



Brandeis
UNIVERSITY

Annual Report 2023-2024

**The Interdisciplinary Minor in
Creativity, the Arts, and Social
Transformation (CAST)**

Compiled by Armine Avetisyan,
CAST Administrator



Overview:

1

Contribution to
Diversity, Equity, and
inclusion at Brandeis

2

Courses

3

Affiliated Faculty
and Staff

4

Faculty and Staff
Achievements

5

Student News

6

Capstone
Projects

7

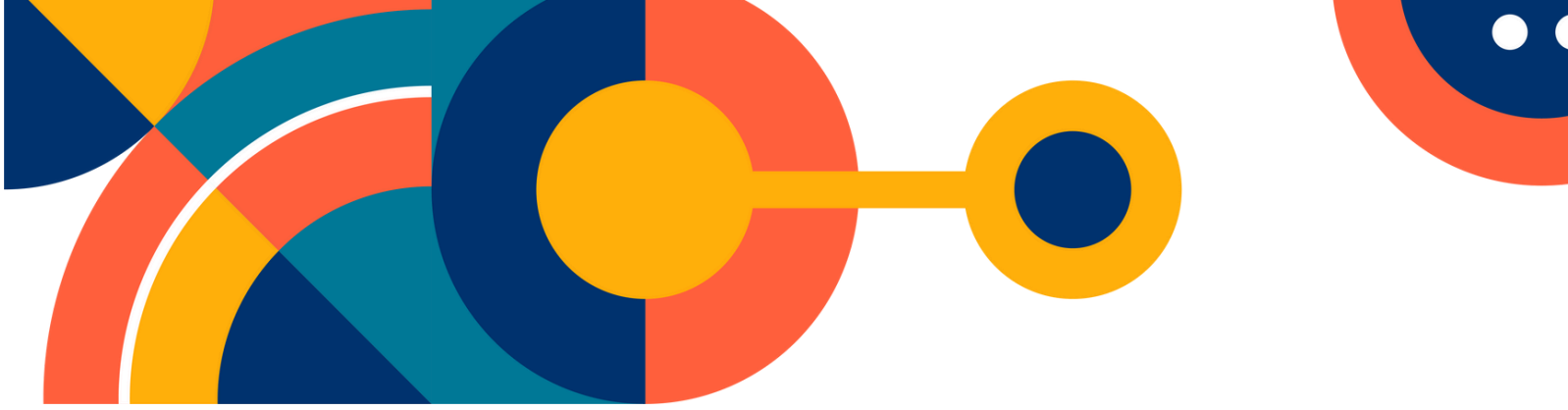
Visiting Artists in the
Classroom

8

Event



**The Interdisciplinary
Minor in Creativity,
the Arts, and Social
Transformation**



The students, faculty, and staff of the Interdisciplinary Minor in Creativity, the Arts, and Social Transformation (CAST) are enormously appreciative of the contributions of Elaine Reuben '63 whose support has made possible many of the activities described in this annual report.

Many thanks also to past supporters: Ammad Bahalim, '04, for his visionary support of CAST 170a: Documenting Immigrant Experiences, Amy Merrill '68, Max and Sunny Howard Memorial Foundation, with the inspiration of Naomi Sinnreich P'13; Louis D. Brandeis Legacy Fund for Social Justice for its support of Let's Make a Better World: Stories and Songs by Jane Sapp, and video podcasts related to the movement for racial justice and the imperatives to vote; and the development of an archive in the Brandeis Library.





Waters Breathe, Too: An Anthology

Highlight

An exploration of aspects of humanity's relationship with particular bodies of water across the globe, this mural was created by students in the Fall 2023 Introduction to Creativity, the Arts and Social Transformation course, under the guidance of renowned Argentinian artist and human rights activist and scholar Claudia Bernardi, a co-founder of the arts and human right project **Walls of Hope**. Students interviewed individuals in or from more than ten countries about their relationship with water, and about what's at stake if we don't address threats to water stemming from the climate crisis.

