The State of Armenian Studies
One Hundred Years after the Genocide
Notes from the Director
Commemorating the Genocide & WWI

This year marks the centennial of the Armenian Genocide. How does one commemorate such a momentous event in Armenian history? To continue in the spirit of our faculty and graduate students’ efforts to push scholarship on the Genocide in new directions, we chose to focus on the State of Armenian Studies, a field produced by the Genocide itself. We will highlight the hallmark of our program, inviting innovative approaches to the event itself, fostering an environment of dialogue between Turkish and Armenian scholars; and placing the study of the Armenian case in larger discussions of human rights, humanitarianism, and genocide studies. How have we come to study and teach the Genocide, as well as evaluate a historiography that has taken shape as a result of the Genocide? What are the directions we have taken and what possible future turns can we anticipate? These are the underlying questions we will consider in our series of workshops, lectures, and exhibits.

The State of Armenian Studies project was first conceived of by Gerard Libaridian, former director of ASP and Manoogian Chair in Modern Armenian History. In 2008, Libaridian together with two graduate students, Naira Tumanyan and Vahe Sahakyan, embarked upon a grand assessment of the field outside of Armenia. They invited a group of scholars working in different geographic locations to collaborate on this project. Thanks to the generous support of the Harry Ardashian-Paul Memorial Fund and Dr. Ara Paul and Shirley Paul, the first phase of this project, which was an institutional and bibliographical survey of the field, was completed. We will make this material available on the ASP website for the general public.

This year’s workshops and events are designed to critically evaluate this historiography and publish a performative space for engaged dialogue. We are particularly excited about our Manoogian Simone Foundation fellows, Eric Bogosian, Rufen Sengul, Hayarpi Papikyan, and Michael Pöfer, each of whom is engaged in innovative scholarship and the arts, shaping new turns in the field that break with the insularity of Armenian studies, as they enter into iterative processes and conversations with sister fields of scholarship.

Finally, I am thrilled to be working with Melanie Tanielian as we organize the exhibit “Now or Never”: Collecting, Documenting, and Photographing World War I in the Middle East. We are drawing on the rich archive of Francis Kelsey (1858–1927) housed in the Bentley Library. Kelsey was a professor of archaeology at the University of Michigan who traveled to Anatolia and Syria together with the university’s staff photographer, George Swain (1866–1947). They visited a region of the world that had experienced four years of destructive war and devastating famine and was the site of genocide. Kelsey’s diaries and Swain’s photographs on exhibit are an important historical record that links them personally and the University of Michigan to one of the largest humanitarian efforts in history.

I hope you will participate in our activities, whether in person or in cyberspace as we post these events on our website.
Gerard Libaridian
Origins of the State of Armenian Studies project
Alex Manoogian Chair in Modern Armenian History (2001–12), U-M

As you embarked upon the "State of Armenian Studies" project in 2008, you sought to create a forum for scholars to discuss and comprehend the trajectory of the field of Armenian studies over the last half a century. What were some of the challenges you encountered?

The field of Armenian studies may be small compared to others, but it is still too wide to be covered by the concepts and resources we had available. First, we had to limit the study to focus beyond Armenia itself, especially since the term is defined and understood differently there. Second, it is not always easy to gather information from institutions and organizations involved in Armenian studies. There are many reasons for this; the main ones are (1) the lack of human resources to compile inventories and quantify holdings, and (2) the lack of interest in placing one's own resources and accomplishments within a larger context. We do not have collective thinking. But, nevertheless, we had good cooperation from so many individuals and institutions.

Now that much of the material for the project has been collected, how do you assess the state of the field of Armenian studies today?

It seems to me that the field has matured quite a bit, although there are too many gaps in what is studied, how works and projects in our field fit into a larger pattern in the social sciences and the humanities and ready to be critical of our own field and own works. In these respects I am very encouraged by the new generation of scholars who need all the encouragement we can offer them.

What are some important turns in the field of Armenian studies not yet taken?

