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*Assyrian Studies Association*  
P.O. Box 632 Woodland Hills, CA 91365  
EIN Tax ID: 83-1163287

# 2025 ASSYRIAN STUDIES SYMPOSIUM

OCTOBER 24-26, 2025



ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND CONFLICT  
1000 CADY MALL  
TEMPE, AZ 85281

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## What Your Donation Supports

- ✓ Travel grants for graduate students to present their research
- ✓ Provide funds to support the Assyrian Academic Research Grant
- ✓ Support future educational events like the Assyrian Studies Symposium

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# BE THE CHANGE

*Become a member!*

Join the Assyrian Studies Association as a member to support the promotion of the academic study of the Assyrian heritage through supporting research, teaching, and intellectual collaboration among scholars in various fields.

## Membership Benefits

- Copy of our 2024 Children/Popular Book recipient, Bedri Dedril's *Assyrian Folk Tales*.
- Moleskin notepad with Assyrian Studies Association's logo and pen.
- Assyrian alphabet magnets.
- Special invitations to member-only fundraising events.

Register Today



[www.assyrianstudiesassociation.org/membership](http://www.assyrianstudiesassociation.org/membership)

## Symposium Program Chairs

**Alexandra Lazar**  
University of California, Davis

**Önver Cetrez**  
Uppsala University

**Nahrain Bet Younadam**  
The University of Arizona

**Julye Bidmead**  
Chapman University

**Mariam Georgis**  
Simon Fraser University

**Helen Malko** (Consultant)  
Stanford University's Humanities Center

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Assyrian Studies  
ASSOCIATION

The Assyrian Studies Association (ASA), a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization that promotes interest in the academic study of the longue durée of the Assyro-Mesopotamian heritage by supporting research, scholarly publications, and collaborative projects. It facilitates contact and exchange of information among scholars, academic organizations, and communities across various disciplines. ASA functions as an instrument to advance academic studies on an academic level.

## Welcome Message

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Welcome to the second Biennial Assyrian Studies Symposium. We are honored to gather with you in Tempe this October to share research, exchange ideas, and build connections that strengthen and sustain the field of Assyrian Studies.

This symposium reflects years of dedication from scholars, students, and community members committed to preserving, interrogating, and advancing knowledge about Assyrian history, language, culture, and contemporary experience. Together, we will engage in conversations that push the boundaries of our disciplines and deepen our understanding of the Assyrian past and present.

We are grateful for your participation – whether presenting new research, contributing to discussions, or supporting the work of others. Your presence and insight make this gathering meaningful. We hope the symposium inspires collaboration and sparks new questions that carry forward long after these three days conclude.

We look forward to welcoming you to Tempe and to sharing this important event with you.

Best,

The 2025 Assyrian Studies Symposium Chairs:

Alexandra Lazar

Julye Bidmead

Önver Cetrez

Mariam Georgis

Nahrain Bet Younadam

Helen Malko



## Thank You to the School of Politics and Global Studies



Dear Faculty and Staff of the School of Politics and Global Studies at Arizona State University,

We extend our deepest gratitude for your partnership and support of the second Biennial Assyrian Studies Symposium, held October 24–26, 2025. This gathering would not be possible without your commitment to fostering rigorous scholarship, dialogue, and collaboration across disciplines.

We are especially grateful to Professor Güneş Murat Tezcür, Director of the School of Politics and Global Studies, for his leadership and generosity in hosting us. Your encouragement and engagement have created an intellectual home for this symposium, one that allows scholars, students, and community members to come together in meaningful dialogue about Assyrian history, language, culture, and identity.

Your support strengthens the foundation of Assyrian Studies and amplifies the work of researchers across the globe. We are honored to collaborate with such a dedicated academic community and look forward to the many ways this partnership will continue to grow.

With heartfelt thanks,  
The 2025 Assyrian Studies Symposium Chairs



## Thank You to our Bronze Sponsor

### Mar Shimun Memorial Foundation™



Mar Shalita, 1894. (Source: Hermann Burchardt Collection, Berlin Ethnology Museum)



UNITED STATES, 1940

**MarShimun.org** was born from the Mar Shimun Fund, formed in 1976 after the assassination of His Holiness, Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII, Catholicos Patriarch of the Church of the East. The “fund” was developed as a memorial to HH Mar Shimun and his mission of investing in the education of Assyrians and other charitable causes that would provide aid for those in need. Media, such as books were sold to raise funds for these causes.

As more information became accessible digitally, in 2007 MarShimun.org was established. The goal of MarShimun.org is to provide authentic information and historical records of the Patriarchs of the d'Mar Shimun successional line and other notable family members showing their work and challenges for the Assyrian Church and Nation. Since then, the site has progressed into a larger endeavor that's resulted in archival documents and photos. In some cases, the documents are private correspondences, or eyewitness accounts of historical events or declassified government reports that have now been made available.

The Mar Shimun Fund evolved into the Mar Shimun Memorial Foundation 501(c). This foundation is devoted to his memory and his 55 years of service and tireless work as the last Patriarch of the Mar Shimun lineage.

**For more information, please visit: [MarShimun.org](http://MarShimun.org)**

## Thank You to our Sponsors, Donors, and Volunteers

Donors, Sponsors, and Volunteers,

On behalf of the Symposium Chairs of the 2025 Assyrian Studies Symposium, hosted at Arizona State University's Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict (October 24–26, 2025), we extend our heartfelt thanks for your generous support. Your commitment to advancing and preserving Assyrian Studies makes this Symposium possible.

Your contributions directly elevate the quality of the Symposium, creating a vibrant platform for scholarly exchange, collaboration, and community.

With sincere appreciation,  
2025 Assyrian Studies Symposium Chairs



Historic Conference at Sar Amadia, Iraq, 1932



## Thank You to the Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict



Faculty and Staff of the Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict at Arizona State University,

Thank you for your gracious hospitality and invaluable support in hosting this significant event for the Assyrian Studies Association.

