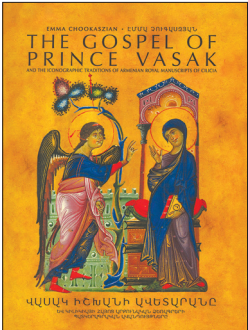


Armenian Studies Program
Book/Video/CD Archival Gifts

Dr. Levon Chookaszian, Yerevan, Armenia, for a copy of *The Gospel of Prince Vasak and the Iconographic Traditions of Armenian Royal Manuscripts of Cilicia* (Վասակ Իշխանի Արքունական Ձեռագրերի Պատկերագրական Ավանդույթները) by Dr. Emma Chookaszian (Yerevan, 2023), 192pp., in English and Armenian, with an introduction by Dr. Dickran Kouymjian and Isabelle Augé. This is the first monographic study of the Second Gospel of Prince Vasak (Treasury of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, Ms. 2568/13), produced in the last quarter of the 13th century. The book offers a detailed analysis of both the historical context and stylistic changes appearing in the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia at the end of the 13th century.



Dr. George B. Kooshian, Jr., Altadena, CA, for a copy of *The Web of Hope: The Memoirs of George B. Kooshian* (Altadena, CA: The Ideal Press, 2017), 507pp., in English. The memoir covers the life story of George B. Kooshian, from his birth in Hadjin, his education in American schools in Turkey, to his arrest and exile during the Armenian Genocide. His memoirs are “an incredible testimony to the triumph of the human spirit in the face of the most extremes trials.”



Gojabashian’s 1992 painting, “Toward the Desert,” tells the story of his mother’s survival of the Genocide.

Photo: ASP Archive

GOJABASHIAN, FROM PAGE 1

He began his career in art at a young age and graduated from the Yerevan Art and Theatre Institute in 1966. In 1981, Gojabashian moved to Montebello, California where he resides today. While living in Soviet Armenia, Gojabashian experienced discrimination from Soviet leaders who, at times, did not approve of his art, which often depicted the struggles of his Armenian ancestors.

One piece that stood out to many as they walked through the exhibition was titled “Toward the Desert,” and it told the tragic story of Gojabashian’s mother’s experience during the Genocide. Gojabashian’s description of the oil sketch stated that his mother was 6 years old at the time of the Genocide, and suffered a cut to her throat that left a scar after a young Turkish boy attempted to slit her throat, but ran away after seeing her begin to bleed.

Other inspiring pieces included sculptures that contained fragments of ancient Armenian artwork dating back to 400 A.D. Photos of Gojabashian’s beautifully detailed bas-relief located at the gate of Holy Etchmiadzin in Armenia was also displayed.

The exhibition was organized by Lucy Eryisian, Mike Bashian, Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Hazel Antaramian, and Kristiana Bashian. Curators of the exhibition were Steve Ruppel and Chris Lopez. Special thanks

to Interim Dean of Library Services, Dr. Bernadette Muscat, and Library staff members Delia Medrano, Barbara Windmiller, and Heather Parish.

Later in the evening, sponsors of the exhibit spoke on the importance of having Yervant Gojabashian’s work in the Library. As Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian and Lucy Eryisian stated, Fresno State students are able to come into the gallery and view pieces of art that are connected to Armenian culture and history during the month of April, when the Armenian Genocide is commemorated. These pieces tell a story of strong individuals who overcame adversity and persevered through hardship. As a patron of the opening of the exhibition, it was inspiring to see and hear how looking at these pieces of art moved people, as they conversed with one another about their interpretation of the artwork.

“In art, you don’t become an artist, you are born an artist,” said organizer Lucy Eryisian. “You find beauty in everything and turn everything beautiful. One of my favorite writers Dostoyevsky said ‘Art will save the world.’ ...I believe that it is through artists like Gojabashian, that the world will be saved.”

Gojabashian went on to explain how much the pieces of art mean to him, and expressed his gratitude to those who attended the reception and were able to experience his artwork.

California State University, Fresno
Armenian Studies Program

Fall 2023 Schedule of Courses

Course	Units	Time	Day	Instructor
General Education-Breadth, Humanities, Area C2				
• Arm 1A-Elementary Armenian (Class #72634)	4	10:00A-11:50A	MW	B. Der Mugrdechian
General Education-Breadth, Arts, Area C1				
• ArmS 20-Arts of Armenia (Class #73125)	3	11:00A-12:15P	TuTh	B. Der Mugrdechian
• ArmS 20-Arts of Armenia (Class #77283)	3	9:00A-9:50A	MWF	DIG SYNC
General Education-Breadth, Area D2				
• ArmS 10-Intro Arm Studies (Class #73378)	3	9:00A- 9:50A	MWF	H. Ohanessian
General Education-Integration, Area IC				
• Arm 148-Mastrpcs Arm Culture (Class #73892)	3	10:00A-10:50A	MWF	H. Ohanessian
• Arm 148-Mastrpcs Arm Culture (Class #73448)	3	2:00P-3:15P	MW	H. Ohanessian
• Arm 148-Mastrpcs Arm Culture (Class #77379)	3			DGT CAMP
Upper Division Armenian Studies Course				
• ArmS 108A-Arm History I (Class #73772)	3	9:30A-10:45A	TuTh	B. Der Mugrdechian

GET A MINOR IN ARMENIAN STUDIES.
CONTACT PROF. BARLOW DER MUGRDECHIAN

HYE SHARZHOOM

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Give Your Way
to the Armenian
Studies Program

There are many
ways to support
the Armenian
Studies Program.

- 1) A gift today could come through the donation of cash, stock, or goods.
- 2) The Armenian Studies Program can also be supported in the future in estate plans.