First, we need to make more use of fields such as anthropology and history, and not everything in our history, society, and culture can be explained by historians. Second, we need to have a closer look at the early periods in Armenian history and a better look at the medieval period, so much of what we see today reflects old patterns. Third, we need to get further away from a narrow nationalistic interpretation of Armenian history. Fourth, we need to make more use of theoretical frameworks that can help us explain things, but also use the Armenian case to challenge larger theoretical frameworks.

Melanie Tanielian
The Pedagogy of Genocide
Assistant Professor of History, U-M

What are some of the motivating questions and goals for your pedagogy workshop, "Teaching about Genocide: Approaches and Challenges"?

The primary goal of this workshop is to bring together a group of scholars, who teach university courses on mass atrocities, and to examine strategies and solutions to common pedagogical challenges when teaching such emotive subjects. The fact that participating scholars' expertise not only lie in vastly different geographical areas and time periods, but also draw on methodological differences will add range to our discussion and perhaps generate new approaches, or at the very least produce new questions.

How have you designed the workshop to address some of the pedagogical challenges you face?

The workshop is split into three sessions addressing different, although clearly related, questions and approaches in teaching about genocide. The first panel tackles issues related to the use of images depicting mass killings in the classroom and film as an educational media. How may we use images productively and beyond simply a sensationalist viewing of suffering? How can we use film—documentary and/or fiction—to teach students the skills of critical analysis? In the second panel we will discuss how to develop a framework for comparative analysis that does not privilege a particular event, while assuring historical specificity in broad thematic discussions. The last panel of the day will complicate the often taken for granted relationship between the fields of human rights and genocide studies. One of the key challenges in teaching human rights history is that more often than not the expansion of human rights is reduced to a stimulus (violence)/response (human rights or humanitarian action) narrative. The approach produces human rights course syllabi that are dominated by mass violence and genocide. Are there alternative narratives? Or can we at least complicate it?

Ronald Suny
On the Question of Genocide
Charles Tilly Collegiate Professor of Social and Political History, U-M

You have been a key architect of the Workshop for Armenian/Turkish Scholarship (WATS) that invited Turkish and Armenian scholars to discuss the events of 1915 and address some of the unaired dimensions of the Genocide. After a series of eight workshops since the year 2000 and a co-edited book with Müge Göçek and Norman Naimark, A Question of Genocide (Oxford University Press, 2011), what inspired you to write a book devoted to the Armenian Genocide? What lacuna does your work fill in the historiography of the Genocide? After twelve years of working with WATS, Müge [Göçek], Gerard Libaridian, and I decided to turn over that project to a younger group of scholars. At about that time an editor at Princeton University Press, Britgitta van Rhineberg, and a colleague and friend, the historian of Germany Eric D. Weitz, asked me if I would write a short history of the Armenian Genocide for Eric's series on human rights that Princeton University Press is publishing. At first I was hesitant, as I am not an Ottoman historian, but since I had been working on and around the topic for several decades, and was engaged with my late wife Armena Marderosian learning Turkish, I decided to take on this book. Sadly, my work was interrupted by Armenia’s illness and death, but in the last year with fellowships from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the American Academy in Berlin, I completed the writing of the book.

Professor Suny’s new book, Why Genocide? The Fate of the Armenians and Assyrians at the End of the Ottoman Empire, is forthcoming from Princeton University Press.

Tamar Boyadjian
Challenging Armenian Literary Studies
Assistant Professor of Medieval Literature, Michigan State University

What do you hope to accomplish at the upcoming Sixth Annual International Graduate Student Workshop, "Challenging Entrenched Categories: Re-Exploring Approaches to Armenian Literature"?

This workshop aims to facilitate and encourage critical dialogue between Ph.D. students, young scholars, and faculty who engage in transcultural and interdisciplinary work in the field of Armenian literature, broadly defined. Pre-circulated papers and sessions will engage participants in comparative and analytical exchange regarding the past and current position of Armenian literature, as well as its future in a digital and rapidly changing world.