Our sincerest gratitude to **John Marc Sianghio**, Assistant Director and Faculty Affiliate, Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict; **Dawn Beeson**, Manager, Marketing and Communication Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict; and **Alex Brooks**, Events Coordinator, Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict for your dedication, professionalism, and unwavering support in ensuring the success of the 2025 Assyrian Studies Symposium. Your expertise and meticulous attention to detail have been instrumental in offering a seamless and enriching experience for all participants.

We look forward to the continued scholarly collaborations within the distinguished setting of the Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict.

Best,  
The 2025 Assyrian Studies Symposium Chairs

## Restaurants, Cafes, and Eateries

### On Campus (nearby West Hall)

#### QDoba Mexican Eats

Memorial Union, 1290 S Normal Ave, Tempe, AZ 85287  
Friday–Sunday Hours: 10:00am–8:00pm

#### Starbucks

1290 S Normal Ave, Tempe, AZ 85281  
Friday Hours: 6:30am–10:30pm  
Saturday Hours: 8:00am–9:00pm  
Sunday Hours: 10am–9:00pm

#### Subway

1290 S Normal Ave #138, Tempe, AZ 85287  
Friday Hours: 10:00am–4:00pm  
Saturday Hours: 10:00am–4:00pm  
Sunday Hours: 10:00am–4:00pm

#### Engrained Cafe

Memorial Union Building, 1290 S Normal Ave, Tempe, AZ 85287  
Friday Hours: 11:00am – 2:00pm  
Saturday Hours: Closed.  
Sunday Hours: Closed.

### Off Campus

#### Original Chop Shop (0.3 miles / 6min walk from West Hall)

222 E University Dr, Tempe, AZ 85281  
Friday Hours: 7:00am – 9:00pm  
Saturday Hours: 7:00am – 9:00pm  
Sunday Hours: 7:00am – 8:00pm

#### Postino Annex (0.3 miles / 8min walk from West Hall)

615 S College Ave, Tempe, AZ 85281  
Friday Hours: 11:00am – 12:00am  
Saturday Hours: 10:00am–12:00am  
Sunday Hours: 10:00am–10:00pm

#### Chipotle (0.4 miles / 10min walk from West Hall)

1038 S Mill Ave, Tempe, AZ 85281  
Friday Hours: 10:45am – 11:00pm  
Saturday Hours: 10:45am – 11:00pm  
Sunday Hours: 10:45am – 11:00pm



## Off Campus Sites & Activities

### Explore Downtown Tempe

Downtown Tempe is a vibrant, walkable hub where culture, adventure, and nightlife converge. Nestled along Tempe Town Lake, Arizona's only downtown waterfront, visitors can enjoy kayaking, paddle boarding, or simply strolling by the water before hiking "A" Mountain for sweeping city views. The area is rich in arts and culture, with the Tempe Center for the Arts showcasing theater, galleries, and public art, while historic landmarks like the **Niels Petersen House** highlight the city's heritage.

By day, visitors can shop and explore unique local businesses, and by night, Mill Avenue comes alive with rooftop lounges, patios, live music, and award-winning dining and craft brews, including the iconic **Four Peaks Brewing Company**. Downtown Tempe also hosts dynamic events year-round—from the **Tempe Festival of the Arts** and 2nd Sundays on Mill to seasonal celebrations and cultural block parties—ensuring there's always something new to experience. With its mix of outdoor recreation, cultural attractions, and lively entertainment, Downtown Tempe offers an unforgettable experience at the heart of Arizona.

Visit [www.downtowntempe.com](http://www.downtowntempe.com) for more information!

### Watch a performance the Arizona Theatre Company in Tempe

- Saturday, October 25 and Sunday, October 26: watch ***Deceived*** is a new adaptation of *Gaslight*, the 1938 thriller by British playwright Patrick Hamilton.
  - Saturday Showtimes: 12:00pm; 7:30pm. Sunday Showtimes: 3:00pm.
  - To purchase tickets, please visit: [www.atc.org](http://www.atc.org)

### Desert Botanical Garden

Address: 1201 N Galvin Pkwy, Phoenix, AZ 85008

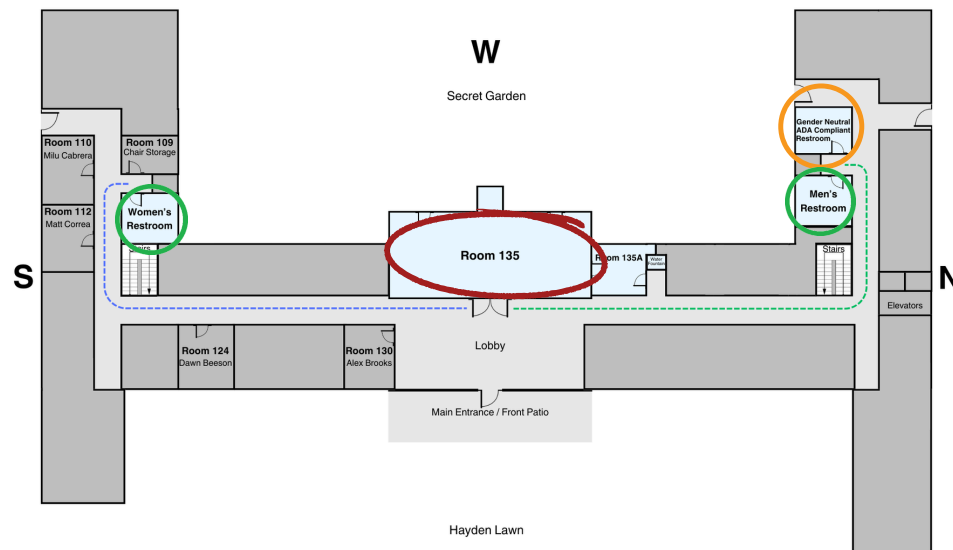
Hours: Monday–Sunday, 7:00am–8:00pm

Nestled in the scenic embrace of Papago Park, the Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix spans a sprawling 140 acres, with approximately 55 acres under cultivation, showcasing over 50,000 plants across more than 4,000 species. Dedicated to conservation, education, and the celebration of desert flora, it stands among the world's foremost living museums of arid-region plants, particularly those of the iconic Sonoran Desert.

