

Berkeley Armenian Studies



Message from ASP Executive Director Dzovinar Derderian

Dear Friends of the Armenian Studies Program,

We have wrapped up another successful academic year at the Armenian Studies Program (ASP). We had a really rich year of events, as well as the active engagement of our students with our classes and lecture series. I am happy to share an overview of the year with you below, featuring our graduating students, our classes, [events](#) and a note on the screening of *My Sweet Land*.

I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize and express my gratitude to Dr. Eric Esrailian for establishing an endowed fund that gives permanency to Armenian language and literature instruction at UC Berkeley. By bolstering our language and literature courses, this new fund ensures the sustainability of the Armenian Studies Program in the long run. In this regard, the efforts and support of the Dean of Arts and Humanities, Dr. Sara Guyer, have been instrumental. You can read more about the new endowed fund [here](#).

In another boon to the ASP this year, the St. John Armenian Apostolic Church of San Francisco made a significant gift that will help fund our future programming. I am grateful for their generosity.

Indeed, we would not exist without the fervent involvement and support of our students, alumni and the community at large!

I look forward to the next academic year. In the meantime, I wish you all a peaceful and prosperous summer!

Course Highlights



In April, the students in Introductory Armenian performed in a hilarious adaptation of Hovhannes Toumanian's *The Death of Kikos* at Words in Action, a multilingual show sponsored by the Berkeley Language Center. In addition to our core language course offerings, Dr. Myrna Douzjian taught an [advanced reading class](#) that introduced students to Armenian writing from a wide range of topics and fields, including literature, history, linguistics, music, social and cultural criticism, international affairs, and current events.



In the Spring of 2025, Dr. Dzovinar Derderian taught a seminar titled [“From Empire to Nation-States: The Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh Conflict”](#). The course began with an examination of the history of the South Caucasus from the early 19th century onwards with the aim of elucidating the historical processes that contributed to the contemporary conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh. Each student wrote a research paper on a topic of their choice related to the conflict. The themes covered by the students extended from contemporary Western media coverage of the conflict to 19th-century Russian imperial policies in the region.



The ASP put together a mini-series of public lectures accompanied by closed seminars for a course on [Medieval Armenian Literature](#) offered through the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures. Ani Honarchian (Saint Louis University), Abraham Terian (St. Nerses Armenian Seminary, NY), Peter Cowe (UCLA) and Jesse Arlen (Zohrab Information Center, NY and Fordham University) were the invited guest lecturers. They presented separate lectures on *The Daredevils of Sassoun*, Grigor Narekatsi, Movses Khorenatsi and Nerses Shnorhali. In collaboration with the UCLA Narekatsi Chair of Armenian Studies (Peter Cowe), a roundtable discussion was convened on April 4, 2025, with the participation of all four speakers, the students and Berkeley's ASP faculty Myrna Douzjian and Dzovinar Derderian. The final session addressed the connections and differences of all the medieval texts and authors discussed throughout the semester, as well as the variety of approaches in the analysis of medieval Armenian literature.

Student Highlights

Our Graduates

Since 2017 students at UC Berkeley have the opportunity to pursue a minor in Armenian Studies or concentrate in a major track in Armenian Studies through the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures. This year five students graduated with a minor in Armenian Studies: Sona Asatryan, Ernest Baghdasaryan, Clement Hudson, Annette Oganesyanyan and Alexander Tavidian.





Christina Moughamian '73, Ernest Baghdasaryan '25 and Dzovinar Derderian

Hrair Terzian Award Recipient

Every year the Cal Armenian Alumni present the Hrair Terzian Award to a graduating student for their exemplary achievement in the Armenian Studies Program. The award recipients are selected by a committee of UC Berkeley faculty and alumni.

This year's awardee, Ernest Baghdasaryan, minored in Armenian Studies and majored in English. In addition to producing exceptional work in his Armenian language and history classes, Ernest received the Citation as the top graduating student in the English Department. The commencement speech that he delivered at his Department's graduation ceremony has been featured [on the Arts & Humanities website](#).

Student Research

For the second year in a row, this time in conjunction with ISEEEES, ASP held a [student symposium](#), where students presented their thesis work. Among the presenters were Harout Albarian and Michael Khoylyan.

"I completed my Master's degree in Global Studies at Berkeley, where I was also a Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellow through the ASP and ISEEEES. My thesis, titled "Negotiating Hostility," focused on the application of coercive bargaining theory to the contemporary Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and a critical analysis of mediation efforts from the 1994 Bishkek Protocol to the 2020 Artsakh War. Whenever I found myself at an impasse in my research, it was the Armenian Studies Program that helped me push through. Professor Derderian, Professor Douzjian, and my peers there not only challenged me to think more critically, but also offered crucial support when the weight of my subject matter became difficult to carry. As my time at Cal comes to a close, I look to apply my research to the field of international human rights law, carrying forward the lessons I learned through the Armenian Studies Program and throughout my graduate studies." ~**Michael Khoylyan**



Michael Khoylyan

“ASP managed to make my short two years at Berkeley an experience I’ll never forget. Graduating as a student in political science with a minor in history, ASP enabled me to explore avenues of research I’d never considered. Professor Derderian’s history classes allowed me to think critically about Armenian history, inspiring me to dig deeper into questions of Armenian nationalism and the role of memories in the realm of politics. This paved the way for me to draft a syllabus and teach a class last semester titled “The Power of Memories.” Furthermore, through the help of Professor Derderian and my faculty advisor Professor Scott Straus in the Political Science department, I completed an independent research study on issues surrounding Armenian territorial sovereignty and the extent to which myths or notions of indigeneity were present in the formation of the two independent Armenian republics. ASP also introduced me to the [Armenian Language in the Bay Area \(ALBA\)](#) research study led by Julianne Kapner through which as a student researcher I was able to speak to members of the Bay area Armenian community and conduct oral history socio-linguistics interviews.” ~**Harout Albarian**



Harout Albarian



Hasmik Djoulakian

“I graduated with my M.S. from the Energy and Resources Group in May 2025. While in the program, I pursued a research project titled *Food Sovereign Futures: More-than-human Networks of Care Among Displaced Artsakh Armenians*. I interviewed people who were displaced from Artsakh in either 2020 or 2023 about the continuation and adaptation of their farming, foraging, and cooking practices, and learned about how those practices support people's physical, mental, and social well-being in Armenia. I benefited greatly from the Armenian Studies Program during my graduate studies, including through the coursework I took for my Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship with Dr. Myrna Douzjian, various events that ASP has hosted, and the ASP community broadly. I will begin my PhD in the Environmental Science, Policy, and Management department at UC Berkeley in Fall 2025.” ~**Hasmik Djoulakian**

A Note on the Screening of *My Sweet Land*

The cancelation of the screening of the film *My Sweet Land* during Armenian Genocide commemoration week, and the Azerbaijani consulate's intrusion in programming taking place at UC Berkeley were a great disappointment. However, the level of activism and engagement that our students, alumni and community at large demonstrated in response to this incident was impressive. Your engagement showed that any attempt to silence Armenians on campus will only contribute to making our voices louder. We are pleased to share the Human Rights Center's (HRC) [updated statement](#) and announcement that HRC will host the screening of the film on September 18, 2025. We hope to see many of you there!

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