Hye Sharzhoom is an ethnic supplement of *The Collegian* and is the newspaper of the Fresno State Armenian Students Organization and the Armenian Studies Program and is funded by the Associated Students. Articles may be reprinted provided *Hye Sharzhoom* is acknowledged. *Hye Sharzhoom* welcomes prose, poetry, articles and other material from its student readers. For further information concerning the newspaper or the Armenian Studies Program contact us at:

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Dr. Christina Maranci Discusses Future Goals of Armenian Art



Left to right: Dr. Sergio La Porta, Dr. Christina Maranci, and Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian.

Photo: Andrew Hagopian

STAFF REPORT

Dr. Christina Maranci, Mashtots Chair of Armenian Studies at Harvard University, gave the inaugural Grace and Paul Shahinian Armenian Christian Art Series on Saturday, April 15, 2023, at Fresno State. Her talk was on “Armenia Art: Current Directions and Future Goals” and was held at the Smittcamp Alumni House on the Fresno State campus. A reception took place immediately before the lecture.

In her illustrated lecture Dr. Maranci gave an overview of under-studied forms of Armenian art and discussed the major sub-disciplines in the field. She opened her presentation by discussing how Armenian art and architecture has been in the current news, especially as it relates to the war in Karabagh. Dr. Maranci has been active in advocating for the protection of the art and architecture.

Christina Maranci grew up in a diasporan Armenian family in Westport, Connecticut. She earned a B.A. in art history at Vassar, and an M.A. and Ph.D. at Princeton in the Department of Art and Archaeology. Her work explores the art and culture of Armenia in all aspects, but with special emphasis on the late antique and medieval periods.

Dr. Maranci is the author of four books and over 100 articles and essays on medieval Armenian art and architecture, including most recently, the *Art of Armenia* (Oxford UP, 2018). Her 2015 monograph, *Vigilant Powers: Three Churches of Early Medieval Armenia* (Brepols, 20215) won the Karen Gould Prize for Art History from the Medieval Academy of America and as well as the Sona Aronian Prize for best Armenian Studies monograph from the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR).

Armenian art was featured in the 2018 “Armenia!” exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Dr. Maranci mentioned how significant a moment this was and how she enjoyed the fact the so many works of Armenian art were displayed. She enjoyed watching people watch the works of art, the enthusiasm of people could be felt.

The connectedness of art

throughout the world is a current discourse in art, and at the same time a future direction, because Armenian art is significant to a world-wide audience. Dr. Maranci used the example of the Cathedral of Ani as a church with Byzantine connections, thus illustrating the connection to world art. Reading the inscriptions on the churches places Armenian art in a broader context. The architect of the Cathedral of Ani, Trdat, also worked on the restoration of the dome of Hagia Sophia, which was damaged by an earthquake.

The Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia is one of the most important periods in the history of Armenian manuscript production. The Lectionary of Hetum II is a sumptuous manuscript decorated with fantastical creatures, which can be connected to Chinese ceramic motifs.

These also illustrate historical connections to the Mongol Empire, and therefore further research needs to be done. “This gives us a sense of how cosmopolitan Armenian Cilician art can be,” stated Dr. Maranci. “It is also an illustration of the elite nature of that art.”

The study of textiles and ceramics are two areas in need of more intense study, having received less attention than church monuments and manuscripts.

Dr. Maranci concluded her presentation by discussing Armenian art found in the United States. She used an example of a textile found in the Armenian Museum in Watertown, about which little is known. Was it made in India or Iran? When was it made? It has extraordinary iconography, but needs further research.

Dr. Maranci’s broad-ranging presentation introduced the audience to the history of the study of Armenian art and also laid the groundwork for future areas of investigation.

Dr. Maranci’s lecture, and all Armenian Studies Lecture series presentation can be accessed on the Armenian Studies Program YouTube channel, <https://bit.ly/armenianstudiesyoutube>.

Visit us at hyesharzhoom.com

Dr. Taner Akçam Presents New Findings on the First Decision to Commit the Armenian Genocide

CAREEN DERKALOUSDIAN
STAFF WRITER

On Friday, March 3, 2023, Dr. Taner Akçam, director of the Armenian Genocide Research Program at The UCLA Promise Institute, presented his new findings regarding the first decision to eradicate the Armenian population in the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the twentieth century. The lecture, “The First Decision of the Armenian Genocide and the Role of the Kurds in Ottoman Documents,” was part of the Armenian Studies Program Spring 2023 lecture series.

Dr. Akçam is recognized as one of the first Turkish scholars to write extensively about the Armenian Genocide and the role that the Ottoman Turks played in orchestrating this atrocity. He has published several award-winning works such as *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility* (Metropolitan Books, 2006) and *Young Turks’ Crime Against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton University Press, 2012).

Dr. Akçam began his presentation by outlining his three main arguments. In his first argument, he explained when the first and final decisions to carry out the Armenian Genocide were made. The first decision was made on December 1, 1914 by the Central Committee of the Teşkilât-ı Mahsûsa [Special Committee] in Erzurum for the Van and Bitlis regions, and the final decision was made by the Central Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) between February 15 and March 3 of 1915.

The date of the first decision is corroborated by two telegrams sent to the Interior Minister Talaat Pasha from the Special Committee, which outlined the beginning stages of the Genocide, which began with the targeting of Armenians in Bitlis and Van: “Those suspected of being potential leaders of the revolt or liable to carry out attacks against Muslims should be arrested and ... eliminated.”

The date of the final decision is evidenced by Bahaeddin Şakir’s visit to Istanbul and Erzerum as well as the restructuring of the Special Committee during this time. The Committee was put under the authority of Şakir, and they contributed to making the final decision. Two letters of Şakir’s, written in March and April of 1915, were published by Aram Andonian, and were recently confirmed to be authentic. These



Photo: Andrew Hagopian

Left to right: Dr. Sergio La Porta, Dr. Taner Akçam, Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian and Dr. Hagop Ohanessian.

letters validate the dates of when the final decision to annihilate the Armenians was made.

