

KEYMAN MODERN TURKISH STUDIES PROGRAM

2024- 2025 Newsletter



A Note from the Director

Dear Friends,

Our campus is awash in the glorious colors of fall as the new academic year begins. Students, faculty, and other members of our extended academic community are excited as ever at the prospect of new opportunities for learning, teaching, exchange of ideas, and intellectual growth. However, there is also a palpable sense of foreboding as universities here in the US, in Turkey, and in other countries experiencing the erosion of democratic norms and laws are under existential threat. Such circumstances accentuate the significance of our mission as an endowed academic program, shielded from adversity and allowed to continue its work in service to independent scholarship. Our community is grateful for the continued support of the Keyman family and other donors, and the Buffett Institute's leadership for allowing us to weather these challenges.

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**A NOTE FROM THE
DIRECTOR**

OUR PEOPLE

EVENTS

STAY CONNECTED

2024-25 was another one full of accomplishments for our community. You will find samples of our activities in the following pages, but there are a few I would like to highlight: our program hosted the inaugural conference of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association on October 25-27. The three-day event featured more than seventy presenters in themed panels, roundtables and two special tribute sessions. The conference brought together an exceptionally diverse range of scholars, from graduate students to emeriti with specializations covering a geography from Eastern Europe to the Arabian Peninsula, from medieval times to the current day. It was a resounding success that consolidated the reputation of our program as the field's premier in North America.

Our postdoctoral fellow Önder Akgül started a new themed talk series on "Histories and Trajectories of Capital in Turkey" in a hybrid online and in person format. The first podcast based on the series will be available on our website and other platforms later this month.

We were also part of the team that convened this year's CEST (Consortium for European Symposia on Turkey) Summer School for junior scholars at Turin University. Our outgoing postdoctoral fellow Kenan Behzat Sharpe, who had conceived the school's theme on "culture wars" also delivered its first and last lectures, and our incoming postdoctoral fellow Mert Koçak was one of the junior members. We are very excited to welcome Mert as the newest member of our community. It is difficult to imagine the Keyman MTS program without Kenan, whose creative energy not only widened our intellectual breadth but also strengthened our camaraderie. Fortunately, he will still be with us in a different capacity, as the founder of Hengame, (meaning "noise" or "cacophony" in Turkish), a bilingual digital platform in English and Turkish featuring writing and thinking on contemporary music in Turkey, bringing together scholars, journalists, and music critics. Kenan created this new project with the belief that knowledge about a country's music provides invaluable insight into its cultural, economic, political, and social dynamics. Scheduled for launch later this year, Hengame will be sponsored and digitally hosted by the Keyman MTS program. Please follow us on our socials and register for announcements on our many exciting new events.

Wishing you a wonderful academic year,

İPEK KOCAÖMER YOSMAOĞLU
Director



2025-2027 POSTDOC MERT KOÇAK, DIRECTOR İPEK YOSMAOĞLU, AND
2023-2025 POSTDOC KENAN SHARPE

OUR PEOPLE

Administration

İpek Kocaömer Yosmaoğlu

KMTS Director,

OTSA Director,

Crown Chair in Middle East Studies

Associate Professor, Department of History

Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences

[Link to Bio](#)



Alicen Collum

Program Coordinator



Postdoctoral Fellows



Önder Eren Akgül,

2024-2026 Keyman Postdoctoral Fellow

[Link to Bio](#)



Mert Koçak,

2025-2027 Keyman Postdoctoral Fellow

[Link to Bio](#)

Faculty Board

Thadeus Dowad

Assistant Professor of
Art History
thadeus.dowad@northwestern.edu
[Link to Bio](#)



Jeff Eden

Assistant Professor, Department of
History
[Link to Bio](#)



Bihter Esener

College Fellow of Medieval Mediterranean
and Islamic Art in the Department of Art
History
[Link to Bio](#)



Seda Öğrenci

Professor in the Department of Electrical
and Computer Engineering and the
Department of Computer Science

[Link to Bio](#)



Wendy Pearlman

Professor of Political Science

[Link to Bio](#)



Özge Samancı

Associate Professor in the School of
Communication

[Link to Bio](#)



Shayna Silverstein

Associate Professor of Performance
Studies

[Link to Bio](#)



Lauren Stokes

Associate Professor of History

[Link to Bio](#)



Oya Topçuoğlu

Associate Professor of Instruction in the
Middle East and North African
Languages Program

