

GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS

UPCOMING EVENTS

SPRING 2025

3 April | 5:30 p.m. ET

Dana Commons, Higgins Lounge
**Excavating Women's Testimony of
the Armenian Genocide**
Speaker: Elyse Semerdjian

28 April | 1:00 p.m. ET

Rose Library, Strassler Center
Asher Annual Lecture Series:
**Symposium: Older Jews and the
Holocaust**

Speakers: Betsy Anthony, Joanna
Sliwa, and Michael Geheran
Discussant: Glenn Dynner

2 May | TBD

Rose Library, Strassler Center
**The Armenian Woman, Minoritarian
Agency, and the Making of Iranian
Modernity, 1860–1979**
Speakers: Talinn Grigor and Houri
Berberian

FALL 2025

6-9 November

**Fifth International Graduate Student
Conference on the Holocaust and
Lessons & Legacies Emerging
Scholars Conference**

For more information and to register
for these events, visit the [Strassler
Center Events Page](#).



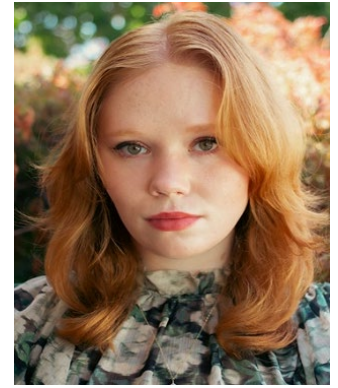
Hasmik Grigoryan is a fifth-year student, Agnes Manoogian Hausrath Memorial fellow, and Mooradian Research Award recipient. Her research is based on interviews with second and third-generation survivors of the Armenian Genocide and has earned her invitations to international conferences. She presented her papers, *"1914 Kurdish Uprising in Bitlis: The Response in the Armenian Press,"* and *"Telling the Armenian Genocide: Family and Communal Memory in Oral History,"* at Yale University and the University of Southern California, respectively.

MK Speth is a third-year student, MKS Endowed Research fellow, and Hilda and Al Kirsch Award recipient interested in the intersection of memory politics and tourism in post-genocide Rwanda. Her research focuses on how the growing tourism industry in Rwanda influences narratives of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsis. Speth spent seven weeks in Rwanda in the summer of 2024.



MD Khalid Rahman is a first-year student and Tapper graduate fellow whose research focuses on the Rohingya genocide, especially Rohingya statelessness and the persecution of ethnic minorities in Bangladesh. He has presented at numerous national and international conferences.

Gabrielle Higgins is a second-year student and Rose Family fellow who explores colonial influences on masculine identity construction in Nazi Germany. Her dissertation will trace how Nazi ideologues and propagandists constructed the 'ideal Aryan man.' Last year, Higgins served as a Summer Graduate Student Research Fellow at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's archive, where she worked on "Imaginary Bodies: Gendered and Colonial Subtexts in Nazi Children's Media," a project she envisions as a chapter of her dissertation. Higgins collected thousands of pages of Nazi materials on the indoctrination of the Hitler Youth, including educational film reels, pamphlets, songbooks, and more.



Nicole Toedtli is a third-year student, Claims Conference fellow, and Jacobs Scholarship recipient who conceptualizes her dissertation on victim-perpetrators and "role-shifting" during the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide. According to scholar Erin Jessee, "Role shifting" is a behavior "whereby people move between or engage simultaneously in actions that cross the perceived boundaries between victims/survivor, bystander, rescuer, combatant, perpetrator, and so on – surrounding genocidal violence and beyond." Nicole aims to understand how, when, and why actors in genocide changed such roles.

Alina Bojic is a second-year student and Luis and Ann Kulin fellow. Her doctoral project will deal with exhibitions and visual cultures during and after the Holocaust. Last year, Bojic received a summer research grant from Gary D. Labovich '81, Chair of Clark's Board of Trustees, which allowed her to complete a German language course at Humboldt University in Berlin.