Dr. Akçam’s second major argument was that the provincial governors did not simply carry out orders from the central government, but they actively participated in the decision-making of the Armenian Genocide. In fact, the radical policy regarding the Armenian population was first adopted by the provincial governments and later adopted and expanded by Istanbul. This fact is evidenced by a series of written and oral discussions among provincial governors, where they explicitly shared ideas on how to carry out the extermination. According to Dr. Akçam, this was a very important discovery.

Dr. Akçam’s third and final argument was that violence against Christians was not only orchestrated by the central government, but that there was also bottom-up violence outside their control. Moreover, there is evidence in telegrams that shows how the provincial governors pushed the central government to carry out the Armenian Genocide. These governors often demanded radical measures to be taken against the Armenians, and the central government gave them permission.

Toward the end of his lecture, Dr. Akçam also presented new findings regarding the Kurdish role in the Genocide. While the Turkish *gendarmes* were sent to carry out the Genocide, anarchy ensued and Kurdish tribes engaged in the murder, rape, and looting of Christian settlements. During this time, the Turkish governors were sending complaints regarding the Kurdish attacks to the central government. This led Dr. Akçam to ask a very important question: “Why did the Ottoman state, which had undertaken extensive political and practical actions in order to annihilate the Armenian population, oppose and clash with the Kurdish tribes when

they attacked the same Christian villages?” One answer to this question is that the Ottoman Turks were unwilling to share power with others. For example, they wanted to exploit the Christians’ wealth for their own gain and not for the benefit of other agents such as the Kurds. In addition, Ottoman officials wanted to control and censor news coverage, but the Kurds’ uncontrollable looting drew attention to the atrocities being committed against the Christian Armenian population and made censorship very difficult. There was also a highly “patriotic” motive to deporting and killing the Armenians as it seemed a personal “accomplishment” that the Ottoman Turks took national pride in. In fact, according to Turkish governors, the Kurds were barbaric, uncivilized, and unpatriotic and thus, their looting and killing of Armenians was deemed as “unreputable.” All of these factors played a part in the clash between the Ottoman state and the Kurds.

Dr. Akçam’s presentation outlined new and critical information regarding the execution and timeline of the Armenian Genocide by the Ottoman central and provincial governments, as well as the role of Kurdish tribes in the looting and killing of Christian Armenian villages. Until the recent documentation was revealed, many might say that the three leaders of the committee of Union and Progress were the main orchestrators of the Armenian Genocide. However, now it is clear that the provincial Turkish governors not only carried out the CUP’s orders, but they also actively contributed ideas and participated in the extermination of the Armenians.

The Armenian community is grateful to Dr. Akçam for his contributions to the field of Armenian Genocide research and looks forward to his future discoveries.

Hye Oozh - Saturdays 9:00 AM - Noon
90.7 FM-KFSR

Hye Oozh is 90.7 KFSR’s weekly program dedicated to contemporary and traditional Armenian music and culture.

Hye Oozh DJ: Vartush Mesropyan

Congratulations Armenian Studies Minors and Graduating Seniors of 2022-2023



ANGELA SOGHOMONIAN
Biochemistry
Minor in Armenian Studies

What encouraged you to take an Armenian Studies course?

I enjoy history and wanted to learn about the historical events relevant to the Armenians.

What was your favorite Armenian Studies class, activity, or event?

I enjoyed the Armenian language classes, because it gave me an opportunity to practice speaking.

What are your plans after graduation?

After I graduate, I plan on applying to medical school.

MITCHEL STATLER
Theatre Arts
Minor in Armenian Studies

What encouraged you to take an Armenian Studies course?

I started taking Armenian studies classes to learn more about my heritage.

What did you value most from your experiences in the Armenian Studies Program?

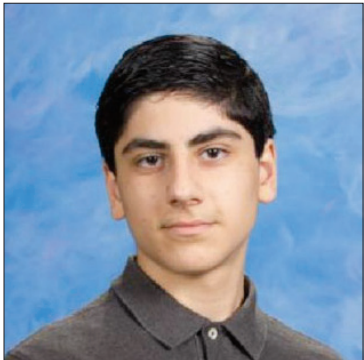
The thing I value most is the friends that I have made over the years. I have met some of my closest friend though this program.

What was your favorite Armenian Studies class, activity, or event?

My favorite classes were the “Arts of Armenia” course and the History of Fresno Armenians weekend class.

What are your plans after graduation?

I am going to attend the University of Nevada, Las Vegas to get an MFA in Technical Direction.



MARK SOGHOMONIAN
Biochemistry
Minor in Armenian Studies

What was your favorite Armenian Studies class, activity, or event?

One of my favorite courses was Armenian Studies 108B, Modern Armenian history. This course offered a very enriching learning experience and made me more aware of root historic causes of conflict in Transcaucasia.

What did you value most from your experiences in the Armenian Studies Program?

I value the historic, cultural, and linguistic knowledge I gained from the Armenian Studies Program. Minor in Armenian Studies provided me with ample opportunity to think critically about historic events affecting Armenia and surrounding nations.

What are your plans after graduation?

I am pursuing a career in medicine and plan on attending a medical school in California.

KHORI CRANFORD
Political Science
Minor in Armenian Studies

What encouraged you to take an Armenian Studies course?

Growing up in the Armenian Church and community, I have always been passionate about my culture and where/who I came from. Having the opportunity to Minor in Armenian Studies at Fresno State was an amazing experience.

What did you value most from your experiences in the Armenian Studies Program?

I value being able to speak Armenian and be educated on an academic level about the culture and what it means to be Armenian. I have made amazing connections and am proud to be part of the Armenian Studies Program!

What are your plans after graduation?

I will be working in Washington, DC for the summer with the Armenian Assembly. Then I will be headed to San Diego State to begin a Masters program in Strategic Communications.



OLIVIA SOGHOMONIAN
Chemistry and Mathematics
Minor in Armenian Studies

What encouraged you to take an Armenian Studies course?

