

A photograph of an ancient stone interior, likely a church or tomb, featuring large columns and intricate carvings. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the textures and details of the stone. The columns are decorated with Armenian script and a cross. The floor is made of large, flat stone slabs.

ARMENIAN STUDIES: *INTO THE ARCHIVES*



LSA

CENTER FOR
ARMENIAN STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

NEWSLETTER
FALL 2024 – ISSUE 18

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EDITORS VICKEN MOURADIAN & GOTTFRIED HAGEN

DESIGN ALINA GORYAEVA / alnrv@gmail.com

CONTRIBUTOR CAITLYN MARENTETTE

COVER IMAGES VICKEN MOURADIAN

LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK

armenianstudies@umich.edu

facebook: @CASumichAA

INTO THE ARCHIVES

A Note from the Director

In my third year as director, the work on the newsletter has become a welcome opportunity to pause and reflect on the state of the Center and to share our accomplishments as well as some ideas with our friends and constituents.

Our programming last fall began once again with an event dedicated to the arts, in conjunction with the Annual Dr. Berj Haidostian Lecture. Filmmaker Inna Sahakyan shared with us her ideas and creative process that led to her widely acclaimed film *Aurora's Sunrise*, about Aurora [Arshaluys] Mardigianian, who survived the horrors of the genocide as a teenager, escaped to America, and agreed to play her own life story in the 1919 film *Auction of Souls* (later screened as *Ravished Armenia*). The film which combines innovative animation with documentary segments then screened at the Michigan Theater.

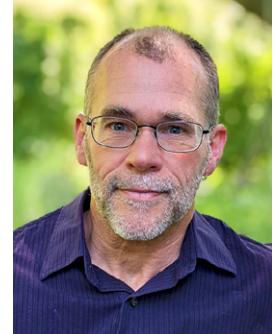
The other opening event was not of our choosing: a panel of experts discussed the political context and implications of the Azerbaijani reoccupation of Nagorno-Karabakh, bringing together legal and political perspectives with the tragedy of heritage destruction. Soon thereafter, our own Jirair Libaridian presented his new book "Precarious Armenia" which resonated strongly with this political and humanitarian disaster. This year, we followed up with a conversation with Philip Gamaghelyan to revisit the perspectives for the Armenian population of the region and the relations between the two countries.

We are excited to have two new Manoogian Postdoctoral Fellows this year, who are opening new horizons in Armenian Studies. Both just graduated from Northwestern University, but they are taking us in very different directions. Hazal Özdemir's journey began with Ottoman officials writing on the back of photographs of families, stating that these families were about to leave the Empire to never return. As I am writing, Bogdan Pavlish is getting ready for another round of research in the archives of the Vatican and the infamous Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, to round out his findings how Catholic missionaries in the seventeenth century sought to bring the Armenians "back" into the fold of the Catholic church. You can read more about them and their research below, and please stay tuned for their public lectures and workshops this upcoming year. We have another lecture on missionaries coming up in March, this time about Mormons among the Armenians, by Prof. Kent Schull from SUNY Binghamton.

More than two decades ago, Professors Müge Göçek and Ronald Suny, together with Kevork Bardakjian, initiated

the first Workshop of Armenian and Turkish Scholarship, and it was fitting that the eleventh iteration, the last organized by the founding generation was held at Michigan again last year. Throughout the series it became evident how the entanglement of Armenian and Ottoman history can be made productive. Similarly, "Imperial Borderlands", a workshop organized by James Wolfe, pursued Armenian history through late Roman and Byzantine history. Just as we saw the porous boundaries of the Roman Empire and Roman and Armenian identities, or Ottoman identities, we can ask where the boundaries of Armenian Studies might be, and how the parts cohere. The same question is raised every time when I attend the bi-weekly MWAS workshops of our amazing group of graduate students, funded once again through Rackham's Interdisciplinary Workshop program. Of course, as a proud practitioner of area studies, I am cognizant that area studies are – ideally at least – microcosms of the university, bringing together all kinds of fields and disciplines, but Armenian Studies probably even more so than others. We – or rather, our graduate students – dedicated a workshop this past spring to one of the defining elements: the Armenian language, yet, even the language is entangled in so many ways with other languages in the diaspora, in the interplay of dialect, koine, and standard, in the competition of Western and Eastern Armenian in the diaspora.

This year, we are highlighting two other aspects that provide coherence to Armenian Studies, which are becoming ever more important as CAS is coming to terms with a new era after the founders. Armenian Studies at Michigan came into being four decades ago through the meeting of visionary community leaders, first and foremost Alex Manoogian, and an enterprising young professor, a certain Ronald Suny. We strive to reaffirm and strengthen our ties with the Armenian community, in our geographical area, beyond working with the Armenian Students Cultural Association on campus this year, we enjoyed welcoming the students from the AGBU Manoogian School on the U-M campus in October to show them how what we do is part of a larger picture. In the same spirit, we are happy to have restarted our partnership with the church of St. John in Southfield, where members of CAS will deliver brief talks about their research for the community.



Gottfried Hagen

And check out the story of our new and exciting t-shirts! Without a mutual commitment between academia and community, our work will remain abstract and irrelevant, if it happens at all.

The second fundamental element for Armenian Studies we will highlight this year is what we have come to call “the archive”, that is, the record of the Armenian experience contained in narratives, official and unofficial documents, images, objects, and more. Last year saw the publication of two books whose impact on Armenian Studies will last for many years, and we were proud to have both presented at U-M by their authors: Elyse Semerdjian’s *Remnants: Embodied Archives of the Armenian Genocide* is a unique account of the bodily dimension of the Armenian genocide. In *Early Modernity: The Armenian Printing Revolution, and Imagining the “Confessional Nation” across the Armenian Diaspora, 1680-1800* Sebouh Aslanian (a former CAS postdoctoral fellow) draws on archives around the world to tell the incredible history of Armenian printing presses around the world and their role in ushering in a new historical era.

We have in the past few years commemorated April 24, by inviting friends and community to share objects and memories of their families. Profoundly moving and historically fascinating, stories told at these gatherings have shown how deep the memories are, and how rich an archive there is among the Armenian families. For example, the letters Garabed Kojanian (died 1976 in Detroit) had received from his family near Kayseri from 1912 to 1919 provide a haunting account of life during the World War

and the genocide. The last letter dates to early summer of 1915, to be followed only by two brief notes from 1919, that nobody from Garabed’s family had survived. These letters were kept by Garabed’s descendants in the US for another generation, and were finally published on the initiative of his grandson, Dr. Jonathan Varjabedian, translated by Şükrü İlicak (Histor Press, Istanbul, 2018; Gomidas Institute, 2021). What other records might there be, tucked away on the shelves of Armenian families in Michigan? In the coming year, Prof. Michael Pifer and Nazelie Doghramadjian, PhD student in the School of Information, will work with a local family to record their family archive, with the hope of preserving unique documents and records for future generations, building on and ever-expanding the Armenian archive. The archive as the basis of Armenian Studies will also be the focus of this year’s International Graduate Student Workshop, to take place in April 2025, organized by Nazelie together with Emma Avagyan (Middle East Studies) and Allison Grenda (Art History). The archive that we seek to understand, explore, and expand, is not the same as that of the previous generations: our concept has evolved, reminding me of what the great historian Jacob Burckhardt in his *Reflections on History* wrote about the sources: “The sources, however, [...] are inexhaustible, and everybody must re-read the works which have been exploited a thousand times, because they present a peculiar aspect, not only to every reader and every century, but also to every time of life. [...] Nor is that a misfortune. It is simply a result of perpetually living intercourse.” To continue this “perpetually living intercourse”, that is our mission.

Arakel Minassian, Nazelie Doghramadjian, and Vicken Mouradian representing CAS at 2024 St. John's Armenian Bazaar



INTRODUCING THE 2024-25 MANOOGIAN POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS

Bogdan Pavlish

2024-25 Manoogian Postdoctoral Fellow

Bogdan Pavlish is a historian of early modern Eastern Europe specializing in the Armenian diaspora of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. He is currently working on his first book manuscript titled *'Nothing Exotic but Ourselves: Translation, Conversion, and Displacement in the Armenian Diaspora of Poland-Lithuania*. It examines the role of the Armenian communities of Lviv and other towns of present-day Ukraine in cultural, commercial, and diplomatic exchanges between Eastern Europe and the Middle East in the early modern period. Informed by insights from microhistory, cultural anthropology, and critical theory, the book follows lives of several interpreters, missionaries, and refugees who found themselves at the forefront of dramatic transformations in the political, economic, and confessional landscape of Eastern Europe in the late seventeenth century. Bogdan earned his PhD in history from Northwestern University in 2024. His writings have appeared in the *Journal of Early Modern History* and *Ab Imperio*. In winter 2025, he will teach a class on early modern Eastern Europe with the focus on entangled histories of Ukraine, Russia, and Poland.

TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF AND YOUR TRAJECTORY: WHERE DID YOU BEGIN YOUR STUDIES, AND HOW DID YOU END UP IN ARMENIAN STUDIES?

My path to Armenian studies was quite long. I started as a student of social sciences at Kyiv-Mohyla Academy in Ukraine in 2010. At first, my biggest interests in college were political theory and historical sociology. In the final few years in Kyiv, I became increasingly interested in the history of political thought, more specifically the reception of Aristotelian ideas in political theology of Thomas Aquinas and other medieval thinkers of Latin Christendom. The research I did for my thesis combined elements of intellectual history, philosophy, and theology, which in retrospect sounds like a recipe for disaster in a department of social sciences. But it turned out to be a very fortunate experiment which brought me closer to a more focused study of the past. It made me appreciate the incredible capacity of history to inform all other branches of humanities and social sciences. By the same token, I realized that history could help me integrate all the disparate interests I had developed in college, from political theory through philosophy and theology to anthropology.

Another milestone was Central European University in Budapest (now in Vienna) where I did my masters in comparative history. Apart from basic skills of historical research, I developed a strong interest in the early modern period and its global scope that brought together diverse societies and cultures on an unprecedented scale. Thanks to the class I took with Tijana Krstić and Jan Hennings, I discovered an exciting body of research on 'connected histories' of Eastern Europe and the Middle East that made me revisit a lot of my assumptions about these regions shaped by national historiographies and geopolitical stereotypes of the last few decades. Now I can see that this class was probably the most important intellectual adventure that prepared the ground for my eventual fascination with Armenian history.

So, when I arrived at Northwestern for my PhD in history and was deciding on my dissertation topic, I accidentally came across a document that changed my trajectory once again and brought me to Armenian studies. It was a missionary report from the mid-seventeenth century, published in the Polish translation of the late nineteenth century, that discussed an unusual (for me then, at least) encounter between Catholic missionaries and Armenian communities of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. I was immediately fascinated by the breadth of the implications hiding in the detailed descriptions of confessional differences and debates between the missionaries and Armenians. I was also struck by the mixture of familiar ideas, primarily on the Catholic side, and rather strange or barely recognizable to me beliefs and practices of the Armenian Church, especially

Bogdan Pavlish





Lviv Armenian cathedral Exterior

its Christology and liturgy. The more I read about these things in other sources and historiography, the more I was captivated by Armenian Christianity, its ancient origins, and unique manifestations in early modern Ukraine.

YOUR DISSERTATION FOCUSES ON THE ARMENIANS IN UKRAINE, BUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVES FIGURE PROMINENTLY IN IT. CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT THIS?

As I mentioned, I was drawn to Armenian history through the unlikely mediation of Catholic missionaries and their writings about the Armenians in Eastern Europe. Even today, centuries later, these texts have not lost the breadth of their ethnographic descriptions and remarkable immediacy of reporting on most diverse events in the missionary field. Of course, the missionaries saw the Armenians in a very polemical light, often treating them with suspicion and condescension characteristic of the age of confessionalization and early orientalism. So, for me, their writings posed a two-fold challenge, namely how to disentangle their erudition and keen observations from the combative confessional rhetoric, and how to place this encounter between the two confessions in a wider context of Armenian, Eastern European, and global Catholic history.

In this sense, the Catholic missionary perspective proved to be very attractive because it invited promising comparisons both within the region and beyond. First, the Armenians' encounter with the Catholic Church was paralleled by similar confessional interaction between the

Catholic Church and Orthodox Ruthenians (early modern Ukrainians and Belarusians) in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Both communities had their respective church unions with Rome negotiated and implemented at different paces and by different means yet sharing crucial structural similarities. Second, these seemingly local developments in Eastern Europe were part of a much wider missionary effort of the Catholic Church in the Middle East to bring different Eastern Churches under the papal authority. As I show in my dissertation, there was a strong connection between these processes, especially in the Armenian case. On the one hand, the Catholic missionaries and church authorities in Rome hoped to extend the union to all Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Persia based on the precedent of the Armenians in Poland-Lithuania. On the other hand, as some historians have recently showed, news of bitter conflicts and disagreements over the union among the Armenians of Lviv reached as far east as New Julfa in the Safavid capital of Isfahan discouraging the local Armenians from interacting with Catholic missionaries in Persia.

These fascinating, if somewhat elusive, connections between places like Rome, Lviv, and Isfahan prompted me to probe into other areas where Eastern European societies closely interacted with the Middle East, especially the Ottoman Empire and its vassals in south-east Europe. Armenians figured prominently not only in long-distance trade but also in diplomatic, artistic, and wider cultural exchanges between these regions, acting as interpreters, brokers, envoys, and expert intermediaries. My

dissertation follows several such go-betweens based in the Armenian community of Lviv in the second half of the seventeenth century, reconstructing their social and professional networks and modes of operation which I collectively define as 'cross-cultural mediation.