To purchase your tickets, please visit: [www.dbg.org](http://www.dbg.org)

## Guide to the Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict

### West Hall



### Address:

West Hall (Room 135): 1000 Cady Mall, Tempe, AZ 85281.

### Accessible Entrance:

Please enter through the east doors (facing the Hayden Library lawn) that are equipped with a power-operated door for wheelchair access. The event space is directly forward in Room 135. If you need additional assistance finding the event space, please contact CSRC staff at 480-965-7187.

### Restrooms:

Green circles indicate restrooms that are located outside Room 135. Women's restroom is located on the right side of Room 135 when exiting and Men's restroom is located on the left. The orange circle on the floor plan indicates Gender neutral and ADA (wheelchair) accessible restrooms are located near the Men's restroom.

### Smoking Policy:

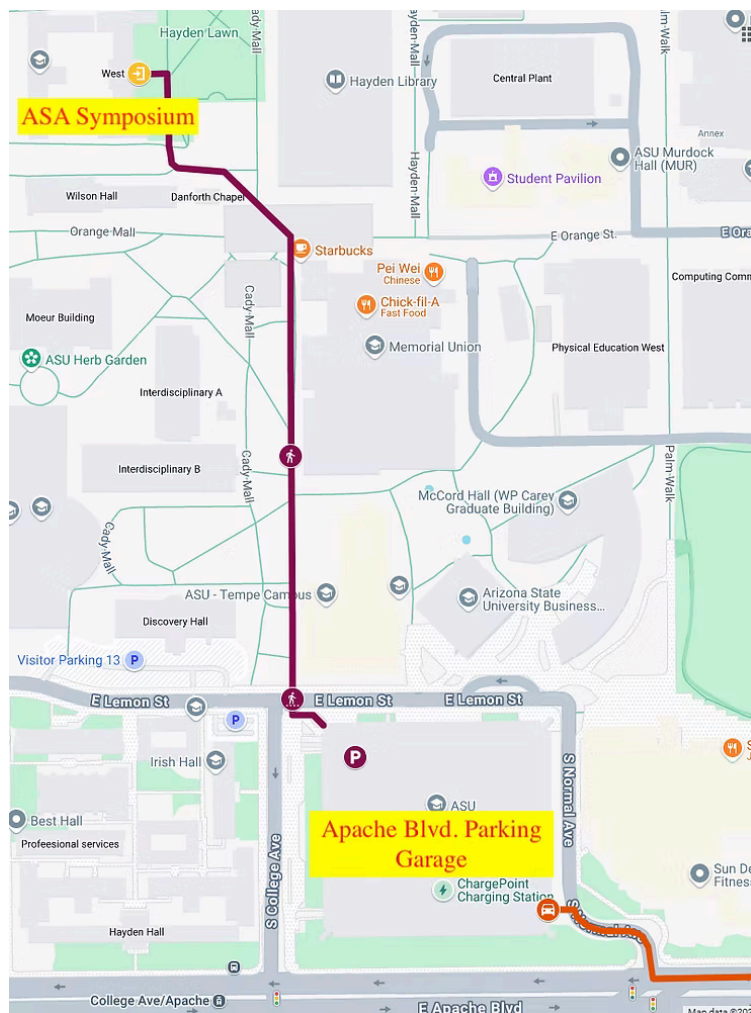
Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict, as part of ASU, adheres to the university-wide **tobacco-free** campus policy.

- Smoking and the use of smokeless tobacco products, including all electronic smoking devices, are **prohibited** in or on all university-owned property, including the facilities, grounds, and parking structures associated with the Center.

## Parking Information

Hourly visitor parking is conveniently located in the Apache Blvd. garage (see image below). This is the nearest parking garage to the Symposium. Please note that there are other events occurring on campus at the same time as the symposium. We strongly encourage attendees and presenters to plan ahead to afford enough time to find parking.

**Apache Parking Garage Address**  
250 E Apache Blvd, Tempe, AZ 85281



## Presenters, Panelists, and Chairs' Biographies

**Shamiran Mako, PhD**  
Assistant Professor, Boston University

**Shamiran Mako** is an Assistant Professor of international relations and political science at the Pardee School of Global Studies at Boston University. She is also a member of the Graduate Faculty at the Political Science Department at Boston University. Her research and teaching focus on the international relations of the Middle East with a substantive emphasis on the politics of state formation and colonial legacies, ethnic politics, governance in divided societies, institutions and post-conflict statebuilding. Her research explores the historical and contemporary drivers of inter and intra-state conflicts that produce weak and fragile states across the MENA region. She is the author of *Structuring Exclusion: Institutions, Grievances, and Ethnic State Capture in Iraq* (forthcoming, summer 2025 with Oxford University Press) and *After the Uprisings: Progress and Stagnation in the Middle East and North Africa*, with Valentine Moghadam (2021), and co-editor of *State and Society in Iraq: Citizenship under Occupation, Dictatorship, and Democratisation*, with Benjamin Isakhan and Fadi Dawood (I.B. Tauris, 2017).

**Michelle Shamoell, PhD**  
Social Work Lecturer, Excelsia University College

**Michelle Shamoell** has a bachelor's degree in Social Work with Honours and a PhD from the University of Sydney. She also has the University of Sydney's Post Graduate Teaching Fellowship. She has years of experience in teaching various social work, social science and research units at Western Sydney University and The University of Sydney.

**Kelly Hannavi, PhD Candidate**  
University of Michigan

**Kelly Hannavi** is a PhD candidate in the joint History and Women's and Gender Studies program at the University of Michigan. She is a social and cultural historian of late Ottoman Mesopotamia, with a focus on religion, gender/sexuality, and communal belonging. Her dissertation, "Belonging and Boundaries: Subjectivity, Gender/Sexuality, and Communities of Syriac Christians in the Ottoman East, 1865–1915," examines how structures of gender and sexuality were used by Syriac Christians to maintain inter- and intra-communal boundaries in an era of competitive confessionalism.