Students also created:

- [Poems and Prose for Waters Breathe, Too: An Anthology](#)
- [Photo Essay: Waters Breathe, Too: An Anthology](#)
- [Video: Behind-the-scenes](#)
- [Resources for learning and action](#)





1. Contribution to DEI at Brandeis

All CAST-designated courses prioritize the inclusion of materials (reading and audio-visual) from diverse sources and perspectives. Our guest teachers (and the performances and exhibitions we see) invariably also come from and/or represent a broad range of cultural and geographical experiences, settings, and viewpoints.





2. CAST Courses

Fall 2023

Core Course

CAST 150B: Introduction to Creativity, the Arts, and Social Transformation. Toni Shapiro-Phim

Capstone Practicum

CAST 181B: Ethics of Community Engagement. Toni Shapiro-Phim

Core Electives

ENG 113B: Performing Climate Justice. Thomas King
FA 181A: Housing and Social Justice. Muna Güvenç
LGLS 129A: Transitional Justice: Global Justice and Societies in Transition. Melissa Stimell
THA 138B: Creative Pedagogy. Jennifer Cleary

CAST Electives in Creative Arts

CAST 160A: Provocative Art: Outside the Comfort Zone. William Chalmus

Spring 2024

Project Design Practicum

CAST 189A: Project Design Practicum. Phim

Core Electives

CAST 110B: Dance and Migration. Toni
ENG 169A: Eco-Writing Workshop. Eliza
HISP 142B: Literature, Film, and Human America. Fernando Rosenberg
MUS 3B: Global Soundscapes: Perform Tradition Across Time and Place. Chae
SOC 155B: Protest, Politics, and Change Movements. Sarah Halford
THA 126A 1: Playing for Change - Community Building and Social Change on Stage. Jennifer Cleary


Additional CAST electives can be found on the [registrar's website](#).



3. CAST Affiliated Faculty and Staff

CAST engages interdisciplinary arts, humanities, and social sciences at Brandeis while retaining its own distinct identity that emphasizes a rigorous study of power relations, conflict, and peace, and the dialogue between change agents, peacebuilders, and artists. The work is supported by Brandeis faculty and staff members from diverse fields.

This year we had a CAST affiliates gathering at Executive Committee member Emilie Diouf's home in Waltham – a time to share plans for the year in a beautiful setting, just as the academic year was getting underway.





3. CAST Affiliated Faculty and Staff

Executive Committee

- Toni Shapiro-Phim, Chair, CAST; Director, Program in Peacebuilding and the Arts, Assistant Director, Global Community Engagement at COMPACT
- Emilie Diouf, English and African and African American Studies
- Thomas King, English

Affiliates

- Cameron Anderson, Theater Arts
- Elizabeth Bradfield, English and Creative Writing
- Jennifer Cleary, Theater Arts
- Caren Irr, English
- Dorothy Kim, English
- Kristin Parker, Boston Public Library [Formerly at the Rose Art Museum]
- Fernando Rosenberg, Hispanic Studies, Comparative Literature
- David Sherman, English
- Faith Smith, English and Latin American, Caribbean and Latinx Studies, and African and African American Studies
- Ilana Szobel, Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
- Sabine von Mering, German, Russian and Asian Languages, and Environmental Studies, and Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies
- William Chalmus, CAST, Theatre Arts

Staff

- Armine Avetisyan, Administrator

4. Faculty and Staff Achievements



Toni Shapiro-Phim

- Moderator: Chea Samy's History and Legacy Seminar, Royal University of Fine Arts, Phnom Penh, Cambodia (November 2023)
- Keynote speaker: Dancing Ecologies in the Asia Pacific: Negotiating Identities in a Context of Change and Dispossession Conference; Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore (February 2024)
- Selection panelist: Inspire Art Award, Peace Research Institute Oslo, Norway (April 2024)
- Produced/presented *The Clear Blue Skies*, a play about young Ukrainians, and *A Deepest Blue*, a dance and music performance by Cambodian and Japanese artists, on campus through the Global Community Engagement Program of COMPACT.