Growing up in an Armenian household, I was no stranger to historic events like the Genocide. However, I wanted to learn more about what Armenian history was like before the Genocide. I was unaware of how rich a field of study Armenian history is, and the more I learned, the more interested I became in taking more

classes. It was fascinating to learn about how Armenia overcame all the struggles it has faced in the past, and how the past has shaped modern conflicts of today.

What did you value most from your experiences in the Armenian Studies Program?

It is impossible to not value everything I learned from the Armenian Studies classes I took. I have learned so much about Armenian culture, art, and history throughout my time as an undergrad. Had I not taken these classes, I would not have been able to appreciate the significance of many aspects of Armenian culture that I was unaware of before. As such, I value how much these classes have taught me to treasure my culture and heritage.

What are your plans after graduation?

I am currently working on my Masters degree at Fresno State. I am studying Pure Mathematics with a focus on functional analysis.



CHRISTIAN TUFENKJIAN
Biology
Minor in Armenian Studies

What encouraged you to take an Armenian Studies course?

I decided to pursue an Armenian Studies Minor because I have always been fascinated by Armenia’s rich and diverse culture. Learning about my history, language, and traditions has been fulfilling. I felt that enrolling in an Armenian Studies Minor would help me deepen my understanding and appreciation for my heritage.

What was your favorite Armenian Studies class, activity, or event?

My favorite class was definitely the Armenian language course. Learning Armenian was a challenging but incredibly rewarding experience, and I loved being able to communicate with native speakers and immerse myself in the language.

What did you value most from your experiences in the Armenian Studies Program?

The most valuable aspect of my experiences in the Armenian Studies Program has been the opportunity to connect with other students who share my passion for Armenian culture. Through class discussions, cultural events, and guest lectures, I have formed lifelong friendships and professional connections that will continue to enrich my life and career long after graduation.

What are your plans after graduation?

After graduation, I plan to continue exploring my passion for Armenian culture and history and I am planning on attending dental school.

MELINA PETERS
Liberal Studies
Minor in Armenian Studies

What encouraged you to take an Armenian Studies course?

As an Armenian-American student, it was important for me to utilize the courses offered at Fresno State to get a deeper understanding of the culture I proudly belong to. After taking my first Armenian Studies course, I knew I wanted to expand my knowledge further in regard to our history, culture, arts, and language. In addition, I have learned in greater detail about the Armenian Genocide and the events leading up to the massacres. After minoring in Armenian Studies, I have sought out opportunities to gain additional knowledge in many different realms of our culture’s rich history.

What was your favorite Armenian Studies class, activity, or event?

My favorite Armenian Studies courses were Armenian 1A & 1B, Introduction to Armenian Language. In both courses, I learned how to read, write, and speak the language. Professor Barlow provided a fun and welcoming environment throughout the courses, which made my experience even more enjoyable. Although I grew up as an Armenian-American, going to Armenian church and events, I never had the opportunity to learn the language until I entered college. Though I am far from perfect when making a conversation, I can come out of this program saying I know far more than I did prior to entering it. The part of me that has been yearning to learn the language has been filled thanks to this program.

What did you value most from your experiences in the Armenian Studies Program?

I valued the community the Armenian Studies Program has offered me throughout my college experience. I enjoyed coming to class not only to learn about my culture, but to spend time with the friends I have made. As a third/fourth-generation Armenian-American, learning about the Genocide has reminded me how fortunate I am to live in a country where I am safe to be who I am. My ancestor’s perseverance and determination to survive and strive during hard times was astonishing to learn about. My experience during the Armenian Studies Program has made me grow as a young Armenian.

What are your plans after graduation?

I will be continuing my studies at Fresno State pursuing my Masters in School Counseling. After graduate school, I hope to work as a school counselor at an elementary or middle school within a local school district in Fresno.



ANAHIT YERDOĞLYAN
Biology
Minor in Armenian Studies

What encouraged you to take an Armenian Studies course?

I really wanted to learn more about my Armenian roots and my country. Growing up, there were not very many chances to take Armenian classes whether it was in high school or middle school, so I was excited to take these classes when I heard that Fresno

Nersisian’s “Back to Ashtarak” Screens at Fresno State



Left to right: Armen Karaoglanian, Mary Karaoglanian, director Tigran Nersisian and Mrs. Nersisian.

NATALIE AGAZARIAN
EDITOR

Tasting grandpa’s fresh apricots and black plums, playing the tunes of childhood on grandma’s old piano, walking past the water fountain by an all too familiar route – “Back to Ashtarak” is a documentary film brimming with nostalgia. It is a compilation of archival and recent footage, with unique animation that captivates the audience through its depiction of the innocence and simplicity of childhood.

On Friday, March 10, the Armenian Studies Program organized the Fresno premiere of “Back to Ashtarak,” directed by Tigran Nersisian and produced by Armen Karaoglanian. Both were present at the Friday night screening to discuss the film with the audience. The screening was co-sponsored by the Hamazkayin Fresno Taniel Varoujan Chapter.

Nersisian was born in Ashtarak and later moved to Russia at the age of five. Between COVID-19 and the recent wars in the region, Nersisian, like many Armenians, experienced feelings of disconnection from his homeland. These overwhelming emotions caused him to return to Ashtarak, where he decided to document

his experiences. While the project initially started out as a form of personal reminiscence, it soon became an artistic expression for Nersisian to highlight the “celebration of Armenian culture and family.”

The short film was recorded and edited in a documentary style and is approximately thirty minutes long. Nersisian incorporated various filming techniques to capture his personal story, elements of Armenian culture, and efforts to unite the Armenian diaspora. The actual process of filming and editing the documentary lasted approximately a year, with ten days spent filming in Ashtarak and the remainder of the time spent editing.

