

The Blanka Rosenstiel Lecture Series on Poland
European and Eurasian Studies Program

HISTORY OF POLAND:
As seen through the cover of *TIME*

Participants: Biographical Notes

Monday, October 28, 2020 | 10:00 am | Live Webinar

Opening Remarks



His Excellency Piotr Wilczek

Ambassador to the United States and the Commonwealth of the Bahamas

Ambassador Piotr Wilczek was born on 26 April 1962, in Chorzów, Poland. A prolific literary scholar, intellectual historian, writer, and translator, he graduated in 1986 from the University of Silesia in Katowice, where he also received his Ph.D. (1992) and *Habilitation* (2001). Recruited by his *Alma Mater*, he remained there until 2008 as a professor and Faculty Dean.

His interests include comparative literature, philology, and intellectual history that form the culture and geography of knowledge across time. In 2006, he received the title of Professor of the Humanities from the President of the Republic of Poland.

In 2008, he joined the University of Warsaw faculty at the new, experimental *Artes Liberales* program. He became the Founding Director of *Collegium Artes Liberales* (College of Liberal Arts and Sciences) where he helped establish and chaired Centre for the Study of the Reformation and Intellectual Culture in Early-Modern Europe. Since 2010, he has also been at the helm of the *Artes Liberales* Doctoral Studies Program. An international scholar active in Europe and the United States, he has been promoting liberal arts education, which breaks the existing barriers between narrow fields of specialization traditionally favored in the continental Europe.

His commitment to interdisciplinary approach to learning draws on his own engagement with international studies, scholarly exchanges, and cultural diplomacy. A recipient of numerous grants and scholarships, he conducted postgraduate research in intellectual history at Oxford's St Anne's College in 1988 and completed two postdoctoral projects at the Warburg Institute, University of London, in 1996 and 1998. Twice, he was visiting translator at The British Centre for Literary Translation, University of East Anglia. In the United States from 1998 to 2001, he taught Polish literature and language as a visiting professor at Rice University, the University of Illinois, and the University of Chicago. He was invited to give public lectures at Harvard University and the University of Texas at Austin and conducted research as a visiting scholar at Boston College and Cleveland State University.

Piotr Wilczek is an active member of the Warsaw-based non-partisan American Study Group at the Polish Institute of International Affairs, which brings together experts, journalist, and academics who comment on political and cultural developments in the United States and analyze their implications for Poland, Europe, and the trans-Atlantic alliance. Until his diplomatic appointment in the US, he was Representative in Poland of the New York-based Kosciuszko Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to educational, cultural, and artistic exchange between the United States and Poland. He also served as President of the Foundation's affiliate in Warsaw.

Piotr Wilczek authored and edited 22 published monographs and more than 100 journal articles which appeared in Poland, the UK, and the United States, both in English and Polish. He belongs to a number of professional groups and associations and is a board member of various international scholarly journals, book series, advisory councils, and academic and educational initiatives in Europe and the United States. In May 2017 he was awarded an honorary doctorate in humane letters from Cleveland State University.

On 21 October 2016 the President of the Republic of Poland nominated him Ambassador to the United States and the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

Guest Speaker



Alvin (Mark) Fountain II, Ph.D.
*Honorary Consul of the Republic of Poland
in North Carolina*

Dr. Alvin M. (Mark) Fountain II was named Honorary Consul for the Republic of Poland in 2008 and re-nominated in 2013. This nomination crowned some 30 years of work on behalf of Poland in Raleigh and in North Carolina, much of it through the Polish-American Club. His work with the NCSU summer biochemistry program in Poznan (UAM and UP), has--since its first summer in 2004--brought more than 60 US students to Poznan. In 2017, he brought a group of 14 students.

While he is not Polish by family, he arrived in Poland for the first time already in 1965, with a German touring student group from the Fridtjof Nansen-Haus in Göttingen, Germany. He was so taken by the openness of Polish society that he chose to study the history of Poland. Having graduated from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, he went to Columbia University in New York in 1967. There he studied with notable scholars such as Istvan Deak, Wojtech Mastny, Joseph Rothschild, Andrzej Kaminski, Aleksander Erlich, and Otokar Odlozilik, earning a Ph.D. in 1976, with a dissertation on Roman Dmowski.

As Honorary Consul, Dr. Fountain has concentrated on cultural matters, promoting Polish music through the Paderewski Piano Festival in Raleigh and through contributions to various Chopin Foundations.

His wife and he were honored by the Polish-American Historical Association for their many contributions to Polish culture in the United States.



David J. Kramer

Director, European & Eurasian Studies

Senior Fellow Vaclav Havel Program for Human Rights and Diplomacy

Steven J. Green School of International & Public Affairs

David J. Kramer joined Florida International University's Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs as a Senior Fellow in the Václav Havel Program for Human Rights and Diplomacy in May 2017. In July 2019, he also became Director for European and Eurasian Studies.

Before moving to Miami, Kramer worked in Washington, DC for 24 years, most recently with The McCain Institute for International Leadership as Senior Director for Human Rights and Democracy. Before that, he served for four years as President of Freedom House. Prior to that, he was a Senior Transatlantic Fellow at the German Marshall Fund of the United States.

Kramer served eight years in the U.S. Department of State, including as Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs (responsible for Russia, Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus affairs as well as regional non-proliferation issues); Professional Staff Member in the Secretary's Office of Policy Planning; and Senior Advisor to the Undersecretary for Global Affairs. He also was Executive Director of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy in Washington.

Before joining the U.S. Government, Kramer worked at various think tanks in Washington including the Project for the New American Century, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Kramer was an Adjunct Professor at the Elliott School for International Affairs at The George Washington University. He also is Chair of the Board for the Free Russia Foundation, a Member of the Board of the International Republican Institute, and a Member of the Advisory Council for the George W. Bush Presidential Center's Human Freedom Project, a Member of the Advisory Council for the Alliance for Securing Democracy at the German Marshall Fund, and a Contributing Editor for The American Interest.

A native of Massachusetts, Kramer received his M.A. in Soviet studies from Harvard University and his B.A. in Soviet Studies and Political Science from Tufts University.