William Chalmus

- Led a series of 6 Poetry Nights that culminated in hosting a team slam with 4 teams from Massachusetts
- Attended the International Playback Theatre Network Conference in South Africa, led a home group there and performed with "Better Together" - a team of Playback practitioners he founded, representing different countries
- Led workshops in Israel and Palestine focused on Playback Theatre for a few companies; undertook educational consulting for a dual immersion school
- Designed curriculum and instructed a year-long educational leadership cohort to realize their capstone projects in 7 local school districts



4. Faculty and Staff Achievements



Elizabeth Bradfield

- Co-edited, *Cascadia Field Guide: Art, Ecology, Poetry*
- Won the 2024 Pacific Northwest Book Award
- Was a finalist in the "Fiction and Poetry" category for the Banff Mountain Film and Book Festival
- Is a finalist for a Foreward Indies award in their Nature category.

Faith Smith

- Published the book, *Strolling in the Ruins: the Caribbean's non-sovereign modern in the early twentieth century*, Duke University Press.



Emilie Diouf

- Gave a presentation on Memory and (Un)Archiving as part of the Global South Executive Committee, Modern Language Association Conference
- Gave a paper at the Senegal in Crisis: Politics and Instrumentalization of Women's Bodies Conference organized by Cheikh Thiam at Amherst College
- Participated in the Mandel Center for the Humanities Faculty Writing Retreat
- Presented as part of a panel on gender justice during the IMPACT Creating Hope Together in Times of Crisis online workshop.
- Submitted a book manuscript for publication.



4. Faculty and Staff Achievements

Thomas King

- Authored an essay "Performing Transformative Climate Justice," which will appear in the *Routledge Handbook of Grassroots Climate Activism* - a volume co-edited by CAST's own Sabine von Mering.
- Published two news essays on sexuality, gender, race, and biopolitics in the 17th and 18th centuries in *The Oxford Handbook of Restoration Literature* and *The Routledge Companion to Eighteenth-Century Literatures in English*.
- Continues work toward a community-engaged project focusing on the role of the arts in transformative climate justice, called "Urban Pastoral," which has been funded by a 2023-24 Public Humanities/Community Engagement Grant from the Mandel Center for the Humanities. This grant has been extended to this academic year.



Robin Feuer Miller

- Gave opening plenary address at the International Dostoevsky Symposium in Nagoya, Japan in August 2023



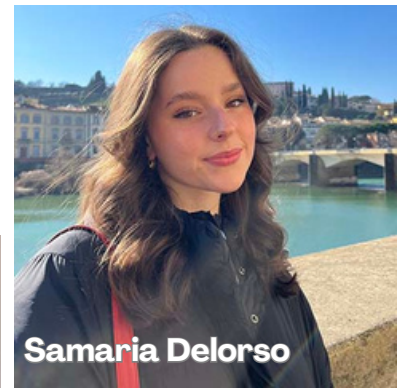
Armine Avetisyan

- Co-authored scholarly article "Local Meanings of Peace: Politics of Words and Emotional Labor of Civil Society Practitioners in Armenia and Turkey" forthcoming in the *Caucasus Survey* peer-reviewed journal.

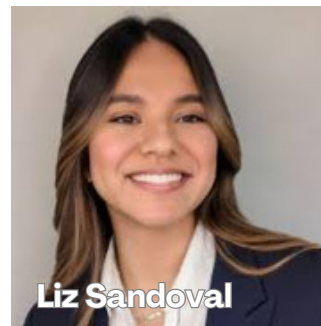
5. Student News

Office of Student Affairs STUDENT INVOLVEMENT AWARD WINNERS

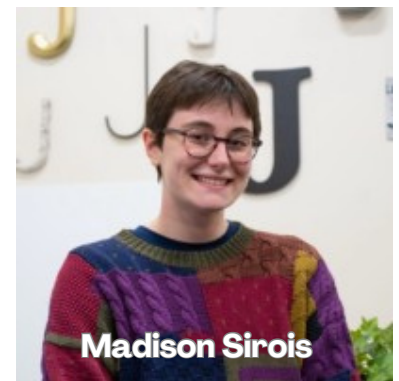
- Sophia Fedus (Commitment to Service Award)
- Samaria Delorso (Commitment to Service Award)
- Liz Sandoval (Community Service Award/Mentorship)
- Madison Sirois (Herman & Bessie Blum Memorial Award)