When Nersisian posted his video online, it garnered the attention of producer Armen Karaoglanian. After coming across Nersisian’s short film, Karaoglanian felt “immediately connected” with the work, even though he had never been to Ashtarak or Armenia. Karaoglanian co-founded the Armenian Film Society in Glendale along with his wife, Mary Karaoglanian. It is Karaoglanian’s goal to connect Armenians in film and Armenian filmmakers, which is why he strives to share these

Photo: Andrew Hagopian

Andrew Hagopian Graduates with Bachelor of Arts Degree in Armenian and Middle Eastern Studies

STAFF REPORT

It is common to hear the exciting announcement of students graduating from Fresno State with a degree in biology, business, engineering, or nursing. Andrew Hagopian, however, decided on a different path, becoming the first student at Fresno State to receive a Bachelor of Arts degree in Armenian and Middle Eastern Studies.

With the help of advisor Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Berberian Coordinator of the Armenian Studies Program, and faculty from the Middle Eastern Studies Program and History Department, Hagopian was successful in petitioning to the university to approve this special major.

The Special Major Degree program at Fresno State provides an opportunity for students to engage in an individualized course of study leading to a degree when one’s academic and professional goals are not accommodated by standard degree majors.

Hagopian started his college journey in the Fall of 2018 as a marketing major in the Craig School of Business. “While at Fresno State I knew that I wanted to pursue a Minor in Armenian Studies but it wasn’t until I took Armenian Studies 20, the Arts of Armenia course with Professor Der Mugrdechian, that I wanted to pursue more than just a Minor. I wanted to become an Armenian Studies professor.”

Hagopian was born and raised

in Fresno with a sincere love and appreciation for his Armenian culture and heritage.

From serving as a deacon on the altar at St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church of Fowler to performing alongside his grandfather Richard Hagopian at the annual “Blessing of the Grapes” picnics, Hagopian became involved in every aspect of the Armenian community. “It is crucial in this day in age that as a third generation Armenian-American, that I do all that I can to preserve my unique Armenian identity in a globalizing world,” said Hagopian. Hagopian was motivated to pursue his passion in Armenian Studies because of his deep love of the Fresno Armenian community and the Armenian Studies Program.

“I decided to pursue Armenian Studies because I fell in love with the concept and purpose of the Program at Fresno State.



Andrew Hagopian

Photo: Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian

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“I decided to pursue Armenian Studies because I fell in love with the concept and purpose of the Program at Fresno State.

of Yerevan, Armenia. The name “Ashtarak” translates to “tower,” as one of the monasteries in the area served as a fortress in the 9th century. The region is home to many Armenians, some of whom moved there after the defense of Van in 1915. One of the main geographical landmarks of the region is the gorge that separates the old and new parts of the city. The two sites are connected by

It not only serves to connect and further educate Armenian students about their Armenian culture but also to expose non-Armenian students to Armenian heritage,” said Hagopian.

The Armenian Studies Program at Fresno State currently offers classes in Armenian language, history, art, and literature, however Hagopian foresees the future possibility of establishing a course in Armenian music.

“Armenian music in the United States has been under-researched over the last one hundred years. With my background and love of Armenian music, I hope to contribute to this aspect of Armenian culture and shed light on the lives of musicians and composers who preserved their music from the old county in America after the Genocide,” stated Hagopian.

the Old Bridge, which was built in 1664 and spans over the Kasagh River. The bridge features three distinctive arches, each a different size. Nersisian commented that he admired the “connection to the past” that Ashtarak seems to transport him to, with its many buildings from the 5th century.

Like many regions in Armenia,

SEE [BACK TO ASHTARAK](#) PAGE 7

MINORS, FROM PAGE 4

State offered many Armenian classes.

What was your favorite Armenian Studies class, activity, or event?

There were many great classes within the Armenian Studies Program but my favorite Armenian Studies class that I have taken was “Arts of Armenia” because it was interesting to learn about all the different churches. It was also interesting to learn about all the different miniatures that Armenians had painted and made over time.

What are your plans after graduation?

After graduation, my plans are to study to take my OAT and apply to optometry schools since I want to become an Optometrist.



RITA YERDOGLYAN
Biology
Minor in Armenian Studies

What encouraged you to take an Armenian Studies course?

I decided to take an Armenian studies course because I wanted to learn more about my Armenian roots. I grew up speaking Armenian in my home, but I wanted to know more about what it meant to be an Armenian. By taking these courses I was able to learn a lot about my culture and gained more appreciation for its long and detailed history.

What was your favorite Armenian Studies class, activity, or event?

My favorite course was the Arts of Armenia course and the Armenian Studies 120T weekend course where we learned about the Armenian Apostolic Church. This course allowed me to learn about the details that went into Armenian art and architecture. In the 120T weekend course we learned about the structure of the Armenian church and the

meaning behind this organization. I enjoyed this course because we learned about the church and got to go to St Paul Armenian church and get a tour of the church.

What are your plans after graduation?

I plan on gaining more healthcare experience and going to PA school and obtaining my Masters degree.



CALEB ARIZMENDEZ
Chemistry
Minor in Armenian Studies

What encouraged you to take an Armenian Studies course?

I have been raised around so many Armenians in Fresno and I wanted to know the history and language of this people

What was your favorite Armenian Studies class, activity, or event?

My favorite Armenian Studies class was Arms 20 Armenian Art because of how beautiful Armenian churches are and I haven’t taken a class that has focused on architecture as an art form.

What did you value most from your experiences in the Armenian Studies Program?

I most value the unique environment of each Armenian Studies course which makes them stand out as GE courses on this campus. They provide students with the opportunity to learn about very interesting subjects pertaining to Armenian culture and history in a safe and encouraging environment.

What are your plans after graduation?

I plan to apply for Pharmacy School.

Armenian Studies Scholarships, from pg. 1

and relatives about the Armenian Studies Program Scholarship Program and to encourage them to apply for the 2023-2024 academic year (application period will open in October of 2023).

Applying has become simplified and is entirely online through the Program website at <https://cah.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies/students/scholarships-offered.html> and the University website at <https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/financialaid/scholarships/scholarshipapplication/index.html>.