Nadia Cross is a third-year student, Rose Family fellow, and MJR Memorial Research Award recipient whose dissertation proposal is titled "Never Forget, Never Again: Holocaust Memory in the United States Post-9/11." This project documents the relationship between Holocaust memory and the memorialization of September 11th in the United States from the immediate aftermath of the attacks to the present day. Cross will study how Holocaust memory has been mobilized in liberal and conservative spaces to contextualize American and Middle Eastern relations. After researching these politically motivated approaches to Holocaust memory, she hopes to uncover how their representations have transformed Holocaust education and memorization in the United States to encompass elements of these liberal and conservative views.

FACULTY NEWS AND NOTES



Elyse Semerdjian, Robert Aram and Marianne Kaloosdian and Stephen and Marian Mugar Chair of Armenian Genocide Studies, presented a paper titled “From Artsakh to Gaza: The Slow Violence of Genocide by Attrition” on the panel “The Perils of Genocide: Past and Present” at the 2024 Middle East Studies Association Conference. She is organizing a two-part workshop on “Necrogeographies of the Marginal Dead” with historian Martin Christ, a Religion and Urbanities fellow at the Max Weber Institute in Erfurt, Germany. The first workshop will take place in Erfurt on May 15-16 and is funded by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft). Semerdjian was recently elected Vice President of the Society for Armenian Studies. Her new book “Remnants: Embodied Archives of the Armenian Genocide” (Stanford University Press, 2023) was awarded the best book prize from the Association for Middle East Women’s Studies for 2024.



In “Bruckner’s Fourth: The Biography of a Symphony” (Oxford University Press, 2024), **Benjamin Korstvedt**, Professor of Visual and Performing Arts and affiliated faculty member, offers the first complete and coherent account of the extraordinary compositional evolution of this magnificent symphony. What emerges is the story of Bruckner’s remarkable efforts to produce a symphony that would, as he put it, be able to “make its effect” in performance. The book also critiques the conventional wisdom about the so-called problem posed by the versions of Bruckner’s works by deconstructing long-established myths, developing new insights, and bringing the musical logic of Bruckner’s approach into clear focus.



Marta Havryshko and Dr. Thomas Zand Visiting Assistant Professor in Holocaust Pedagogy and Antisemitism Studies, convened a workshop on the Holocaust in Ukraine. Participants discussed the choices and experiences of perpetrators, collaborators and victims during the Holocaust, the challenges scholars, educators, and memory actors currently face in light of Russia’s War on Ukraine, and the politicization of Holocaust memory around the globe. In addition, Havryshko gave numerous talks about sexual violence during the Holocaust (the topic of her book project). In an online portal, Havryshko co-authored a story about a Jewish survivor of the Holocaust in Ukraine, who suffered from sexual violence during the war and fought for justice after it. Deeply engaged in Holocaust education and fighting antisemitism, she engages routinely with American and European media. In an interview with *Jacobin*, she analyzed how the Russian-Ukrainian war has fueled myths about Ukrainian nationalists in World War II and obfuscated the role of Nazi collaborators.



Next to his administrative work as director of the Center, Strassler Colin Flug Professor of Holocaust History **Thomas Kühne** worked on two ground laying anthologies, the *Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Memory*, co-edited with his Clark colleague Frances Tanzer, and the *Oxford Handbook of Nazi Germany*, co-edited with Benjamin Ziemann, Sheffield University. He published an autobiographical essay on his transatlantic career and the impact of American academia and the experience of diversity at Clark on his scholarship, mentoring, and teaching ("German American-Identity and the Demise of National History." In *German Migrant-Historians in North America. Transatlantic Careers and Scholarship after 1945*. Ed. Karen Hagemann and Konrad H. Jarausch, New York: Berghahn Books, 2024). In November, he spent a few days at Sciences Po, Paris, France, to join as external committee member the dissertation defense of

Justina Smalkytė, who studies Jewish and non-Jewish resistance movements in Lithuania under Nazi occupation.



