



## CESS Elections 2018 – Candidate statements

### Candidates for President (one vacancy)

[Marlene LARUELLE](#)

[Jennifer Brick MURTAZASHVILI](#)

#### Marlene LARUELLE

I am Associate Director and Research Professor at the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies ([IERES](#)), Elliott School of International Affairs, The George Washington University. I received my Ph.D. in history at the National Institute of Oriental Languages and Cultures (INALCO) and my post-doctoral degree in political science at Sciences Po in Paris. In 2012, I launched GW's Central Asia Program (CAP), which I have been directing ever since. Within its framework of CAP, I have organized more than 230 events; launched several series of online papers and e-books; established two websites, [Voices on Central Asia](#) and [Central Asian Analytical Network](#); and founded a peer-reviewed quarterly, [Central Asian Affairs](#), and a book series, "[Contemporary Central Asia](#)" (published by Lexington/Rowman and Littlefield). CAP's main success has been in its role as a training hub for the new generation of Central Asian public policy experts.

My research takes a multidisciplinary approach to nationhood and nationalism issues in Eurasia, combining political science and cultural studies. I am in the process of completing a monograph on Kazakhstan's nationhood trajectory and transformations. My Ph.D. explored the ideological tools used to justify Russia's conquest of Central Asia in the nineteenth century. During my post-doctoral research, I moved to contemporary issues, investigating Central Asia's interaction with Russia, China, India, and Afghanistan. Since then, benefiting from CAP's status as a knowledge hub, I have published seven edited volumes: four devoted to individual countries in the region, one on the relationship between Central Asia and Afghanistan, one on migration, and one on Islam.

I attended the CESS annual conference for the first time in 1999 and was a member of the board for 2014-2017. CAP had the honor of organizing the 16th annual meeting in 2015 and will hold the 20th annual meeting in 2019. It is an honor to run for the presidency. If elected president of CESS, I envision helping the Society strengthen its mission by securing new grants to support research on the region, developing more institutionalized international collaboration, and better integrating our field into the social sciences and humanities. I am also interested in fostering multidisciplinary approaches to Central Asia that would link the study of society and politics with that of literature and arts, and in expanding publishing platforms for junior scholars from the region.

#### Jennifer Brick MURTAZASHVILI

I am [Associate Professor and Director of the International Development Program in the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh](#). My research spans several countries—especially Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. My first book, *Informal Order and the State in Afghanistan* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), explores how rural Afghans govern themselves when the state is unwilling/unable to do so. A second book, *Land, the State, and War: Property Rights and Political Violence in Afghanistan* (under review), examines the relationship between land reform and political stability. I'm working on two new books projects: *Red Tape: How Bureaucratic Legacies Derailed State Building in Afghanistan* and a project on local governance in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan.

My interdisciplinary training helps me understand diverse interests of CESS members. I completed a B.S. in Foreign Service from Georgetown, an M.A. in Agricultural and Applied Economics and a Ph.D. in Political Science—both from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I have extensive experience in the policy world having worked for independent think tanks, government agencies, and international organizations. During my twenty years of engagement in the region, I've been fortunate to work with local research organizations to strengthen research capacity, including more than a year at the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit in Kabul. I'm partnering with colleagues in Uzbekistan to establish a center that will conduct cutting edge academic and policy research.

My perspective on Central Eurasia is shaped people in communities where I have lived for years. As an undergraduate I studied Russian and lived in Moscow. I served in the Peace Corps in Samarkand, Uzbekistan for two years where I learned Uzbek and Tajik. After finishing the Peace Corps, I worked in Tashkent for three years as a Democracy and Governance Officer for the United States Agency for International Development (living five years in Uzbekistan). When I started graduate school, I had intended to study Uzbekistan, but after Andjion I turned my attention to Afghanistan where I have been working since 2005 (transforming my Samarkandi dialect of Tajik into Dari). In Afghanistan I have done ethnographic fieldwork in rural areas and have also conducted large public opinion surveys. I have also conducted surveys on local governance in rural Tajikistan. I'm now doing survey work and other original research in Uzbekistan.

CESS has given me the ability to learn so much from so many. I've tried to give back by serving on a range of committees including as an elected member of the board, host of the 2018 CESS Conference, chair/founder of the Institutional Linkages committee, member of the Task Force on Field Safety, and several others. I'm co-organizing a workshop on research ethics and field safety this year's conference.

It is an honor to be nominated for the Presidency of CESS. If elected I would build on the important work of current leadership by finding ways to more actively engage our members, raise funds to expand our activities, strengthen platforms that give our research a broad audience, expand our membership base beyond the core former Soviet Central Asia—including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, China, Turkey, Mongolia--and provide support for scholars working/living in challenging environments.

## Candidates for Board members (two vacancies)

[Jeanne FEAUX DE LA CROIX](#)

[Martha MERRILL](#)

[DeI SCHWAB](#)

[Christopher M. WHITSEL](#)

[Russell ZANCA](#)

### **Jeanne FEAUX DE LA CROIX**

I currently lead a number of research projects on environmental issues such as urban pollution and water in Central Asia at Tübingen University in Germany. I work with a highly international and Central Asian staff base, and value my close collaborations with Uzbekistani, Kazakhstani and Kyrgyzstani institutions. My research focuses on the 'social life' of environments such as the Naryn and Syr Darya basins, covering hydropower, agricultural infrastructures and the perception of glacier melt, particularly in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. As an environmental anthropologist, it is important to me to seek exchanges with other disciplines such as history, geography and natural scientists focusing on the region - an element that we could strengthen within CESS.

