *The Darkest Period: The Kanza Indians and Their Last Homeland.*
Early news reports from 1929 said that the city of Lawrence had claim to the rock because the rock, they said, was a pioneer like them.\(^{10}\) Calling the rock a “pioneer” removes the Indigenous context from In´zhúje´waxóbe. The plaque on the rock now dedicates it to the “pioneers of Kansas,” implying the pioneers and settlers of Lawrence were the first people in the area. However, the Kaw Nation and many other Indigenous people lived in the area for centuries—the “pioneers” mentioned may have been the first white people. However, it was only after nearly 100 years of discourse surrounding the monument that the Kaw Nation requested the return of In´zhúje´waxóbe. After much debate, in 2021, the city of Lawrence formally adopted a resolution to return In´zhúje´waxóbe to the Kaw Nation.\(^{11}\) Now, news articles published in the Lawrence Journal World predominantly focus on the Indigenous history of In´zhúje´waxóbe and center Indigenous voices.

Conducting this research gave me more insight into how settler colonialism informs the media and, by extension, people’s perspective on the world around them. Seeing settler colonialism in action is very different from learning about it in the classroom. However, it’s still important to learn about settler colonialism and the effects of colonization.

Settler colonialism seeps into our everyday life, whether we notice it or not. Much of it is something we are taught to do without even knowing why or how. Colonization started as an intentional activity—and still can be intentional—but most everyday people are not aware of it. The effects of colonization are in our everyday culture. Our culture glorifies the settlement of “the West” and Manifest Destiny, which is reflected in our education system and also in the media we consume. Western movies and books focus on the white cowboy figure and Indigenous people are often side characters that are steeped in stereotypes. Stereotypes are perpetuated through the culture, and if people aren’t properly educated on those stereotypes, they will believe them and take them as fact.

Knowing about settler colonialism and Indigenous misrepresentation helped me create my research question while walking my dog one morning—why is Johnny Kaw called Johnny Kaw? The project, “Settler Colonialism and Indigenous (Mis)Representation in Manhattan Monuments,” focused on the stereotypes and representation of the Kaw Nation in the sites of public memory Johnny Kaw, Blue Earth Plaza, and “Peace Offering on the Blue.” I focused on how public memory practices shaped these representations. Public memory is a way for a group of people to remember history and cultural values, but in doing so, they also choose how they remember historical events and construct what the narratives around the events are.\(^{12}\) Through these three sites of
memory, we observe different levels of interaction between the city of Manhattan and the Kaw Nation. Starting with the statue of Johnny Kaw, there is no interaction between the cultures, but that changes with Blue Earth Plaza and “Peace Offering on the Blue.”

Johnny Kaw is a fictional white pioneer created by former K-State professor George Filinger. Filinger created the character of Johnny to celebrate Manhattan’s centennial celebration in 1955 and the statue was built in 1966. Now, Johnny stands in City Park, holding a scythe. He is a tall, blond, white man. However, he draws his name “Kaw” from the Kaw Nation and places in Kansas named after the Kaw Nation.

In placing a statue of a blond, white settler named Johnny Kaw on historically Kaw land, the ownership of the name “Kaw” then mistakenly reflects an inherently white history through appearance, name, and location. The history is recast by taking the Indigenous name and giving it to a white settler figure, and then claiming he created Kansas landmarks and Kanza sacred sites, which are then allegedly named after him. This adds another layer of distance to the already murky history people are taught about Indigenous people. Monuments themselves—in location, characteristics, and ownership—help form the narratives and cultural values the dominant culture of white Manhattan residents choose to remember. The non-Indigenous people of Manhattan decided Johnny Kaw reflected the cultural values of Manhattan in the 50s and 60s.

Blue Earth Plaza and “Peace Offering on the Blue,” however, reflect changes in public memory practices in Manhattan. Blue Earth Plaza, a small park with a shopping center in Manhattan, was named after the Blue Earth Village the Kanza people lived in during the late 1700s and the early 1800s. The Manhattan City Commission approved the name for the Plaza in 2011. The city commission’s goal was “to spark awareness among the local community. Manhattan City Commissioners hope the name of this one-acre park will educate residents about Native American history in Kansas and honor
the Kansa Indian tribe.” However, the plaza itself has no signs or plaques that explain the history behind the name—it’s up to the individual to research for themselves what the name means. In addition, the city commission did not take into consideration that the government forcibly removed the Kanza from their homelands—they only mentioned that they once lived in the area. The intentions behind the name may have been good, but the execution was poor.