Anita Fábos, Professor of Sustainability and Social Justice, advanced her work on refugees, forced migration, and sustainability through several forthcoming and recently published articles in leading journals, including *Global Sustainability and Global Environmental Change*, as well as a co-authored article in PNAS addressing the migration-sustainability nexus. She organized and participated in workshops and panels, including The Belonging Talks series hosted by Clark University's Integration and Belonging Hub, which she launched with colleagues in the Sustainability and Social Justice department in 2023. Her active collaboration with Aristotle University of Thessaloniki continues, including the second annual summer

study abroad program, "Food, Migration, and Belonging," and her co-led NEH research proposal on climate mobilities. In addition, she is developing several community-engaged courses, such as "Food Cultures of Exile" in partnership with African Community Education in Worcester, and exploring creative projects like food-based walking tours in Thessaloniki, highlighting the city's culinary heritage shaped by migration. She has also shared her expertise in webinars and publications, such as her recent blog post for Switchboard TA on supporting transgender and gender non-conforming refugees, showcasing her commitment to inclusive newcomer services. This spring, she will join colleagues in presenting a roundtable discussion on Innovative Approaches to Belonging in Urban Settings at the 25th meeting of the International Association for the Study of Forced Migration, held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.



Valerie Sperling (Political Science), whose research largely focuses on Russia, conducted fieldwork interviewing Russian feminist and environmentalist activists-in-exile in Vilnius, Lithuania, and Tbilisi, Georgia, and Berlin, Germany. She is working on a coauthored book manuscript covering the trajectory of Russian environmentalist and feminist activism from the early post-Soviet period to the present. Her most recent publications include the open access article "Movement of Movements: Russian Activism in Exile and the Porous Political Opportunity Structure," in *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* (2024) 29 (3): 375–394, co-authored with Laura A. Henry and Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom.



Frances Tanzer, Rose Professor of Holocaust Studies and Modern Jewish History and Culture has busied herself promoting her recently published book Vanishing Vienna: Modernism, Philosemitism, and Jews in a Postwar City. She has given talks at Harvard, University of Amsterdam, GWU, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, with an upcoming lecture at the Wiener Library in London. Tanzer's work was also featured on an episode of the New Books Network Podcast. In addition, her research for her next project, *Klezmer Dynasty: An Intimate History of Modern Jewish Culture, 1840-2019*, moves forward thanks to the fellowship she held last spring at the Remarque Institute at NYU. This project examines the history of a distant branch of her family tree, the Brandwein Klezmer dynasty of Eastern Galicia.

They played Klezmer music from the middle of the nineteenth century through the twenty-first, across the cataclysmic ruptures that usually inform studies of Jewish history. Tanzer asks: what happens to a cultural form shaped by the multiethnic borderlands of East Central Europe when these liminal zones cease to exist? She is working on two articles related to the project: one forthcoming in *Lessons and Legacies*; and the other, about contemporary memory politics in Poland, is currently in production.



Ken MacLean, Professor at the Strassler Center and the Department of Sustainability and Social Justice, spent his fall sabbatical at the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum archives in Cambodia translating documents, primarily confessions of prisoners who were tortured and then executed for their alleged crimes against the state. He is now preparing a new book, tentatively titled, "Tortured Histories: Conspiratorial Fantasies and the Khmer Rouge Genocide", co-authored with Pheaktra Song, head of archives at the museum. MacLean published two articles, "Digital Human Rights Storytelling and its Palimpsests: (De-) Constructed Images of Ethnic Cleansing in Myanmar," *Journal of Human Rights*, 23(3) (2024): 283-296, and "Interactive Digital Platforms, Human Rights

Fact Production, and the International Criminal Court," *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 15(1): 84-99. In addition, he gave a keynote lecture and guest talks in Bangkok, at Kyoto University, and Kobe University.



Shelly Tenenbaum, Professor of Sociology, teaches the required introductory course for the Genocide and Human Rights Undergraduate Concentration and serves as Co-Director of Liberal Arts for Returning Citizens (LARC), a tuition-free college program at Clark University for formerly incarcerated people. LARC is growing in every dimension including enrollments, community partnerships, and number of courses. When LARC launched two years ago, it began with six classes. It currently offers 14 courses spanning the fields of art, business, chemistry, computer science, economics, English, financial literacy, history, philosophy, and sociology. LARC students receive laptops and

stipends for course completion and internships on and off campus. The Worcester Telegram & Gazette reported on this exciting program.



EVENT REPORTS

Understanding Gaza: Tracing Violence and Reconciliation in Palestine/Israel

18 October 2024

Dr. Sa'ed Atshan's (*Associate Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies and Anthropology and Chair of the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies at Swarthmore College*) insightful lecture provided an overview of the Israel-Gaza conflict since October 7, 2023 through the prism of poetry. These narratives captured the stakes for people on the ground and how we can imagine life beyond physical and structural violence.

The Holocaust in Ukraine: History, Memory, and Education in a Changing World

7-8 November 2024

Dr. Bartov's (*Samuel Pisar Professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Brown University*) keynote address explored what researchers can learn from the Holocaust in the multiethnic region of Galicia from a local study and how a focus on first-person history can help us reconstruct the world that was irretrievably lost in war and genocide.



Professors Thomas Kühne, Marta Havryshko, Paul Himka, Amelia Glaser, Frances Tanzer, and Omer Bartov at the workshop on Ukraine



Strassler Center Fall 2024 Colloquium

Nitzan Lebovic, the Apter Chair of Holocaust Studies and Ethical Values at Lehigh University, discussed his current research on complicity at our monthly Strassler Center Colloquium. Lebovic's book project traces the history of complicity from the aftermath of World War II to contemporary discussions of the Anthropocene. In our colloquium, he shared his article, "Forms of Complicity: History and Law in the Kastner Affair," which is forthcoming in the *Journal of the History of Ideas*.

An Unlikely Friendship: Helene Freed and Jessa Sinnott

Jessa Sinnott, sixth year doctoral candidate, Claims Conference Fellow and Hannah and Roman Kent Research Award recipient, met Helene Freed, longtime Strassler Center donor, at her synagogue in the summer of 2023, where Jessa gave a presentation on her dissertation project entitled *Anti-Jewish Pogroms and Neighborhood Violence in Nazi-Occupied Poland: Szczuczyn County*. Helene's father, Samuel was born Szlomo Perler in 1917 in Szczuczyn, one of the main villages featured in Jessa's research. Helene and Jessa began attending Shabbat services together and soon became friends. Helene shared her father's and grandfather's stories about growing up in the shtetl, their apartment above the butcher shop, and their family bakery.

In early 2024, Jessa began planning a research trip to Białystok, located just 50 miles southeast of Szczuczyn. She invited Helene and promised to show her the village where her father was born.

In May 2024, Helene and Jessa traveled to Warsaw, Białystok, and Szczuczyn. Through local contacts, Jessa found the apartment where Helene's father had lived. The building has been renovated and converted into a small Carrefour shop. Through archival documents and testimony from Szczuczyn residents, Jessa was able to put together a tour of the town, including the site of the Jewish cemetery, the Rabbi's home, the Kaplan photography studio, the old Jewish quarter, and the bridge where young couples would often court.

This journey between friends brought Jewish Szczuczyn to life, out of the archives and out of faded memories. For Helene, imagining her father in the town square outside his home and her grandparents meeting on the bridge, visiting the studio where all of her family photos were taken, and finally, visiting the cemetery where generations of her family were buried – and the pain that comes from the neglect of their memory – was a unique experience. For Jessa, visiting Szczuczyn with Helene meant uncovering a new reality beyond the death of the shtetl, Jewish life in Szczuczyn as it flourished before the Holocaust and survived in the families of its descendants – in people like Helene.





Our Ph.D. students conduct innovative research in archives around the world, with survivors of genocides, and at sites of mass violence. They secure prestigious fellowships, like those offered by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, the Fulbright Foundation, and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, and travel the globe to present their research at conferences and academic institutions. They publish in peer-reviewed journals and contribute chapters to edited volumes.



Donors provide critically important support for the Strassler Center's rich Holocaust and Genocide Studies curriculum and unique doctoral programs. Their investments have been key to building a program universally recognized for its superior academic achievement. Annual gifts help the Center fund public events, undergraduate and graduate research, and ongoing operations. Endowments established by major contributions have fostered swift and robust growth.

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