

FACULTY NEWS AND NOTES

UPCOMING EVENTS

SPRING 2026

23 March | 4:00 p.m. EST

Speaker: Dr. Febe Armanios (*Philip Battell and Sarah Frances Cowles Stewart Professor of History, Middlebury College*)

Come for the Wrestling, Stay for the Gospel: Christian Television in the Middle East (1981-2000)

24 April | 5:30 p.m. EST

Speaker: Dr. Khatchig Mouradian (*Lecturer in Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies, Columbia University*)

The David Atamian Journals: An Unparalleled Record of the Armenian Genocide

28 April | 4:00 p.m. EST

Asher Annual Lecture Series
Keynote Speaker: Molly Crabapple (*Artist and Writer*)

All Men Are Brothers: Bundist Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Poland

29 April | 12:00 p.m. EST

Speaker: Aleksander Hemon (*Professor, of Creative Writing, Lewis Center for the Arts, Princeton University*)

The Logic of Genocide

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

In the past academic year, **Dr. Frances Tanzer** gave talks about her recently published book, [Vanishing Vienna](#) at the Central European University in Vienna, Princeton, the Leve Center for Jewish Studies at UCLA, the Modern Europe Colloquium at Yale, the Remarque Institute at NYU, and the Wiener Library in London among others. Tanzer has also been working on her next monograph, *Klezmer Dynasty: Musical and Linguistic Inheritance in the Galician Borderlands*. This project examines a distant branch of Tanzer's family tree: the Brandwein klezmerim of Habsburg Galica, who performed and innovated the klezmer repertoire from the middle of the nineteenth-century until the last surviving member of the family died in 2019. This research has taken her to New York, Kraków, Warsaw, and Vienna. She looks forward to a residency in Spring 2026 at the Lviv Center for Urban History. An article that offers a précis of the post-Holocaust chapters of the book is forthcoming in the next volume of *Lessons and Legacies*. Another article, "Film in Illiberal Times: Poland's Public Memory and the European Union," was recently published in *Central European History*. In this article, Tanzer examines the status of Holocaust memory in Poland during the repressive eight-year reign of the Law and Justice Party through an examination of two recent films:



*Leopold Kozłowski, "the last klezmer" and a subject of *Klezmer Dynasty* (he is featured in the portrait on the wall).*

Jonathan Glazer's *Zone of Interest* (2023) and Agnieszka Holland's *Green Border* (2023). Finally, the Oxford Handbook on Holocaust Memory, co-edited with Thomas Kühne--with its forty-seven chapters--begins to reach completion.

Tanzer co-organized two conferences, which will take place in April 2026. The first gathers an esteemed, international group of scholars and practitioners to assess the state of the field of Holocaust Studies. The conference was planned in conjunction with--and will take place at--Brown University's Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs. The second conference, co-organized with the Berman Center for Jewish Studies at Lehigh University, will take place 28-29 April 2026 at the Strassler Center. The first joint Berman Center/Strassler Center conference for graduate students represents what we hope will be a fruitful and sustained collaboration between faculty and students at the two centers. The conference features keynote and plenary lectures by esteemed speakers Molly Crabapple and Aleksandar Hemon respectively. With a renowned graphic artist and writer at the helm, we are keen to encourage participating students to pursue innovative interdisciplinary approaches in their own work. Likewise, the conference affords students from Lehigh and Clark the opportunity to present their work and get professional feedback at the earliest stages of their studies



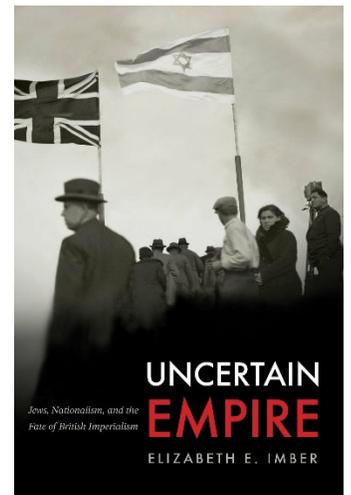
In January 2026, **Dr. Elyse Semerdjian** joined a large consortium of scholars, including Rami Alafandi, collections curator of MIT's Aga Khan Documentation Center and Ammar Alsomar, the Director of the Syrian National Archives, at an international workshop at the University of Damascus organized with the aim of reopening Syrian archives. The panels highlighted the nature of the documents previously held at the Dar al-Watha'iq al-Tarikhiyya in Damascus as well as archival materials that can be found in

