

Berkeley Armenian Studies

May 28, 2024

Letter from Executive Director of Armenian Studies Dr. Dzovinar Derderian:

Dear Friends, Colleagues and Students of the UC Berkeley Armenian Studies Program,

As the 2023-2024 academic year has ended, I wanted to reflect on the current state of the Armenian Studies Program, our accomplishments this year, and hopes for the future. This year my position as the Executive Director of the Armenian Studies Program and my faculty position in the History Department were finalized. These steps ensure the continuity of the Armenian Studies Program at UC Berkeley after the retirement of Professor Stephan Astourian, to whom I am extremely grateful for establishing the program on a strong footing. I would also like to thank all the faculty members and administrators at UC Berkeley, as well as the members of the Armenian Alumni organization, who advocated for a smooth transition from the previous twenty-five years of growth. Securing continuity of the program also means giving it an opportunity to expand further, a process that I look forward to spearheading along with my colleague Dr. Myrna Douzjian.

Dr. Douzjian, Continuing Lecturer in the Slavic Department of Languages and Literatures, has been at Cal for eight years now. As most of you know, the courses she has taught in Armenian language (both Western and Eastern), literature, and culture have been extremely popular among students. She has had a pivotal role in overseeing the Armenian Studies degree program housed in her department and has been central to the success of that program.

This year four graduating students minored in Armenian Studies. Since 2017, the inception of the Armenian Studies degree program, seven students have graduated with the major and nineteen students with a minor in Armenian Studies, which are amazing numbers for a small program. We also had three undergraduate students, who having taken Armenian history courses in the last two years, decided to write their undergraduate theses in their respective departments on topics related to Armenian history. They include:

Hrachia George Kasabyan, “Controlling the Narrative: Re-Examining Myths of Armenia’s Conversion to Christianity” (Department of Ancient Greek and Roman Studies)

Hrag Kyle Kassabian, “Origins of Liberal Internationalism in the Russo-Ottoman Borderlands: British Intervention in Circassia and Armenia (1830s-World

War I)” (History Department)

Alex Hrach Mooradian, “‘Then What is White?’ The Prerequisite Courts and Their Role in the Racial Categorization of Middle Eastern Immigrants” (History Department)

I wanted to list their works because the diverse topics that they wrote about are a reminder of how relevant Armenian Studies is to disparate geographic and chronological fields in history, in this case, the modern-era Caucasus, the Ottoman and Russian empires, the ancient and medieval Eastern Mediterranean region, and the twentieth-century United States. The interdisciplinarity of Armenian Studies is also apparent in the research of our recent and current graduate students, whose home departments are in Geography, Linguistics, and Art History.

I hope that by encouraging further undergraduate and graduate research in connection to Armenian Studies our program will become a prime example of how Armenian Studies relates to the histories, cultures, and literatures of many regions and historical periods. That is why, this year, while we organized monthly lectures and a student colloquium, we also co-sponsored and co-organized five different lectures and workshops with the Center for Middle East Studies, the Center for Jewish Studies, the Greek Studies Program as well as colleagues from the departments of History, Political Science, Sociology, and Slavic Languages and Literatures. I hope that by organizing more co-sponsored events, attracting graduate students, and creating research opportunities for undergraduate students, the Armenian Studies Program at UC Berkeley will become a hub of interdisciplinary work and a connector of various area studies.

We look forward to seeing you in the fall of 2024. In the meantime, please visit our [new website](#) to learn more about our program and our past and upcoming events.

Wishing you all a wonderful summer!

Dzovinar Derderian

Assistant Adjunct Professor, Department of History
Executive Director, Armenian Studies Program

Please visit the [Armenian Studies Program's calendar](#) for additional information about our upcoming events.

Please write to armenian@berkeley.edu if you would like to be added to our mailing list.

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