Samaria Delorso

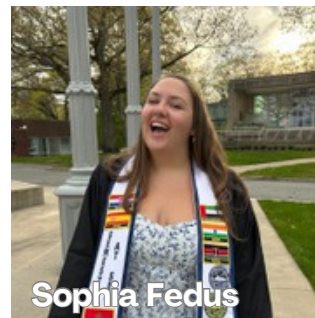


Liz Sandoval



Madison Sirois

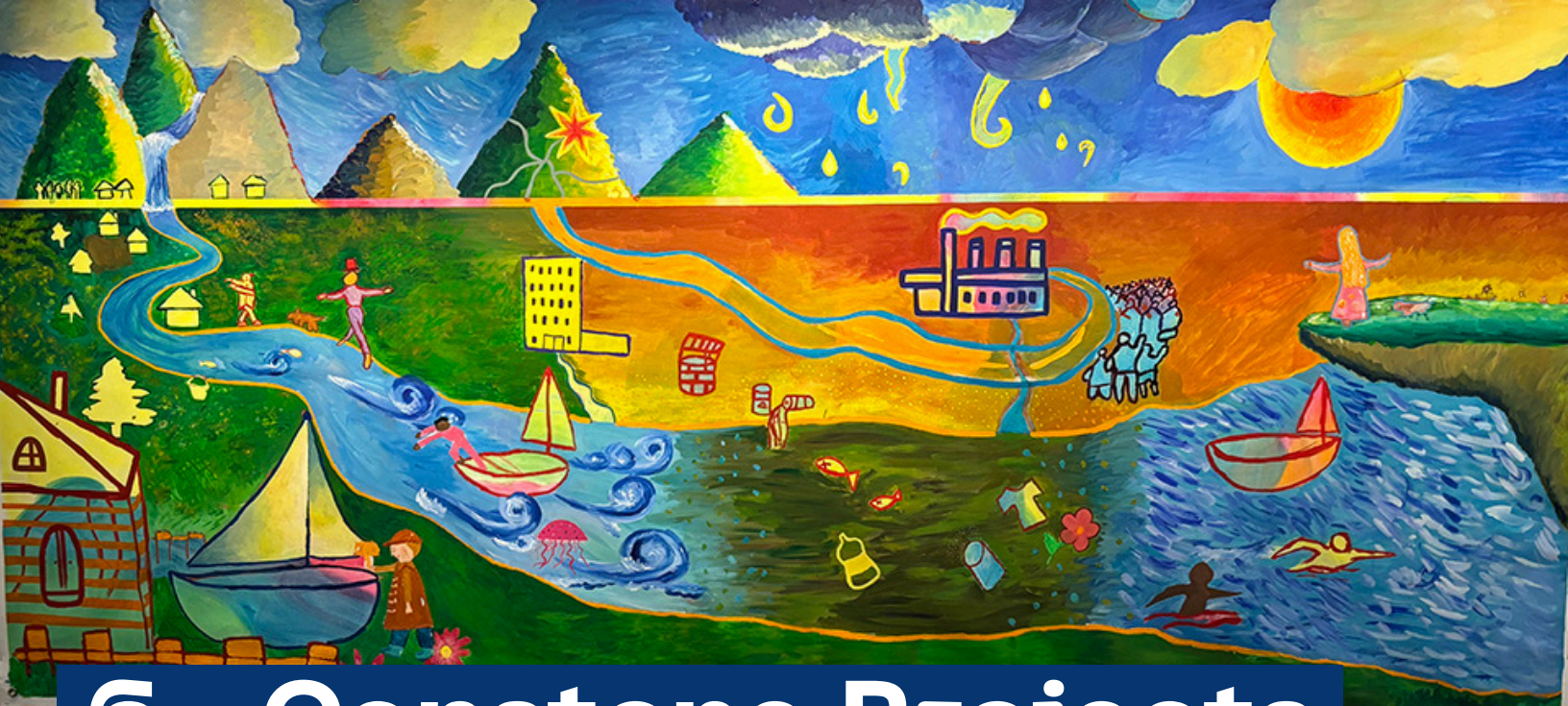
CAST graduating senior **Sophia Fedus** and CAST rising sophomore **Gustavo Nascimento** both had internships with the Smithsonian Institution in the summer of 2024.



