



ANTH 360 | Cultures of the South Caucasus (1.0 Unit*)

Instructor: Dr. Hamlet Melkumyan, hamlet.melkumyan@ysu.am

Time: TBD

Location: Yerevan State University, Faculty of International Relations; Yerevan, Armenia

Number of hours: 75 (5 academic hours per week, over the course of 15 weeks)

**One Bryn Mawr unit is equal to four undergraduate semester credits*

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the major intellectual and artistic patterns shaping the South Caucasus in the 20th and 21st centuries, with particular attention to film, art, music, and literature. We explore how local artists and thinkers have responded to the violence and upheaval that reshaped the region over the past century, as well as crucial historical moments: from Genocide and Sovietization to ethnic wars and political transitions. How have they sought to foster peace, challenge injustice, or sharpen disputes? What role do they play today in shaping public debates and regional development? Alongside these questions, the course situates the South Caucasus as a crossroads of empires and cultures, tracing continuities from pre-Soviet legacies to contemporary diasporic and transnational exchanges. Special emphasis is placed on memory and trauma, the role of diaspora communities, and the intersections of visual art, music with gender, social change, and minority voices. Finally, the course considers how artists and intellectuals of the South Caucasus have been influenced by the most recent local and global conflicts and peace politics, and how they contribute to reframing new public discourse in the context of post-congeniality and new colonialism. Class sessions will combine close reading, film screenings, and guest lectures to connect cultural works with broader historical and social contexts.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The course will provide understanding of

- key concepts, actors and processes in the framework of South Caucasus traditional and everyday cultural patterns,
- context of cross-culturality,
- Post-Soviet and Post-colonial discourses in cultural canvas
- individual and group fieldworks to experience culture

TARGET AUDIENCE

Students interested or specializing in Caucasus, Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan.

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance in this class is required. Make-up work will be allowed in cases of excused absences only, which include documented illness, religious holidays or family emergency. In addition to contacting the American Councils Resident Director, you are required to notify me in writing immediately of an absence. Other absences will be considered unexcused and will result in an immediate reduction of your grade of 10%. Students who arrive more than 15 minutes late without a valid excuse will not receive credit for attending. More than three unexcused absences will result in automatic course failure.



ACCOMMODATIONS

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact American Council in keeping with its Accommodations Policy, which was distributed to all participants upon admission to the program. Student seeking accommodations who have not yet informed American Councils of this request, should speak to the Resident Director immediately about their needs. Students are also welcome to contact me regarding accommodation but should be aware that all accommodations are provided in keeping with the American Councils Accommodations Policy.

DISCUSSION RULES

As this class has a discussion component and small group work covering sensitive political topics, please observe the following rules during the discussions and small groups' works: (1) listen carefully and be respectful to the other participants in the discussion or group, (2) be sure that you understand the positions and opinions stated and ask for clarification, if necessary and (3) offer your viewpoint in respectful and non-confrontational manner, in order to achieve constructive dialogue with the instructor and your colleagues.

OFFICE HOURS

Students in this course are strongly encouraged to take advantage of instructor's weekly office hours for material clarification and guidance for midterm papers and presentations twice a week offline from 9:30-12:30 or online via zoom.

GRADING AND ASSESSMENT

Grading will consist of:

Category	% Points
In-class participation	5%
Quizzes	20%
Mid-term test	20%
In-class presentation	20%
Final research paper	35%
TOTAL	100%

Grade Scale

Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D	F
4.0 Scale	4	3.7	3.3	3.0	2.7	2.3	2.0	1.7	1.0	0.0
% Points	94-100	90-94	87-90	84-87	80-84	77-80	74-77	70-74	60-70	0-60

READING LOAD

Participants in the course are expected to read from around 60 to 95 pages per week. Students are expected to budget their time accordingly in order to complete all required reading selections prior to a particular class for which they have been assigned.

IN-CLASS PARTICIPATION



The class is lecture-style but I ask for student participation and feedback multiple times during each session. Participation is key in establishing in-class dynamics and gauging feedbacks regarding the perception of material presented. Thus, active participation, rather than just voicing the correct answer is very important for our progress. Simple passive attendance will not count as in-class participation. Participation will be graded on one time basis at the end of the semester. In-class participation will count for 5% of individual overall grades.