**Robina Lajin, Graduate Student**  
Johannes Gutenberg University

**Robina Lajin** is a graduate student in the Master's program in Educational Sciences at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, Germany. Her academic interests lie in the historical and theoretical foundations of education, with a particular emphasis on postcolonial theory, migration, and forced displacement within educational contexts. Her research critically engages with questions of power, identity, and representation in pedagogical settings. She is a full scholarship recipient of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, awarded for both academic excellence and social engagement. Beyond her studies, she serves as Deputy Chair of the Etui Institute and as Chair of the Assyrian Student Group Rhein-Main, where she advocates for diasporic self organization and educational equity. Her academic and civic work are closely intertwined, driven by a commitment to critical inquiry and transformative educational practice.



## Presenters, Panelists, and Chairs' Biographies

**Önver Cetrez, PhD**  
Professor, Uppsala University

**Önver Andreas Cetrez** is a professor in psychology of religion and cultural psychology at the Faculty of Theology, Uppsala University, Sweden. He is recognized for his research and teaching on psychosocial and existential health among migrants and refugees. Critically applying concepts such as resilience, coping, existential, and acculturation, he has led several research projects and authored many peer-reviewed articles, chapters, and books, drawing on both qualitative and quantitative data. He has led several international (EU Horizon) and national research projects, both as coordinator and PI. He is responsible for two current courses at the faculty: Existential Health and Migration, Religion, and Health. He serves as the scientific secretary for the Swedish Ethical Review Authority in Uppsala and as the ethics advisor at the university.

**Ramina Samuel,**  
Seyfo Center

**Ramina Samuel** is a nationally certified counselor and a committed advocate for the Assyrian community. She immigrated from Iraq to the U.S. as a young teenager. A former student of Assyrian schools in Nuhadra, she is passionate about preserving the Assyrian language and culture. Ramina co-sponsors her school's Assyrian Club and her district's Assyrian parent group, Suraye. She is one of the co-founders of BET KANU Inc., a nonprofit organization focused on reviving the Assyrian language, where she serves as the Vice President and leads the language committee. Ramina and her Assyrian colleagues have also led efforts in the Niles Township schools for Assyrian Genocide recognition and helped establish the first accredited Assyrian language program in the U.S.

**Nahrain Bet Younadam, PhD**  
Faculty Associate, Arizona State University

**Nahrain Bet Younadam** is a Faculty Associate in the School of Politics and Global Studies at Arizona State University. She earned her Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of California, Davis, in 2022. Before joining ASU, she held a Presidential Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Arizona's School of Government and Public Policy. Her research explores ethnic group movements—from protests to civil wars—and explores how institutions influence the resolution of ethnic grievances. Dr. Bet Younadam has taught a range of courses in international relations and comparative politics.

**Timothy Langille, PhD**  
Associate Teaching Professor, Arizona State University

**Timothy Langille** is an Associate Teaching Professor in the School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies at Arizona State University. He completed his doctorate at the University of Toronto in the Study of Religion and Jewish Studies. His research focuses on trauma and memory, genocide in antiquity, the Jewish Legion during World War I, and Purim plays in post-Holocaust DP camps. At Arizona State University, Langille primarily teaches courses on the Hebrew Bible, Jewish history, comparative genocide, religion and violence, nationalism, and ethnic conflict. He has participated in summer institutes and seminars at the Holocaust Educational Foundation (Northwestern University), Zoryan Institute (University of Toronto), and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. These programs have focused on pedagogy in Holocaust studies, genocide studies, and Jewish studies. He is currently working on a book manuscript on genocide in antiquity. He is a member of the board of directors for Genocide Awareness Week.

## Symposium Program Overview

### Friday, October 24, 2025

| Event                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Time                      | Location                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Welcome Remarks by Professor Günes Murat Tezcür, Director and Professor, School of Politics and Global Studies</b>                                                                                      | <b>10:00am</b>            | <b>West Hall - Room 135</b> |
| <b>Welcome Address by Alexandra Lazar, Executive Director, Assyrian Studies Association</b>                                                                                                                | <b>10:15-10:30 am</b>     | <b>West Hall - Room 135</b> |
| <b>Keynote Address by Önver Cetrez, Professor at Department of Theology; Social Sciences of Religion and Practical Theology at Uppsala University and Board Member at the Assyrian Studies Association</b> | <b>10:30-11:00 am</b>     | <b>West Hall - Room 135</b> |
| <b>[Panel 1] - Navigating Identity Across Borders: Reflections on Diaspora and Youth</b>                                                                                                                   | <b>11:00am - 12:30 pm</b> | <b>West Hall - Room 135</b> |
| <b>Lunch Break</b>                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>12:30-1:30 pm</b>      |                             |
| <b>[Panel 2] - Reimagining Heritage: Destruction, Boundaries, and Parenting across Diasporas</b>                                                                                                           | <b>1:30 - 3:00 pm</b>     | <b>West Hall - Room 135</b> |

## Symposium Program Overview

### Friday, October 24, 2025 (Continued...)

| Event                                                                                       | Time                  | Location                    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>[Roundtable 1] - Spaces of Identity: Art, Institutions, and Political Representation</b> | <b>3:15 - 4:45 pm</b> | <b>West Hall - Room 135</b> |
| <b>Evening Networking Reception</b>                                                         | <b>5:00 - 7:00 pm</b> | <b>West Hall - Room 135</b> |

### Saturday, October 25, 2025

| Event                                                                                                                    | Time                      | Location                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>[Panel 3] - From Ancient Wisdom to Modern Performance: Exploring Cultural Heritage and Its Contemporary Relevance</b> | <b>10:00 - 11:30 am</b>   | <b>West Hall - Room 135</b> |
| <b>Lunch Break</b>                                                                                                       | <b>11:30 am- 12:30 pm</b> |                             |
| <b>[Panel 4] - Mobilizing Resilience: Assyrian Communities in the Face of Political Violence and Digital Innovation</b>  | <b>1:00-2:30 pm</b>       | <b>West Hall - Room 135</b> |
| <b>[Roundtable 2] - Genocide Awareness</b>                                                                               | <b>2:45- 4:00 pm</b>      | <b>West Hall - Room 135</b> |
| <b>Dinner Reception<br/>(This is a closed-off and ticketed dinner open only to those with prior registration.)</b>       | <b>5:00 - 7:00 pm</b>     |                             |