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE CURRENT STATE OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT ARMENIANS IN EASTERN EUROPE? WHAT CONTRIBUTION DOES YOUR DISSERTATION SEEK TO MAKE?

In recent decades, there has been a resurgence of scholarship on the history of Eastern European Armenians in research centers in Poland, Hungary, Germany, and Ukraine. The Polish strand of this movement is probably the most impressive, with its own academic journal and book series dedicated specifically to studies of local Armenian communities, although published predominantly in Polish. This ever-growing body of scholarship is based on a very careful analysis of primary sources from rich collections of local archives and libraries. However, there is little engagement with wider historiographic and theoretical debates that take place in the English-speaking academia where the agenda of Armenian studies is ultimately being set. Given these differences of language and methodology, Armenians of Eastern Europe are largely treated as a curious footnote to the standard narrative of the evolution of the Armenian diaspora told by scholars in the West. With my research, I hope to show that these communities deserve to be a solid chapter, at least, and an entire volume, at best.

So, one of the contributions that I hope to make is to show the significance of the Armenian communities of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the

emergence of the wider Armenian diaspora, especially in the Ottoman Empire. As one of the oldest, continuously existing branches of the diaspora, Armenians of Lviv, Kamianets-Podilskyi, and other neighboring towns actively participated in economic and cultural life of their coreligionists in the Ottoman Empire, Safavid Persia, the Crimean Khanate, Moldavia, Wallachia, and Transylvania. In the seventeenth century, they supported the Armenian refugees in the European territories of the Ottoman Empire who were massively displaced from their ancestral lands in Eastern Anatolia during Ottoman-Safavid wars and Celali revolts. For example, in the mid-1670s, Armenian refugees from Kamianets-Podilskyi helped found the church of St George in Plovdiv which until today remains one of the most significant centers of Armenian life in Bulgaria, while Armenian merchants from Lviv around the same time sought to restore St Niwcholas Armenian church in Istanbul. The real scope of these interactions was much wider and more complex, but it remains largely unknown to historians. I would say that bridging these different geographical contexts and their respective historiographies is one of the central challenges and ambitions of my research.

WHAT ARE YOUR PROJECTS FOR THE COMING YEAR? WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY WORKING ON?

This is going to be a very busy year for me. I am currently working on an article manuscript based on one of my dissertation chapters which deals with those very same missionaries who in a sense brought me here. I have to finally return them the favor. Also, I am organizing a workshop on comparative religious history in February 2025 and teaching a class on Eastern European history in the winter semester. My other big goal is to turn my dissertation into a book manuscript and find a publisher for it. Other than that, I am just trying to keep up with Michigan's impressive schedule of vigorous lectures and workshops which is no mean feat!

Lviv Armenian cathedral Interior



Lviv Armenian cathedral Interior



Hazal Özdemir 2024-25 Manoogian Postdoctoral Fellow

Hazal Özdemir is a historian of migration and law in Ottoman and Middle Eastern history, with extensive training and teaching experience in refugees and incarceration, comparative empires and Armenian history in global perspective. Her work pursues how Ottoman subjecthood was made and unmade—a question that requires interdisciplinary tools from history, visual culture, migration studies, and fields of citizenship and belonging. She received her PhD at Northwestern University in 2024. Her book manuscript, preliminarily titled, “Abandoned Subjects: Transatlantic Mobility and The Price of Ottoman Nationality” reconstructs changing conceptions of subjecthood in the context of Ottoman migration policies and argues that denaturalization and archive emerged as a crucial part of state governance in the nineteenth century. Hazal taught “Global History of Refugees” in Fall 2024. Her teaching emphasizes the historical transition from empires to nation-states in the Middle East after World War I, demonstrating how the reclassification of former imperial subjects into minorities laid the groundwork for today's refugee crises. The class challenges the common assumption that the concept of the modern refugee emerged only after World War II, encouraging students to examine earlier examples, such as nineteenth-century incarceration and humanitarianism in the Ottoman Empire. As a historian engaging with questions of displacement and ethnoreligious discrimination, her goal is to equip students with the tools to “think like a historian”—analyzing primary sources, contextualizing them, and interrogating the archives from which they originate, the ones they construct, or those they aim to dismantle. As a post-doctoral fellow at Michigan, she is organizing a workshop to explore the bureaucratic and legal reforms that defined the limits of Ottoman subjecthood and their enduring legacy in post-Ottoman states scheduled for January 2025.

TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOURSELF AND YOUR TRAJECTORY: WHERE DID YOU BEGIN YOUR STUDIES, AND HOW DID YOU END UP IN ARMENIAN STUDIES?

I became interested in Armenian history, while attending a bi-weekly lecture series organized by the non-profit organization Social History Foundation of Turkey, as a sophomore in 2014-2015. I was writing for the journal *Toplumsal Tarih* (Social History) about these lectures which involved different aspects of the Ottoman Armenians including the Armenian collective memory of genocide, the situation of orphans and women and Armenian diasporic identity. That year, I also attended numerous exhibitions in Istanbul, which commemorated the Armenian Genocide, mainly through the lens of the grandchildren of genocide survivors. Silvina Der-Meguerditchian, an Armenian-Argentine, exhibited an artwork



Hazal Özdemir

that she called “The Texture of Identity,” a tapestry on which she embedded studio and family portraits, and wedding photographs of Ottoman Armenians, referring to their weaving and photographic practices, as well as the last unities of families before the genocide. These objects were touched by the dead, by survivors, by their photographers, by the artist herself, and by people who came to this exhibition, as me. The role of the archive in resisting erasure impressed upon me before I began “touching” the Ottoman photographic registries of Armenians who migrated to the United States.

As a History undergraduate at Boğaziçi University, I had to write an undergraduate thesis. Our assignment was to collect a few documents from the Ottoman State Archives, transliterate them and write a research paper. I was interested in Ottoman photography, and I knew that almost all photographers in the empire were Armenians. When I entered the key terms ‘Armenian’ and ‘photograph’ into the Ottoman state archives search engine, I was hoping to write an undergraduate thesis on Armenian photographers of the Ottoman Empire. After stumbling upon the photographic records of Armenian transatlantic migrants, my curiosity shifted from the photographer to the subject of photography. I learned that as Armenian men were leaving Ottoman domains to work in the US, the government of Abdülhamid II (1876-1909) was developing documenting technologies to foreclose the possibility of their return.

By 1896, the administration of Abdülhamid II aimed to shape Armenian transatlantic migration by forcing migrants to renounce their Ottoman subjecthood and vow never to return. Although Armenian migration was not an exile, the requirement for migrants to submit two

photographs to be circulated among various Ottoman ministries and ports of entry, along with signing a document attesting that they would never return, effectively prevented circular migration. This policy transformed what began as a temporary sojourn of males into a permanent settlement. While my interest in nationality, subjecthood, and citizenship later overshadowed my initial focus on photography, I felt a tangible connection when working with photographs of Armenian migrants.

HOW DOES YOUR DISSERTATION CONTRIBUTE TO UNDERSTANDING THE HAMIDIAN PERIOD, PARTICULARLY THE ARMENIAN EXPERIENCE, WITHIN THE BROADER HISTORIOGRAPHY THAT EXAMINES SULTAN ABDÜLHAMID II'S ISLAMIC POLITICS, AMBIVALENCE TOWARD REFORM, AND TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION?

Abdülhamid II has been viewed in various lights: as a ruthless despot, a modernizer, and a shrewd and adept leader who averted the empire's complete downfall. Each of these characterizations holds some truth, and his rule marks a distinct period in the late Ottoman Empire's history. Historically, research on this era has predominantly examined aspects such as the centralization of authority at the Yıldız Palace, the evolving structure of the bureaucracy, state control mechanisms, and his efforts to rally different Muslim factions within the empire against the Christian population. While Armenians were crucial in defining this period, established historiography has engaged with the population mainly through land and taxation issues, the changing structure of the Armenian millet and church, rising Armenian nationalism, and anti-Armenian massacres. Although the field of Ottoman Armenian history has long been preoccupied with physical violence, my work directs its focus on nationality, law and legality of violence. My book project, " 'They Vowed Never to Return: Armenian Transatlantic Mobility and Abandoned Ottomans'" promises to offer new perspectives on the social and political history of the end of the Ottoman Empire, exposing how a look at bureaucratic forms of Armenian elimination can tell us about demographic engineering rather than only focusing on physical violence.

My work challenges the received wisdom about Ottomanism and citizenship. The nascent field of Ottoman nationality focuses predominantly on becoming an Ottoman subject and argues that Ottoman citizenship was universal and equal. Although the term imperial citizenship gained popularity in recent decades, I prefer to use the term subjecthood or nationality rather than citizenship for the age of empires. While citizenship entailed political identity and participation, nationality provided

subjects with the legal status to live in the empire, and inherit property, hence it was a looser bond between the ruler and the ruled. Focusing on the denaturalization of Armenian transatlantic migrants, my work examines how to un-become an Ottoman and demonstrates the instances in which Ottoman membership was not that equal and inclusive. The Hamidian state defined its Armenian subjects as outsiders and made them targets of denaturalization, and later forced nationalist homogenization, assimilation, and ethnic cleansing.

Emptying the Ottoman landscape of Armenians was not only a political and bureaucratic project, but also a visual and archival one. This history is deeply intertwined with Ottoman indigenous photography. The administration of Abdülhamid II relied on local Armenian photographers to capture the identities of the migrants. The photography and archiving of undesirable migrants became engines of state-building and ethnonational ideology. The meticulous effort of the state to document the identities of emigrating Armenians by creating a photographic database is a significant example of the confluence of emergent technologies of state surveillance and an exclusive conception of imperial subjecthood.

YOU ARE WRITING ABOUT FORCED DISPLACEMENT AND MIGRATION, OF SURVEILLANCE AND OF CITIZENSHIP IN AN AGE OF GLOBAL MIGRATION. HAS THE CONTEMPORARY DEBATE IN SO MANY NATIONS AROUND THE GLOBE INFORMED YOUR THINKING ABOUT THE ARMENIANS OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE?

Armenian transcontinental mobility coincided with the age of high imperialism which involved technological innovations such as steamships and trains, faster and more efficient connections between places, the emergence of inter-state conflicts about the new regulation and surveillance systems such as quarantines, checkpoints, and passports, and time and space compression. In parallel to faster land transportation, overseas mobility was transformed by the construction of larger ships and the introduction of cheaper fares. Like their Italian, Greek, and Eastern European counterparts, Armenians participated in the globalizing world economy, as factory workers, weavers, merchants, or peasants. Migration forged socioeconomic, cultural, and political ties, exchanges, and dependencies between home and host countries.

Transcontinental interconnections were also sustained by return migration. Migration histories are generally limited to emigration or immigration, have been assumed as unidirectional and are often told from the perspective of a country. The emphasis on the terminology of

“emigrant” and “immigrant” is an outcome of a unidirectional understanding and highlights stasis, rather than ongoing movement. Quite the contrary, Italians, Greeks, Czechs, Sephardic Jews, Lebanese and Syrian Christians, and Armenians moved and relocated frequently. While some states like Italy benefited from the influx of cash and therefore encouraged return migration, some states took precautions against the circular mobility of some ethnoreligious communities.

Channeling the mobilities of specific groups was not exclusive to the Ottoman Empire. For example, migration policies of the tsarist government got harsher when the imperial government denied subjecthood and return to Jews, Nogai and Crimean Tatars who were leaving for the United States or the Ottoman Empire in 1892. By contextualizing the Ottoman nationality regime within other colonial empires of the late nineteenth century, I aim to analyze how the question of becoming Ottoman was informed by colonial perceptions of governability and malleability. My goal is to demonstrate that each empire regulated its nationality laws according to the mobility of their specific populations, often undesirable communities, and how their mobility challenged and shaped the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion on racial and ethnic basis.

WHAT ARE YOUR PROJECTS FOR THE COMING YEAR? WHAT DO YOU SEEK TO ACCOMPLISH DURING THE FELLOWSHIP?

I will begin revising my dissertation for publication as a scholarly monograph as the first Ottoman study that focuses on expatriation as a tool of border-building. I am working on an article on comparative methods of Ottoman subject-unmaking. Employing my research on Armenian transatlantic migrants, as well as Ottomans

Jews and Christians who migrated to Europe, this article will distinguish between denaturalization and voluntary forms of relinquishing nationality. Armenians were the only migrant group subject to denaturalization, whereas Jews and other Christians only requested to renounce their Ottoman subjecthood if they wanted to become citizens of a different country.

I will teach a class on the global history of refugees. This class will historicize the global refugee crisis and examine the roots of mass displacement, statelessness and ethnic cleansing starting from the late nineteenth century. We will locate the emergence of refuge in histories of border-making, the transition from empires to nation-states, world wars, genocidal violence, (de)colonization. The main argument of the class is that the modern refugee regime was not created in postwar Europe, but in the nineteenth-century Middle East, hence, we will take humanitarianism in the Ottoman Empire as our starting point. We will unpack the framing of refugees as “a crisis” or “problem,” and concentrate on the structural, political, socioeconomic and environmental forces and violence that cause displacement.