State of Armenian Studies
One-on-One with ASP Faculty

“One of the key challenges in teaching human rights history is that more often than not the expansion of human rights is reduced to a stimulus (violence)/response (human rights or humanitarian action) narrative.”
Manoogian Fellows

Eric Bogosian
Fall 2014 Manoogian Simone Foundation Visiting Fellow; Artist in Residence, Institute for the Humanities

What will you be working on as an Artist in Residence at U-M?
During my residency at U-M, I hope to transpose my new book, Operation Nemesis, to other media, particularly film and theater. I will be looking at and outlining these different formats.

Your talk that inaugurates this year’s ASP Lecture Series is entitled, “An Armenian American Artist—Back to the Front.” What are some of the questions you ask in this forward-facing encounter with your Armenian past?
In the lecture, I will discuss my life as an artist and how my identity—both as a grandson of Ottoman Armenians and as a suburban American—set the stage for my evolution as an artist. This talk will intersect with your Armenian past?
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In a previous interview with ASP, you spoke about your interest in examining humanity, in putting yourself in “that man’s shoes.” How does the medium of theater facilitate entry into the attitudes and sentiments of the other?
Theater operates on the audience’s imagination in a way no other medium does. Theater is primal; people have been performing for other people as long as humans have been self-conscious, perhaps even before that time. (Story-telling, performing, and orating are all forms of theater.) The audience inevitably identifies with the speaker or protagonist, even sympathizes and tries to see things from the central actor’s point of view. In this way, theater is essentially empathetic.
It asks the viewer to imagine, to re-enact in one’s mind, the trials and tribulations of the key performer. This experience is amplified for the viewer by immersion in a group—the audience. Drama and comedy depend on the reaction of the audience to measure “success” as performance. In effective theater, laughter or any emotional group reaction generates a collective attitude. In this way, theater is not only empathetic; it is essentially ethical in a way that other media are not. Theater is a deeply entertaining way for us to experience “walking in another man’s shoes.”

Eric Bogosian’s residency is made possible by generous contributions from the Institute for the Humanities and the Department of Screen Arts and Cultures.

“...most (Western) Armenians are caught in repetition; we cannot define ourselves outside of the genocidal legacy…”

Marie-Aude Baronian
Winter 2014 Manoogian Simone Foundation Visiting Fellow

Tell us about your experience as a Manoogian Visiting Fellow at U-M. What are some of the memories you have taken and challenges you encountered in the classroom and beyond?
My experience was definitely very enriching! First of all I was so pleased to be able to present and “translate” my work outside of Europe. The U-M context is very stimulating and I was so impressed by the quality of the Armenian Studies Program. I now understand why the program is so unique and has such a good reputation. It was great having an inspiring platform for sharing ideas.
I very much appreciated teaching non-European students, it was thoroughly rewarding. Students were keen to learn and to participate in discussions.
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“...most (Western) Armenians are caught in repetition; we cannot define ourselves outside of the genocidal legacy…”
**Ruken Sengul**  
2014-15 Manoogian Simone Foundation Post-doctoral Fellow, Doctoral Program in Anthropology and History in the Department of History  

**What are your current projects?**  
I am working on two articles that draw upon my doctoral research on the transcivilization between Kurdish and Armenian collective experiences of the past century. The first is a historical ethnographic study on sexual body politics. It explores the processes of making the Turkish state in the former Ottoman Kurdish-Armenian region from the fin-de-siècle Armenian massacres to the present Kurdish war. The second article studies the effects of the Armenian Genocide on contemporary Kurdish national imaginaries based on popular narratives of history and justice that inscribe Kurdish accounts on self, history, and home in Diyarbakır. In addition, I started a new line of research this summer on the formations of Armenian subjectivity in the present-day Diyarbakır region. A renewed research interest of mine on Anatolia’s remaining Armenian communities has crucially served to unsettle the latter’s public invisibility and silence. Preoccupied with “problems” of identity, much of the recent scholarship brings these communities into public view through the prism of lack or excess—as implied by categories like “Muslimized Armenians” or “Kurdified Armenians.” Shifting focus onto subjectivity, I wish to understand how various—possibly adversely positioned—genealogies, affinities, and experiences interact in deployments of Armenian selves in the region today.  