The same goes for “Peace Offering on the Blue.” Tom Ford, a white artist from Wyoming, created the statue. While it might seem at first that the statue “Peace Offering on the Blue” is another Manhattan public site meant to honor the Kansa people, Ford admits that he neither consulted Kaw Nation members nor did he undertake any research for the statue; instead, he “just picked up his tools and started carving out what his imagination thought it should look like.” The motivation for the statue is similar to the intent behind Blue Earth Plaza—the city commission wanted to recognize that the Kaw lived on that land. However, here again, they did not want to remember the forced removal from the area.

Providing interactions between groups with opposing voices is what monuments and sites of memory should do, Matthew Houdeck and Kendall Phillips explain. They write that sometimes there can be tension between groups about official historic accounts and what monuments promote:

Given the function of such places of memory to construct a vision of national identity for their viewers, these same sites invite dissident
voices to challenge the official versions of history to create space so that their own voices may be heard. … In such cases, the locations of museums, monuments, or memorials within a specific space and time, and the embeddedness within a particular geographical and economic landscape, open them to vernacular contestation.¹⁵

Each monument discussed in this paper is a product of its own time period. The time periods, paired with the location on historically Kaw land, reflect the public memory practices of the dominant culture during that time. In the case of Johnny Kaw, the collective dominant memory at the time ignored Indigenous people and the Kaw did not have input into the creation of a white settler figure using their name. Newer monuments attempt to bring the Kaw Nation back into the narrative, with the city asking for input in the process. However, even with the input from the Kaw Nation, the sites of memory intentions fall flat.

In Manhattan, there are several other efforts to recognize Indigenous history in the area, as well as change and acknowledge current hurtful portrayals. Some efforts have failed, such as pushes to change the Manhattan High School mascot, which is currently the Indians. The largely white MHS community continues to vote against changing the mascot.¹⁶ Other efforts are more successful, such as The Chapman Center for Rural Studies’ Kansas land treaties project. The project is aimed at the public, and focuses on the Kanza perspective of the 1825, 1846, and 1859 treaties that allowed the U.S. government to remove the Kanza from their homelands.¹⁷

To me, education is one of the most important things a person can have. Without education, I wouldn’t know about
settler colonialism, which is probably what society wants. Once you’re educated, you start to see the effects of colonization all around you. For example, K-State is a landgrant university, and takes pride in that. Where did that land come from though? Before it was K-State land, the Kanza people—and others—lived and thrived in this area. When the U.S. Government forcibly removed the Kanza people to Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma, the government stole the land. They covered this up with treaties that harmed the Indigenous people, claiming to make them civilized. However, the treaties did not properly compensate them and the U.S. Government often lied and cheated the Indigenous people. Stolen land, treaties, and murders of Indigenous people isn’t covered in the modern United States education system.

Whenever I get a chance in my classes, I try to talk about settler colonialism or a similar topic. This semester, I took the class ENGL705 Theories of Cultural Studies. The professor, Greg Eiselein, had every student teach a class period on an article of their choice from our textbook. I chose to teach “Imperialist Nostalgia” by Renato Resaldo. I had read this article for my research over the summer, but the teaching assignment gave me the opportunity to dig into it deeper and try to teach others why it is important to learn about imperialism and its effects.
Imperialist nostalgia is a type of nostalgia that colonizers or imperialists may feel after they have completely altered or destroyed a way of life.\textsuperscript{18} Resaldo writes that nostalgia is a way for those in power to feel better about what they destroyed, which is contradictory, as “a mood of nostalgia makes racial domination appear innocent and pure.”\textsuperscript{19} A simple way to think of it is like this: “A person kills somebody, and then mourns their victim.”\textsuperscript{20} The article was written and published in 1989. We discussed how we still see imperialist nostalgia in our culture today. The class discussion was engaging—all but one student actively participated in the discussion. Imperialist nostalgia and colonization are something everyone sees in their life. That being said, these are students who have learned about colonization and settler colonialism and imperialist nostalgia—these concepts wouldn’t be obvious to anyone who hadn’t heard of these subjects before.