## Presenters, Panelists, and Chairs' Biographies

**Maureen Khoshaba, Graduate Student**  
DePaul University

**Maureen Khoshaba** is pursuing a Master's degree in Refugee and Forced Migration Studies at DePaul University. Her research interests include forced migration, ethnic cleansing, decolonization, and Indigenous studies. Her current work examines the low-intensity ethnic cleansing of Indigenous Assyrians carried out by the Kurdistan Regional Government in pursuit of ethnic and territorial uniformity within the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science with a concentration in International Politics and a minor in Peace, Justice, and Conflict Studies from DePaul University. She serves as the Legal Resource Project Coordinator at DePaul University's Asylum and Immigration Law Clinic. She sits on the board of Ishtar's Circle and has served as an Advocacy Associate at the Assyrian Policy Institute.

**Sargon Donabed, PhD**  
Professor of History, Roger Williams University

**Sargon Donabed** is a professor of history at Roger Williams University. He holds a PhD in Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations from the University of Toronto and a MSci from Canisius College in Anthropology/Animal Studies. In addition, he is a TAARII recipient (the American Academic Research Institute in Iraq). He serves on the advisory board of the journal, *Chronos*, published by the University of Balamand and is also the editor for the book series *Alternative Histories: Narratives from the Middle East and Mediterranean*, Edinburgh University Press. Donabed is also published in a variety of journals from *Folklore* to *National Identities*, *Perspectives on History*, and the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. He is also the author of *Reforging a Forgotten History: Iraq and the Assyrians in the 20th Century* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015) and co-editor and contributor to numerous works including *The Assyrian Heritage: Threads of Continuity and Influence* (Uppsala University, 2012).

**Şahika Karatepe, PhD Candidate**  
Binghamton University

Şahika Karatepe is a doctoral candidate in the History Department at Binghamton University, where she is completing her dissertation titled "Labor, Gender, Nature, and the Politics of Expropriation: Armenian Peasantry in the Bardizag Region of the Ottoman Empire (1790–1924)." She holds an M.A. in Modern Turkish History from Boğaziçi University. She has designed and taught courses on the history of the Armenian Genocide, colonialism, gender and sexuality in both Middle Eastern and American contexts. She previously worked as a researcher for the Hrant Dink Foundation's Turkey Cultural Heritage Map project, where she conducted archival research on Assyrian, Nestorian, and Chaldean cultural heritage sites across Anatolia. Her articles and interviews have been published in *Çatlık Zemin*, *Evrensel*, *5Harfliler*, and *Bilim ve Gelecek*.

**Shmuel (Samuel) Tamo**  
Executive Director of Indigenous Roots Productions

**Shmuel (Samuel) Tamo** is an indigenous Assyrian researcher and filmmaker born in diaspora. He is the founder and Executive Director of Indigenous Roots Productions (IRP), a nonprofit dedicated to amplifying Indigenous voices through community-led oral history research film productions. He holds an M.A. in Social Justice and Human Rights from Arizona State University and a B.A. in Sociology and International Studies as an Honors College graduate from the University of Central Arkansas. His work merges academic inquiry with creative media, focusing on cultural resilience and contemporary Indigenous issues. IRP's films have been shown in academic, cultural, and grassroots settings in multiple countries.



Jack Jendo,  
Founder of Brain Digits

**Jack Jendo** is an accomplished entrepreneur and a visionary in digital transformation with a profound commitment to fostering social change. As the founder of Brain Digits—an advanced technology company headquartered in Delaware and Lebanon—Jack empowers aspiring entrepreneurs and business teams with innovative training, advanced solutions, and technology. His goal is to facilitate the launch and growth of businesses while enhancing organizational effectiveness through strategic leadership and a blend of soft and technical skills. Jack’s entrepreneurial ventures extend to Beirut in, a leading digital marketing agency that operates across Lebanon and Sydney, Australia. Under his leadership, the agency specializes in crafting digital strategies that drive community engagement with sustainable growth.

Mary Isaac, PhD  
Visiting Assistant Professor, Norco College

**Mary S. Isaac** recently earned her Ph.D. from the University of California, Irvine, where she conducted research on the legacies of violence on the political integration of various ethno-religious groups from Iraq—namely Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Shi’a Muslims. Her dissertation examined how each group’s experiences with pre-migration marginalization shaped their political trust, community-building, identity-formation, and second-generation mobilization. During her time at UCI, she served as an instructor, teaching assistant, mentor, and pedagogical consultant to the Political Science Department, continually seeking opportunities to expand her pedagogical knowledge and expertise. She is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor of Political Science at Norco College teaching courses like American Government, Race and Ethnic Politics, Comparative Politics, and Political Violence.

Kim Klett, MA  
Seyfo Center

**Kim Klett, MA**, was a high school ELA classroom teacher for 31 years in the Mesa District in Arizona, retiring in 2023. She is a 2003 Museum Teacher Fellow of the United States Holocaust Museum and is a senior facilitator with Echoes & Reflections, where she has led teachers in Holocaust education trainings since 2014. Klett is the Deputy Executive Director of the Educators' Institute for Human Rights (EIHR), and has led teacher trainings for educators in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Rwanda in that role, as well as working with pedagogy teams to create publications in each of the two countries. In addition, Klett teaches a course on the Holocaust at Scottsdale Community College, as an adjunct faculty member. She is a Defiant Requiem Teacher Ambassador, a member of the inaugural cohort of Learning for Justices' Teaching Hard History, and serves on the board of the Phoenix Holocaust Association.

