

# Polish Lecture Series at the University of Virginia

By Prof. Roberto Geraci

The Polish Lecture Series was established by the American Institute of Polish Culture, Inc. at the time of the Kosciuszko Chair transfer. The endowment fund was created to supplement existing coursework with ongoing extra-curricular talks by leading scholars on Poland.

Since the inauguration of the program in the 2005-2006 academic year, 15 scholars have given a total of 18 lectures on various aspects of Polish history, literature and culture, society, politics and international relations. The Polish Lectures Series is administered by a committee of Virginia faculty with expertise in Polish Studies under the direction of the Center for Russian & East European Studies

In the 2008-2009 academic year, the following lectures were presented:

On March 12, 2009, Allen Kuharski, Professor of Theater at Swarthmore College, spoke on "Silence, Soliloquy and Karaoke: Adapting Witold Gombrowicz to the Stage in Poland and the U.S." Professor Kuharski is the Chair of the Department of Theater at Swarthmore. His articles, reviews, and translations have been widely published in the U.S., Great Britain, Poland, France and the Netherlands. He is the leading authority on the theatrical work of Polish playwright Witold Gombrowicz, and is the co-editor of the 16-volume edition of his collected works being published in Poland. His translations of works by Gombrowicz and Ionesco have been widely performed nationally as well as internationally. He commissioned and served as the production dramaturge of Pig Iron Theatre Company's OBIE Award-winning production *Hell Meets Henry Halfway*, which was inspired by Gombrowicz's novel *Possessed*. Kuharski is the recipient of the Order of Merit for Polish Culture (2002) and the Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz Award (2006).

While he was at UVA, Professor Kuharski also spoke at classes in the University's Drama department.

On April 23rd, 2009, Mr. Herbert Eagle, Professor of Slavic Languages & Literature at the University of Michigan, gave a lecture entitled, "Visual Coding, Dissident Meaning and the Enduring Message of Andrzej Wajda's *Ashes and Diamonds*." Professor Eagle discussed in depth Wajda's third full-length film that masterfully interweaves the fate of a nation with that of one man, establishing Wajda as a leader of the new, post-war Polish cinema. Professor Eagle also spoke at classes in the University's department of Slavic Languages and Literature.



Professor  
Allen Kuharski

On October 27, 2009, Dariusz Tolczyk, Professor of Slavic Languages and Literature at the University of Virginia, conducted a screening of "*Katyn*," the most personal film of Poland's Oscar-winning director Andrzej Wajda. *Katyn* is the name of the forest where the Soviets secretly murdered 22,000 Polish military officers, intellectuals and professionals in the Spring of 1940 (in which the 14-year-old Wajda lost his own father). Stalin's purpose was to destroy those elements of the population who would be most resistant to Soviet control following World War II. For decades the truth was obfuscated by both the Soviet and Polish governments, with the Nazis often blamed for the atrocity. Half a century later, in 1990, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev admitted his nation's responsibility. In this elegant production, Wajda recreates war-torn Poland and the stories of both the perpetrators and their victims. "*Katyn*" was an Oscar nominee



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for Best Foreign Language Film in 2008. After the screening, Professor Tolczyk gave a lecture entitled, "The Katyn Massacre: Stalin's Crime and Its Western Cover-Up," at Monroe Hall.

At the time of this writing, the Polish Lecture Committee at the University of Virginia is planning its series of events for the 2009-2010 academic year, celebrating the life and accomplishments of Pope John Paul II and Fryderyk Chopin (2010 marks the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth), and their influence around the world.



# Euro Challenge

## Miami-Dade Competition 2010 Winners

The Euro Challenge is an exciting educational opportunity for high school students to learn about the European Union (EU) and the Euro. Student teams of three to five students are asked to make presentations answering specific questions about the European economy and the single currency, the euro. They are also asked to pick one member country of the "euro area" (the 16 EU member countries that have adopted the euro so far), to examine an economic problem at the country level, and to identify policies for responding to that problem.

### Coral Reef Senior High School

Ridhima Gurnani  
Barbara Jerome  
Nicole Martinez  
Melissa Quintana  
Perihan Elbadrawi

### G. Holmes Braddock Senior High School

Karen Burgos  
Yadira Capaz  
Estefania Chavez  
Katherine Nilsson  
Gerry Rivadeneira

### Miami Palmetto Senior High School

Samanta Agron  
Joelle Deleveaux  
Alyssa Rosenfeld  
Lucia Ruan  
Ellora Sarkar

*Congratulations to these outstanding students!*