**What courses will you teach during your stay?**  
I will teach an upper-level undergraduate course on gender and militarism in the Department of History in Winter 2015. Taking gender as an analytical optic into militarization, the seminar will explore fusions between these two phenomena at multiple registers, such as national formations of identity, culture and citizenship, neoliberal securitization processes, everyday life, and deployments of sexual violence in contexts of ethnic conflicts, genocide, and their aftermaths in different geographical settings.

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**Michael Pifer**  
2014-15 Manoogian Simone Foundation Post-doctoral Fellow, Department of Comparative Literatures  

**What are you currently working on?**  
My current research focuses on the relationship between different literary cultures in premodern Anatolia and its neighboring regions during the 13th-15th centuries. This was a period when authors like Dante and Chaucer were writing in their own literary vernaculars, but it was also a time when Armenian and Turkish speaking authors were beginning to compose in new literary languages of their own. How were these diverse cultures of literary production interrelated or interconnected? How did they develop alongside, in concert with, and in opposition to one another? My work seeks to make a contribution to our understanding of cross-cultural exchange across literatures in the premodern world.  

**What classes will you teach?**  
I’ll be teaching a course on border-crossings and cross-cultural contact in world literature, with an emphasis on Near Eastern and Armenian perspectives. Through novels by Orhan Pamuk, Shahan Shahnoun, Elif Shafak, and the science-fiction author China Miéville, we’ll rethink borders as ever-wandering metaphors that structure our world.  

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**Hayarpi Papikyan**  
2014-15 Manoogian Simone Foundation Pre-doctoral Fellow, Department of Near Eastern Studies  

Tell us about your research interests. What are you currently working on? What do you hope to achieve as a student at the University of Michigan?  
My doctoral research concentrates on the education of Armenian girls in the South Caucasus from 1880 until 1921, during which time the dominant cultural and political discourse emphasized national interest in education. It examines the large number of schools opened by Armenian writers, pedagogues, and philanthropists during this period, which created networks of girls’ institutions within urban centers of the South Caucasus and major Armenian towns. I study how the growth of these institutions stimulated the first efforts to establish the contours of a teaching profession and contributed to the emergence of Armenian pedagogues and pedagogy. The creation of girls’ schools was a national political decision on the part of the Armenian intelligentsia, who transmitted to girls their vision of becoming responsible mothers, wives, and caregivers of the nation.  

During my year at U-M, I will make use of the rich collection of books and archives housed at the Hatcher Graduate Library. I will add this to material that I compiled during my research in the National Library and Archives in Armenia. I am auditing classes on feminism and historical methodology to fill in these important pedagogical gaps in the French academy. I am confident that the seminars I take and discussions with professors and graduate students will help me situate the history of Armenian girls’ schools within current historical scholarship in the fields of gender and nationality.
Tugce Kayaal
PhD student, Department of Near Eastern Studies
How did you become interested in Armenian studies? Since my high school years, I have been interested in studying history, but I also questioned the exclusion of Ottoman Armenians and non-Muslim communities in the national narratives taught in Turkish schools. As an undergraduate student, I began to work at the Hrant Dink Foundation voluntarily. During my work at the foundation I had a chance to be involved in projects related to Ottoman Armenians. This experience showed me the immediate need for writing an alternative Ottoman history, which must go beyond the Turkish nationalist narratives. This is how my particular interest in Armenian studies began.

Tell us about your first-year experience as a graduate student at NES, ASP and more generally at U-M? My first year at U-M was my first year in the U.S. as well. For this reason, it was a new life challenge to adapt to an entirely different environment. However, the unconditional support of my professors and friends at U-M helped me survive this process. The camaraderie among students, and between students and faculty, and feel that it is a very important aspect of the culture. My experiences in ASP have exposed me to a more thorough understanding of the Armenian language and history than I had gotten from reading many books on my own. I have gained the ability to think more critically about what I read and not to take things at face value, but to understand that there are motives for why different authors write history. For example, some early historians wanted to strengthen an Armenian Christian identity by writing a history that connected the Armenian people with the descendants of the biblical Noah. I would not have thought in depth about the history books I was reading before taking classes taught through the Armenian Studies Program. The program has also given me the opportunity to study abroad in Yerevan to learn Eastern Armenian and immerse myself in a culture that is not like my own.