IN-CLASS QUIZZES

This class has four, written in-class quizzes, administered throughout the semester. The quizzes consist of open-ended questions and are given after each corresponding topical course module/theme. The quiz should be taken within one academic hour. See class schedule for quiz dates. Quizzes comprise 20% of individual student grades.

IN-CLASS PRESENTATION

The presentations will be conducted in groups of 3-4 people. The presentation will be based on the topic your group has selected at mid-term from a list of topics that will be published on Canvas. It should consist of 5-10 slides that outline the importance of the case selection, relevance, methods and results of your research on the cases drawn from the three big topical modules of the course. The assignment instructions will be distributed via Canvas.

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER

The final research paper will be a result of your selected mid-term topic and abstract. It will be an original paper in the range of 2500 to 2700 words. It should include a description of research methods, theory, sources, and results.

REQUIRED TEXTS

These are the texts that contain the required reading for this course:

- Abrahamian, L. 2006. *Armenian Identity in a Changing World*. Costa Mesa: Mazda.
- Bouzarovski, St., Salukvadze, J., and Gentile, M., 2021. *A Socially Resilient Urban Transition? The Contested Landscapes of Apartment Building Extensions in Two Post-communist Cities*, *Urban Studies*, 48(13), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098010385158>
- Chkheidze, Maia and Gudushauri, Tinatin, 2024. *Investigating the Convergence of Linguistics and Cultural Anthropology in Decoding the Dynamics of Gender Roles: A Case Study of Georgia*, *Caucasus Journal of Social Sciences* 17(1).
- Darieva Ts., Wolfgang Kaschuba, Melanie Krebs (eds.) 2011. *Urban Spaces after Socialism: Ethnographies of Public Places in Eurasian Cities*, Campus Verlag.
- Darieva, T. (2021). Encountering Informal and Invisible Religious Diversity in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan. *New Diversities*, 23(2), 11–26. <https://doi.org/10.58002/hqn6-e350>.
- Derluguian, G. 2004. *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*. London & New York: Verso.
- Harutyun Marutyan, 2009. *Iconography of Armenian Identity*.
- Iashvili, Ia 2023. *The Diaspora Space and Social Solidarity Among Georgian Immigrant Communities Amid Global Crisis*.
- Ishkanian, Armine. 2002. *Mobile Motherhood: Armenian Women's Labor Migration in the Post-Soviet Period*, *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 11(3): 383–416.
- Kevin Tuite, 1998. *The Meaning of Hospitality in the Georgian Highlands*.

- Melkumyan, Hamlet. 2016. "Elites" Between Nationalism and Tradition: The Modernization Processes in the Yezidi Community of Armenia. In *Elites and "Elites": Transformations of Social Structures in Post-Soviet Armenia and Georgia* (ed. Y. Antonyan), Yerevan: YSU, 175-195.
- Melkumyan, Hamlet. 2018. "Informality, Politics and Mutual Support in Armenian Flea Markets." Working Paper Series on Informal Markets and Trade 1-28. <http://publikationen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/frontdoor/index/index/docId/43115>.
- Melkumyan, H. 2018. 'Informal Shrines and Social Transformations: The Murids as New Religious Mediators among Yezidis in Armenia', in *Sacred Places, Emerging Spaces: Religious Pluralism in the Post-Soviet Caucasus* (eds.) Ts. Darieva, F. Mühlfried, & K. Tuite, Berghahn Series, Space and Place (17): 177-202.
- Roth, Sascha. 2020. Politics of Representation: Housing, Family, and State in Baku. Berlin: Lit.
- Salukvadze, Joseph, 2019. *Urbanization Trends and Development of Cities in Georgia*. In book: *Cities of the South Caucasus: a view from Georgia*, 10.2307/j.ctvdf0kf6.4
- Sever, Hande. 2025. *Interview with Ruben Arevshatyan*, <https://field-journal.com/issue-28/interview-with-ruben-arevshatyan/>
- Tatarashvili, Tamta, 2022. *Patriarchy in the Absence of Men*, https://ge.boell.org/en/2022/11/09/patriarchy-absence-men?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Tohidi N., 1996, Soviet in public, Azeri in private: Gender, Islam, and Nationality in Soviet and Post-Soviet Azerbaijan, *Women's Studies International Forum*, Volume 19, Issues 1–2: 111-123. Tölölyan, Khachig, 1996. "Rethinking Diaspora(s): Stateless Power in the Transnational Moment," *Diaspora* 5(1).
- Tölölyan, Khachig / Taline Papazian interview, 2014. *Armenians in Diaspora and Armenia: Issues of Identity and Mobilization*.
- Voell, Stéphane, 2016. *Traditional Law in the Caucasus: Local Legal Practices in the Georgian Lowlands*.
- Yemelianova, G. & Broers, Laurence, 2020. *Routledge Handbook of the Caucasus*.
- Zaslavskaya, Maria and Aghajanyan, Viktor, 2022. *Gender Attitudes Across Generations in Contemporary Armenian Society (Comparative Analysis)*, *Journal of Sociology* 13(2) <https://doi.org/10.46991/BYSU:F/2022.13.2.048>
- Zürcher, Christoph, 2007. *The Post-Soviet Wars: Rebellion, Ethnic Conflict, and Nationhood in the Caucasus*. New York and London: New York University.