other locales. Semerdjian presented a small portion of her current project on the Armenians of Aleppo in a presentation titled, "*The History of Christian-Muslim Coexistence in Aleppo with Shari'a Court Records and Armenian Sources*". The presentation focused on Semerdjian's larger book project that seeks to tell the story of pre- and post-war Aleppo in tandem with the history of its Armenian community. The story centers heavily on the Christian quarter of Judayda which emerged in the sixteenth century and extends through to the Syrian war, destruction of huge swaths of the city, and the resulting decline in its historic Armenian population. Semerdjian's scholarship draws heavily upon the now-closed national archives in Damascus where she researched for many years. Dr. Semerdjian looks forward to more engagement with the new directors and government ministers to encourage political and intellectual opening in Syria to foster a more democratic future. In August 2025, Semerdjian's book, *Remnants: Embodied Archives of the Armenian Genocide* received the [2025 Raphael Lemkin Book Award](#) by the Institute for the Study of Genocide ([ISGen.org](#)). The biennial award is for the best nonfiction work that focuses on the causes, prevention, response, or consequences of genocide and mass atrocities.



Dr. Ken MacLean is currently revising his manuscript with Pheaktra Song, the head of archives at the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in Phnom Penh. They anticipate submitting the manuscript, *Tortured Histories: Conspiracies and the Khmer Rouge Genocide*, for academic review later this year. He has been busy with several other research and advocacy projects as well. MacLean co-authored the introduction and co-edited a special journal issue on “War Ecologies and Their Seductions.” The collection will appear this summer in *War & Society*. He will continue work in on this topic as a co-editor for another special issue journal collection titled, “Sensing Noise and Leakages in War Ecologies,” for *Allegra Lab*. MacLean also provided training support for young Cambodian scholars researching the Khmer Rouge Genocide. As part of this work, he gave three guest lectures for the Documentation Center of Cambodia’s training course. Lastly, his co-authored report on the illegal warehousing of Rohingya refugees, done in collaboration with Fortify Rights, a Southeast Asia-based NGO, was recently published.

Dr. Elizabeth Imber, Leffell Chair in Modern Jewish History and Associate Professor of History, recently published the book [*Uncertain Empire: Jews, Nationalism, and the Fate of British Imperialism*](#) (Stanford University Press, 2025), which was honored with the 2025 National Jewish Book Award for Writing Based on Archival Material from the Jewish Book Council. It explores the intricate interplay between Jewish politics, British imperialism, and anticolonial movements from 1917-1948, highlighting diverse and sometimes conflicting visions of Jewish political futures. Imber spoke about her book on a [recent episode](#) of the New Books Network podcast. Imber also served as guest editor of a forthcoming special issue of *Jewish Historical Studies: A Journal of English-Speaking Jewry* on Jews and the British Empire. Her article, “Jews and the British Empire: New Directions in the Field,” appears in the issue. She is co-editor of the primary source reader *Jewish Women in Global Perspective: A Documentary History* (under contract with Oxford University Press). When not teaching, she has been back in the archives—this time in Scotland—at work on her next book.