I will also organize a workshop on Ottoman subjecthood (*tabiiyet*), tentatively titled “Becoming and Unbecoming Imperial Subjects: Mobility, Exclusion, and (Real/Discursive) Borders”. This workshop explores the making and unmaking of Ottoman imperial subjecthood, and its legacy in the post-Ottoman states. It investigates the bureaucratic and legal reforms that enabled to define the Ottoman membership and the limits of belonging. The workshop aims to bring together scholars whose work explores how diverse ethnoreligious communities experienced Ottoman subjecthood in the center and the margins of the empire, such as in Istanbul, the Ottoman East, the Gulf, Russian borderlands and Bosnia.

Ottoman Armenian Passport Photos



2023 POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW SHARES HIS EXPERIENCES:

Reflections by James Wolfe

I cannot be more thankful for my time in Ann Arbor over the last two years as the Manoogian Postdoctoral Fellow in Armenian History at the Center for Armenian Studies. Although I am very excited to start the next chapter of my career teaching Latin to 6th, 7th, and 8th graders at Severn School outside Baltimore, it will be hard to leave behind the Center for Armenian Studies and the friends I've made here.

When I arrived in Ann Arbor in August 2022, I had just finished a postdoctoral fellowship at the Seeger Center for Hellenic Studies at Princeton University. Like many of us with a degree in Classics, I was excited to venture a little outside my comfort zone and leave the familiar confines of Classical Antiquity and the world of ancient Greece and Rome. I wanted to discover ways to push the field of Classics in new directions by sinking my teeth into the world of the medieval Middle East and uncovering the lives of Syrians and Armenians who lived there, their interactions with Roman law, and their experiences of empire.

I had already started this journey during my time as a graduate student at The Ohio State University. In 2017, with the support of my advisors, I applied to the HMML / Dumbarton Oaks Summer Language Program to learn Classical Armenian at St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota, where I was taught *գրաբար* by none other than Michael Pifer. It is certainly no coincidence that it was in a classroom led by Michael that I fell in love with Armenian literature and met some of my closest friends in the whole world. For six weeks that summer, I could think of nothing I'd rather be doing than sit in a library in a little town in Minnesota studying Armenian and looking at Armenian manuscripts. Thank you, Michael, for welcoming me into the world of Armenian studies and for your friendship.

Joining the Center for Armenian Studies was, however, much more of a step outside my comfort zone than I thought it would be, and I am so thankful that it was. Growing up academically in the narrow confines of "Classical Antiquity," I had grown accustomed to a discipline that functions a lot like an echo-chamber - everyone reads essentially the same texts, knows the same languages, and asks the same set of questions. I am very lucky, however, to have mentors who encouraged me to explore new ways to "do Classics" and who gave me the courage to study Syriac, Armenian, Middle

Persian, Parthian, and Coptic. It is probably no coincidence that many of my mentors were themselves students or faculty here at Michigan at one time or another.

In the first few months of my postdoctoral fellowship with the Center for Armenian Studies, I soon found that the Armenian studies community both here at the University of Michigan and as a whole is dynamic, innovative, creative, and, for a coddled Classicist like me, perfectly destabilizing. With the help of my new friends and mentors here at the Center for Armenian Studies, I quickly learned how to find my footing by asking new questions, testing out new theories, applying new methods, and exploring new directions to take my research and teaching. I had to learn how to explain to students, members of the community, and my colleagues why my research matters: why I think it's important to study the lives of people who lived in Syria and Armenia, why their voices mattered and still matter today, and what their experiences can teach us about the world today. Thank you for challenging me to think about the big picture. In the process, I hope that I've become a better scholar and teacher. If I have, it's because I have had the opportunity to learn from you all.

Also, I think my research matters because Syrians and Armenians lived at the crossroads of the ancient and medieval worlds, at the center of global trade routes, and along imperial borders. By studying the ways in which they navigated the transformations that took place in these spaces, we can learn how to navigate

James Wolfe



the challenges that face us today as citizens of a similarly interconnected world.)

During my time at the University of Michigan, I had the opportunity to teach three courses for the Department of History. The first was an undergraduate seminar that examined the fall of Rome, the rise of Islam, and the Crusades through sources written exclusively in Syriac and Armenian. Not only was it fun to design a course that highlighted Syriac and Armenian voices for our undergraduates, but it was easy to do: many of our best sources for the history of the medieval Middle East are written in Syriac and Armenian. I hope that my students, many of whom were members of the Assyrian and Armenian diasporas, learned as much as I did from them. Another course I taught this past semester was a first-year seminar called "Ghost Stories from the Ancient Mediterranean," in which we read and analyzed narratives about personal encounters with the supernatural from the ancient Mediterranean through the modern day. I think I successfully tricked my students into thinking this was a "fun" class about ghosts, demons, and monsters, even though they were also learning about cuneiform tablets from ancient Mesopotamia, Roman law, Armenian folklore, medieval art, and Christological controversies.

I was also extremely lucky to have had the opportunity to teach a graduate seminar for the Interdepartmental Program in Ancient History for the Department of History, which was a completely new, challenging, and fulfilling experience for me this past semester. I'd like to thank my students for being patient with me as I taught my first graduate-level course. Thank you also for taking the journey with me into the world of late antique Syria, medieval Mesopotamia, and ancient Armenia - where my research into the world of the "ancient Mediterranean" has taken me. It wasn't easy, but it was one of the best experiences I've had in my career.

Thanks in part to the various speeds at which academic publishing happens, I was very excited to have several of my articles finally appear in print in the two years that I've been here at Michigan. One, which I began working on in the summer of 2018 when I was spending all day reading Armenian with Michael and Sergio La Porta in sunny Fresno, California, examines the role of rhetorical education in fifth-century Armenia and the ways in which Classical Armenian historiography engages with the literary traditions of ancient Greece and Rome as well as ancient Persia. Other articles explore citations of biblical literature in Syriac historiography, the use of Syriac in Roman legal contexts, and how Syrian monks copied manuscripts and translated them into different languages in the medieval Middle East.

I've also been very fortunate to have been able to attend several international conferences and workshops across the United States and Europe where I've presented my ongoing work on the Syriac- and Armenian-speaking communities of the mountain highlands of northern Mesopotamia and in the Armenian districts of eastern Anatolia. It was so helpful to be able to workshop my papers with you all first at our meetings for the Multidisciplinary Workshop for Armenian Studies. MWAS is such an incredible forum for those of us who work at the intersection of different academic disciplines, and so thank you to the organizers past, present, and future.

I've also had the opportunity to work with Michael to organize two workshops the past two years for the Center for Armenian Studies here at Michigan. In February 2023, we hosted scholars from multiple institutions and academic disciplines, including Classics, the Ancient Middle East, Late Antiquity, Byzantine Studies, Armenian Studies, and the History of Art, to reconsider the dynamics of imperialism and to propose new historical paradigms to decenter, decolonize, and deconstruct the historiography of empires in the premodern Mediterranean world. Titled "Negotiating 'Ambiguous Race': Hierarchies of Citizenship and Belonging in the Empires of the Ancient Mediterranean," the workshop sought to contribute to critical conversations on the study of race in the ancient and late ancient Mediterranean and how we might better attend to those voices who were not amplified by those who have written the history of race in the ancient world.

This past February, we welcomed specialists from across the academy who study the diverse languages, literatures, and cultures of the spaces where empires meet, to excavate commingled lives in the borderlands of Armenia and Syria in the late antique and medieval Middle East. We are happy to report that "Where Empires Meet: Borderland Cosmopolitanisms in the Late Antique and Medieval Middle East" was another resounding success, and promises to continue to engender meaningful conversations about life on the border and in the middle of the premodern worlds.

Both workshops would not have been as successful without the help of Vicken Mouradian and Gottfried Hagen, whose work "behind the scenes" made Michael and my jobs much easier. For those who know Vicken and Gottfried, however, this should come as no surprise. Their tireless work for the Center ensures that Armenian studies will continue to make its mark at the University of Michigan.

It was because of these workshops that I took the chance to take the plunge and work on a project that I had begun

during my time at Princeton. Moving farther away from my home in Classical Antiquity, I found myself tracing the career of E. W. McDowell, an American Presbyterian missionary who served in the West Persia Mission for nearly forty years, from 1887 to 1928, as a teacher and advocate for the Armenian and Assyrian communities in what is today Northwestern Iraq and Southeastern Turkey, in the city of Mosul and in the mountain districts surrounding lakes Urmia and Van, and in the Baqubah refugee camp during the height of the Armenian and Assyrian genocides. In 1928, McDowell moved back to the states, settling briefly in Columbus, Ohio, where he befriended William Oxley Thompson, the former president of The Ohio State University and fellow graduate of the Western Theological Seminary. He then moved to Ann Arbor in 1932 and lived with friends first on North Ingalls Street and then at 705 Church Street. Eventually, McDowell settled in Fort Collins, Colorado, where he died in 1939.

The parallels between McDowell's career and my own, with their stops in Princeton, Columbus, and Ann Arbor, inspired me to dig deeper into his life and the lives of the Assyrians and Armenians he encountered along the way. In addition to his duties as a missionary, McDowell was obsessed with one thing and one thing above all else: manuscripts. In 1931, McDowell donated 42 Syriac manuscripts to the Reverend Robert E. Speer (1867 - 1947), the general secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions and a graduate of the Princeton Theological Seminary. Speer in turn donated all 42 manuscripts to the Seminary's Wright Library. In Spring 2022, I was asked to identify one of these manuscripts - PTS Syriac Ms 10 [321]. Thanks to a short colophon on folio 19 verso, originally page 481 of the manuscript, I was able to identify the text as a Garshuni edition of Bar Bahlul's Syriac to Arabic Lexicon, as well as the name of the scribe, Joseph bar Eliya.

I am very happy to announce that, just earlier this May, I had the opportunity to discuss my work on McDowell and his career as a missionary in an episode of *Reverb*



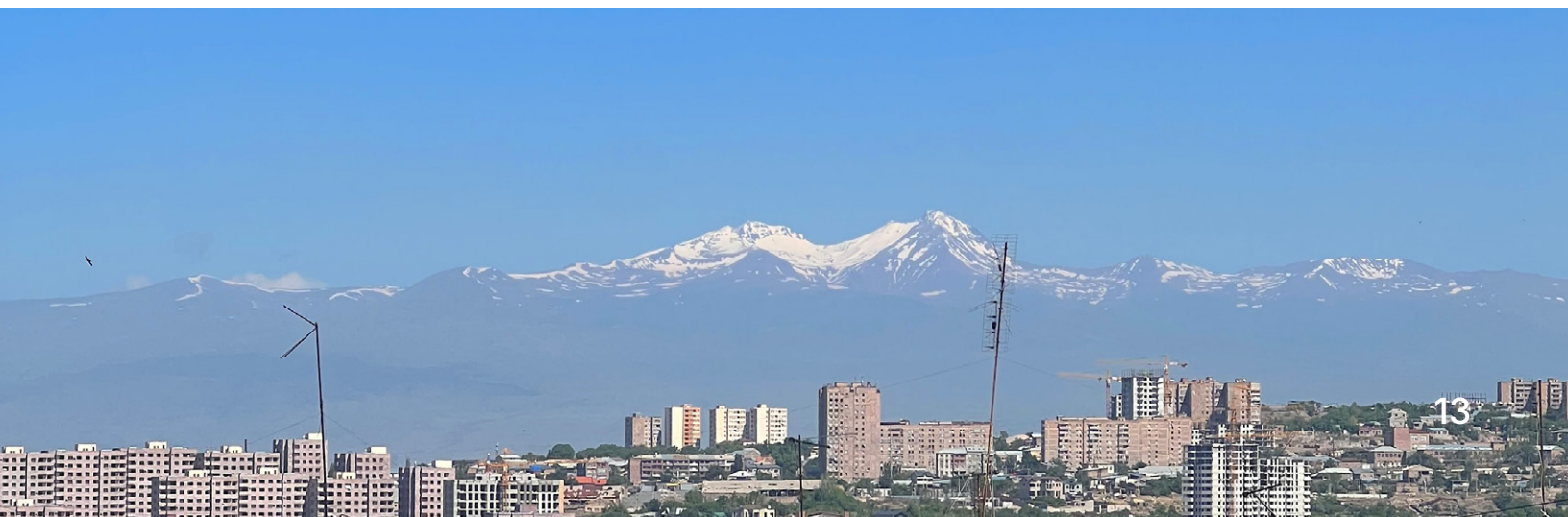
James Wolfe

Effect, a podcast presented by the University of Michigan's Department of History. Those interested can listen to the podcast here or wherever you listen to podcasts.

As I get ready to take the next step into the wild and woolly west that is Middle School Latin, I want to take the time to thank you all again for making Ann Arbor feel like home and for your over the past two years. Before I go, I'd like to say just one more thing...

Part of why I'm excited to leave the world of academia is because I want to change the way we teach Latin, and I know that my experiences here in the Center for Armenian Studies will help me do that. As someone whose job it will be to convince middle schoolers that they actually do want to learn Latin at 8:30 AM, I think it'll be more important to instill in them a love of all languages, including Armenian, and not just Latin.