Growing up, I wasn’t taught about Indigenous people, the way the government treated them, or how they are living now. I was, however, taught that the state of Kansas was named after the Kanza people. I was taught—in vague details that may be inaccurate—that Native Americans lived in teepees. I was taught that they hunted buffalo and grew corn. I was taught that the government tried to help the Native Americans and “civilize” them. I was taught that the United States wasn’t to blame for their death. I wasn’t taught that the government forced Indigenous children into boarding schools, ripping them away from their parents. I wasn’t taught how reservations were formed. I wasn’t taught that Indigenous people still live today and have sovereign governments. According to IllumiNatives, a non-profit Native leadership organization dedicated to research, “A study of schools in 2011–2012 found that nearly 87 percent of state history standards failed to cover Native American history in a post-1900 context and that 27 states did not specifically name any individual Native Americans in their standards at all.” Beyond K-12 and undergraduate education, IllumiNatives reports, “None of the federal judges interviewed had taken an Indian law course in law school; they reported that either their school didn’t offer one or they did not recall seeing a course offered.” The lack of education isn’t something that was only experienced by me or students in Kansas—it’s a nation-wide issue.

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An Interview with Mr. Roger Friedmann

Bryant Macfarlane

doctoral candidate | history

Abstract

An interview with Mr. Friedmann, instructor of ENGL 575 Holocaust Literature. Mr. Friedmann, whose personal and professional connection to the material is worthy of the consideration of any student, is offering a Primary Texts Certificate qualifying course for the final time before he retires.
One of the quintessential “bucket-list” college experiences is meeting people from different walks of life with different lived experiences. Generally, these experiences are amongst our peer group. However, occasionally, you are presented with the opportunity to meet a faculty member less as a professional educator and more as an individual. I was recently rewarded with this experience when I sat down to speak with English Department Faculty Member Mr. Roger Friedmann about his upcoming spring 2023 offering of English 575 – Holocaust Literature.

Mr. Friedmann moved to Israel in 1973 as a volunteer to help rebuild Israel after the Yom Kippur War. “I didn’t plan on staying. I thought I’d be there for 6 months, and I was just taken by my experience when I was there and decided to stay.” Living on a communal farming Kibbutz and dedicating his days to helping fellow Jews, Friedmann would eventually be conscripted and serve as a paratrooper in the Israeli Defense Force. Friedmann moved in communities of authors and created written pieces while in Israel but found his mastery of Hebrew somewhat limiting. “I couldn’t express myself with the kind of precision that I wanted to,” said Friedmann.

This longing for a full creative range of expression inspired Friedmann to return to the US in 1980. After publishing some works and earning his MA in Creative Writing and English Literature from K-State, the late University Distinguished Professor Dr. Lilian Kremer asked Friedmann to contribute biographical pieces to The Encyclopedia for Holocaust Literature (2002).

Friedmann took over the Holocaust Literature course in 2000, first as an Honors offering, then as a topics course, and finally in its current form as a 500-level course. Over the last twenty years, Friedmann and the class have evolved. “I can’t divorce the literature from the history,” said Friedmann, “I want to know what made this author write this thing and that. There came a point in which I changed what I taught from, you know, works of fiction about the Holocaust by American writers as well as other writers to they were either based on extensive interviews with a particular survivor or written by those who survived the Holocaust.”

The Spring 2023 offering will be the last for Friedmann and one he hopes to be the most excellent version of the course. Friedmann feels that especially given the events in Ukraine over the past months, that Holocaust literature has a more profound impact on our understanding of the world. Friedmann offered that he will have more invested in this semester’s teaching than he had in the past, “although I’ve always felt like this course was the most demanding course for me to teach in terms of preparation.” In fact, Friedmann is still researching to connect his materials even more closely to the lived experiences of Jews.
I recently found an old diary entry inscribed in a French novel’s margins. The writer was about 14 years old, but it had been written in English actually. Then it was eventually, it was buried and hidden. When it was recovered, it was published in a book called *The Secret Diaries of the Children During the Holocaust*. When I found it, I discovered something very interesting. The entry has a very clear parallel with a short story written by an author who was present in the same Ghetto at the same time. It was written up as a short story, but it’s obvious what changes he made. But the parallel just can’t be ignored. We have records of these moments to truly explain and testimonial for these people and the conditions they were put through. And hopefully, that’s a condition we will never find again in human history…It just amazes me the way so much survived against all the odds.