After completing a 2011 PhD at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, I worked on questions of age, authority and the travel of ideas through development organizations at Zentrum Moderner Orient (Berlin). In 2010, I co-founded the Central Eurasian Scholars and Media Initiative, which takes scholarship beyond our familiar circles, helps scholars and journalists to network, and to publish valuable scholarship in languages such as Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Russian and English via the BBC and Eurasianet. We were rewarded for this work with the CESS Outreach Award in 2015 and I remain passionate about finding creative ways to make our scholarship matter to wider audiences, for example through travelling exhibitions around the region. I have served on the CESS book award committee, and been involved with CESS efforts to reflect on ethical practice and fieldwork risks in our region. As a young scholar, the vibrancy and collegiality of CESS events has been vital to me: it would be a real pleasure to help CESS grow in new directions. I want to offer my enthusiasm for fostering the best possible research on the region, and my experience of using such research and organizations like CESS as platforms of communication and solidarity - also between Central Asian neighbours.

### **Martha MERRILL**

Central Eurasia has been the focus of my professional life for more than two decades, and CESS has become my academic home. If elected to the Board, my priorities, would be to continue our stimulating collegiality, to encourage even more younger scholars to contribute, and to maintain all the funding sources that allow less well-resourced colleagues to participate.

I attended one of the early CESS organizing meetings in Madison in 1996, and then moved to Kyrgyzstan for five years, where I worked on university reform, first as a Fulbright and then as a consultant and later Academic Vice President at the American University in Central Asia. Since I returned to the US in 2001, I have attended and arranged panels at almost every CESS conference in the US, as well as in Astana, Bishkek, and Kazan. I served on several awards committees, and organized the Seattle session honoring the late Edward Allworth, recipient of the first Lifetime Achievement Award. I return to Central Asia regularly for research, consulting, curriculum development, and dissertation reading, and, in 2016, for a six-month sabbatical.

I am an Associate Professor of Higher Education at Kent State University. My research on Central Asia has been published in the journals *European Education*, *International Higher Education*, and *Central Eurasian Studies Review*, as well as in local journals in Kyrgyzstan, and I have chapters in *Globalization on the Margins: Education and Post-socialist Transformations in Central Asia*; *Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan: Political and Social*

Challenges; The European Union in Central Asia; Politics, Identity, and Education in Central Asia; and Reimagining Utopias: Theory and Method for Educational Research in Post-Socialist Contexts.

## **Del SCHWAB**

I was trained as a cultural anthropologist at Indiana University. I currently work as an academic administrator at Pennsylvania State University, serving as the coordinator of the individual major program and as an academic adviser. My research focuses on Islamic media in Kazakhstan. I have published articles in journals such as *Central Asian Affairs*, *Central Asian Survey*, and *Contemporary Islam* on topics such as visual culture in social media, the production of Islamic literature, and the ways that Kazakhs learn to interpret the Qur'an and hadiths.

As a part of the CESS Executive Board, I will develop robust structures that connect graduate students to academic and non-academic career opportunities. My motivation for this focus is twofold. First, senior scholars have a responsibility to help graduate students in their professional development. Second, graduate students are the future of the field, and we can build a more robust organization by expanding membership and participation of Central Asianists both inside and outside of academia. Some specific possibilities to help graduate students include an electronic matching tool to connect graduate students to mentors outside of academia, and a pre-conference workshop on how to look for non-academic jobs, including producing resumes and cover letters during the workshop.

## **Christopher M. WHITSEL**

I am a sociologist with regional specialty in Central Asia. My research focuses on trends in educational inequality and access to education. I've also recently studied influence of Ethics Review Board policies on field work and ethical ways of working in the field with Martha Merrill. I completed my degrees in Central Eurasian Studies and Sociology at Indiana University.

I am an active member of CESS, often attending regional conferences as well as annual conferences. Over several years I've helped the conference committee by reviewing abstracts for conferences. I was appointed to the CESS Taskforce on Fieldwork Safety. Recently I was appointed to serve as the Chair of the Pre-Conference Workshop Committee.

If elected as a board member, I'm happy to continue to assist with conference planning. If the pre-conference workshops are successful, I'm happy to continue that work. I'm most passionate about providing better safety and ethics training for our young scholars entering the field.

## **Russell ZANCA**

I am honored to run for a CESS Board position. I have been a member of CESS from its inception in the mid-1990s, and it has always been my favorite professional organization because it is where my scholarly passions lie. Taking part in the growth and development of Central Eurasian studies internationally has been a source of great pride. I am a cultural anthropologist and began working in Central Asia more than 25 years ago. My early work focused on collective farming, historical knowledge, oral history, religion and cuisine. And for 20 years now, I have taught anthropology in Chicago, mainly in the capacity of professor at Northeastern Illinois University.

Serving CESS will allow me to merge efforts that I have dedicated recently to expanding Central Eurasian academic programs and public outreach in Chicago as well as establishing relationships among universities and institutes in Astana, Almaty, Chicago, Tashkent, and Zurich. Helping CESS grow and expand internationally, in conjunction with the establishment of dedicated programs and institutes for the advanced study of Central Eurasia, will be the driving force in near future. My goal is to play a valuable role in securing funding and endowments for CESS.