This is because, as my book project tries to demonstrate, speaking Syriac and Armenian in the medieval world was a way to get ahead because those who spoke these languages were able to tap into cosmopolitan networks that spanned the globe, from Canterbury in England to Karakorum in Mongolia. We need to convince people that the same is still true today. So, if you hear about some weirdo sneaking a lot of Armenian lessons into middle school Latin classes, you'll know who it is!



CAS IN THE CAUCASUS

By Vicken Mouradian

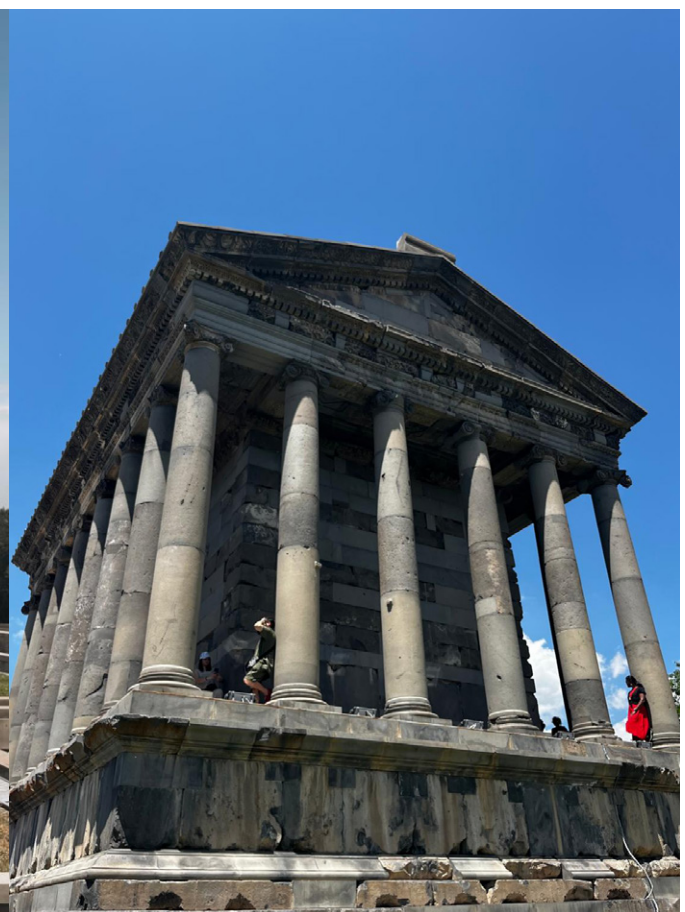
This summer, I had the opportunity to participate in the 2024 Monterey Summer Symposium on Russia Hosted by Middlebury College, which took place in Yerevan, Tbilisi, and Istanbul. The invitation came from Dr. Anna Vassilieva and Dr. Ronald Suny, and my trip was supported by a grant from the Center for Armenian Studies, the University of Michigan's Career Development Fund, and the International Institute. The three-week program offered an in-depth exploration of the South Caucasus and its complex relationship with Russia. This report highlights key insights from my time in Armenia and the lasting impact to my work at the University of Michigan.

In Yerevan, the symposium began with lectures from Dr. Suny and other experts, offering a deep dive into the historical and geopolitical significance of the region. Topics like "Empires and Nations in the South Caucasus" contextualized Armenia's ongoing challenges with Turkey and Azerbaijan, and the lasting legacy of its ties to the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. These sessions provided critical insights into Armenia's role in contemporary geopolitics.

A major highlight for me was visiting the Matenadaran, the world-renowned repository of Armenian manuscripts. As a historian, this was a long-held academic goal, and

being able to access primary source materials that are not available online enriched my research significantly. The trip to Tsitsernakaberd, the Armenian Genocide Memorial, and discussions on the topic of genocide with Dr. Suny deepened my understanding of how history and memory shape Armenian identity. Day trips to historical sites such as Garni Temple, Geghard Monastery, Akhtala, Hovhannavank, Haghpat, and all the other beautiful stops along the way to Tbilisi gave me a renewed perspective of the diversity and historical foundations Armenians so vehemently take pride in.

Networking opportunities in Yerevan were also pivotal. I arranged meetings with local university liaisons, museum directors, and government officials, aiming to foster future collaborations with the University of Michigan. Establishing these personal connections was crucial, as it supports our center's long-standing goal of building partnerships in Armenia. Networking in Armenia was a cultural adjustment in itself. While I was accustomed to formal meetings and structured introductions, Yerevan's vibrant city culture and strong communal spirit led to spontaneous connections all over town. From bumping into local professors in front of the Matenadaran, to having coffee with fashion designers at cafes, to sharing family histories with salespeople at Vernissage market,





I began to understand how knowing one person easily connects you to villages of contacts!

Tbilisi and Istanbul provided different but still valuable perspectives. Georgia's multi-ethnic history was visible in its architecture and felt in daily interactions, reinforcing its complex relationship with both Russia and the West. In addition to extraordinary visits to the breathtaking regions of Pankisi, Gori, and Mtskheta, I sought out Armenian influences within Tbilisi's Avlabari district. Perhaps too fixated on the search for some Armenian cuisine, I found myself inadvertently crashing an Armenian wedding at the aptly titled restaurant, "Old Yerevan!"

Istanbul was also a unique learning experience for me as I was able to find Armenian connections where I did not expect them. A city of over 15 million people, it was easy to get lost trekking between destinations like the Grand Bazaar or the Hagia Sophia. I had the opportunity to visit Aras Publishing House and find a little oasis of Armenian representation, hidden within the maze that is İstiklal Street. Not too far away, I also visited (or snuck into) the Surp Krikor Lusavoric Armenian Orthodox Church and school. Finally, my stay was rounded out with an obligatory visit to the Hrant Dink Foundation and Museum, the location of the offices that used to print the iconic Agos newspaper. From the lively bazaars to the mosques and museums, we were greeted and treated with nothing but kindness and hospitality everywhere we went

in Istanbul, indicative of the tremendous collaboration opportunities that lie ahead.

Overall, my time in the Caucasus and Turkey was intellectually and professionally rewarding. The symposium's academic focus, coupled with the cultural-historical immersion and local networking, allowed me to gain a comprehensive understanding of the region's geopolitical landscape, which will directly inform my work in Armenian Studies back in Michigan. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Anna Vassilieva for her invitation and all the work that she and her team put into organizing this tremendous endeavor.



KEEPING UP WITH CAS: YEAR IN REVIEW

11TH WORKSHOP ON ARMENIAN AND TURKISH SCHOLARSHIP

From the Foundational Crime to the Making of a New State (and Nation): The End of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Turkish Republic

By Ronald Suny

One of the most influential scholarly efforts to increase understanding of the causes and effects of the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1916 was the series of Workshops on Armenian-Turkish Scholarship (WATS) that began a quarter of a century ago. The eleventh workshop was held at the University of Michigan under the auspices and with the support of the Center for Armenian Studies. The workshop was organized by [Ronald Grigor Suny](#), [Fatma Müge Göçek](#), and the director of the Center, [Gottfried Hagen](#), with the indispensable assistance of the chief administrator, [Vicken Mouradian](#). Held on November 10-11, 2023, the workshop, entitled "From the Foundational Crime to the Making of a New State (and Nation): The End of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Turkish Republic," marked the centennial of the founding of the Republic of Turkey and linked that event with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the Armenian Genocide.

In his opening remarks, Professor Suny noted, "The period that we are looking at, from Tanzimat to the Republic, or more narrowly, 1908 to roughly 1927, was a moment of imperial collapse and the early construction of a new nation-state. There is both a continuum from the Young Turks to the Kemalists but there was also a rupture, or a series of ruptures. One of the threads that runs through the period was that modernizing change was largely authoritarian rather than democratic. Eventually, with the destruction of the Ottoman bourgeoisie, mostly made up of minorities like Armenians and Greeks, the state was the instrument of reform and development." In that transition from empire to nation, Armenians became second-class

citizens of the Turkish Republic; Kurdish identity was radically suppressed; and the influence of the military further increased to the point that Turkey failed to achieve a stable democracy but remained an authoritarian state.

Four panels traced the evolution from the 1908 coup d'état by the Young Turks, through the Genocide, the fall of the Empire, the Allied occupations of Turkey, and the victory of the Turkish nationalists. Most of the presentations were by younger scholars: [Armen Manuk-Khaloyan](#) (Georgetown University), [Umit Kurt](#) (University of Newcastle, Australia), [Sahika Karatepe](#) (SUNY, Binghamton), [Mehmet Polatel](#) (Hrant Dink Foundation), [Samuel Dolbee](#) (Vanderbilt University), [Ceren Verbowski](#) (York University), [Aram Ghogasian](#) (Princeton University), [Merisa Şahin](#) (University of Michigan), [Elif Shannon-Chastain](#) (University of California, Irvine), [Ari Şekeryan](#) (Independent Scholar), [Cevat Dargin](#) (University of Michigan), and [Vahram Ter-Matevosyan](#) (American University of Armenia). They were joined by more seasoned scholars, who had presented in earlier WATS meetings: [Keith Watenpaugh](#) and [Heghnar Watenpaugh](#) (University of California, Davis), and [David Gaunt](#) (Södertörn University).

The papers and discussions ranged from international finance and diplomacy to whether settler colonialism was a relevant concept for the Genocide and its aftermath, from the revenge of nature, and the power of natural metaphors like plagues, locusts, disease, germs to investigations of sexual violence and the problems of primitive accumulation of capital. Among the central themes running through many presentations, and emphasized in Heghnar Watenpaugh's paper on physical objects, were erasure and recovery: erasure of a people and its material remains, and recovery by those people of their culture and their continued presence. The Workshop continued the WATS tradition of bringing evidence-based and theoretically informed scholarship to bear on the most controversial and disputed issues of Armenian and Turkish history: the Genocide and the foundation of the Turkish Republic on a landscape cleansed of an indigenous people who had laid the basis of a civilization in Anatolia for millennia. The intensity of the discussions was deeply influenced by what had occurred and was at that





moment still going on outside the walls of the conference room: the ongoing war in Ukraine; the ethnic cleansing of Karabakh/Artsakh Armenians from their homeland in September 2023; and the Israeli war against the Palestinians, which had reached genocidal proportions since

the Hamas massacres of October. Comparative reflection on the entangled past of the Armenians, Turks, and Kurds appeared immediately relevant for renewed scholarly examination as the world experienced new levels of barbarity in Ukraine, South Caucasia, and the Middle East.

13TH INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE STUDENT WORKSHOP Language Revitalization and Resurgence: The Case of Modern Armenian

By Arakel Minassian and Emma Portugal

On March 8 and 9, 2024, CAS hosted the 13th International Graduate Student Workshop titled “Language Revitalization and Resurgence: The Case of Modern Armenian,” organized by CAS PhD students **Emma Portugal** (linguistics) and **Arakel Minassian** (comparative literature). Inspired by today’s rapidly evolving Armenian linguistic environment, including creative efforts at Western Armenian resurgence, the new landscape of Eastern and Western Armenian interaction in Armenia and the diaspora, and the precarious position of local dialects such as the Artsakh dialect, this workshop sought to bring a diverse group of young scholars in Armenian studies together to engage deeply with the state of the Armenian language today.

The outcomes of the workshop exceeded the organizers’ expectations both in terms of the knowledge exchanged during the event and in terms of the potential for future collaboration among participants. Though all the presentations focused in some way on the Armenian language, the participants represented a wide variety of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. The workshop was thus highly interdisciplinary, which facilitated productive dialogue among presenters whose work examined similar topics through different disciplinary lenses. We had the pleasure of inviting two keynote speakers, one of whom spoke on each respective evening. **Dr. Shushan Karapetian**, director of the Institute for

Armenian Studies at USC, closed out the first day with an illuminating talk about her recent research on gendered uses of the Armenian language. She also structured her presentation in a way that highlighted the development of her research through various preliminary stages, providing insights to the graduate student presenters about what the long-term development of an academic project can look like.

Dr. Talar Chahinian (UC Irvine) closed out the second day of the workshop with a talk bridging her work on Western Armenian literary history with her current research on contemporary Armenian. She drew upon her recently published book *Stateless: The Politics of the Armenian Language in Exile* (2023) while also making connections to current debates the evolution of Armenian writing today. We were particularly excited that Dr.





Chahinian presented her research on a recently published Armenian book co-authored by our own graduate student Arakel Minassian. Dr. Chahinian showed how that book, written as a dialogue between an Eastern and Western Armenian speaker, reflects the changing landscape of contemporary Armenian usage.

In addition to these two keynote lectures, we organized five panels addressing different aspects of current scholarship on Armenian language. These panels reflected the diverse disciplines and approaches brought together at the workshop, from the literary to the historical and linguistic. The first panel, titled “Roots of Modern Armenian Literary Languages” ([Aram Khoogasian](#), [Emma Avagyan](#), [Roza Melkumyan](#)) set the groundwork for the rest of the workshop by stimulating discussion on the historical background to the contemporary Armenian language landscape. This was followed by a panel specifically on diverse Eastern Armenian dialects, titled “Eastern Armenian Dialects Today” ([Hripsime Khachatryan](#), [Emma Portugal](#)). The final panel on our first day was titled “Contemporary Armenian Language Teaching and Research” ([Alexia Hatun](#), [Annika Topelian](#)) and specifically focused on novel teaching methods in Western Armenian and in establishing trends in current linguistics research on Armenian.