Erin Hughes, PhD  
Assistant Professor, California State University–Stanislaus

**Erin Hughes** is an Assistant Professor of Political Science and History at California State University–Stanislaus. She obtained a BA in Political Science and History from McGill University in Canada, an MSc with Distinction in Nationalism Studies, and a PhD in Sociology, both from the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. She is particularly interested in nationalism, genocide and ethnic conflict, diaspora and migration, state- and nation-building, and modern Assyrian studies. As the Director of the Sarguis Modern Assyrian Heritage Project at California State University (CSU), Stanislaus in Turlock, California, established in 2017, she brings new and emerging research in Assyrian studies to Stanislaus State University.

Sunday, October 26, 2025

| Event                                                                                                   | Time              | Location             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| [Panel 5] - Faith, Unity, and Sovereignty: Re-examining Assyrian Identity and Inter-Religious Relations | 10:00- 11:30 am   | West Hall - Room 135 |
| Lunch Break                                                                                             | 11:30am- 12:30 pm |                      |
| [Film Screening] - “Return to Babylon”                                                                  | 12:30-1:30 pm     | West Hall - Room 135 |

**Welcome Remarks: School of Politics and Global Studies, Arizona State University, 10:00am**

Professor Günes Murat Tezcür, Director and Professor, School of Politics and Global Studies, Arizona State University.

West Hall, Room 135

**Introduction: the Assyrian Studies Association, 10:15am**

Alexandra Lazar, Executive Director, Assyrian Studies Association.

West Hall, Room 135

**Keynote Address**

Onver Cetrez, Professor in Psychology of Religion, Uppsala University, and Board Member of the Assyrian Studies Association.

West Hall, Room 135

**Navigating Identity Across Borders: Reflections on Diaspora and Youth, 11:00am–12:30pm**

Panel Session, West Hall, Room 135

This panel traces how Assyrian identity evolves across borders and generations. Papers cover autoethnographic insight, the impact of tightening European border policies on belonging, and youth-led cultural expression among second and third generations. Together they show how migration, policy, and agency redefine Assyrian identity today.

**Chair:** Michel Shamoon-Pour

**Panelists:**

- **Nashie Shamoon**, *Deconstructing the Assyrian Identity from Within: Autoethnography, Positionality, and Reflexive Approaches to Youth Identity Formation Across Diaspora Landscapes*.
- **Eamama Daniyal**, *Memory, Migration, and Belonging: Diasporic Identity Formation among Assyrian Youth in Chicago in the Context of Contemporary American Politics*.
- **Sahika Karatepe**, *Assyrian, Nestorian and Chaldean Cultural Heritage in Anatolia*.

**Reimagining Heritage: Destruction, Boundaries, and Parenting Across Diasporas, 1:30pm–3:00pm**

Panel Session, West Hall, Room 135

This panel examines how diaspora communities remake identity through cultural loss, borders, survival, and family life. Papers cover rebuilding collective memory after destroyed artefacts, boundary-making among Assyro-Chaldeans in France, parenting adaptations among Assyrians in Germany, and genocide survivors reshaping identity in an era of live-streamed atrocities.

**Chair:** Sargon Donabed

**Panelists:**

- **Michelle Shamoell**, *The Assyrian Collective Identity Beyond the Destruction of the Assyrian Artifacts; A View from Down Under*.
- **Claire Ichou**, *Affirming, Troubling, or Crossing Boundaries: Narratives from Assyro-Chaldeans born in France*.
- **Robina Lajin**, *Parenting in Transition: Assyrian Families Navigating Child-Rearing in the German Diaspora*.
- **Michel Shamoon-Pour**, *Rediscovering Assyrian Identity as Genocide Survivors in the Era of Live-streamed Genocides*.

**Presenters, Panelists, and Chairs' Biographies**

**Julye Bidmead, PhD**

Associate Professor, Chapman University

**Julye Bidmead** is Associate Professor and Program Director of Religious Studies at Chapman University, Orange, CA. Dr. Bidmead holds a Ph.D. in Religion from Vanderbilt University. Her publications include *The Akitu Festival: Religious Continuity and Royal Legitimation in Mesopotamia*, *Invest Your Humanity*, and numerous articles on Near Eastern religions, ritual studies, magic, and gender. She is finishing a manuscript, *Recovering Women's Rituals in the Ancient Near East*, that examines women's religious and domestic rituals in antiquity.

**Güneş Murat Tezcür, PhD**

Director and Professor, School of Politics and Global Studies, Arizona State University

**Güneş Murat Tezcür** (Ph.D., University of Michigan, 2005) is Professor of Political Science and the Director of the School of Politics and Global Studies (SPGS) at the Arizona State University. He is a scholar of comparative politics who explores the trajectories of political violence and politics of identity with a focus on Iranian, Kurdish, and Turkish human geography as well as the United States. Güneş authored 30 scholarly articles and 8 book chapters and two books while editing three books. His newest book is *Liminal Minorities: Religion and Mass Violence in Muslim Societies* (Cornell University Press, 2024) that won multiple awards. He is also the editor of *The Oxford Handbook of Turkish Politics* (Oxford University Press, 2022).

**Volker Benkert, PhD**

Associate Professor, Arizona State University

**Volker Benkert** is an Associate Professor in the School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies at Arizona State University. His research focuses on the impact of sudden regime change on biographies after both totalitarian regimes in 20th century Germany. He is the author of *Glückskinder der Einheit. Lebenswege der um 1970 in der DDR Geborenen* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag 2017) and the editor of *Unsere Väter, unsere Mütter Deutsche Generationen seit 1945* with Campus Verlag 2020. How regime change in Germany influenced German perceptions of the United States is part of *Feinde, Freunde, Fremde. Deutsche Perspektiven auf die USA*, an edited volume on German-American relations Benkert published in 2018 with Nomos Verlag. Benkert's new research project explores apologetic and redemptive narratives in recent German Film.