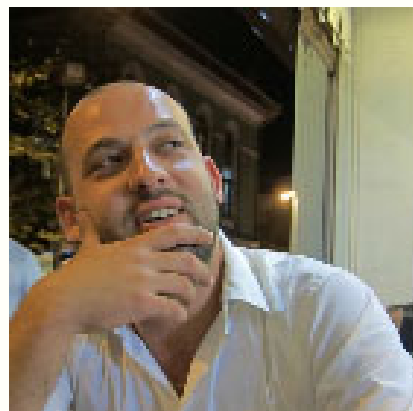
[Link to Bio](#)



Emrah Yıldız

Associate Professor of Anthropology

[Link to Bio](#)



Visiting Scholars



Roberto Mazza

Visiting Scholar at the
Roberta Buffett Institute for Global Affairs
[Link to Bio](#)



Feyza Burak-Adli

Visiting Scholar at the
Roberta Buffett Institute for Global Affairs
[Link to Bio](#)

Graduate Students

- **Ubeydullah Ademi**, Political Science
- **Elif Buyukakbas**, Sociology
- **Esra Çimencioğlu**, Radio, Television, Film
- **Ulaş Erdoğan**, Political Science
- **Ali Murat Gali**, Performance Studies
- **Hevi Gökdemir**, Political Science
- **Elizabeth Howell**, History
- **Şeyma Kabaoğlu**, Anthropology
- **Özge Karagöz**, Art History
- **İdil Özkan**, Anthropology

News and Updates

- In the run-up to the academic year, KMTS Faculty Board Member Thadeus Dowad led a group of rising second-year graduate students on a two-week trip to Istanbul as part of the Art History Department's annual summer seminar, along with KMTS Director Prof. İpek K. Yosmaoğlu. Their jam-packed itinerary included visits to historical sites across the city, from Byzantine monasteries and Ottoman palaces to modern art museums and galleries. They also met with local scholars, curators, and artists who shed light on the city's past and present through collaborative seminars, roundtable discussions, and artist studio visits. On his return to Chicago, Dowad was appointed the Crown Junior Chair in Middle East Studies and joined the core faculty of Northwestern's Middle East & North African Studies Program. In November, Dowad delivered a lecture related to his ongoing book project, *The Draftsman's Empire: Art & the French Occupation of Egypt*, at Bryn Mawr College's Colloquium in Visual Culture. In April, Dowad shared sections of his book project with the Newberry Library's Eighteenth-Century Seminar, with Professor Emerita Holly Clayson as his generous respondent. The following month, the exhibition *The First Homosexuals: The Birth of a New Identity, 1869-1939*, to which Dowad served as a consultant, opened at Chicago's Wrightwood 659 to rave reviews. His essay tracing the impact of sexological discourse on the art of the Middle East and North Africa from the 18th century to the start of World War II appeared in the accompanying catalogue.
- *Evil Eyes Sea* (Uncivilized Books, 2024), written by KMTS Faculty Board member Özge Samancı was named one of *The Guardian's* best graphic novels of 2024, American Library Association's best graphic novels for adults, and won the 2025 Cartoonist Studio Prize. It is slated for translation into two languages (French and German). Özge gave book and artist talks at Stanford University and Yale University. In September 2025, France's ARTE TV channel filmed a documentary about her graphic novels for the program *Invitation au voyage*. Ragdale selected Özge as one of six fellows for the Human Artist Residency in collaboration with Mellon Foundation, where she will continue expanding *AI Bytes Ocean* and *Terra*, exploring the relationship between artificial intelligence and social justice. Supported by grants from the Buffett Institute, Ozge is currently developing this project. Özge's interactive art installation *You Are the Ocean* will be on view for eight months at the Science Gallery in Monterrey, Mexico, from 2025 to 2026.
- 2023-2025 KMTS Postdoctoral Fellow Kenan Sharpe's article "When 'Ottoman' Was an Insult: Turkish Modernist Poets and their Critics" was published in the journal *Modernism/modernity*. He organized a panel on culture wars in contemporary Turkey for the annual meeting of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association (OTSA). He was invited as a faculty presenter to the Consortium for European Symposia on Turkey (CEST) in Torino, Italy where he lectured on the concept of culture war in Turkish and world politics and led a seminar on moments of conflict in Turkish popular music. As his time at Northwestern came to an end, Kenan accepted a position in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Sabancı University, where he is now an assistant professor. From Istanbul, he will work as the chief editor of the new Keyman MTS project *Hengame: A Journal of Music and Politics in Contemporary Turkey*.
- KMTS Visiting Scholar Roberto Mazza has submitted an article for publication titled "The Last Crusade and the First Zionists: Religion, Empire and the Making of Modern Palestine"
- KMTS Faculty Board Member Emrah Yıldız received tenure. Congratulations Emrah!