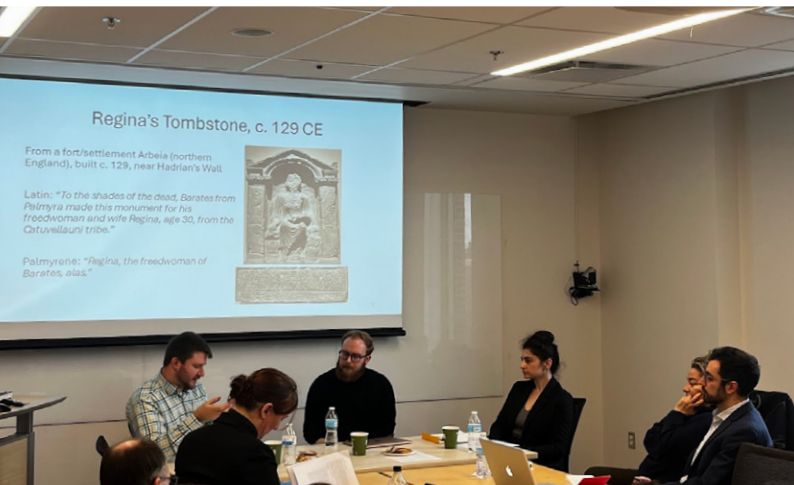
Our second day was kicked off with a panel dedicated to the Western Armenian dialect, titled “Western Armenian:

Past, Present, Future” ([George Balabanian](#), [Arthur Ipek](#), [Annika Topelian](#)). In this panel, three papers were presented on Western Armenian through the discipline of linguistics specifically, both from historical and contemporary perspectives. This panel was followed by our last panel, “Armenian(s) in the Diaspora” ([Setrag Hovsepien](#), [Inessa Arustamyan](#), [Julianne Kapner](#)) which was dedicated primarily to interactions among different dialects of Armenian within locales ranging from Yerevan, Budapest, Damascus, and San Francisco.

As you might gather from the above, the workshop brought together a diverse array of scholars working on similar topics who might not otherwise have had an opportunity to interact in-person. The workshop therefore served as a valuable networking opportunity for participants. Many of the projects presented at the workshop were still in their preliminary stages, and the presenters of these projects were able not only to receive useful feedback from other participants, but also to make connections with scholars whose input could prove valuable at later stages of the given projects. The relatively small number of workshop participants allowed for all participants to get to know one another both during the panels and during breaks and meals, and all participants felt a strong sense of community and camaraderie by the time the two days were over, which we hope will continue as this new cohort of scholars on Armenian language move on in their academic careers.

WHERE EMPIRES MEET: BORDERLAND COSMOPOLITANISMS IN THE LATE ANTIQUE AND MEDIEVAL MIDDLE EAST

By James Wolfe



On February 16-17, 2024, the Center for Armenian Studies hosted a workshop titled “Where Empires Meet: Borderland Cosmopolitanisms in the Late Antique and Medieval Middle East.” We were very fortunate to have been able to welcome scholars from across the United States and Europe to Ann Arbor in order to investigate what life was like in the borderlands of the premodern Middle East. During this workshop, we were encouraged to think more deeply about the ways in which we can amplify the voices of the individuals who lived there in our scholarship.

“Where Empires Meet” is now the second workshop that Michael Pifer and I have had a small hand in organizing for the Center for Armenian Studies during my time here at the University of Michigan. Although the title we chose for the workshop is filled with academic “buzzwords,” such as empires, borderlands, and cosmopolitanism, we wanted to design a workshop that would engender deeper conversations about the different ways that scholars can move beyond cursory applications of these buzzwords. In doing so, we hope to build a new set of historical paradigms that will help us better understand the individuals and their communities who came to embody and variously perform a wide range of non-elite cosmopolitanisms in the borderlands of the late antique and medieval Middle East, where empires meet.

We noticed, for example, that it is often repeated in modern scholarship that premodern Armenia and Syria were places in-between: Between the empires of Rome and Persia, between Europe and Asia, between Christianity and Islam, and between “East” and “West.” But what did that in-betweenness look like on the ground? How did Armenians, Syrians, and others navigate “borders,”

let alone their shifting relationships to Rome and Persia, in light of the border? Finally, where do borders get crossed, and how might such crossings inform theoretical and methodological approaches to studying these complex regions today?

We are happy to report that the workshop was another smashing success, thanks in no small part to the time, energy, and thoughtful interventions of all who were in attendance!

On Friday, February 16, the workshop commenced with a keynote address by [Kate Franklin](#), Senior Lecturer and the co-director of the MA program in Medieval History in the School of Historical Studies at Birkbeck, University of London, whose work explores the ways that local politics and Silk Road culture were entangled in medieval Armenia. Her talk, “Between Ecumene and Ecology: Armenians on the Silk Road and More-than-Human Cosmopolitanism,” situated the lives of human and non-human beings in Armenia at the center of global network that flowed along the Silk Road. Rather than treating Armenia as a space in-between, Franklin revealed how the medieval Armenian highlands were cosmopolitan spaces that fostered interactions not just amongst humans, but also between humans and their non-human neighbors as well as between humans and the landscape. Through her own fieldwork, Franklin uncovered what these spaces looked like and the artistic and literary productions that were brought to life in a cosmopolitan Armenia.

Day two of the workshop consisted of three panels that brought Armenian evidence in direct conversation with non-Armenian evidence. In the first panel, titled “Cosmopolitanisms Along and Across the Borders of Rome in Late Antiquity,” [Jimmy Wolfe](#) (University of Michigan) and [Walter Beers](#) (Hamilton College) examined how Armenians and Syrians navigated the realities of daily life in the borderlands of the late Roman world and how their imperial subjectivities shaped their relationships not just with the Roman state and its institutions, but also with one another. In his talk, “Segmentation, Enclaves, and Forgotten Borders: Navigating the Borderless Borderlands of The Late Roman Near East,” Wolfe explored how the Roman tax system, which was designed to maximize and facilitate the extraction of capital from its subjects, shaped how Syriac- and Armenian-speakers negotiated their place in the empire as taxpayers and sought help from monks, priests, and other holy men and women in order to do so. Beers, in his talk “Seeing like a Monastery:

Cop'k'/Sophene as Syro-Armenian Borderland in John of Ephesus' Lives of the Eastern Saints," examined how the career of John of Ephesus highlights the complex relationship between the imperial center and the Armenian borderland. Beers investigated how Syriac- and Armenian-speaking communities who lived there were brought under direct Roman imperial rule through a matrix of imperialist programs, including, perhaps most importantly, the missionary activities of imperial agents, such as John of Ephesus, who used the building of churches and monasteries to "Romanize" the borderlands of late antique Armenia. [Anna Bonnell Freidin](#), from the University of Michigan, offered a response in which she invited further reflections on the nature of Roman imperialism, what constitutes "Romanization," and how the experiences of non-elite subjects of the empire can be reconstructed from our sources.

Panel two, "Racialized Paradigms and Minoritized Populations in the Ancient and Medieval Middle East," included papers by [Polina Ivanova](#) (Justus Liebig University Gießen) and [Michael Pifer](#) (University of Michigan), with a response given by [Kathryn Babayan](#). In her paper, "An Invisible Frontier? On the Traces of Medieval Armenian Settlements in Central Anatolia," Ivanova presented her fieldwork, which discussed how Armenians recreated Armenia outside of the traditional Armenian homeland, making new spaces in which Armenians could belong. In doing so, Ivanova elucidated what it meant to "be Armenian" in the Ottoman Empire, how space and place can become Armenian, and how Armenians left their mark on the landscapes, spaces, and places they inhabited. Michael Pifer, in his talk "Traveler's Cant: Language and Public Epigraphy in Fourteenth-Century Armenia," brought to life the polyglot world of medieval Armenia in order to contextualize a 14th-century trilingual funerary Armenian-Persian-Arabic inscription from the village of Yeghegis in the mountains of the Vayots' Dzor. Pifer demonstrated how the trilingual funerary inscription of Tawakkul / T'avak'al imparted different forms of information to different kinds of readers, bringing into question the nature of multilingualism, the presence of polyglots in medieval Armenia, and the production of memory at the crossroads of a global Middle Ages. In her response, Kathryn Babayan encouraged Ivanova and Pifer to consider new ways of "reading" the material evidence they brought to life and how "Armenianness" factored into the production of the texts and objects they examined in their talks. How and why did individuals come to perform Armenianness in the ways that they did in these cosmopolitan spaces, and how did the Armenian language play a role in these performances?

After more thought-provoking and lively conversations over lunch, panel three, "Drawing Political and Social Borders," concluded the workshop with talks by [Lev Weitz](#) (Catholic University of America) and [Alison Vacca](#) (Columbia University). Weitz, in his talk "Syriac Cosmopolitanisms on the Plains and the Coasts," examined how the writing and exchange of letters between leaders of the East Syriac Church engendered the creation of cosmopolitan communities of Christians living in the Islamic empires of the medieval Middle East. Although our extant evidence focuses primarily on the lives of the leaders of the East Syriac Church, Weitz deftly uncovered the communities of non-elite Syriac-speakers that lay behind these elite networks, and whether their experiences as subjects of the caliphate should be seen as a form of non-elite, Syriac cosmopolitanism. To close the workshop, Alison Vacca offered her paper "Herakleios's Allies: Turks in the Sasanian-Byzantine Wars," in which she problematized etic representations of the Turks as a people group in both ancient and modern scholarship. Her intervention illuminated various issues in the racialized systems of classification that have informed how the Turks are characterized as a people group in modern scholarship, as well as how many of these systems of classification have been directly lifted from our ancient sources. Rather than obsessively trying to uncover the "reality" of Herakleios's allies, Vacca encourages us to investigate how discourses shape the writing of historical narrative. [Juan Cole](#)'s response further problematized facile reproductions of racialized discourses that continue to shape our world today, and he invited conversations about the role historians can and should play in destabilizing these discourses, both ancient and modern.

We cannot be more thankful to all of our participants, to our keynote speaker, Kate Franklin, and to the tireless work of Gottfried Hagen and Vicken Mouradian who made this workshop a resounding success. Not only did the workshop deliver on its promise to foster deep conversations about the borderlands of the medieval Middle East and the non-elite cosmopolitanisms that the individuals and communities that lived there cultivated in their day-to-day lives, but also because of the friendships that grew out of it.



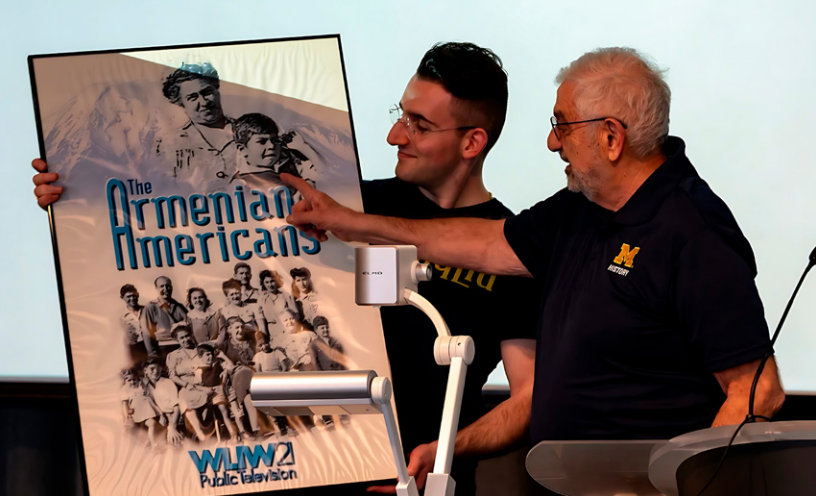
2ND SHARED MEMORIES: THE ARMENIAN EXPERIENCE THROUGH OBJECTS AND STORIES

Approximately 70 University of Michigan students, faculty, and community members gathered on April 24th, 2024 in Weiser Hall for "Shared Memories: The Armenian Experience Through Objects and Stories," an event hosted by CAS and the Armenian Students' Cultural Association to commemorate the 1915 Armenian Genocide. Marking CAS's second annual community commemoration, the event featured a show-and-tell format where attendees shared personal objects and stories reflecting Armenian identity while enjoying music, cultural foods like baklava and sarma, and meaningful conversations. The interactive approach was aimed at fostering inclusivity and community

connection beyond traditional lectures or vigils. Presentations included heirlooms, photographs, and artwork that facilitated dialogue about shared experiences, with participants highlighting stories of resilience from the post-genocide diaspora. Attendees reflected on the importance of honoring family histories while celebrating the strength and perseverance of Armenian culture.

The event's broader focus on community and connection, was a chance to embrace shared stories and positive reflections on the Armenian experience. The event highlighted the power of storytelling to preserve cultural heritage and strengthen bonds within the campus's Armenian community.





2023 DR. BERJ H. HAIDOSTIAN ANNUAL DISTINGUISHED LECTURE: INNA SAHAKYAN AND AURORA'S SUNRISE

The Center for Armenian Studies hosted Inna Sahakyan, director of *Aurora's Sunrise*, for the 2023 Dr. Berj H. Haidostian Annual Distinguished Lecture on September 28th, 2024. Sahakyan discussed her innovative approach to blending animation with historical footage to tell the story of Aurora Mardiganyan, a 14-year-old Armenian Genocide survivor who became a media icon. Mardiganyan starred in *Auction of Souls*, a Hollywood film that helped her become the face of one of the largest charity campaigns in American history. *Aurora's Sunrise*, through vivid animation, personal interviews, and 18 minutes of rare footage from Mardiganyan's lost silent film, revives this compelling story of survival and resilience. Sahakyan's documentary has garnered international acclaim, winning multiple awards for its visual storytelling and historical depth, and it was followed by a week of public screenings at Ann Arbor's State Theater.

