REEEC is glad to welcome Dr. Liza Kustanovich Berdychevsky as a new member of our affiliated faculty. This fall, Dr. Berdychevsky has joined the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism in the College of Applied Health Sciences at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She will also be an affiliated faculty member of the Program in Jewish Culture and Society. Her research interests focus on matters of gender, identity, risk-taking, and well-being in recreation, sport, and tourism contexts. Additionally, her research interests include research methods—quantitative, qualitative, and mixed.

Dr. Berdychevsky was born and grew up in Ukraine. As a teenager, she immigrated to Israel with her family. She graduated from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev with a B.A. in hotel and tourism management, and an MBA. Her thesis focused on Jewish Israeli women's sexual behavior in tourism compared to everyday life, describing meaningful behavioral, motivational, and interpretational changes. She graduated from the University of Florida with a Ph.D. in Health and Human Performance, along with a concentration in Recreation, Parks, and Tourism as well as minors in Sociology and Research Methods. In her dissertation, she investigated U.S. women’s sexual risk-taking in tourism implementing a sequential mixed methods design, starting with a qualitative phase, drawing upon phenomenology, and proceeding to a quantitative phase. Both qualitative and quantitative findings revealed that sexual risk-taking in tourism is a multidimensional and complex phenomenon, including physical, sexual health, social, emotional, mental/self-perception, and cultural aspects. The contribution of this study stems from the development of a deeper understanding of the perceptions of and motivations for women’s sexual risk-taking in tourism. In turn, this increased understanding offers directions for health programs and information campaigns aimed at addressing sexual risk behaviors in different leisure and travel contexts.

In the future, Dr. Berdychevsky intends to continue exploring the links between sexual behavior, well-being, and identity throughout the life course in various socio-cultural contexts. Indeed the socio-cultural diversity and terrific research opportunities were the major reasons that drew her to the University of Illinois. She is very excited to be here, and hopes for a lifelong journey of research and personal growth.

Stephanie Chung is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her research interests are in Soviet literature and culture, Russian women’s writing, and Czech literature. She received her B.A. in Plan II Honors, and Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies in 2007; and her M.A. in Slavic Languages and Literatures in 2009 at the University of Texas at Austin. She hopes to write a dissertation on Soviet Russian women’s memoirs, with a particular focus on the writer and translator Lilianna Lungina.