In selecting materials, Friedmann consciously chose various works to guide the reader through the experience of several ghettos, hiding in the countryside to avoid capture, and the infamous Auschwitz concentration camp. While the poetry of Abraham Sutzkever and Paul Celan may be new to many, the inclusion of Art Spiegelman’s graphic novel *Maus* and Elie Wiesel’s *Night* may be more familiar.

When pressed as to his decision to include a graphic novel, Friedman offered, “I have to say that this was an eye-opening experience for me because I avoided looking at it for years. But when
I read it, I was just floored by how good it was - it’s not a comic book at all; it’s an amazing work.” Friedmann continues to teach Wiesel's work, not only because of its importance and accessibility, but because of the transference of insights from college to the high school classroom through Education majors.

The inclusion of Joshua Sobel’s play “Ghetto” and Aharon Appelfeld’s *Tzili* have a special connection for Friedmann. Sobel’s work, which dutifully relays the creation of a theater company as a way for registering protest and unity through skits and songs that were incomprehensible to the SS guards, was created on a Kibbutz very near the one that Friedmann himself lived on and about the same time. Appelfeld and Friedmann have common ties to the villages mentioned in the work.

Friedmann has developed the course to focus on a paced but close reading of the material. Friedmann adds several close reading workshops throughout the course that focuses the reader on questions about the works initially as a small group but finally as individual directed writing pieces.

While Friedmann is interested in technical writing – particularly written communication for engineers – he is also the editor for City Arts Magazine and assistant editor of *Studies in Twentieth Century Literature*. Friedmann will be retiring from K-State in 2024 and hopes that this final offering of English 575: Holocaust Literature is a fitting homage to Dr. Kremer and to his efforts over the past twenty years to make the experiences of the Holocaust more accessible to K-Staters. English 575 fulfills upper-level course requirements for the Primary Texts Certificate Program and the Historical Perspectives and Aesthetic Interpretation content areas of the K-State 8. English 575 convenes Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 1:30-2:20 PM in Spring 2023.
Live Ideas: Undergraduate Primary Texts Journal

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Editors:
Austin Kruse (political science, philosophy, pre-law; ajkrusu@ksu.edu)
Kamryn Nickel (political science, pre-law, history; krnickel@ksu.edu)

Assistant Editor:
Tinashe Sekabanja (statistics, data science; tinashem@ksu.edu)

Primary Texts Program Director & Associate Faculty Editor:
Laurie Johnson (political science; lauriej@ksu.edu)

Primary Texts Program Graduate Assistants:
Bryant Macfarlane (history; bmarc002@ksu.edu)
Alex Corrado (public administration; corrado@ksu.edu)

Student Reviewers:
Ashley Elliott (history; classical studies; ashley220@ksu.edu)
Naomi Galindo (french, international and area studies; ngalindn21@ksu.edu)
Laura Anderson (political science; lauraanderson@ksu.edu)
Cassidy Hartig (english; chartig@ksu.edu)
Wilbur Dodderidge (history; classical studies; mddodder@ksu.edu)

Faculty Reviewers:
Kathleen Antonioli (modern languages; kantonioli@ksu.edu)
Mark Crosby (english; crosbym@ksu.edu)
John Fliter (political science; jfliter@ksu.edu)

Carol Franko (english; franko@ksu.edu)
Sara Luly (modern languages; srhuly@ksu.edu)
James Hohenbary III (nationally competitive scholarships; jimlhb@ksu.edu)
Benjamin McCloskey (classical studies; mmccloskey@ksu.edu)
Shannon Skelton (theatre; shbskelton@ksu.edu)

John Warner (political science; jmwarner@ksu.edu)

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—Jakob Hanschu & Laurie Johnson
“Conducting this research gave me more insight into how settler colonialism informs the media and, by extension, people’s perspective on the world around them. Seeing settler colonialism in action is very different from learning about it in the classroom.”

– Bailey Britton

“When we left Haiti, we never looked back—but the paradise we expected to find waiting for us on the other side didn’t exist.”

– Teri Jacques