Sahakyan has been directing and producing documentaries, doc series, and shorts internationally for over

fifteen years. Her work explores untold stories and the human condition through intimate, innovative filmmaking. Her feature-length debut, *The Last Tightrope Dancer in Armenia*, co-directed with Arman Yeritsyan, won multiple awards. Recently, she completed *Mel*, a documentary about a transgender weightlifter from Armenia, and *Aurora's Sunrise*, which has become a festival favorite, winning honors at more than 40 international festivals, including the Asia Pacific Screen Awards, IDFA, and Geneva's FIFDH. Sahakyan has also produced *One, Two, Three* and *Donkeymentary*.

The Center extends its gratitude to Ms. Sahakyan and Bars Media for collaborating to bring this extraordinary film to Michigan.

The Dr. Berj H. Haidostian Annual Distinguished Lectureship, established by the family of the late Dr. Berj Haidostian—a distinguished Michigan physician—honors internationally recognized experts on Armenia and Armenians. CAS is grateful to the Haidostian family for their continuing support.



CRISIS IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH: PANEL ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

On September 22, 2023, CAS hosted a special roundtable titled *Crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh: Panel on Recent Developments*, in response to Azerbaijan's 2022 blockade of the Lachin Corridor, which precipitated a humanitarian crisis, the ethnic cleansing of Artsakh, and a mass exodus of Armenians from the region. The event featured panelists **Talin Hitik** (Hitik Law), **Lori Khatchadourian** (Cornell University and Caucasus Heritage Watch), and **Ronald Suny** (University of Michigan), who examined the legal, cultural, and historical dimensions of these developments. Talin Hitik discussed issues of self-determination, international law, and human rights, drawing from her advocacy work at the UN. Lori Khatchadourian focused on the cultural erasure and heritage destruction in Nagorno-Karabakh, employing satellite monitoring to assess risks and damages. Ronald Suny provided historical context and analysis of the region's political dynamics and the broader implications of the crisis. The roundtable underscored the urgent need to address the humanitarian, cultural, and geopolitical ramifications of the blockade and ethnic cleansing in Artsakh. This event was open to all members of the U-M community and beyond, achieving a broad reach across the US and internationally.



REMNANTS: EMBODIED ARCHIVES OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

On September 18, 2023, CAS invited **Elyse Semerdjian**, the Robert Aram and Marianne Kaloosdian and Stephen and Marian Mugar Chair of Armenian Genocide Studies at the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University, to discuss her recent book *Remnants*. Semerdjian's work examines historical fragments of the 1915 Armenian Genocide, focusing on the tattoos forcibly applied to Armenian women and their significance as sites of trauma and resistance. She highlighted survivor narratives, who bore scars from tattoo removal as a physical marker of her experiences. Semerdjian's lecture explored themes of postmemory, the intergenerational transmission of trauma, and the overlooked narratives of women and sexual violence during the genocide. Her monograph explores historical accounts of the Armenian Genocide through a feminist lens, opening up new interpretations that take account of affect and memory's role in shaping the historical record. At the U-M, conversation surrounding *Remnants* created spaces for scholars, students, and community members to engage at the interface of Armenian Area Studies and critical theory. Attendees praised the lecture for its novel approach to Armenian Genocide studies, shedding light on deeply personal and often silenced aspects of history.



EARLY MODERNITY, THE ARMENIAN PRINTING REVOLUTION, AND IMAGINING THE "CONFESIONAL NATION" ACROSS THE ARMENIAN DIASPORA, 1680-1800

On October 11, 2023, CAS welcomed longtime collaborator and former Manoogian Postdoctoral Fellow **Sebouh Aslanian** to discuss his new monograph, titled *Early Modernity and Mobility*. The Professor and Richard Hovannisian Endowed Chair in Modern Armenian History at the University of California, Los Angeles shared his research on Armenian language books produced and circulated throughout Europe and Asia during the early modern period. His lecture explored



how "confessionalism" and increasingly visible distinctions between practices in the Roman and Armenian churches helped in shaping collective Armenian identity, thereby offering a revisionist account of Armenian identity and nation-state formation.

A PRECARIOUS ARMENIA: WHEN DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE THE PAST?

On December 6, 2023, **Gerard Libaridian**, Professor Emeritus of the University of Michigan and publisher of numerous texts on Armenian history and politics, led a lecture on U-M's campus that discussed how events of Armenia's past play active roles in shaping contemporary geopolitical events local, national, and multinational. His lecture provided the U-M community with an opportunity to consider the interplay between history, politics, and global Armenian influences in geopolitics, as explored in the latest volume of *A Precarious Armenia*. Libaridian shed light on the dynamic and often disastrous relationship between our perception of the past and projections of the future, a relationship that can define the policies of the present.



BUILDING BRIDGES: CAS CONNECTS WITH FUTURE SCHOLARS AT AGBU MANOOGIAN SCHOOL

On March 13, 2024, a delegation from CAS visited the AGBU Alex and Marie Manoogian School in Southfield for a memorable presentation and tour of the St. John Armenian Church complex. After receiving a tour of the historic Manoogian Museum, the team held an assembly for junior and sophomore classes, led by Vicken Mouradian. Guest speakers included CAS Director Gottfried Hagen, Weiser Center for Europe and Eurasia spokesman Derek Groom, and 2023 Noroian Scholarship recipient Armen Vartanian, inspiring students with stories of academic opportunity and campus life at U-M. We extend our thanks to Principal Armoudlian and the Manoogian School community for their warm welcome and unforgettable visit.



GROWING TOGETHER THROUGH INTERDISCIPLINARY DIALOGUE: MWAS ANNUAL REPORT

This year's Multidisciplinary Workshop for Armenian Studies (MWAS) was again generously supported by Rackham, run by [Arakel Minassian](#) (PhD Student, Comparative Literature), [Emma Portugal](#) (PhD Candidate Linguistics), and [Sara Ruiz](#) (PhD Candidate, Slavic Languages and Literatures). See their yearly report below.

2023-2024 was a busy and exciting year for the Multidisciplinary Workshop for Armenian Studies (MWAS). We held 11 events, which showcased the breadth of research in Armenian studies, and gave Armenian studies-related graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, visiting scholars, and faculty an opportunity to gather about once a month for interdisciplinary dialogue on works-in-progress. The character of the meetings varied based on the presenter: some events involved presenters seeking feedback on works-in-progress, while others were primarily presentations. All-in-all, these events helped foster a community of scholars in Armenian studies at U-M who, being dispersed among different departments (Comparative Literature, Linguistics, Middle East Studies, History, etc.), would not otherwise have this opportunity.

The fall 2023 programming began with a workshop with [Arakel Minassian](#), one of the co-organizers and a PhD student in Comparative Literature. On September 21, the group read a paper Arakel had written entitled "Is This a Military Base?: Violence and Trauma in Zaven Biberian's *Twilight of the Ants*," a close reading of a novel he had been working on. Arakel intends to focus on the author Zaven Biberian for his dissertation, and Arakel received considerable feedback from the attendees on new research avenues.

Arakel's workshop was followed by a presentation on October 19 by visiting scholar [Rasmus Thorsø](#), a graduate student in Linguistics at the University of Leiden and currently a visiting scholar at CAS. Rasmus' presentation was titled "Prehistoric Loanwords in Armenian," and offered a fascinating look at the development of the Armenian language. Although Rasmus was at a late stage of his dissertation work, he still received helpful questions and feedback from the attendees. This was also an opportunity for the Armenian studies community at U-M to learn more about this particular linguistics research taking place on Armenian, and was an example of how the MWAS events created new opportunities for the Armenian studies graduate students to learn about different topics in Armenian studies, an opportunity we do not have in our home departments.

Another opportunity to learn from an external scholar

took place on October 26, when [Anahit Margaryan](#), PhD student at the University of Cadiz spending a semester with CAS, presented her work. Her presentation was titled "The Discourse of Conflict in the Spanish Sources on the 'Armenian Cause' and its Translations into English and Armenian." Anahit's work focuses on analyzing the discourse on the Armenian cause (i.e. Armenian genocide and later ethnic cleansing of the province of Artsakh) in Spanish sources from a sociolinguistics perspective. Anahit received helpful feedback from the attendees on how to narrow her research, and the group also learned much about Armenian studies in the Spanish context. Anahit's presentation was followed by a presentation on November 16 by U-M Middle East Studies PhD student [Emma Avagyan](#). Emma's presentation, titled "Armenian and Hebrew Revitalization Movements in the 19th Century: A Comparative Analysis of Khachatur Abovyan and Eliezer Ben-Yehuda," looked at textbooks and other primary sources to show parallels between Armenian and Hebrew revitalization movements, a central focus of Emma's doctoral work. Emma received feedback from the attendees on how to expand her work using new sources and new methodologies.

The fall semester wrapped up with a presentation by [James Wolfe](#), Manoogian Postdoctoral Fellow in Armenian Studies at U-M. On November 30, Dr. Wolfe led a workshop titled "Armenia and the Armenians in Lives of the Eastern Saints." Rather than presenting work-in-progress, Dr. Wolfe had the participants read a passage from sixth century historian John of Ephesus' *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, which included a narrative about a cleric known as "Thomas" from Armenia." Dr. Wolfe had been working with this text for some time, but he wanted to receive comments from the group on some of his initial research ideas. The workshop was therefore both helpful for James' own research and was illuminating for the participants.

The winter 2024 semester continued the busy work of fall 2023, beginning with a workshop with School of Information PhD student [Nazelie Doghramadjian](#) on February 8. Nazelie workshopped her paper titled "An Archival World Turns: Armenian Women's Archives in Southeast Michigan." Using fieldwork and interviews, Nazelie looked at the archival practices of women in the Armenian community in comparison with official archival practices. Nazelie argued that women's private archives have largely been excluded from official institutions, but nonetheless tell a vital part of the Armenian story in Michigan. This was the first time Nazelie had shown her work to a specifically



Armenian studies audience, and she received helpful feedback on future directions for her research. The participants also learned a considerable amount about the archival practices of the Michigan Armenian communities.

Nazalie's workshop was followed by two succeeding workshops with external guests. The first guest was [Kate Franklin](#), a lecturer in history at Birkbeck, University of London on February 15 (Dr. Franklin was also the keynote speaker at a conference organized by CAS the following day). The group workshoped Dr. Franklin's co-authored article titled "Textual Layering as Landscape Formation Process: Interdisciplinary Methodology and Medieval Places in Vayots Dzor, Armenia." This was followed by a workshop on March 7 with [Jennifer Manoukian](#), postdoctoral fellow at UC Irvine. Dr. Manoukian workshoped the epilogue of her dissertation, titled "The Post-Ottoman Expansion of Western Armenian and the Purist Ideology." In both cases, these presenters received valuable feedback from the group, but this was also an opportunity for the graduate students at U-M to network with two cutting-edge scholars in Armenian studies outside the university. Dr. Manoukian's presentation particularly afforded an opportunity for networking outside U-M, because her workshop coincided with the graduate student conference in Armenian studies run by CAS, and many of the conference attendees, who came from universities across and even outside the country, attended this workshop as well.

Our programming continued with a workshop with [Hakem al-Rustom](#), Alex Manoogian Professor of Modern Armenian History at U-M. On March 13, Dr. Al-Rustom workshoped the introduction to his forthcoming book, titled *Afterlives of Genocide: The Erasure of Armenians in Turkey and France*. Dr. Al-Rustom's book uses a multidisciplinary perspective to look at the after-effects of the Armenian genocide, employing literary analysis, anthropological fieldwork, and oral interviews. He received helpful feedback from a group of faculty and graduate students about how to revise his introduction for his upcoming publication, and the workshop participants also learned much from Dr. Al-Rustom's work.

The 2023-2024 MWAS programming concluded with two events on April 11 and 18. The first event was again by [James Wolfe](#). Dr. Wolfe's presentation, titled "Death and Taxes: Timeless Concerns from Late Antique Syria

and Armenia," updated the group on work Dr. Wolfe had introduced at his fall 2023 MWAS presentation. Building on that initial presentation, Dr. Wolfe showed a detailed examination of the concerns of both ordinary people and the clergy in the eastern Roman Empire, providing a fascinating window into the life of Armenians and other ethnic groups in this space. Dr. Wolfe's presentation was followed by the final MWAS meeting of the year on April 18, by [Astghik Soghoyan](#), a visiting scholar at CAS. Dr. Soghoyan workshoped her article titled "Pagan and Christian Interpretations of Dream-Visions in 'History of Armenia' Published by Hakobos Issavertents." Dr. Soghoyan's article was a deep and careful analysis of dream-vision motifs in an early modern Armenian text, showing parallels and continuities between Armenian pagan and later Christian imagery. Dr. Soghoyan received feedback from the workshop participants on how to complicate her work and adapt it for a western academic audience, as it had originally been written in Armenia. The participants also learned much about the dream-vision motif in Armenian culture.