- KMTS Visiting Scholar Feyza Burak-Aldi was invited to attend an international workshop in Fall 2024 in Prato, Italy. “Afterlives of Sufism in Republican Turkey” Workshop: Comparative Perspectives on Islam and Muslim Lives in Indonesia and Turkey, Monash University, Prato, Italy. (November 28-29). PUBLICATION IN FALL 2024: She published last fall a journal article., an editorial essay for a special issue, and a book chapter. ARTICLE: Burak-Adli, Feyza. 2024. “Agent of Change or Guardian of Tradition: Sufism, Gender, and Nationalism in Cold War Turkey.” Culture and Religion. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14755610.2024.2420982> EDITORIAL: Burak-Adli, Feyza, Shobhana M. Xavier, and Francesco Piraino. 2024. “Editorial: Genderless Souls?: Sufi Women in Sociopolitical Contexts.” Special Issue. Culture and Religion. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14755610.2024.2426343> BOOK CHAPTER: Burak-Adli, Feyza. (22 Oct 2024). “Turkish Islamic Feminism.” In Oxford Handbook of Religion in Turkey. Ed. by. Fabio Vicini, Caroline Tee, and Philip Dorroll. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197624883.013.31>. INVITED TALKS Spring 2025: She gave three talks on her IJMES article that was also published last year in 2024: “The Portrait of an Alla Franca Shaykh: Sufism, Modernity, and Class in Turkey,” MENA Monday Talk Series, MENA & Keyman Modern Turkish Studies, Northwestern University. (April 28) “The Portrait of an Alla Franca Shaykh: Sufism, Modernity, and Class in Turkey,” W’OTSaP Friday Lecture Series: Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association (March 21) and “The Portrait of an Alla Franca Shaykh: Sufism, Modernity, and Class in Turkey,” Middle East History and Theory (MEHAT) Workshop, University of Chicago. (February 27).
- KMTS Faculty Board Member Shayna Silverstein's book, *Fraught Balance: The Embodied Politics of Dabke Dance Music in Syria*, won the de la Torre Bueno® First Book Award from the Dance Studies Association, and the Joann Kealiinohomoku Award from the Society for Ethnomusicology's section for Dance, Movement, and Gesture. Her book received an Honorable Mention for the 2025 Book Prize from the International Council for Traditions of Music and Dance. *Fraught Balance* has also been featured on several platforms (Borderlines and New Books Network) and is recommended by The Markaz Review on several of its top reading lists. Shayna convened a summer intensive seminar for graduate students along the theme of "On Time: Intensities, Socialities, and Temporalities across Studies of Performance." She is also contributing a chapter on the cultural history of dabke in Chicago for the forthcoming collection, *Dancing on the Third Coast: Chicago Dance Histories*, edited by Susan Manning and Lizzie Leopold.



ART HISTORY STUDENTS IN ISTANBUL

- KMTS Faculty Board Member Wendy Pearlman's 2024 book, *The Home I Worked to Make: Voices from the New Syrian Diaspora*, was named a finalist for the 2025 Dayton Literary Peace Prize. During the 2024-25 academic year, she gave talks on the book in Denmark, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States, in addition to seven talks at universities in Turkey. In addition to her ongoing work as Co-Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Perspectives on Politics*, Wendy published two academic essays related to Syria's post-Assad politics: "Why Syria's Civil Society is the Key" (co-authored with Northwestern alumnus Rana Khoury, *Journal of Democracy*) and "Genocide in Syria, Gaza, and Beyond: An interview with Yassin al-Haj Saleh" (*Journal of Genocide Research*).
- KMTS Faculty Board Member Oya Topçuoğlu organized a special presentation in February by Ayhan Hurlagu, a New York-based actor who founded the US Karagoz Theater Company in 2017, which is the first traditional Turkish Theater in the United States. After enjoying a lively show featuring Karagöz and Hacivat, among other characters, Ayhan Hurlagu invited students and faculty to go behind the stage to learn more about building the puppets and about the difficulties for one actor to make different characters come alive in the play through movement, different voices, and music. Also in February, students in her 1st-year Turkish (111-2) course participated in the Herskovitz Library student exhibit celebrating the accomplishments and contributions of Africans and People of African Descent Across Languages. The event was co-organized by CLI. Six students from the Turkish Program participated with posters highlighting various Afro-Turks: sculptor, Kuzgun Acar; Safiye Ayla, the first Turkish woman to perform on stage; Ahmet Ali Çelikten, the first black pilot in history; Turkey's first professional soccer player, Vahap Özaltay; and choreographer and dancer, Sait Sökmen.