**Claire Ichou, MS**

Entre-Autres

**Claire Ichou** is a French-Assyrian NGO professional with over a decade of international experience in gender and human rights. She holds a Master's degree in Development Studies from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa), a Master of Science in Public Health from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (UK), and a Diplôme des Hautes Études en Pratiques Sociales from France. Claire founded a France-based NGO rooted in the principles of popular education. Her work centers on emancipatory methodologies, which she applies in training programs, participatory research, and community engagement. Claire recently completed an action-research project on first-generation Assyrian-French individuals.

## Presenters, Panelists, and Chairs' Biographies

**Abdulmesih BarAbraham,**  
Mor Afrem Foundation

**Abdulmesih BarAbraham** earned a Master of Science in Engineering from the University of Erlangen/Nuernberg. During his professional career, he has worked in research and in various management positions for an international German company in Munich and in Silicon Valley, California. In addition to more than two dozen published technical and scientific articles, he also holds more than a dozen US and European patents. As an independent author, BarAbraham has published on Assyrian issues such as the situation of minorities in the Middle East, genocide, migration and diaspora. His writings include numerous published articles and book chapters in several languages. In addition to his academic and professional activities, he is Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Yoken-bar-Yoken Foundation and the Mor Afrem Foundation. He is also secretary of the Suryoye Theological Seminary in Salzburg.

**Lawrence Nader Makho, MS**  
Assistant Lecturer, University of Duhok

**Lawrence Nader Makho** holds a Bachelor's degree in History from the University of Zakho (2011) and a Master's degree in Modern and Contemporary History from the same university (2023). He is the author of the book *The Assyrians of Hakkari in Iraq (1933–1988): A Historical Study* originally published in Arabic and recently translated into English, with publication forthcoming. Makho has written numerous research papers, studies, and articles on heritage and history in Arabic, Assyrian, and Kurdish languages. He has participated in several international academic conferences and currently serves as the Editor-in-Chief of *Kekhwa d'Beth Nahrin*, a journal publishing by the Assyrian Cultural Center in Nohadra (Duhok). He is also a member of the Center's Administrative Board and Head of its Cultural Committee. At present, he works at the College of Humanities, University of Duhok.

**Candace Lukasik, PhD**  
Assistant Professor, Mississippi State University

**Candace Lukasik** is Assistant Professor of Religion and Faculty Affiliate in Anthropology and Middle Eastern Cultures at Mississippi State University. Her research explores religion and the transnational politics of violence, migration, race, and indigeneity in the Middle East, specifically Egypt and Iraq, and its US diasporas. She is the author of *Martyrs and Migrants: Coptic Christians and the Persecution Politics of US Empire* (NYU Press, 2025) and co-editor of *Anthropologies of Orthodox Christianity: Theology, Politics, Ethics* (Fordham University Press, 2026). She was previously a Faculty Leave Fellow at the Crown Center for Middle East Studies at Brandeis University, an AAUW American Postdoctoral Research Leave Fellow, and Postdoctoral Research Associate at the John C. Danforth Center on Religion and Politics at Washington University in St. Louis. She earned her PhD in Sociocultural Anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley.

**Nashie Shamoon, PhD Candidate**  
Victoria University of Wellington

**Nashie Shamoon** is a PhD candidate in Political Science at Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington (VUW), New Zealand. Her research focuses on the prospects of a modern-day Assyrian identity, as seen by young Assyrians in diaspora communities across Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, and Sweden. Broader research interests include Middle Eastern politics, Syrian refugee communities based in the Middle East, refugee-background communities in New Zealand, and ethnic minority representation in politics. She is currently a Teaching Fellow in the Department of Political Science and International Relations at VUW.

## Cultural Landscapes of Identity: Art, Community, and Political Presence, 3:15pm–4:45pm

Roundtable Discussion, West Hall, Room 135

This roundtable examines how Assyrian identity is shaped through art, community, and politics. Presentations cover diaspora art that turns survival into self-expression and cultural memory. They trace Assyrian cultural centers in Iraq after 1972 and their role in community life. The discussion links art, institutions, and politics in sustaining Assyrian identity over time.

**Chair:** Helen Malko

**Presenters:**

- **Shmuel Tamo**, *From Survival to Self-Expression: Artistic Memory and the Evolution of Assyrian Identity in Diaspora*.
- **Lawrence Makho**, *Assyrian Cultural Centers in Iraq after 1972*.
- **Abdulmesih BarAbraham**, *Dr. Davud Yusuf: The First Assyrian Representative in the Ottoman Parliament*.

## Evening Networking Reception sponsored by the Seyfo Center, 5:00pm–7:00pm

West Hall, Room 135

Join us for an evening reception sponsored by the Seyfo Center. Meet presenters, exchange ideas, and build new connections.

## Saturday, October 25, 2025

### From Ancient Wisdom to Modern Performance: Exploring Cultural Heritage and Its Contemporary Relevance, 10:00am–11:30am

Panel Session, West Hall, Room 135

This panel explores the living impact of ancient Assyrian heritage on contemporary culture. Papers trace Ahiqar's ethical teachings in communal memory, Gilgamesh's journey from tablet to stage, and the reimagining of Assyrian imagery and myth in today's visual and cultural work. Together they show how Assyrian heritage shapes modern artistic and performance practices.

**Chair:** Önver Cetrez

**Panelists:**

- **Helen Malko**, *The Wisdom of Ahiqar and its Assyrian Past & Present*.
- **Eve Sada**, *From Inspiration to Performance: The Journey to Gilgamesh*.
- **Julye Bidmead**, *Ancient Assyrian Imagery and Mythology in Contemporary Culture*.

### Mobilizing Resilience: Assyrian Communities in the Face of Political Violence and Digital Innovation, 1:00pm–2:30pm

Panel Session, West Hall, Room 135

This panel examines how Assyrian communities face violence, displacement, and erasure while building resilience, mobilization, and digital belonging. Papers cover parental socialization and second-generation activism, the impact of violence in Iraq on voter turnout, slow low-intensity ethnic cleansing in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, and eAssyria, a pilot virtual homeland for cross-border engagement.