How have you been challenged intellectually? As a PhD student in NES and also in ASP, I had a chance to take courses in different disciplines such as history, anthropology, and literature. All these courses provide me with a new academic perspective, and have encouraged me to ask different and original questions. As an aspiring historian, integrating different disciplines into my field of study was both a challenging and intellectually enriching process.

Shanda Eisel
BA Arabic, Armenian, Persian, Turkish, Islamic Studies, 2014
How did you become interested in the Armenian language? My love for the Armenian language and culture stems from my interest in learning about other cultures, especially those which are not well-known. After hearing about the Armenian Genocide, I decided to look into Armenian history, and since I loved languages as well, I got the Pimsleur lessons for both Western and Eastern Armenian dialects, and really liked the language. Besides being interested in Armenia’s rich language and history, I love the emphasis on keeping close relationships with families and friends, and feel that it is a very important aspect of the culture.

How did your experience in the ASP community help you grow as an undergraduate? My experiences in ASP have exposed me to a more thorough understanding of the Armenian language and history than I had gotten from reading many books on my own. I have gained the ability to think more critically about what I read and not to take things at face value, but to understand that there are motives for why different authors write history. For example, some early historians wanted to strengthen an Armenian Christian identity by writing a history that connected the Armenian people with the descendants of the biblical Noah. I would not have thought in depth about the history books I was reading before taking classes taught through the Armenian Studies Program. The program has also given me the opportunity to study abroad in Yerevan to learn Eastern Armenian and immerse myself in a culture that is not like my own.

What directions will you be taking now that you have graduated? I will now begin attending Eastern Michigan University for my MA in teaching English as a second language. I will use my experience with the Armenian language and studying abroad to help my students gain an understanding and empathy they will need in order to learn English more effectively. This is a tool necessary for many of their future endeavors.

ASP Graduate Students
Ali Bolcakan
PhD pre-candidate, Department of Comparative Literature
Area of concentration: Armenian, Greek, and Turkish literatures in the late Ottoman Empire
Eltonie Charriere
PhD candidate, Department of Comparative Literature
Area of concentration: 19th-century prose fiction, Greek and Armenian novels in the late Ottoman Empire
Dovin Derderian
PhD candidate, Department of Near Eastern Studies
Area of concentration: 19th-century social and cultural history in the Ottoman East
Jeremy Johnson
PhD candidate, Interdepartmental Program in Anthropology and History
Area of concentration: Soviet history, languages of the Caucasus, gender
Tugce Kayaal
PhD pre-candidate, Department of Near Eastern Studies
Area of concentration: Childhood history and the history of Armenian orphans during the late 19th and early 20th century
Vahak Sahakyan
PhD candidate, Department of Near Eastern Studies
Area of concentration: Diaspora studies, Armenian diaspora
Pietro Shakharian
MA student, Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies
Area of concentration: Soviet and post-Soviet Armenia and Caucasus
Richard Antaramian
Turpanjian Early Career Chair in Armenian Studies and Assistant Professor of History, Department of History, University of Southern California
Area of concentration: Modern Ottoman and comparative empire
Michael Pifer
Manosyan Simone Foundation Post-doctoral Fellow, Department of Comparative Literature, U-M
Area of concentration: Comparative literature and Armenian, Persian, and Turkish poetry from the 13th-15th centuries