Dr. Soghoyan's workshop capped off a strong and diverse year at MWAS. These meetings covered the breadth of scholarly work on Armenian studies both at U-M and other institutions. MWAS afforded the Armenian studies graduate students and faculty a space to come together and collaborate on works-in-progress and learn from each other. The community spirit of MWAS was always cordial and respectful, even during times of rigorous scholarly critique. MWAS also afforded us the opportunity to create new collaborations, including with visiting scholars at Michigan and with external scholars whom we invited to present their own works.

In collaboration with the Center for Armenian Studies, the MWAS group decided to co-sponsor a year-end event hosted by the Center. On April 24th, CAS held its second annual Armenian Genocide community commemoration event titled, "Shared Memories, The Armenian Experience Through Objects and Stories." This event brought together campus faculty, staff, undergraduates, and graduates with members of the local Metro Detroit community in an interactive and collaborative effort to critically reflect on the Armenian experience. Participants were encouraged to bring objects and stories that illustrated their connections to Armenian identity, the Genocide, and the Armenian-American experience. MWAS participants attended and presented at the event, facilitating community connections and offering an academic perspective to a broader audience. We are extremely happy with the outcome of our MWAS activities this year, and we look forward to another great year ahead.



A YEAR OF TRADITION, CELEBRATION, AND PHILANTHROPY: ASCA'S ANNUAL RECAP

By Naro Chopjian

The Armenian Students' Cultural Association (ASCA) enjoyed an exceptional school year in 2023-2024. We were excited to host engaging events like tailgates and cider mill trips, giving members the chance to celebrate Michigan's autumn together. We also had the privilege of welcoming pastoral visits from Father Aren and Lisa Mardigian of St. John Armenian Church, deepening our cultural and spiritual bonds through these and other community gatherings.

In addition to these new activities, we continued our annual traditions with enthusiasm. Our group took part in educational events, charity initiatives, and collaborations with other cultural organizations. One of the year's highlights was the much-anticipated Hye Hop event in mid-February, which brought together nearly 150 attendees. This celebration raised \$2,855 for AGBU Artsakh Relief, supporting food security initiatives and heater distribution programs to aid individuals in Artsakh.

Our executive board this year included Naro Chopjian (President), Dante Calo (Vice President), Courtney Baylerian (Secretary), Chris Alajajian (Treasurer), Victoria Nigoghosian (Marketing Chair), Isabella Klein (Outreach Chair), Alec Gharibian (Social Chair) and Jacqueline Zorian (Hye Hop Chair). Together with the Center for Armenian Studies, we hosted events like lectures and Armenian movie nights, which deepened our appreciation for our cultural heritage.

Reflecting on 2023-24, it's clear that ASCA continues to thrive with cultural enrichment and impactful outreach. As we approach a new year, we carry forward our achievements and treasured memories with pride and optimism. With the enthusiasm of our dedicated members and the support of CAS, we are excited and confident that our future endeavors will be even more remarkable.

CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENT: FELLOWSHIPS & SCHOLARSHIPS

2023-24 NOROIAN SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT: DANTE CALO

This year, the Center for Armenian Studies is proud to award **Dante Calo** the Edward Hagop Noroian Scholarshi Dante is a Computer Science student in the College of Engineering. He is of "half-Armenian" descent and is actively involved in the Armenian community on campus, serving as Vice President of the Armenian Students' Cultural Association. Over the past two summers, he interned with the Technology and Operations department at Comerica Bank. Dante discovered Armenian studies at the university by chance last year and has been deeply engaged in learning about his heritage ever since. In his executive role, he aims to give back to the Armenian community and plans to contribute even more in the future. In his response to the Noroian application, we learned more about Dante's story and what makes him a great recipient of the award this year!

HOW HAVE YOUR ACADEMIC PURSUITS ALIGNED WITH AND DEMONSTRATED ENGAGEMENT IN ARMENIAN STUDIES?

In my early youth, I was admittedly divorced from my own "Armenian-ness". All I really knew about my mother's heritage were the stories that she and my nene (mom's mom) told me about history, and my knowledge of the language was limited to phrases my mother would say to myself and my two brothers if we got in trouble. There even came a point in time where, to my mother, it seemed like I was more proud of the "Italian" side of me than the Armenian side.

My father is a mix of primarily Italian, as well as unknown measures of German and possibly Norwegian and/or Sicilian, so I stick with "Italian" for the sake of simplicity. In



Dante Calo

a roundabout way, she was right; it felt hard for me to self-identify as Armenian in my circles due to a lack of universal understanding. If I just said, "I'm Italian," then I wouldn't need to explain that I am both "part of an ethnicity of victims forgotten by history" and "not a Kardashian."

The opportunities afforded to me through attending this university

have opened my eyes and allowed me to feel welcome and proud of my identity. Before last year, I didn't even know that U-M offered Armenian language classes, let alone having an entire department dedicated to Armenian studies. I happened to stumble upon Armenian 101 when registering for classes for the Fall 2023 semester, and my curiosity led me to complete 101 and 102, learn about Armenian film in a class taught by Michael Pifer (MIDEAST 223), and now further my education in more Armenian courses offered by the university. I have also looked into the possibility of pursuing a minor in Armenian Studies.

Some other avenues that have encouraged my expanded interest in Armenian Studies are the Armenian Students' Cultural Association and the Center for Armenian Studies at the university. Whether I would be engaging with other fellow Armenian students at events the association would host or attending lectures or presentations hosted by the wonderful people involved with CAS, I found myself becoming more and more enamored with the Armenian community, to the point where I feel like I have an extension of my family on campus. If it weren't for the ASCA and CAS, I wouldn't be as interested in being as involved as I am now. To that point, I became

so interested in engaging with Armenian Studies and culture that I found myself running for the ASCA Executive Board in the Winter 2024 semester and was elected Vice President this past May.

HOW DO YOU PLAN TO CONTINUE ENGAGING IN ARMENIAN ISSUES?

In the campaign speech I used in my bid for a spot on the ASCA Executive Board, I spoke about a desire to have the ASCA's reach increased dramatically and to encourage heightened interactions with the greater Armenian community. I still stand by this statement, I feel that, given my position, I could extend the association's reach and turn it into a force for good.

Last academic year, when the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenian and Azerbaijan was nearing its climax, there were several instances where members of the executive board made members aware of charities to donate to in order to help out families impacted by the fallout. I felt touched by those actions, and feel a need to encourage this year's roster to help out the community wherever help is needed.

Outside of ASCA-related opportunities, I plan to engage with the greater Armenian community post-graduation. I plan to use my background in Computer Science and experience in Site Reliability Engineering (SRE) to start my career; I have a particular company in mind, but I plan to keep my options for jobs open. Although such a career would likely have limited applications to Armenian culture, at the very least "do my part" and help the community as a financial benefactor. Whether it would be helping out families forcefully relocated from their homes, or helping out more students like myself by removing the financial burden of tuition, I want to pay forward the kindness of the Armenians of today, to the Armenians of tomorrow.





FELLOWSHIP/GRANT REPORTS

FROM ARCHIVE TO IMPACT: EMMA AVAGYAN

With the support of the Center for Armenian Studies Summer Research Grant, I conducted research on the Armenian and Hebrew language ideology movements in the 19th century, focusing on Khachatur Abovyan and Eliezer Ben Yehuda. This funding allowed me to access archives in Armenia, specifically at the Yeghishe Charents State Museum of Literature and Art and the Abovyan House-Museum. Here, I studied Abovyan's writings, letters, and teaching materials, which highlighted how Western ideas shaped his views on language as a tool for cultural preservation. This work revealed Abovyan's efforts to build Armenian

cultural identity and resilience in response to imperial pressures.

These findings have significantly contributed to my dissertation, deepening my understanding of the impact of Abovyan's language reforms on Armenian society. This experience demonstrated the importance of archival research in understanding how language shapes cultural and national identity. It has also strengthened my preparation for exams and will inform my future contributions to discussions on language preservation, cultural resilience, and social change in similar historical contexts.

ARMENIAN ACOUSTICS ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE: EMMA PORTUGAL

Thanks to a conference travel grant from the Center for Armenian Studies, I had the opportunity to present a poster about my research at the 186th Meeting of the Acoustical Society of America / Acoustics Week in Canada in Ottawa, Canada in May 2024. My poster presented the results of my qualifying paper research about variation in the use of vowels among speakers of Armenian in Gavar, Armenia. The preliminary results of my research suggest that men use vowels more consistent with the previously described norms of the local dialect than women do, while age and education level did not seem to be related to the vowels that people use.



Emma Avagyan

PhD Student, Middle East Studies

Emma participated in the 21st Annual Graduate Student Colloquium in Armenian Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, this past February. At the event, she presented her research on the Armenian and Hebrew language revitalization movements of the 19th century, focusing on the influential figures and ideas that shaped these language ideologies. The colloquium provided her with a valuable platform to share her work, engage in enriching discussions on Armenian Studies topics, and receive insightful feedback from fellow scholars.



Nazelie Doghramadjian

PhD Candidate, Information

Nazelie presented at two conferences in the 23-24 academic year about Armenian women's personal archives: at UCLA's Graduate Student Colloquium in Armenian Studies, and the Archival Education Research Institute (AERI). Nazelie successfully completed her field preliminary exam this August, bringing together literature on Armenian history, feminist epistemology, and archival theory to pinpoint the significance of Armenian women's knowledge production through personal archives.

Lilit Gizhlaryan

MA Student, International and Regional Studies

Lilit completed her summer internship in Washington, D.C., assisting a human rights and rule of law organization with their projects in Armenia focused on advancing justice systems and human rights. She has returned to her second year of studies and works as a Graduate Student Instructor (GSI) for the class on Russia and the Soviet Union. In this class, she delivered a lecture titled "Introduction to the Caucasus," and she is also involved in a research project on radical reforms. Alongside her colleagues from the South Caucasus, Lilit will present at the International Studies Association's 66th Annual Convention in Chicago in Spring 2025 during a roundtable discussion titled "Thinking from the Periphery: Development of Critical Scholarship in the South Caucasus." Lilit is currently writing her thesis on Armenia-Turkey trade, focusing on vendor experiences in the markets despite the closed borders.



FACULTY UPDATES



Kathryn Babayan has been appointed visiting professor at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris. During spring 2025, she will lead four seminars at the School's Center for Historical Research. The topics she will address are:

Family Archives: Urban Knowledge and Social History, Desiring Isfahan: Seeing, Reading, and Writing the Early Modern City, Material Sentiments: Gifts of Letters and Paintings in Early Modern Isfahan, and Microhistories of Reading: Anthologies before Print Culture.

The seventeenth-century Ottoman polymath Kâtib Çelebi once wrote: "They call history 'the salt of the sciences' because a pinch of it goes into everything." In his recent article, "The Salt of the Sciences," **Gottfried Hagen** explores the implications of this statement for Ottoman historical thought (*Osmanlı'da İlm-i Tarih*, edited by Zahir Atçıl, Ercüment Asil, and Cemal Atabaş, 103–23. Istanbul: İsar Yayınları, 2023). Gottfried also presented on Ottoman sacred kingship at the *Great Lakes Ottoman Workshop*, an event he co-founded, held in May at SUNY Binghamton, and on an Ottoman translation of an English atlas (titled "Cedîd Atlas Tercümesi", 1803) at a workshop in September at McMaster University, one of the few institutions on the continent to own a complete copy of this atlas, of which only 50 copies were produced.

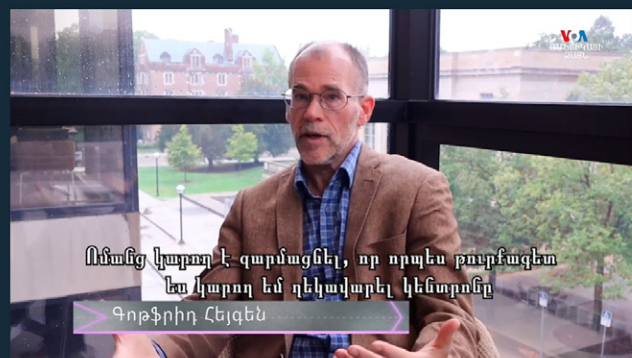


In 2024, **Sosy Mishoyan** introduced the course, "*Armenian in Diaspora*" during the Fall Semester, which examines the development and evolution of Western Armenian in diaspora communities, focusing on historical, cultural, and linguistic influences. The course explores the role of cultural institutions, media, education, and community efforts in preserving the language, alongside challenges and opportunities in a globalized world, with topics including local language influences, first-generation and contemporary literature, and both spoken and written language. In the Winter Semester of 2025, the topical course "*Seeds of Peace*" continues, delving into linguistic and cultural similarities and differences among various Middle Eastern and Asian communities. Additionally, Sosy participated in the conference "*Western Armenian in the 21st Century: Challenges and Possibilities*" held in Armenia, presenting on "*Western Armenian at the University of Michigan*," where she discussed innovative teaching methods, the importance of professional development for educators, and the use of engaging apps and platforms to enhance language learning.