BEHIND THE SCENES WITH AYHAN HURLAGU



STUDENT EXHIBITS

EVENTS

ŞARIK TARA MEMORIAL LECTURE:
"THE AFTERLIFE OF OTTOMAN EUROPE:
MUSLIMS IN HABSBURG BOSNIA
HERZEGOVINA"
OCTOBER 2, 2024

Featuring Leyla Amzi-Erdogdular,
Rutgers University, Newark



BOOK LAUNCH EVENT:
ZAINAB'S TRAFFIC: MOVING SAINTS,
SELVES, AND OTHERS ACROSS BORDERS
OCTOBER 30, 2024

Organized by Anthropology & MENA Studies,
featuring KMTS Faculty Board Member Emrah Yildiz

NEW DIRECTIONS | ISLAND & EMPIRE:
HOW CIVIL WAR IN CRETE MOBILIZED
THE OTTOMAN WORLD
JANUARY 13, 2025

Organized by MENA Studies,
featuring Uğur Zekeriya Peçe, Lehigh University



**ONLINE CENSORSHIP AS A TOOL OF FAILED
GOVERNMENTALITY IN TURKEY**
MARCH 5, 2025

Featuring MESA Global Academy and Dr. Begum
Burak



**MESA
Global Academy**



**OTTOMAN JEWRY: LEADERSHIP, CHARITY,
AND LITERACY –
A CONVERSATION WITH AUTHOR YARON
AYALON AND ORIT BASHKIN**
APRIL 9, 2025

Co-organized by The Crown Family Center for Jewish and
Israel Studies

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN TURKEY?
APRIL 10, 2025

Featuring Karabekir Akkoyunlu,
SOAS University of London
and Şebnem Gümüşcü, Middlebury College



**AN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY OF THE
LATE OTTOMAN FRONTIER**
APRIL 16, 2025

Featuring Dr. Chris Gratien, University of Virginia
co-sponsored by MENA Studies and SHC Program



**THE GOVERNMENT AGAINST THE UNIVERSITY: REPORTS FROM
COLOMBIA, HUNGARY, POLAND & TURKEY**
APRIL 25, 2025

Organized by the Roberta Buffett Institute for Global Affairs, featuring István Rév of Central European University in Hungary and Austria, Andrzej Rychard of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Can Candan of Boğaziçi University in Turkey and Johanna Mick Clausen of the Universidad de Los Andes in Colombia and moderated by Alexander Cooley of Columbia University.



**HOW TO WRITE A DEMOCRATIC HISTORY
OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE?**
APRIL 30, 2025

Featuring Ali Yaycioglu, Stanford University

**THE LION AND THE NIGHTINGALE:
THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT AGAINST
TURKEY'S ARTISTIC COMMUNITIES**
MAY 14, 2025

Featuring Kaya Genç



Talk Series:

Histories and Trajectories of Capital in Turkey:

This series will explore trajectories of capital in the Late Ottoman Empire and contemporary Turkey. We will hear from scholars of capitalism from across different disciplines, highlighting recent research grounded in extensive fieldwork within archives and/or sites of production and social reproduction. By offering interdisciplinary and global perspectives, the series will relate the histories and trajectories of capital to the everyday lives, cultures, and labor of a variety of economic communities, ultimately addressing the past and present of capitalism in Turkey.

The Order of Dispossession: Crisis and the Making of Global Capital in the Late Ottoman Empire

May 7, 2025

Featuring KMTS Postdoctoral Fellow, Önder Eren Akgül



Extractivism Across Production and Social Reproduction: Classes of Labour in Rural Turkey

May 21, 2025

Featuring Coşku Çelik, Kadir Has University



2024 OTSA Annual Conference

Northwestern University
October 25-27, 2024

The Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association (OTSA) held its first annual conference at Northwestern University, from October 25 – 27, 2024. The organization accepted panel proposals from any discipline in the humanities and the social sciences on themes dedicated to the study of the Ottoman Empire and modern/contemporary Turkey, particularly proposals that addressed the state of the field of Ottoman and Turkish Studies, broadly construed.