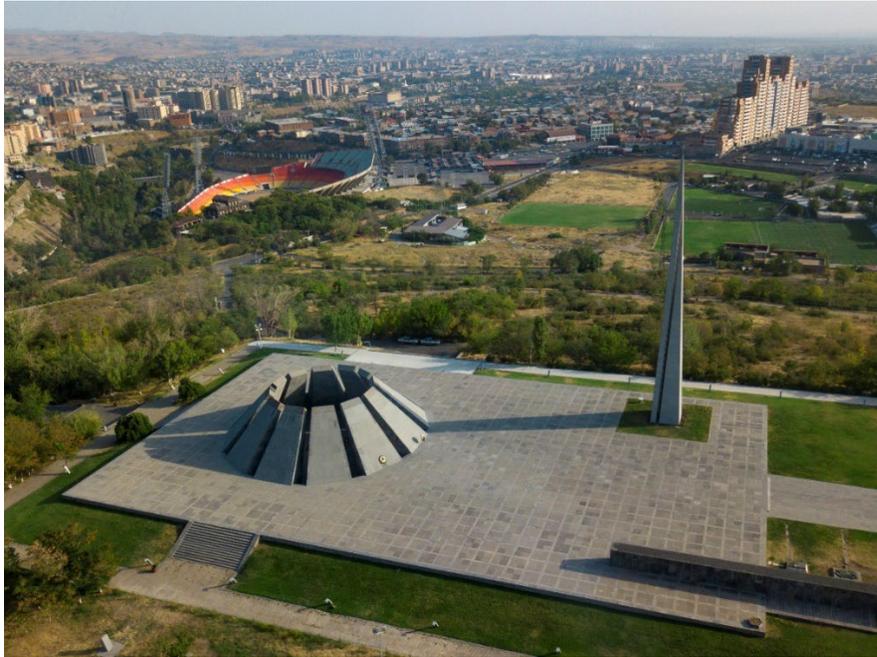


Graffiti on building in Tbilisi, Georgia

This past summer, **Dr. Valerie Sperling** (Political Science), conducted a research trip to Yerevan, Armenia, and Tbilisi, Georgia, primarily to interview Russian feminist and environmental activists who left Russia after the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and are continuing their activism from abroad. She learned more about the local context and the interactions between Russian activists and their Armenian counterparts by interviewing some local Armenian feminist and environmental activists. She is writing a book about how activists in Russia have adapted to state repression over time (from the late-Gorbachev era to the present).

Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day

Anahit Marutyan '29



Built in 1967 in Yerevan, the Armenian Genocide Memorial complex is Armenia's official memorial dedicated to the victims of the Armenian Genocide.

As a student assistant at the Center, I was given the opportunity to examine an Armenian archival collection currently housed at the Center. In the Center's archives is a copy of the congressional records from April 24, 1984, which detailed how members of Congress recognized and commemorated the Armenian Genocide. The Armenian genocide is often considered the "forgotten genocide" of the 20th century. As an Armenian and a descendant of Genocide survivors; I have always carried with me the responsibility to educate and raise awareness about the genocide and its aftermath. I see it as a duty to speak up, and to honor the memory of those who suffered.

The date April 24 is a significant one in Armenian history. On this date in 1915, the deportation of Armenian intellectuals in Constantinople (present-day Istanbul) began. Today, April 24th is regarded as Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day. In 1984, members of Congress stood on the House and Senate floors to commemorate one of the darkest chapters of the 20th century. Their words, preserved in the Congressional Record, remind us that the duty of the U.S. legislative branch is not only to make laws, but uphold the memory of human rights tragedies around the world. Lawmakers addressed the mass killings and deportations of Armenians carried out by the Ottoman Empire between 1915 and 1923. They honored the victims and called for action against denial.

During the hearing, Congressman Edward Boland (D-Massachusetts), drew a correlation between horror and fear:

"The silence with which the community of nations greeted the decimation of the Armenian people may have emboldened those who would later perpetrate similar acts. It certainly influenced Adolf Hitler who

while planning the extermination of millions of Jews was asked how the world would respond to a program of mass murder. In reply Hitler said, 'Who remembers the Armenians?'"

Many speakers extended their focus to accountability as well. Representative Hamilton Fish Jr. (R-New York) emphasized the importance recollection:

"Indeed it is our responsibility to just do that; remember that which we would rather choose to forget."

The speakers were able to tie the memory of the Armenian Genocide to an ethical duty for all. Efforts must be made for prevention of such atrocities in the future.

This commemoration shows the Congress's symbolic but important role in preserving historical memory by memorializing these expressions in the permanent record. When Congress officially recognized it as a genocide in 2019, followed by President Joe Biden's recognition in 2021, the efforts were able to extend remembrance beyond Armenian communities. These actions took a necessary step towards justice and healing for Armenian communities after being denied recognition for multiple decades.

Though the Congressional Record of April 24, 1984, carried no binding resolution, it was a crucial step towards raising further awareness. Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide allowed American political institutions to look critically at the past. In doing so, this commemoration served as a lesson that memory is a form of justice, and the second we forget that is the second we endanger humankind.

Anahit Marutyan is a first-year student at Clark University and recipient of Clark's highly esteemed Presidential Scholarship. She is majoring in Political Science with a concentration in Genocide and Human Rights.



