

For Immediate Release:



**Armenian Studies Program
California State University, Fresno**

**Kazan Visiting Professor Dr. Myrna Douzjian to Present Series on
“The Armenian Genocide in Film: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives”**

Dr. Myrna Douzjian (UCLA), the 11th Henry K. Khanzadian Kazan Visiting Professor of Armenian Studies at California State University, Fresno, will hold three illustrated public lectures on the theme “The Armenian Genocide in Film: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives” in the Spring 2015 semester.

The first lecture in the series, “The Genocide as Allegory in Serge Avedikian’s *Chienne d’Histoire*” will take place at 7:30PM on Wednesday, February 11, in the University Business Center, Alice Peters Auditorium, Room 191, on the Fresno State campus. An hors d’oeuvres reception will take place from 6:30 to 7:30PM in the University Business Center Gallery, just prior to the lecture.

Chienne d’Histoire is a short animation that makes no mention of the Armenian Genocide. Instead, the film depicts the eradication of stray dogs in the city of Constantinople in 1910. Read allegorically, however, the film represents the Genocide of the Armenians. Interpreted in this way, the film highlights an important question, seldom asked, that straddles the line between history and fiction: What does it mean to read one fictionalized history as a metaphor for another moment in history? This lecture will argue that by linking two historical moments Avedikian’s film about the eradication of dogs provides a new lens with which to view the Genocide—one that sees history as a chain of fragments that speak to, and of, one another. In doing so, the film succeeds in reminding viewers that they can never really know the Catastrophe.

Lecture II in the series, on Thursday, March 19, will feature Atom Egoyan’s *Ararat: Traumatic Histories and Transnational Identities*.

Lecture III in the series, on Wednesday, April 8, will be on “Reinventing the Genocide Documentary: *Memories Without Borders* and *Solemnity*.”

History as a discipline has documented the facts of the Armenian Genocide through eyewitness and survivor accounts and archival research. The teleological grand narrative that has emerged proves the truth of the Genocide through facts and evidence. In

response to the Turkish government's denialism, Genocide survivors, their progeny, and Armenian communities in the diaspora have privileged historiographical scholarship and cultural production that demonstrates the reality of the Event. Comparatively speaking, fictional narratives that do not belong to historically grounded subgenres, such as biography, memoir, and documentary, have garnered less scholarly and popular interest. This dynamic is a symptom of the tension between fiction and history: fiction questions history's ability to tell the truth in its entirety and history questions the scientific validity of artistic representation.

This series of lectures explores three films and an audiovisual art installation in the context of the tension between fiction and history. The lectures will demonstrate that these texts, though completely different in terms subgenre, complicate notions about narrativizing the Armenian Genocide. Through a refusal to depict the events factually, these works approach the Genocide most accurately. That is to say, because they do not attempt to represent the un---representable, they effectively gesture toward the unnaturalness and unquantifiability of the Genocide. Taken together, the lectures assert that the filmic arts have a serious role to play in our understanding of the Genocide, one that goes beyond the fetishization of history.

Myrna Douzjian earned her Ph.D. in comparative literature from the University of California, Los Angeles. Her research interests include postmodernism; the Theater of the Absurd; critical approaches to the study of world literature; and post-Soviet Armenian and Russian cultural production. Dr. Douzjian has published translations of contemporary Armenian poetry and drama, and she regularly contributes articles dealing with diaspora Armenian film and culture to the syndicated column, *Critics' Forum*. Her chapter on the politics of literary publication in twentieth-century Armenia appeared in the volume *Armenian Philology in the Modern Era: From Manuscript to Digital Text* (2014). Dr. Douzjian has taught world literature and philosophical thought in the Intellectual Heritage Program at Temple University in Philadelphia, and she currently teaches comparative literature courses at UCLA.

The lectures and reception are free and open to the public. Free parking is available, with a parking code available through the Armenian Studies Program office, after 7:00PM at Fresno State Lots P5 and P6, near the University Business Center.

For more information about the lecture please contact the Armenian Studies Program at 278-2669, or visit our website at www.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies.