

September 17, 2018 Meeting:

Our September meeting was held at the UNM Student Union Building, attended by 34 people. Mechanical Engineering Professor Peter Vorobieff presented a talk entitled “It all happened before - Russian intelligence services, propaganda, and corruption of democracies”.

His talk considers the following scenario. A presidential election is about to happen in a deeply divided country with a somewhat disillusioned electorate. One of the candidates (A) is a highly controversial figure - a draft dodger with a murky financial past, a strange fondness for coal, and a strong sympathy for Vladimir Putin. The other candidate (B) is a woman who is experienced in politics, but accused by her opponents of being too cozy with the monopolies. The electoral campaign is marred by bad behavior of various parties involved, accusations of voter-list tampering, and hacks. Candidate A manages to eke out a win, largely owing it to propaganda (and perhaps covert support) from the Russian government... and immediately proceeds to put his erstwhile opponent into prison on trumped-up charges. See, we are not talking about the 2016 campaign in the US, but about the presidential elections in Ukraine in 2010. This talk will describe the long-going efforts by the Russian intelligence services to find and exploit weaknesses in the democratic process in multiple countries, and to reuse the scenarios that were successfully tested. An attempt will also be made to predict what can happen next specifically with the effort targeting the United States, based on earlier campaigns to destabilize and/or subvert European democracies.

Peter Vorobieff has been a Professor of Mechanical Engineering at the University of New Mexico since 1999. Before joining the ranks of the academia, he has worked in a variety of places - from Russian Association of Space Explorers to Los Alamos National Laboratory (not to mention odd jobs as a news photographer, newspaper columnist, construction worker, etc.). His primary research interests lie in the area of fundamental hydrodynamic instability studies. He earned a PhD in Mechanical Engineering and Applied Mathematics from Lehigh University in 1996. He earned the Master of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering from M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University in 1989. His research interests, ranging from “What’s at Stake in Vampirism?” to “Representations of the Red Army Faction in Film” and Film Theory.