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Vic Gerami’s Powerful Documentary “Motherland” Featured as Part of CineCulture Series at Fresno State

STAFF REPORT

Award-winning journalist and director of the documentary film “Motherland,” Vic Gerami, was a guest of CineCulture and the Armenian Studies Program on Friday, April 14, 2023. Gerami interacted with a virtual audience of students and community members, who posed a variety of interesting questions regarding the movie. CineCulture Professor Mary Husain moderated the discussion, together with Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian of the Armenian Studies Program. Students and community members had the opportunity to watch “Motherland” in the week prior to participating in the Friday discussion. “Motherland” is a 120-minute documentary feature film focusing on the September 27, 2020 invasion of Artsakh. The film illustrates history repeating itself through Turkey and Azerbaijan’s aggression and attempts at ethnic cleansing in Artsakh. Once the war began, Gerami, without hesitation, flew to the embattled motherland to personally interview officials, veterans, experts, and journalists. He interviewed nine congressmen for the film, in order to get the response of American politicians to recent attacks in Artsakh. He documented how Presidents Aliyev (Azerbaijan) and Erdogan (Turkey) are covering their crimes, and in the process, also seeking to divert the attention of the world. Gerami also wanted to underscore the lack of major

Armenian Studies Program & CineCulture present

A Documentary Film: “Motherland”

Friday, April 14, 2023





Director Vic Gerami

media coverage of the war. From the day the invasion started on September 27, 2020, the making of the documentary has weighed heavily on Gerami. He had more than 43 hours of footage from the 2020 invasion of Artsakh. The process of post-production took almost seven months and Gerami had to live every aspect of the war during that period. During the process he and his editor worked to bring together a fast-paced film. Gerami wanted to make the most accurate film possible, documenting every fact and piece of information. He understood that the film would be scrutinized, so it was important that all of the facts be substantiated and correct. The film was “made for non-Armenians” stated Gerami. “The people who were watching the film may not even know where Armenia or Artsakh is on a map.” “I was determined to make a documentary film aimed toward bringing the attention of the world to the Artsakh conflict,” stated Gerami. “Therefore, the film is in many ways dense and full of information.” Through a journalist and activist’s lens, “Motherland” focuses the world’s attention on the atrocities, war crimes, and crimes against humanity committed by Azerbaijan and Turkey against Artsakh and Armenia. “Motherland is an investigative film, and I wanted to show people the reality of what is going on,” said Gerami. “There is still a genocide taking place and I felt the need to show explicit footage of the atrocities committed against the Armenians. I wanted people to leave the theater a little disturbed.” CineCulture and the Armenian Studies Program have collaborated for many years in bringing Armenian films to the campus and the community.

HAMPARSON GIFT, FROM PAGE 1 publications, program outreach and conferences. “The Armenian Studies Program represents the students and the community. I believe that gifts such as the Hamparson Endowment will encourage others to also participate in the success of the Program,” said Barlow Der Mugrdechian, director of the Armenian Studies Program. “The Program is appreciative of this gift, and to the donor Florence Elaine Hamparson.” The fund will bolster the program’s already active publishing schedule, which includes 20 books in The Armenian Series published through The Press at California State University, Fresno and four editions of their “Hye Sharzhoom” newspaper each year. “It is so heartening to see such generosity displayed toward two colleges on campus that will have such a profound impact.

The Hamparson Trust gift for Armenian Studies will bolster the students’ excellence in research, outreach, and conference participation,” said Dr. Honora Chapman, dean of the College of Arts and Humanities. “We are excited to see their new projects come to fruition that are made possible with these new funds, and we are truly grateful for this support.” The other half, \$450,000, went to the Lyles College of Engineering to establish the Hamparson Lyles College Quasi Endowed Fund to be used at the discretion of the dean to best benefit the college. Dean Ram Nunna has chosen to use a portion of the funds to support a scholarship honoring the legacy and life of Ms. Hamparson. Scholarship recipients will be part of the Lyles College of Engineering Honors Program. The dean has allocated the remaining funds to support the construction of the Lyles College of Engineering Student Center at the Engineering East building. The center will serve as a space for collaboration and technology-facilitated teamwork that will bring together students from all Lyles College disciplines. “This timely gift will impact thousands of students each year,” said Dr. Ram Nunna, dean of the Lyles College of Engineering. “Our honors program attracts highly talented students from across our region to our college, and this gift will allow us to grow the program. The new student center will be a place for student engagement and collaboration.” Hamparson was born in Everett, Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston, in 1935. Her father, George Hamparson, was a business owner in Boston, but due to challenging circumstances, he moved his family to Fresno to start a new life.

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Scottsdale Community College Hosts Genocide Workshop for Teachers



Left to right: Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Roxanne Makasdjian, Executive Director of the Genocide Education Project; Kerri Flynn, Education Director of the Genocide Education Project; Dr. Lisa Marsio, Scottsdale Community College, and Fr. Zachariah Saribekyan, Pastor of St. Apkar Armenian Apostolic Church in Scottsdale.

Scottsdale Community College hosted a one-day workshop for teachers “Teaching About the Armenian Genocide and the Legacy of Denial” on Saturday, April 22, in Scottsdale, Arizona. Twenty-two local teachers

GENOCIDE AWARENESS WEEK, FROM PAGE 1

and current and ongoing threats of genocide throughout the world, while also looking to the past for guidance and to honor those affected by genocide.

This year’s “Genocide Awareness Week” featured a variety of presentations and movies focusing on the Armenian Genocide. Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian of Armenian Studies Program at Fresno State and Fr. Zacharia Saribekyan, Pastor of St. Apkar Armenian Apostolic Church in Scottsdale, are on the “Genocide Awareness Week” board and organized the Armenian related events. The Armenian Studies Program and St. Apkar Armenian Church were also financial sponsors of the week.

