I will discuss my own career as a comparativist with a particular interest in Russia. I am interested in how culture influences politics and vice versa, and how much our own culture and experience affects our understanding of other peoples and places. In my research I rely on knowing foreign languages to understand the concepts and frameworks that people live by ordinary people as well as political officials. I do believe that some concepts and methods are universal. But also I believe that to apply them to particular times and places, we need contextual knowledge to explain what people want and do in the circumstances that surround them. Therefore our theories about politics and society have to be grounded in actual times and places.