**Chair:** Nahrain Bet Younam

**Panelists:**

- **Mary Isaac**, *Second-Generation Mobilization in the Absence of Threat: The Role of Parental Socialization*.
- **Alexandra Lazar** and **Shamiram Mako**, *Effects of Political Violence on Voter Turnout in Iraq*.



- **Jack Jendo**, *eAssyria: A Pilot Virtual Homeland in the eNations Initiative*.
- **Maureen Khoshaba**, *Quiet Displacement, Slow Erasure: The Low-Intensity Ethnic Cleansing of Indigenous Assyrians in the Pursuit of Ethnic and Territorial Uniformity in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI)*.

### The Assyrian Genocide in Secondary Education: From Curriculum Design to Implementation, 2:45pm–4:00pm

Roundtable Discussion, West Hall, Room 135

This panel convenes the principal architects of the Assyrian Genocide High School curriculum to examine its trajectory from conception to classroom practice. Presentations will detail the curricular design process, the procedures required for approval by the Arizona and Illinois Departments of Education, and the pedagogical framework underlying its implementation. The session will conclude with a discussion of forthcoming initiatives, including teacher training and strategies for broadening adoption across additional states.

**Chair:** Günes Murat Tezcür

#### Presenters:

- **Timothy Langille**, *Advancing Education on the Assyrian Genocide: The Need for a High School Curriculum in Arizona*.
- **Volker Benkert**, *Educational Policy: The Arizona Task Force and the Approval of an Assyrian Genocide Curriculum*.
- **Erin Hughes**, *Historiography and Historical Memory: Pedagogical Considerations in Designing an Assyrian Genocide High School Curriculum*.
- **Kim Klett**, *Curriculum Design and Implementation: Efforts Thus Far in Arizona*.
- **Ramina Samuel**, *From Policy to Practice: Advocacy and the Implementation of Assyrian Genocide Education in Illinois*.

### Dinner Reception, 5:00pm–7:00pm

Attendance at the dinner requires pre-registration before Saturday, October 25, 2025. Space is limited. We will accommodate pre-registered guests only.

## Sunday, October 26, 2025

### Faith, Unity, and Sovereignty: Reexamining Assyrian Identity and Inter-Religious Relations, 10:00am–11:30am

Panel Session, West Hall, Room 135

This panel traces how faith, community, and claims to sovereignty shape Assyrian identity and inter-religious ties. Papers examine household spirituality in Late Ottoman Syriac Orthodox life, Coptic-Assyrian dialogues and Anglican efforts at Christian unity in the late 1800s, and the Assyrian community in Södertälje during COVID-19, including existential strain and coping.

**Chair:** Juley Bidmead

#### Panelists:

- **Kelly Hannavi**, *A Spiritual Household: Approaching Community and Subjectivity of the Late Ottoman Syriac Orthodox*.
- **Candace Lukasik**, *'Indigenous, not Christian': Secular Separations and Decolonial Sovereignty in Global Assyria*.
- **Önver Cetrez**, *"I didn't take the vaccine – qit aloho bi'shmayo – there is a God in heaven": A cultural psychological approach to the COVID-19 pandemic among Assyrians in Sweden*.

### Return to Babylon, 12:30–1:30pm

Film Screening, West Hall, Room 135

**Helen Malko, PhD**

**Executive Director, Stanford University's Humanities Center**

**Helen Malko** is an anthropological archaeologist with training in Cultural Heritage Studies. She is the Executive Director of the Stanford Humanities Center at Stanford University. Her research focuses on Mesopotamian archaeology, the destruction of cultural heritage in Iraq and its impact on local communities, including the Assyrians. Other areas of her scholarly interest includes cultural representation in museums and cultural and collective memory.

**Alexandra Lazar, PhD Candidate**

**University of California, Davis and Executive Director at Assyrian Studies Association**

**Alexandra Lazar** is a PhD candidate in Political Science at the University of California, Davis, specializing in international security, political violence, and security cooperation. Her dissertation develops the Security Cooperation Index (SCI) to examine how cooperation among states shapes both conflict deterrence and trade flows. Beyond her research, she served on UC Davis's Chancellor's Graduate & Professional Student Advisory Board (2022–2024) and was a Summer Associate at RAND's Arroyo Army Research Center in 2024. Since 2019, she has also been the Executive Director of the Assyrian Studies Association, advancing global scholarship on Assyrian history, heritage, and culture.

**Eve Sada, PhD**

**Postdoctoral Fellow, Center for the Study of World Religions (CSWR), Harvard Divinity School**

**Eve Georges Sada** is an Assyrian choral conductor, music educator, and researcher born and raised in Iraq. Eve completed her academic journey at the University of Oklahoma, earning a Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) in Choral Conducting and a Master in Music Education. Sada received the 2021 Provost Dissertation Award from the University of Oklahoma for her exceptional research in the field of Humanities and Fine Arts. In her study Assyrian-Syriac chants from the liturgy of the Church of the East, Eve explored the chants from the fourth to seventh centuries of distinguished theologians and poets such as Mar Aprem (Ephrem) and Mar Narsai. She examined the diverse genres of Church hymnody, including Soghyāthā, Madrāshe, Tešbāthā, `Onyatha, and Memre. Prior to her time at the University of Oklahoma, Dr. Sada served as a faculty member and Assistant Dean at the School of Arts and Design at the University of Jordan, where she published articles in music education and vocal physiology.

**Michel Shamooun-Pour, PhD**

**Research Assistant Professor, Binghamton University**

**Michel Shamooun-Pour** is an Assyrian anthropologist specializing in population genetics and paleogenomics. He is a Research Associate Professor in the First-year Research Immersion Program at Binghamton University. His research focuses include the genetic histories of Assyrians and other populations of the Middle East and Caucasus. Shamooun-Pour is committed to promoting a people's history of Assyria instead of the outdated, conventional narratives focused on states and military campaigns. A microbiologist by training, his research also extends to the diagnostics of tick-borne pathogens, and evolution of re-emerging viruses. As an educator, Shamooun-Pour emphasizes the health impact of socioeconomic disparities and systemic racism in the United States.