On Monday, April 17, two special sessions were held. Dr. Taner Akçam, director of the Armenian Genocide Research Program of the Promise Armenian Institute at UCLA, gave a presentation on “What’s Next?: Armenian Genocide Restitution in the Post-Recognition Era.” The talk was based on a recent conference that Dr. Akçam had organized at UCLA, and explored questions such as: what are the possibilities of creating an Armenian Genocide reparation movement post-recognition by President Biden and Congress in 2021? What opportunities does the American legal system

participated in the workshop, sponsored by the Fresno State Armenian Studies Program, St. Apkar Armenian Apostolic Church, and Scottsdale Community College.

offer for reparation? Can the Holocaust restitution movement serve as a model for the Armenian Genocide?” A video interview with Ambassador Stuart Eizenstat framed comparative restitution efforts in achieving some measure of justice for the post-Holocaust restitution movement.

An Armenian musical interlude followed featuring performers Narine Babayan on *kanun*, Gevork Gevorkyan on *kemancha*, and Daniel Decker performing vocal numbers.

Robert Morgenthau, great-grandson of U.S. Ambassador to Turkey Henry Morgenthau (1913-1996), gave the keynote address for the week-long conference speaking on “Spreading the Word: From the American Committee for Syrian and Armenian Relief to the Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Memorial to the Holocaust.” Morgenthau’s presentation focused on how four generations of Morgenthau family members have been involved in humanitarian efforts in various areas of the world.

On Tuesday, April 18, Berberian Coordinator of Armenian Studies at Fresno State, Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, participated in a discussion on “Denial of the Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide,” with Dr. Sarah Cushman of the Holocaust Educational Foundation of Northwestern University. Prof.

other sister wore a white dress. In a tragic series of events, the three sisters were all in love with the same man. The older two sisters wanted to ensure their younger sister’s happiness, so they sacrificed themselves by throwing themselves into the Ashtarak gorge so that the youngest sister could be happy with the man she loved. The younger sister tragically also threw herself into the gorge, because she could not bear to live without her sisters. Nersisian animated this legend in

USC Institute of Armenian Studies “My Armenian Story” Oral History Project Presented at Fresno State

STAFF REPORT

A team of USC Institute of Armenian Studies staff, including Dr. Lilit Keshishyan, Manuk Avedikyan, and Brandan Balayan, visited Fresno State on Monday, March 13, 2023 to speak to students and faculty about the Institute’s “My Armenian Story” oral history project. The two-year project involves conducting oral interview with Armenians throughout California, to “discover and record individual journeys.”

Dr. Keshishyan spoke to students in Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian’s Armenian language class. She presented the “My Armenian Story” project by showing clips of various interviews that had already been conducted and that illustrated the variety topics that can be covered in the interviews. Dr. Keshishyan and Avedikyan explained the process of how the interviews are conducted and that anyone could participate. According to the Institute for Armenian Studies FAQ sheet, “My Armenian Story” is a “resource base that reflects the scope and depth of the Armenian experience.”

Dr. Keshishyan is the director of the USC Institute of Armenian Studies “California History through the Armenian Experience” oral history project and also works on various aspects of the Institute’s Digital Diaspora Initiative.

“The oral story includes emotions, memories, and personal relationships. The focus is on one person at that moment and how they’re seeing the world around them [...] it brings the human element to the historical record,” said Dr. Keshishyan.

In her presentation, Dr. Keshishyan defined oral history and how historians recognize that

Der Mugrdechian gave an overview of the various stages of denial by the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey, from 1918 to the present, and then participated in a discussion with Dr. Cushman on comparative aspects of Genocide and Holocaust. Audience members participated in the discussion with their questions.

The documentary “The Stateless Diplomat” was screened on Wednesday, April 19, followed by a discussion with director/producer Mimi Malayan. “The Stateless Diplomat,” which was first released in November 2018,

his short film, and maintained the theme of innocence by modifying the tale. In his illustrations, each sister became an angel, rather than depicting each sister’s demise. This aspect of Nersisian’s film emphasizes three important elements: the landmarks of Ashtarak, the rich cultural and religious history of Armenia, and the personal style of Nersisian’s work.

Not only did Nersisian incorporate footage from his childhood, latest travels, and



Left to right: Dr. Hagop Ohanessian, Jonathan Chardukian, Andrew Hagopian, Eddy Thurber, Manuk Avedikyan, Brandan Balayan, Dr. Lilit Keshishyan, Mia Daniels, Armand Karkazian, and Guadalupe Frausto.

the memories of everyday people have historical importance. The oral history project gives an opportunity for the average person to share their life story. The value of oral history is in its possibility of volume and nuance with a goal of gathering a large number of oral histories from Armenians all across California.

Avedikyan, who worked on and managed the Armenian Genocide survivor testimony collections at the USC Shoah Foundation for over seven years, also conducted interviews in Fresno. Team member Brandan Balayan, who works on oral histories and website development for the Institute, recorded the interviews on camera.

Dr. Keshishyan and Avedikyan separately interviewed Prof. Der Mugrdechian for more than four hours, with a focus on local Fresno and San Joaquin Valley history.

The wide-ranging interview covered family history as well as the history of the Armenian Studies Program. The USC team also interviewed other Valley

tells the story of Diana Apar, Armenia’s first woman diplomat. <https://dianaapcar.org/>.

Over the past few years, Malayan has screened “The Stateless Diplomat” at several film festivals, and it has won several awards.

On Thursday, April 19, Megan Reid of the International Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies (a division of the Zoryan Institute), introduced the screening of “Aurora’s Sunrise” with a talk on “Preserving and Sharing Stories of Survival: The Significance of Conducting Oral History Research.”

animations, but he also included interviews with Ashtarak locals. “Ashtarak is my cradle and my homeland,” said one woman. Another Ashtarak resident described the region as having an “ancientness that will be valued.”

“Back to Ashtarak” serves as Nersisian’s personal homage to his childhood, and beyond that, an intercessor between the people of the Armenian diaspora and the motherland. The visual narration of the rich history, youthfulness, and connection to Armenia is

residents during their three-day stay in Fresno.

The goal of “My Armenian Story” is to create a resource base that reflects the scope and depth of the Armenian experience in California. The individual interviews will be kept in the USC Institute of Armenian Studies archive.