Pictured here are Ishkhan (b. 1905) and Lusik Barseghyan (b. 1901), Anahit's third great-grandparents and survivors of the 1915 Armenian Genocide. Ishkhan fled across the Araks River at the age of six to Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), which was part of the Russian Empire. All of Ishkhan's sisters either died or perished during the Genocide. Later in life, he met and married Lusik. Much of Lusik's early life remains undocumented, reflecting the erasure experienced by countless survivors. Together, they had sixteen children enduring immense loss as eight of them died in the years that followed.

GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS



Andrew (center) with teacher and students at the Nativity School of Worcester

This past December, second-year Strassler Center Ph.D. student and Tapper Fellow Andrew Burnstein gave a lecture at the Nativity School of Worcester, a tuition-free, private middle school on Lincoln Street in Worcester’s Bell Hill neighborhood. Andrew visited the eighth-grade class of Diane McDonough, a Masters of Arts in Teaching student at Clark University’s Adam Institute for Urban Teaching and School Practice, completing her teaching fellowship at the Nativity School. To introduce her class to Holocaust history at the beginning of their unit on Holocaust literature, where they read Elie Wiesel and Anne Frank, Ms. McDonough invited a Strassler Ph.D. student to give a lecture to her class. Andrew lectured on his research area: the Shtetl. He discussed the expansion of Nazism and antisemitism, how the Holocaust played out in small towns versus large cities, local collaboration, hiding and “masking” among the non-Jewish population, and partisan activity. He also discussed Jewish culture in the Shtetl before the Shoah, introducing students to Yiddish, Klezmer, and Jewish religious institutions. Ms. McDonough’s students were very engaged, brimming with questions, and respectful throughout. For many students, it was their first time learning about Judaism and/or the Holocaust. This experience, Andrew said, shows how important Clark’s engagement with the local community is, and that being located in Worcester, rather than being incidental to the Strassler Center, is actually part of what has made Strassler such a special place. He and the other Ph.D. students are looking forward to more opportunities to use their studies to engage in the local central Massachusetts community.

Event Reports

Defining Antisemitism and Protecting Academic Freedom After October 7th

30 September 2025

Clark professors Frances Tanzer (*History*) and Johanna Vollhardt (*Psychology*) examined and historicized this paradoxical situation and the controversies around definitions of antisemitism. Participants in this hands-on workshop learned what exactly the IHRA definition of antisemitism states and how its original drafter, Kenneth S. Stern intended it to be used. They also examined alternative working definitions of antisemitism (the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism and the Nexus Project definition).



Especially for Students Lecture Jack Trompetter

7 October 2025

Trompetter, a Holocaust child survivor, spoke to a large group of students about his remembrances during WWII. Trompetter was born in Amsterdam, Netherlands in 1942, when antisemitism in Europe was intensifying. His parents made the heartbreaking decision to go into hiding and give him up to a Christian family in order to increase his chance at survival.



When Conflicts Go Against the Grain: The Fall of Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh and Its Global Consequences

27 October 2025

Nagorno-Karabakh, a disputed, region in the South Caucasus claimed by both Armenia and Azerbaijan was the topic of Dr. Anna Ohanian's (*Richard B. Finnegan Distinguished Professor of Political Science and International Relations at Stonehill College*) lecture. Dr. Ohanian posed the questions; Why did this outcome prevail over alternatives such as negotiated autonomy within Azerbaijan or secession, as in Kosovo or Timor-Leste? Why did the conflict end through mass expulsion, defying the global trend toward power-sharing settlements?



Film Screening: *My Sweet Land*

3 November 2025

Further discussion about the Nagorno-Karabakh region took place during the film screen of *“My Sweet Land.”* This 2024 documentary film written, co-produced, edited and directed by Sareen Hairabedian follows 11-year-old Vrej, living in Nagorno-Karabakh. His life takes a sudden turn when war erupts and is forced to flee. Worcester City Councilor Khrystian King introduced the film and spoke about the effect traumas, like war and diaspora, have on a culture, especially its children. After the film, Sarah Stites (*Ayo! Program Director, Fund for Armenian Relief*) led a discussion about the film’s messages and shared the continuing relief efforts in the area through her organization.



L to R: Sarah Stites, Dr. Elyse Semerdjian and Anahit Marutyan



Early Recordings of Armenian Classics

12 November 2025

Ara Dinkjian (*Armenian-American musician and founder of the band Night Ark*) discussed that as a result of the 1915 Armenian Genocide, the newly-arrived Armenians in America created a new music, rooted in their cultural homeland, but shaped by their adopted country. Dinkjian played early recordings of well-known Armenian songs made more than 100 years ago, and shared historic photographs.