Additional and optional reading, when necessary, will be uploaded to Canvas to corresponding lecture units.

COURSE CONTENT

Class	Topic of Lecture/Discussion	Required Reading	Date	Assignment
1.	Introduction to the course and syllabus distribution.	Distribution of syllabus, discussion about the aims and the rules of the course		
2.	Place, peoples and culture	Yemelianova G. & Broers Laurence, 2020, Routledge Handbook of the Caucasus: 19-68		
3.	Framework for thinking about Naming as Nation Building	Abrahamian, L. (2006). Armenian Identity in a Changing		

		World. Costa Mesa: Mazda: 27-36		
4.	Language and Identity	Abrahamian, L. (2006). Armenian Identity in a Changing World. Costa Mesa: Mazda: 65-72		
5.	Religion and Identity: Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan	Yemelianova G. & Broers Laurence, 2020, Routledge Handbook of the Caucasus: 52-68; Abrahamian, L. (2006). Armenian Identity in a Changing World. Costa Mesa: Mazda: 111-133 Darieva, T. (2021). Encountering Informal and Invisible Religious Diversity in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan. <i>New Diversities</i> , 23(2), 11–26. https://doi.org/10.58002/hqn6-e350 Roth, Sascha. 2020. Politics of Representation: Housing, Family, and State in Baku. Berlin: Lit.		
6.	Traditions in transition and everyday life	Abrahamian, L. (2006). Armenian Identity in a Changing World. Costa Mesa: Mazda: 137-161		
7.	Rethinking Soviet and post-soviet identities: Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan	Derluguian, G. 2004. Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus. London & New York: Verso; Melkumyan, Hamlet. 2018. "Informality, Politics and Mutual Support in Armenian Flea Markets." Working Paper Series on Informal Markets and Trade 1-28. Roth, Sascha. 2020. Politics of Representation: Housing, Family, and State in Baku. Berlin: Lit.		
8.	Utopia and collapse: Post-soviet transitions in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan	Yemelianova G. & Broers Laurence, 2020, Routledge Handbook of the Caucasus. 416-420 Roth, Sascha. 2020. Politics of Representation: Housing,		

		Family, and State in Baku. Berlin: Lit.		
9.	Armenia and Georgia from revolution to revolution: new civic identities via Visual art	Abrahamian, L. 2006. Armenian Identity in a Changing World. Costa Mesa: Mazda. 217-235. Arevik Martirosyan, documentary.		
10.	The Concept of “Culture” and Regional Diversity	Film by S. Parajanov: <i>The Color of Pomegranates</i> . 1969 Kurban Said: Ali and Nino. 1937		
11.	MIDTERM EXAM			
12.	Highland–lowland contrasts; kinship and community	Voell Stéphane, 2016. Traditional Law in the Caucasus: Local Legal Practices in the Georgian Lowlands.		
13.	Material and Visual Culture	Field assignment: observe a local cultural site		
14.	Diaspora, Migration, and Mobility	Tölölyan, Khachig. 1996 “Rethinking Diaspora(s): Stateless Power in the Transnational Moment.” <i>Diaspora</i> 5(1).		
15.	Transnational connections and cultural remittances	Khachig Tölölyan / Taline Papazian interview, 2014. Armenians in Diaspora and Armenia: Issues of Identity and Mobilization		
16.	Armenian and Georgian diasporas worldwide	Iashvili Ia 2023. The Diaspora Space and Social Solidarity Among Georgian Immigrant Communities Amid Global Crisis.		
17.	Kinship and nation-building	Abrahamian, L. 2006. Armenian Identity in a Changing World. Costa Mesa: Mazda. 145-148. Roth, Sascha. 2020. Politics of Representation: Housing, Family, and State in Baku. Berlin: Lit.		
18.	Urban Anthropology of the Caucasus	Bouzarovski St, Salukvadze J., and Gentile M., 2021, A Socially Resilient Urban Transition? The Contested Landscapes of Apartment Building Extensions in Two		