Some of those panel titles included:

- Ottoman Diasporas in the Americas
- Cultural Hegemony in Turkey's Domestic Politics
- Who is Afraid of the Balkans?
- Memory after a Decade of War
- Interwar Turkey in Global Context
- Beyond the Madrasa: Sites of Science and Religion in Ottoman History



PRESIDENT İPEK YOSMAOĞLU



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JAMES RYAN

2025 Keyman Article Workshop

The Keyman Modern Turkish Studies Program at Northwestern University's Buffett Institute of Global Affairs continued its series of virtual workshops to support early career scholars preparing an article for publication by a peer-reviewed journal. We invited applications from junior scholars working in all branches of the Social Sciences and Humanities on themes related to Turkey and its diasporas. This year we had a cohort of 6 authors. We look forward to hearing news about their publications.

We would like to thank the following scholars who shared their expertise in an exceptional spirit of generosity, this workshop series would not have been possible without their commitment.

- **Aytek Soner Alpan**
- **Marilyn Booth**
- **Kate Dannies**
- **Joanne Nucho**
- **Martin Stokes**

And thank you to our 2025 participants! We look forward to hearing news about their publications.

- **Pinar Odabasi**
- **Eyup Ozkan**
- **Anoush Suni**
- **Berkay Uluç**
- **Sophia Zervas**



**FACULTY BOARD MEMBER THADEUS DOWAD
IN ISTANBUL**

CEST Summer School

University of Turin

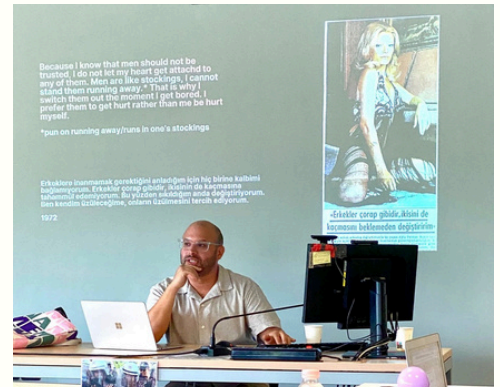
August 24-31, 2025

Turkey's Culture Wars – Culture, Politics, and Society Under Autocratization

The 2025 CEST Summer School explored the politics of culture wars—deep-seated ideological conflicts over values, identity, and social norms that divide societies along political, religious, or cultural lines. Over an intense week of lectures, professionalization workshops, and feedback sessions, fourteen students and the same number of professors explored the construction and impact of authoritarian cultural policies. Our postdoctoral fellow, and recently appointed assistant professor of cultural studies at Sabancı University, Kenan Sharpe delivered the first and the last lectures of the school. This year's postdoctoral fellow was among the students who participated in this memorable experience of learning, networking, and professional development. The Keyman Program's reception at the historical grounds of Armida, the Turin Rowing Society, on the banks of the Po River was a resounding success with all the attendees.



GROUP PHOTO OF ATTENDEES



2023-2025 POSTDOC KENAN SHARPE



CO-ORGANIZERS İPEK YOSMAOĞLU,
CHIARA MARITATO,
KEREM ÖKTEM,
AND ANDREA FELLINE

STAY CONNECTED

PROVIDING AN INTERDISCIPLINARY UNDERSTANDING OF CONTEMPORARY TURKEY IN CONNECTION WITH GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Keyman Modern Turkish Studies Program was founded in 2005 at Northwestern University's Buffett Institute for Global Affairs, with a generous gift from Melih and Zeynep Keyman, and with continued essential support from additional donors. The Program promotes intellectual dialogue and scholarship to provide a deeper, interdisciplinary and critical understanding of contemporary Turkey in connection with global social processes, problems or conflicts.

PROGRAM ACTIVITY:

- Organizes seminars and conferences on critical issues
- Funds research by Northwestern faculty, graduate and undergraduate students
- Offers Postdoctoral Fellowship, Visiting Professor and Visiting Scholar programs
- Supports undergraduate teaching on topics related to Turkey
- Facilitates study abroad and exchange programs in Turkey
- Funds the university library's acquisitions in the area of modern Turkish studies

The Keyman Modern Turkish Studies Program is situated within the Roberta Buffett Institute for Global Affairs, allowing for important collaborations with a broad pool of global experts and practitioners on a range of topics.

CONTACT US:

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