Goldberg, Krouse, Rosenthal, Gendell and Shiner, Karasik, Filler, and Drobny—all testify to the vision and generosity of supporters of our project, along with a devoted Advisory Council in greater Chicago.

Since Gary and I retired, new leaders, first Matti Bunzl and then Brett Kaplan, took the helm and several new faculty members joined the crew, and we have watched with pride as the Program has grown. We are especially pleased to note the expansion of the Jewish studies minor, the scholarly achievements of the faculty, even wider participation of faculty throughout the campus, and the vibrant series of lectures, workshops and films. We are confident that the Program has the intellectual resources to meet the challenges of the future, and we trust that it will continue to enjoy the kemach, the continued support of administrators and friends.

After receiving his doctorate from Columbia University, Michael Shapiro spent the bulk of his career at the University of Illinois. He was also a visiting professor at Reading (England), Cornell, Tamkang (Taiwan), and Loyola (Chicago). At UIUC he was a member of the English Department, where he taught courses in Shakespeare and early modern drama and literature, and was co-founder and director of the Program in Jewish Culture and Society, for which he taught courses in modern Jewish literature. He was also the co-founder and artistic director of the Revels Players, an amateur theatrical troupe dedicated to producing early modern classic plays. He is the author of books and articles on Elizabethan drama. See page 18 for more on one of his new books.

EUGENE AVRUTIN ON KROUSE FAMILY VISITING SCHOLAR IN JUDAISM AND WESTERN CULTURE MASHA GESSEN’S VISIT

Masha Gessen, one of the world’s leading journalists and critics of contemporary Russian culture and politics, is a frequent contributor to The New York Times, The Washington Post, Harper’s, The New York Review of Books, Vanity Fair, The New Yorker, and other publications. Gessen undergoes great personal risk to write truthfully about human rights violations, humanitarian values, and the current cultural and political climate in Russia. Over the years, Gessen has received numerous prestigious awards for her work, including the 2015 Raoul Wallenberg Medal from the University of Michigan and the 2015-16 Carnegie Millennial Fellowship.

She has authored some of the most influential books on contemporary Russian culture and politics. The Man Without a Face describes how a low-level, small-minded KGB operative ascended to the Russian presidency. The book has been translated into several languages. In The Brothers: The Road to an American Tragedy, Gessen
Masha Gessen, center, at workshop on Where the Jews Aren’t

Gessen gave the CAS/MillerComm lecture, “Retrofitting Totalitarianism in Putin’s Russia,” on Tuesday, October 25, at the Spurlock Museum, to a capacity audience of over 200 people. Since starting his third presidential term in March 2012, Vladimir Putin has refashioned himself as an ideological leader. His ideology is that of “traditional values.” Masha Gessen told the story of the creation of that ideology, beginning with the antigay campaign, ballooning into a civilizational mission, and culminating with war—whether in Ukraine or in Syria, it is against the United States. The creation of ideology went hand-in-hand with a political crackdown—the arrests of peaceful protesters, the attack on NGOs—and together, they set in motion a process unlike any we have ever seen. The mechanisms of life under totalitarianism kicked back in, often apparently set in motion at the ground level rather than imposed from the top.

In addition to the MillerComm lecture, Gessen participated in activities to benefit the academic community and the wider public. On the afternoon of October 26, the IPRH, in conjunction with its “Publics” theme, hosted a lively conversation between Gessen and Christopher Benson, Professor of Journalism at the University of Illinois. The two talked about the changing environment of journalism today; the ways that global social media shapes narratives of geopolitics; the payoffs and perils of being a critic as well as a reporter of the news; and the challenges of keeping up with the 24-7 news cycle. This was a unique opportunity to hear first-hand how two journalists think about the state of media coverage at a key moment in the US election cycle—and at a time when the world order seems on the verge of a paradigm shift. Furthermore, the Program in Jewish Culture and Society organized a discussion of Gessen’s most recent book, Where the Jews Aren’t: The Sad and Absurd Story of Birobidzhan, attended by a diverse group of professors and graduate students.

Gessen’s visit could not have been more timely given the frequency with which Russia has been featured in the news since the fall. She offered a vibrant and thought-provoking series of events that were well received by multiple communities on and off campus and which primed us to understand the current news from Russia.

See page 32 for a bio and photo of Eugene Avrutin.