		Post-communist Cities, <u>48 (13)</u> , <u>Urban Studies</u> https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098010385158		
19.	Soviet and post-Soviet Yerevan, Tbilisi and Baku	Sever Hande, Interview with Ruben Arevshatyan, https://field-journal.com/issue-28/interview-with-ruben-arevshatyan/ , 22.10.2025		
20.	Soviet and post-Soviet Yerevan, Tbilisi and Baku	Salukvadze Joseph, 2019. Urbanization Trends and Development of Cities in Georgia , In book: Cities of the South Caucasus: a view from Georgia, 10.2307/j.ctvdf0kf6.4 Darieva Ts., Wolfgang Kaschuba, Melanie Krebs (eds.) 2011. <i>Urban Spaces after Socialism: Ethnographies of Public Places in Eurasian Cities</i> , Campus Verlag. Roth, Sascha. 2020. Politics of Representation: Housing, Family, and State in Baku. Berlin: Lit.		
21.	Globalization, "Post-Coloniality"	Discussion: New colonialism		
22.	MIDTERM EXAM			
23.	Art, Protest, and Political Expression in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia	Guest talk and Anthology of Armenian Performance Art https://arefoundation.com/en/anthology-performance-art , 22.10.2025		
24.	Gender and Identity in Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan	Tatarashvili Tamta, 2022. Patriarchy in the Absence of Men, https://ge.boell.org/en/2022/11/09/patriarchy-absence-men?utm_source=chatgpt.com ; Chkheidze Maia and Gudushauri, Tinatin, 2024, Investigating the Convergence of Linguistics and Cultural		

		Anthropology in Decoding the Dynamics of Gender Roles: A Case Study of Georgia, Caucasus Journal of Social Sciences 17 (1). Zaslavskaya Maria and Aghajanyan Viktor, 2022, Gender Attitudes Across Generations in Contemporary Armenian Society (Comparative Analysis), Journal of Sociology 13(2) https://doi.org/10.46991/BYSU:F/2022.13.2.048; Ishkanian, Armine. 2002. "Mobile Motherhood: Armenian Women's Labor Migration in the Post-Soviet Period." <i>Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies</i> 11, no. 3: 383–416 Tohidi N., 1996, Soviet in public, Azeri in private: Gender, Islam, and nationality in Soviet and post-Soviet Azerbaijan, Women's Studies International Forum, Volume 19, Issues 1–2: 111-123.		
25.	Folk Revival, Music, and Identity: Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia	Visual studies or Guest lecture: Ethnomusicology of the Caucasus		
26.	Folk Revival, Music, and Identity: Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan	Visual studies or Guest lecture: Ethnomusicology of the Caucasus		
27.	Ethnic Minorities and New Nation Building in Caucasus: Yezidies	Melkumyan, H. 'Informal Shrines and Social Transformations: The Murids as New Religious Mediators among Yezidis in Armenia', in <i>Sacred Places, Emerging Spaces: Religious Pluralism in the Post-Soviet Caucasus</i>, (eds.) Ts. Darieva, F. Mühlfried, & K. Tuite, <i>Berghahn Series, Space and Place</i> 2018 (17): 177-202; "Elites" Between Nationalism and Tradition: The Modernization Processes in the		

		Yezidi Community of Armenia. In Elites and “Elites”: Transformations of Social Structures in Post-Soviet Armenia and Georgia (ed. Y. Antonyan), Yerevan: YSU, 2016, pp. 175-195.		
28.	Ethnic Minorities and New Nation Building in Caucasus: Yezidies	Fieldwork		
29.	Ethnic Minorities and New identities in Caucasus: Russian Molokans	Fieldwork and lecture		
30.	Final EXAM			