Congratulations to 2014 Graduates!
Q&A with workshop organizer
Vahe Sahakyan

Why was the theme of your workshop “diasporas”? What did you set out to accomplish for ASP’s Fifth Annual International Graduate Student Workshop?
I have been following the themes of the International Graduate Student Workshops since I started my PhD program in 2008 and have been looking forward to participating in a workshop on modern and contemporary Armenian diaspora—the theme of my dissertation. While I enjoyed attending the workshops and even presented a paper in 2011 on the meaning of azg—“Nation” in Arakel Dawrizhetsi’s Book of History (17th c), I realized that if I wanted to organize a workshop on diasporas, I should take the initiative. Thanks to the encouragement and support I received from Kathryn Babayan and from my advisor Kevork Bardakjian, I was finally able to accomplish the idea I had nurtured for several years. My primary interest in organizing the workshop was to bring graduate students from other countries, universities, and disciplines together and learn about their research on Armenian diaspora, about new approaches and methodologies. I also hoped the workshop would contribute to the participants’ and my own work, as well as allowing us to make professional connections.

What role did faculty play in your workshop?
The encouragement I received from Kathryn Babayan and Kevork Bardakjian prompted me to start working out the call for papers and think of the structure, focus, and scope of the workshop. I was delighted that Khachig Tölölyan, professor of English and comparative literature at Wesleyan University, and one of the most renowned scholars in Armenian diaspora studies, and Kevork Bardakjian kindly agreed to serve as faculty advisors. I was happy I could benefit from their valuable advice and suggestions without feeling pressure. As I proceeded through the steps of the behind-the-scenes organizational process, I learned from the valuable comments and suggestions I received from my faculty advisors.

Besides Professors Bardakjian and Tölölyan, I was lucky to have Dr. Ara Sanjian, associate professor of history and director of the Armenian Resource Center at the University of Michigan–Dearborn, and Dr. Marie-Aude Baronian, associate professor in visual culture and film at the University of Amsterdam, as panel discussants. Discussions facilitated by faculty representing different universities and academic backgrounds provided an outlet for exploring various theoretical, methodological, and practical aspects of the questions raised in the papers. I am glad to occasionally hear that after the workshop some participants still keep in touch with each other and with faculty for possible future projects.

What do you feel was the workshop’s biggest success?
As a workshop on diaspora, the biggest success was the academic and geographical diversity and interdisciplinarity provided by the diverse academic backgrounds of both faculty and participants. The workshop brought together graduate students and recent PhDs from several different universities in Armenia, Brazil, Germany, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The panels and closing round table discussion provided a comprehensive framework for our discussions that extended beyond the scope of papers.

How will the workshop shape your research and professional development in the following years?
My research and professional development have already been shaped by the workshop in several ways. The fruitful discussions at the workshop clarified some methodological issues for my own work in progress. Some of the papers provided interesting and new perspectives on the internal dynamics within various Armenian diasporic communities and on the construction of diasporic identities, which will contribute to my theorizing on some parallel aspects of the Armenian diaspora. In terms of professional development, the networks created thanks to the workshop have certainly opened new opportunities for future projects and collaborations. Finally, the process of organizing a workshop has been a invaluable experience for my professional career. I am very thankful to Kathryn Babayan, the ASP executive committee, and particularly the Manoogian family, whose generous contributions make the ASP International Graduate Students Workshop possible.
We gratefully acknowledge the following individuals for their generous contributions in 2013-14 (as of September 15, 2014). A special thanks to donors of the Millicent and Kaloosdian Mugar Professorship Fund. This workshop is made possible through the generosity of several funders who contributed towards its inclusive and scholarly nature.

Armenian Endowment

Center for Armenian Studies Strategic Fund

More information, please visit https://sites.google.com/a/umich.edu/mwas/

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Eternal flame at Tsitsernakaberd, dedicated to the victims of the 1915 Armenian Genocide. Yerevan, Armenia. Photo: Marianna Meliksetyan

Jan 14–Apr 24
Francis W. Kelsey Exhibit
‘Now or Never’: Collecting, Documenting, and Photographing the Aftermath of World War I in the Middle East
Audubon Room, Hatcher Graduate Library, 913 S. University
Above: Kelsey Diary, December 20, 1919
(Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan)
Photo: Kathryn Babayan

Read about this and other upcoming events on the opposite side.