

THE COURAGE OF KNOWLEDGE

BY CHRISTINE CALY-SANCHEZ

The Lady Blanka Rosenstiel Lecture Series at FIU, the European and Eurasian Studies Program, and the European Student Association premiered the French-Polish-German co-production, *“Marie Curie: The Courage of Knowledge,”* on October 30, 2017 at the FIU campus. The film, starring Polish actress Karolina Gruszka, tells the story of a truly remarkable woman during the most turbulent years of her life--1906 through 1911. Guy Lodge said in his review, *“Even in the film’s most melodramatic interludes, with only the essential academic details to work with, Gruszka’s reserved, intelligent performance does a fine job of projecting the stern intellect and unwavering seriousness of conviction that ultimately made a mockery of Curie’s archaic detractors.”*

Maria Skłodowska Curie and her husband, Pierre Curie, received the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1903 for their joint discovery of radium and radioactivity. In 1906, a tragic accident left Marie a widow. By sheer will and determination, and because she was now raising two young daughters alone, she continued her scientific research and became the first woman Professor at the Sorbonne. Early in the twentieth century, Science was considered a man’s world and Marie’s knowledge and involvement were not always well received. Nonetheless, she persevered and in 1911, she was awarded her second Nobel Prize in Chemistry for her discoveries and subsequent studies of the elements radium and polonium (and she remains the only woman to receive this recognition twice.) Critic Kimber Myers added, *“As biopics go, ‘Marie Curie’ is a beautifully rendered sketch, rather than a fully detailed painting. Cinematographer Michal Englert employs a handheld camera, bringing an intimacy as well as a modern feeling to ensure that ‘Marie Curie’ never feels stale. Noelle’s film doesn’t offer much historical context, but it’s a fascinating entry point for those unfamiliar with Curie’s personal life.”*



Karolina Gruszka as Maria Skłodowska Curie

The movie ends with a prophetic scene of Marie and her young daughter, Irene, walking through an illuminated open door from which light is radiating. It is certainly symbolic as the two-time Nobel Prize winning mother is going forward and holding the hand of her future Nobel Laureate daughter.

The audience for this inspiring movie included about 50 students, faculty and Polish community members, with a welcome presented by Ms. Beata Paszyc, Honorable Vice Consul of the Republic of Poland, and Dr. Markus Thiel, Director of FIU’s European & Eurasian Studies Program.



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Maria Skłodowska Curie