There is an urgency to collect and record now to preserve much of the history of the Armenians in California. Everyone is qualified to conduct the research as interviews are really a conversation.

As part of Armenian History Month, the Institute for Armenian Studies drove a food truck converted into a mobile recording studio to various locations in Glendale and Los Angeles to interview community members.

The “My Armenian Story” website gives an idea of what interviewers can cover and how to conduct an interview. For more information, go to: <https://armenian.usc.edu/myarmenianstory/>.

This was followed by a discussion on the inspiration behind “Aurora’s Sunrise” with Dr. Rouben Adalian, a member of the Board of Directors the Zoryan Institute and Director of the Armenian National Institute (ANI).

President and co-founder of the Zoryan Institute, K.M. Greg Sarkissian joined Dr. Adalian on the stage and shared his insights into the background of the film.

More information on the 11th Annual “Genocide Awareness Week” can be found at this site: <https://shprs.asu.edu/gaw2023>.

BACK TO ASHTARAK, FROM PAGE 5

Ashtarak is sprinkled with churches amongst its verdant and mountainous plains. Three of its well-known churches include: Tsiranavor (the apricot church), Karmravor (the red church), and Spitakavor (the white church). These churches are named after an old Armenian tale, where there were three sisters. One sister wore an apricot-colored dress, one sister wore a red dress, and the

fused by a final comment from Nersisian that “Ashtarak is impossible to describe, only to feel.”

Armenian Studies Program

<https://fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies/>

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Left to right: Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Dean Dr. Honora Chapman, Anahid Yerdoglyan, Dr. Hagop Ohanessian, Caleb Arizmendez, President Dr. Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval, Christian Tufenkjian, Rita Yerdoglyan, Khorh Cranford, Melina Peters, Mitchel Statler, Mark Soghomonian, Angela Soghomonian, Associate Dean Dr. Sergio La Porta, and Andrew Hagopian.

Photo: Iris Zuniga Soto

ASP BANQUET, FROM PAGE 1

Xuanning Fu, Vice-President for Administration Debbie Adishian-Astone, Fresno County Supervisor Sal Quintero, Dean Dr. Honora Chapman, Associate Dean Dr. Sergio La Porta, Dr. Hagop Ohanessian, and the family and friends of the late Ralph Shabazian and the late Florence Elaine Hamparson.

Der Mugrdechian also recognized table sponsors, patrons, and other donors to the Banquet. He thanked Andrew Hagopian for designing the banner with the photos of scholarship recipients and thanked Tatevik Hovhannisyan for her assistance in the Banquet planning.

Supervisor Sal Quintero presented Prof. Der Mugrdechian a proclamation declaring Sunday, March 26, 2023 as “Armenian Studies Program” day in Fresno County. Dr. Ohanessian then introduced the Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities, Dr. Chapman and Associate Dean of the College, Dr. La Porta, who gave their welcoming remarks. Dr. Chapman stated how strong and amazing the Armenian Studies Program is and how it is a positive influence for the community. She also emphasized how Armenian Studies students should be proud of the Minor they earned. Dr. La Porta gave a passionate speech about how, with knowledge, one can keep

Armenian culture alive and use it to prevent another genocide, such as the one taking place in Artsakh now.

The families and close friends of the Shabazian and Hamparson Endowments were recognized. The two endowments will support the activities of the Armenian Studies Program and also support student scholarships. Ralph Shabazian’s sister, Rosemary Selland, emphasized how Ralph was a modest man who would not have wanted any attention focused on himself. His passion for keeping the Armenian culture alive was the reason he wanted to donate to the Program. Hamparson’s loved ones discussed how she was a compassionate and loving person, whose generosity will leave an impact for generations.

Fresno State President Dr. Jiménez-Sandoval emphasized how the Armenian Studies Program sets the standard for programs in the entire California State University system and how the Program is a model for Armenian Studies all over the world. President Jiménez-Sandoval emphasized how proud the community should be that fifty-seven students, Armenian and non-Armenian, are receiving scholarships worth more than \$90,000, and that ten students are graduating with a Minor in Armenian Studies in 2022-2023.

Mark Soghomonian, Melina Peters, Christian Tufenkjian, Khorh Cranford, and Andrew Hagopian, were asked to give their reflections on their experiences as students at Fresno State. Mark Soghomonian discussed how his decision to pursue a Minor had influenced him to attend Fresno State. Melina Peters spoke about how she was able to learn more about the Genocide and is now more informed about her history and culture as an Armenian. Christian Tufenkjian humorously discussed how his pursuit of the Minor allowed him to learn about places and monuments he visited during a trip to Armenia. He noted that he was the only member of the group that was able to name the place or monument, state the date it was created, and recount its cultural significance and significance. Khorh Cranford described how she is now well-informed about Armenian culture and how this has helped her lobby for Armenian rights. Andrew Hagopian concluded the student reflections after receiving a plaque for completing a Special Major in Armenian and Middle Eastern Studies.

As guests were enjoying dessert and coffee, the student scholarship recipients, graduating seniors, Minor recipients, and ASO executive officers were presented certificates.

The executive officers of the Armenian Student Organization were also recognized and introduced.

Graduating seniors were called to the podium to receive their Armenian Studies Minor stoles. The students receiving their Minor included Chemistry major Caleb Arizmendez, Political Science major Khorh Cranford, Liberal Studies major Melina Peters, Biochemistry major Angela Soghomonian, Biochemistry major Mark Soghomonian, Chemistry and Mathematics major Olivia Soghomonian, Theater Arts major Michel Statler, Biology major Christian Tufenkjian, Biology major Anahit Yerdoglyan, and Biology major Rita Yerdoglyan.

Overall, the Armenian Studies banquet was an exciting, emotional, and wonderful event.

Armenian Students Organization Holds Genocide Information Day on April 24



Students and faculty at the Armenian Students Organization Armenian Genocide Commemoration held on April 24.

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