Sophia Fedus

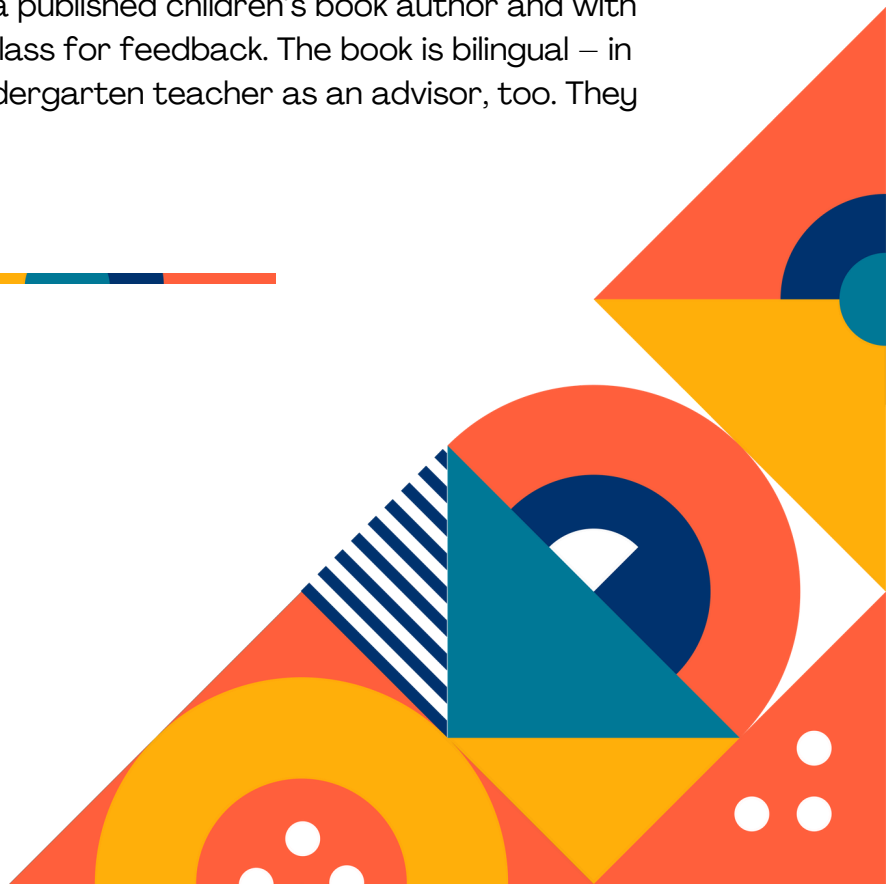


Gustavo Nascimento



6. Capstone Projects

In the Spring practicum course, six students continued work that the CAST 150B students had started in the Fall. (Four of the practicum students had been in that Fall class.) The practicum students created a book for kindergarten-age children, basing the story on images in the mural that the CAST 150B students had painted under the guidance of artist-in-residence Claudia Bernardi. The story focuses on the importance of keeping water clean. Students met with a published children's book author and with students in Rachel Theodorou's Education class for feedback. The book is bilingual – in Chinese and English. They had a Chinese kindergarten teacher as an advisor, too. They are hoping to publish it in the Fall of 2024.





7. Visiting Artists and Scholars in the Classroom

Distinguished artists and scholars visited CAST core and elective courses during the year, adding expertise and insight to class activities and discussions.


