

## Universities Build International Electronic Research Bridge

**EuroMaidan** is a social and political phenomenon, which began in November 2013. Millions of Ukrainian citizens participated in demonstrations against their government's refusal to sign a trade agreement with the European Union. Then they protested against dictatorship in favour of democratic civic standards. The Government's use of lethal sniper fire against peaceful protestors resulted in political changes in Parliament that led to the President fleeing the country to escape being arrested. Subsequently Ukraine, with a new government, came under the threat of war. EuroMaidan has become an element in geo-political negotiations among the EU, USA and the Russian Federation.

All of the above events deserve academic analysis and discussion. Five universities in Canada and Ukraine have announced the creation of a joint electronic project called the **Contemporary Ukraine Research Forum**. The project was started in January by the University of Alberta, MacEwan University and Concordia University College in Edmonton and by the Ukrainian Catholic University and the National University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy in Ukraine. Their joint research is inter-disciplinary and topics are seen through the lens of many disciplines, including social and political sciences, economics, media studies, religion, folklore, and literature and linguistics.

The project has established both a web site <http://euromaidan-researchforum.ca> and monthly video-conferences between researchers in Canada and Ukraine. Other post-secondary institutions are invited to participate. Other topics will be added with time and alongside new participants.

The project's co-directors are **Dr. Olenka Bilash** from the University of Alberta and **Dr. Roman Petryshyn** of MacEwan University. Dr. Bilash says that "this is an experiment in using digital means to allow dozens of researchers to collaborate in both individual and team projects in three languages – English, Ukrainian and Russian".

The project is funded by the Kule Institute of Advanced Study (KIAS), the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies (CIUS) both at the University of Alberta, the Ukrainian Resource and Development Centre (URDC) at MacEwan University, as well as the Alberta Foundation for Ukrainian Education Society (AFUES).

The coordinator of the project is **Oleksandr Pankieiev** who brings a strong background in historical studies and journalism to the project. Dr. Petryshyn says that "this is the first time such an ambitious electronic network has been created among universities in Canada and Ukraine. Initial positive responses indicate that there will be more projects of this kind in the future."

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