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**Armenian Genocide Scholar Elyse Semerdjian to hold the
Stephen and Marian Mugar and Robert Aram and Marianne Kaloosdian'52 Chair**

Through the generosity of the Kaloosdian and Mugar families, Clark University established the first-ever endowed Chair in Modern Armenian History and Armenian Genocide Studies. This innovative professorship honors Stephen and Marian Mugar, as well as Clark alumnus Robert Aram Kaloosdian'52 and his wife Marianne. The appointment of Elyse Semerdjian as the next Kaloosdian Mugar Professor represents a fresh chapter in the development of Armenian Genocide Studies at Clark University and the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies.

Semerdjian will begin in fall 2024 following a year-long fellowship at the University of Erfurt's Max Weber Kolleg as part of an ongoing study, *Religion and Urbanity: Reciprocal Formations*. As part a research group titled "Group Formations and Fragmentations," she will document the co-spatiality between Aleppo's Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities in order to better understand how multi-religious communities lived together and, ultimately, fell apart in the modern era. Semerdjian's study will cover the formation of the Christian and Jewish quarters of the city of Aleppo, religious segregation in Aleppo's confessional cemeteries, and intercommunal relations in public spaces with an aim of exploring group identity, sectarian tensions, and urbicide during the decade-long Syrian War. This research program will form the core research for two book projects she is currently developing.

Currently a Professor of Islamic World/Middle Eastern History and Chair of the History Department at Whitman College (Walla Walla, WA), Semerdjian, teaches a broad range of courses on gender, sexuality, social history, culture, and politics of the Middle East. A specialist in the history of the Ottoman Empire and Syria, she has published on gender, law, violence, and Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. She published *"Off the Straight Path": Illicit Sex, Law, and Community in Ottoman*

Aleppo (Syracuse University Press) in 2008 and her next book project, *Remnants: Embodied Archives of the Armenian Genocide* (Stanford University Press) is forthcoming in 2023.

Semerdjian currently serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, the *Journal for the Society of Armenian Studies*, and she recently finished her term as book review editor for the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. A two-time Fulbright scholarship awardee, her research is primarily focused on Syria, the social history of Aleppo's Armenian community, and gender and the Armenian Genocide. In the Spring of 2013, she was awarded the Dumanian Visiting Professorship in Armenian Studies in the Department of Near Eastern Cultures and Languages at the University of Chicago. Her article "Naked Anxiety: Bathhouses, Nudity, and Muslim/non-Muslim Relations in Eighteenth-Century Aleppo," published in the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, won the Syrian Studies Association Best Article Prize in 2014. She was awarded a fellowship at Cornell University Society for the Humanities in 2016-2017 to support research on "Skin" for her forthcoming book *Remnants*. She recently received a German Research Grant with the "Religion and Urbanity" Research Group at University of Erfurt, Germany to write *Aleppo: An Urban Biography*, an inclusive pre- and post-war urban history of the city's Muslim and non-Muslim inhabitants.

In 2002, the Kaloosdian Mugar Chair was inaugurated in the History Department with its holder serving as a constituent member of the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies. Taner Akçam joined Clark University as Kaloosdian Mugar Professor in fall 2008. The first scholar of Turkish origin to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide and to conduct groundbreaking research on this topic, Akçam spent 14 years strengthening the program through his innovative research, outstanding publication record, and strong commitment to training students. With his departure, Semerdjian is well prepared to advance the Strassler Center's commitment to mentoring Ph.D. students in Armenian Genocide Studies. Under her leadership, our mandate will remain strong: to train graduate students, host conferences with leading scholars, and advance significant research on the Armenian Genocide.