Michael Pifer gave a keynote lecture, which focused on an Armenian physician in the early Ottoman court, at the 20th anniversary gathering of the Mediterranean Seminar in Santa Cruz, California in 2023. He also published a recent article based on this talk: "Learning

Մեկ օր Միչիգանի համալսարանի Հայագիտական կենտրոնում. NEXT USՈՊ



Սյա անգամ NEXT USՈՊ-ի շրջանակներում ասելիկ ենք Միչիգանի համալսարանի Հայագիտական կենտրոն, որտեղ գտացել ենք համալսարանի նայ ուսանողների և դասախոսների հետ: Կենտրոնը կարևոր դեր ունի Միչիգանի համալսարանում:

Middle Armenian at the Court of Mehmed II: Language, Knowledge, and Power Before the Imperial Rise of Ottoman Turkish," coauthored with Samet Budak, in *al-'Usur al-Wusta: The Journal of Middle East Medievalists*. Most of all, he has enjoyed teaching a new undergraduate course on the "Silk Road" (and Armenia's place along it) last winter.



Melanie Schulze Tanielian is currently the Director of the Program for International and Comparative Studies and an elected member of the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs (SACUA). In January of 2024, Prof. Schulze Tanielian published "The Silent Slow Killer of Famine: Humanitarian Management and Permanent Security" in the *Journal of Genocide Research*. The article addresses contemporary humanitarian issues in Gaza, demonstrating Professor Tanielian's engagement with both historical and current humanitarian challenges. In September, "'We Found Her at the River': German Humanitarian Fantasies and Child Sponsorship in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries" was published in the premier journal of history the *American Historical Review*. The article focuses on German humanitarian efforts in the late 19th century, particularly the Armenisches Hilfswerk (Armenian Relief Works) child sponsorship program. The piece explores how these efforts influenced modern humanitarianism's ideologies and practices. She was invited to give a lecture for the Eisenberg Historical Institute at U of M. She is currently revising an article, "Impossible Conditions of Life: Famine, Humanitarian Management and Genocide in Gaza" for the journal *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*, and is preparing a book chapter on refugee/humanitarian camps in Mandate Syria for an Anthology edited by Bedross Der Matossian and Edita Gzoyan. But

the big push this year has been for the new book preliminarily titled *Scandals and Salvation: German Humanitarianism in the Eastern Mediterranean (1890-1933)* under contract with Cambridge University Press.



Ronald Suny, now retired from teaching, has done more than sit in his comfy leather chair and write his book on nations and nationalism. He traveled to Armenia, Georgia, and Turkey in July to lecture in the Monterey Summer Symposium, where he was joined by his daughter, Sevan Suni, and his faithful gym buddy, Vicken Mouradian. He has also been lecturing around this country, at UCLA, Sonoma State University (on the Armenian Genocide), at Princeton University and New York University (on the Soviet Union and nationalities issues). He regularly is interviewed on KPFA in Oakland, CA, and is featured often on Arirang in South Korea, as well as on the Voice of America.

The International Institute honored **Vicken Mouradian**, Academic Program Specialist at the Center, with the 2023 Outstanding Public Engagement Award. This recognition celebrates Vicken's exceptional dedication to public outreach, embodying the Institute's mission to "bring Michigan to the world and the world to Michigan." Vicken also presented his research at the first annual II-Po-sium, a staff event dedicated to cross-regional education within the International Institute. His presentation was titled, "Love in Ancient Armenia: Formations of Identity in the Pre-Christian Conceived Tradition." Finally, Vicken was selected to participate in the University of Michigan's Voices of the Staff program, as a member of the "Enhance the Employee Experience" committee, where he hopes to lend a voice in improving practices and policies throughout campus.



ACADEMIC YEAR 2024-2025 GRADUATE STUDENTS

ARMEN ABKARIAN *PhD Candidate, Department of History*

Areas of Concentration: The Mongol Empire, Armenian Literature, Armenian Historiography

EMMA AVAGYAN *PhD Student, Department of Middle East Studies*

Areas of Concentration: Modern Hebrew Language and Linguistics, Modern Armenian and Linguistics, Language Pedagogy, Comparative Sociolinguistics, Teaching Hebrew as a Foreign Language

NAZELIE DOGHRAMADJIAN *PhD Student, School of Information*

Areas of Concentration: Personal Archives, Archival Silences, Recordkeeping and Preservation Practices of Armenian Women

LILIT GIZHLARYAN *MA Student, International and Regional Studies Program*

Areas of Concentration: Identity Creation, Nationalism, Memory Politics, Borders, Colonial Legacies

ALLISON GREENDA *PhD Candidate, Department of Art History*

Areas of Concentration: Byzantine Art and Architecture, Cross-Cultural Contact in the Medieval Mediterranean, Urban Crisis and Resilience, the History of Archaeology

SOSI LEPEJIAN *PhD Student, Department of Sociology*

Areas of Concentration: Ethnography, Comparative-Historical Sociology, Environmental Sociology, Colonialism, Social Movements, Migration, Race and Ethnicity, Middle East Studies

ARAKEL MINASSIAN *PhD Student, Department of Comparative Literature*

Areas of Concentration: Modern and Contemporary Armenian Literature; Postcolonial Studies; Translation; Creative Writing in Western Armenian

EMMA PORTUGAL *PhD Candidate, Department of Linguistics*

Areas of Concentration: Sociolinguistics, Language and Dialect Contact, Language Ideologies, Armenian Dialects

ARMENIAN STUDIES AFFILIATED FACULTY

HAKEM AL-RUSTOM *Assistant Professor in History & the Alex Manoogian Professor of Modern Armenian History, Departments of History and Anthropology*

KATHRYN BABAYAN *Professor of Iranian History and Culture, Department of History*

KEVORK BARDAKJIAN *Professor Emeritus of Armenian Languages and Literatures, Department of Middle East Studies*

GOTTFRIED HAGEN *Director, Center for Armenian Studies, Professor of Turkish Studies, Department of Middle East Studies*

SOSY MISHOYAN, *Lecturer, Department of Middle East Studies*

MICHAEL PIFER *Marie Manoogian Professor of Armenian Language and Literature, Department of Middle East Studies*

RONALD GRIGOR SUNY *William H. Sewell, Jr. Distinguished University Professor Emeritus of History, Department of History*

MELANIE TANIELIAN, *Director, Program in International and Comparative Studies, Associate Professor of History, Department of History*

2024-25 EVENT CALENDAR

All our events are free and open to the public. When possible, recordings will be posted on the CAS youtube page www.youtube.com/aspnichigan after the event. Please visit ii.umich.edu/armenian for more information on upcoming events and sign up for our mailing list to receive updates and announcements.

SEPTEMBER

5
thu

2024 Annual Dr. Berj H. Haidostian Lecture |
Paradox and Liberation: Bones, Puppets, and Psychedelic Journeys in the Play of Identity.
Sona Tatoyan, Hakawati.

7
sat

Theater Performance | *Azad Storytelling: Interactive Karagöz Puppetry Experience.*
Sona Tatoyan & Ayhan Hulagu.

17
tue

Roundtable | *The End of Artsakh: One Year In.*
Phillip Gamaghelyan, University of San Diego.

26
thu

Lecture | *The Ethics of Blessed Entertainment: The Visual and Affective Fundraising Strategies of German Humanitarianism on Behalf of Ottoman Armenians (1890-1930).*
Melanie Tanielian, University of Michigan.

OCTOBER

2
wed

Lecture | *"For us the Desert are Buzzling Cities:" Early Soviet Yerevan between Armenian Futurism and Post-Persian Retrotopia".*
David Leupold, Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient Berlin.

24
thu

Lecture | *Ottoman Passports: Security and Geographic Mobility, 1876-1908.*
Ilkay Yilmaz, Freie Universität Berlin.

NOVEMBER

5
tue

Lecture | *"They Vowed Never to Return:" Armenian Transatlantic Mobility and Abandoned Ottomans.*
Hazal Ozdemir, 2024-24 Manoogian Postdoctoral Fellow in Armenian Studies, U-M.

7
thu

Lecture | *Making "MENA": Histories of the "Middle East," Race, and the US Census.*
Thomas Simsarian Dolan, Armenian General Benevolent Union.

20
wed

Lecture | *Political Anxieties in Caucasia: the Georgian National Narrative Between War and Peace.*
Nutsa Batiashvili, Free University of Tbilisi.

21
thu

Lecture | *Needs of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the Context of Contemporary Political Processes and Social Modernization Trends.*
Arthur Atanesyan, Yerevan State University, Armenia.

JANUARY

24
fri

Workshop | *Becoming and Unbecoming Imperial Subjects: Mobility, Exclusion, and (Real/Discursive) Borders.*

FEBRUARY

1
sat

Community Event | *Hye Hop - Annual Armenian Students' Cultural Association Dance.*

4
tue

Lecture | *Diluted Wine, Disguised Belief: Catholic Ethnography of the Armenian Rite in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.*
Bogdan Pavlish, 2024-2025 Manoogian Postdoctoral Fellow in Armenian History, U-M.

21
fri

Workshop | *From Schism to Union and Back: Eastern Christians and Catholic Expansion in the Age of Confessionalism.*

MARCH

11
tue

Lecture | *The Mormon Colony Scheme in the late Ottoman Empire - Attempts to Alleviate the Abject Poverty facing Armenian Converts to Mormonism (1898-1928).*
Kent Schull, Binghamton University.

APRIL

4-5
fri-sat

Workshop | *14th Annual International Graduate Student Workshop in Armenian Studies: "The Archive in Theory and Practice in Armenian Studies".*

24
thu

Community Event | *3rd Annual Shared Memories: The Armenian Experience Through Objects and Stories.*

A YEAR OF SUPPORT

ANNUAL DONATION REPORT

The Center for Armenian Studies is funded almost entirely by the generous donations of our supporters. We seek to increase the depth and breadth of resources devoted to Armenian studies at U-M through an endowed fund that provides permanent support for the center. Each year, CAS solicits to support our three publicly-sourced funds:

ARMENIAN ENDOWMENT - \$1,986.46

Gifts to this fund seek to increase the depth of resources devoted to Armenian studies to provide permanent support for the center.

GRADUATE STUDENT FELLOWSHIP FUND - \$2,420.00

Gifts to this fund support graduate student tuition, benefits, and summer research funding.

CENTER FOR ARMENIAN STUDIES STRATEGIC FUND - \$6,825.00

Gifts to this fund support collaborations, initiatives, and center public programming creating opportunities for the students and community to interact with prominent scholars, artists, and experts in the field.

We'd like to extend our deepest gratitude to all our community members that donated to the Center this year. Particularly during Fall's Giving Tuesday and Spring's Giving Blue Day, we raised a combined total of \$1,990.00. We gratefully acknowledge the following individuals for their generous contributions in 2023-24 (August 1, 2023 - July 31, 2024).

WE WOULD LIKE TO SHARE OUR EARNEST GRATITUDE AND RECOGNITION FOR OUR REGULAR MAJOR DONORS REPRESENTED BY THE FOLLOWING FUNDS:

- Agnes, Harry, and Richard Yarmain Fellowship Fund
- Ashod and Clara Makarian Scholarship Fund
- Avedis and Arsen Sanjian Fellowship Fund
- Dr. Berj H. Haidostian Lecture Fund
- Edward Hagop Noroian Scholarship Fund
- Haiganoosh Mengushian/Ajemian Memorial Scholarship & Student Travel Award
- Harry Ardashes Paul Memorial Fund
- Leo A. and Armine G. Aroian Armenian Studies Scholarship Fund
- Manoogian Simone Fund for Armenian Studies

As CAS navigates through a post-pandemic landscape, we continue to provide in-person and hybrid programming for our on-campus and general community populations. Your gift is not only critical to helping us attract and retain the most outstanding graduate students from the U.S. and overseas, but your financial support is also an investment in the next generation of Armenian studies scholars and public servants in the diaspora as well as in Armenia!

We could not do this without your generous support. It is our great hope that we continue to work together to drive forward the mission of the center to educate about all things Armenian and provide the most promising undergraduate and graduate students as well as early-career scholars with an intellectual community wherein they may thrive!

In an effort to foster community engagement and in recognition of every donation of **\$65 or higher**, we will send you one of our special **CAS T-shirts!** Our Center T-shirts not only represent your support for Armenian Studies but also help raise awareness of our vibrant community!

FOLLOW THESE STEPS TO RECEIVE YOUR SHIRT:

Follow these steps to receive your shirt:

1. Visit the Donation page and select your fund
2. Proceed to Checkout, and under Gift Options, select "I would like to add a comment," and enter your T-shirt size here (1 T-shirt per \$65 increment)
3. Enter your contact information on the following page with the best email & mailing address the T-shirt would be sent to.

SCAN HERE TO
LEARN HOW YOU
CAN SUPPORT
ARMENIAN
STUDIES!





The University of Michigan's Center for Armenian Studies
serves the university and the community by:

- Preparing the next generation of scholars in the field of Armenian Studies.
- Offering a comprehensive university-level education in Armenian studies, teaching language, culture, literature, history, anthropology, international relations, and political science.
- Offering graduate student, postdoctoral, and visiting scholar fellowships; graduate and undergraduate student research support.
- Reaching out to the larger community with an intensive program of public lectures, workshops, international conferences, and film screenings.
- Answering student and researcher questions on Armenian history and culture from the US and throughout the world.

Together with our faculty, graduate students, visiting and postdoctoral fellows we have combined our efforts to push scholarship in Armenian Studies in new directions. Our interventions in the study of Armenian history, literature, translation studies, and the visual arts can be gauged by a carefully curated set of initiatives we have undertaken that will have a long-term impact on the field. The Center for Armenian Studies has been there for you since 1981; we want to be there in the future and do more.