Strassler Center Fall 2025 Colloquium

The Strassler Center Colloquium meets twice a semester and provides a forum for faculty and graduate students from Clark and nearby institutions to present works-in-progress and engage in rigorous discussion about matters that are important to our field. On November 18th, Dr. Nana Kesse (History, Clark), presented on his work *“Implied Agendas, Imperial Outcomes: The 1848 Appolonia war and British Colonialism on the Gold Coast”* and on December 4th, Dr. Atina Grossmann (Cooper Union), presented on her work, *“Between Orient’ and European Catastrophe: Jewish Refugees in Iran”*



l to r: Professors Nana Kesse and Frances Tanzer



Lessons and Legacies of the Holocaust: Inaugural Emerging Scholars Conference 7-9 November 2025

This year, Clark University's Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, in partnership with the Holocaust Education Foundation of Northwestern University (HEFNU), hosted the Lessons & Legacies of the Holocaust Inaugural Emerging Scholars Conference. From November 6th to 9th, junior scholars presented their work in panels of three, moderated by senior scholars in the field. At this conference, the two generations of scholars worked together to create a supportive, mentory environment to help guide early-career researchers' work and professional development.

Sarah Phillips Casteel, Professor of English at Carleton University, graciously delivered the conference's keynote address, titled "Holocaust Studies from the Outside In." Casteel provided an overview of her research, which focuses on using literary and artistic works to understand Black people's experience of Nazi terror and Jews' place in the Caribbean imaginary. The talk in particular used visual and literary art to illustrate the bonds formed by Jewish and Black internees in Nazi camps. By using a framework of "Holocaust Entanglement," Casteel introduced a prominent theme of the conference: expanding the geography of the Holocaust, or, rather, thinking of the Holocaust as a global event.

Throughout the three days of the conference, emerging scholars demonstrated that by adopting a global lens, Holocaust scholars can uncover surprising, underexamined Shoah histories the world over. Conferencegoers presented on the experiences of Jewish refugees in Japan, Puerto Rico, Bolivia, Kenya, and elsewhere, and discovered fascinating encounters between Jews and unfamiliar imperial systems that often struggled to incorporate these new refugees into their existing racial hierarchies. The ambivalent social standing of refugee Jews in these new geographies is reflected in their art and testimony, with many survivors reckoning with discovering new systems of social inequality after having just experienced social inequality in its most extreme form.

The Strassler Center was well represented at the conference, with alumni and Ph.D. candidates presenting, and professors moderating. In a panel on the aftermath of the Holocaust chaired by the Strassler Center's Rose Professor of Holocaust Studies and Jewish Culture Frances Tanzer, Strassler Center Ph.D. Candidate and 2025-2026 Saul Kagan Claims Conference Academic Fellow in Shoah Studies Alexandra Kramen presented her work on Jewish-police relations in Displaced Person Camps. She discussed the relative absence of Jewish attempts at or stated desire for "revenge" against Nazi violence and post-war police violence. Then, in a panel on "Identity, Survival, and Erasure," Strassler Center alum Dr. Hana G. Green presented a paper on Jewish "passers" who adopted a non-Jewish identity during the Holocaust, in particular focusing on the experience of passers during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Additionally, Strassler Center Director and Strassler Colin Flug Professor of Holocaust History Thomas Kühne moderated a powerful panel on gender, sexuality, and sterilization, where participants analyzed the Holocaust experience of queer Berliners, sterilized Roma and Sinti, and the Rabbis of the Sonderkommando.

Sarah M. Cushman, Director of HEFNU, delivered closing remarks. She emphasized the expanding geographies of Holocaust research, both literally and methodologically, that had been presented during the conference. What is clear, then, is that study of the Holocaust remains an ever-ongoing, never-completed project that each new generation of scholars will continue to enrich, as they seek new standpoints from which to understand that most incomprehensible of historical events. And, as always, the Clark University Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies will continue to remain a crucial site of innovation and connection for scholars young and old across the field as they continue their always evolving study of the Shoah.

—Andrew Burnstein, Tapper Fellow and Second-Year Doctoral Student at the Strassler Center





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, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, which is supported by the Foundation Remembrance, Responsibility and Future and by the German Federal Ministry of Finance, 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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