Fall 2023:

CAST: 150B Introduction to Creativity, the Arts, and Social Transformation

- Nao Suzuki (visual artist; visited her exhibition at a Waltham gallery)
- Dr. Cynthia Cohen (oral historian)
- Fatu Gayflor (Liberian singer and dancer)
- Dr. Sabine von Mering (climate justice activist and scholar)
- Dr. Sally Warner (specialist in the physics of water)
- Claudia Bernardi (Argentinian artist and human rights activist)

Spring 2024:

CAST: 110B: Dance and Migration

- Dr. Katarzyna Grabska (forced migration expert)
 - Tania Isaac (African-Caribbean dancer, diasporic identity scholar)
 - Jean Appolon (Haitian dancer, choreographer)
 - Fatu Gayflor (Liberian singer and dancer)
 - Rebecca Pappas (Contemporary/improvisational dancer)
 - Angkor Dance Troupe (three Cambodian dancers)
 - Anida Yoeu Ali (Cambodian American performance artist)
 - Prumsodun Ok (Cambodian choreographer and dancer)
- 

8. Events

Spring 2024

CAST Graduation Ceremony

May 6, 2024

CAST celebrated its 2024 graduates: **Luna Li, Sophia Fedus, Emily Braun, Samaria Dellorso, and Jolecia Sauderson.**

CAST alum Zoë Rose shared a message with the graduates and CAST Affiliate Faith Smith gave a keynote speech.



8. Events

Spring 2024

In the Spring 2024 semester CAST co-sponsored a number of events.

Zoë Rose Spills Her Guts Show

April 13, 2024

Zoë Rose '20 presented her national award-winning one-woman show "Zoë Rose Spills Her Guts," an immersive, participatory theater experience about exploring identity. Part of the Leonard Bernstein Festival of the Creative Arts | April 6-14, 2024.



Niiksokowaiks My Relatives: Dance Offering & Conversation

April 11, 2024

During the week of the Leonard Bernstein Festival of the Creative Arts, Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and Women's Studies Research Center faculty Evangelina Macias (Amskapi Pikuni & A'aninin) presented her dance work, "Niiksokowaiks My Relatives." The dance offering was followed by a talk back and conversation with distinguished and internationally recognized artist Daystar Rosalie Jones (Pembina Chippewa-Cree).

Unissued Diplomas



"Unissued Diplomas" is a global exhibition that honors the memory of 40 Ukrainian students who will never graduate because their lives were taken away by the full-scale Russian invasion that began on February 24, 2022. War continues and it means more people do not have a chance to get a degree.

02/29-03/14, 2024
Mandel Center for the Humanities
Exhibition opening 2:30 -3:30 pm

Brandeis University
02453, Waltham, MA
Never graduated, forever honored



Unissued Diplomas Exhibition

February 29-March 14, 2024

"Unissued Diplomas" is a global exhibition that honors the memory of 40 Ukrainian students who will never graduate because their lives were taken away by the full-scale Russian invasion that began on February 24, 2022. War continues and it means more people do not have a chance to get a degree. Brandeis IBS graduate students Yuliia Stelmakh, Sofiia Tarasiuk and Kamila Haieva brought the photo exhibition to Brandeis.

8. Events

Spring 2024



A Deepest Blue Performance

April 18, 2024

Prumsodun Ok, Khmer classical dance choreographer, dancer, educator and scholar and LGBTQ+ rights activist and founder and artistic director of Cambodia's first and only all-male gay classical dance company, performed his most recent work, *A Deepest Blue*, accompanied by four musicians from Japan. *A Deepest Blue* explores humanity's multifaceted relationship with water, focusing on origin stories from both Cambodia and Japan.



Palimpsest for Generation 1.5 Performance

April 2, 2024

Anida Yoeu Ali, multi-disciplinary artist and immigration rights activist performed *Palimpsest for Generation 1.5*, in which her body is transformed into a palimpsest where histories are inscribed, layering one moment over another. Text pulled from her family's memories and histories related to Cambodia are inscribed in ink onto her back. As a result of the act, ink and water drip onto her back and stain the dress. When the gestures end and the body leaves the installation, detached roots, a disembodied dress, and faint traces of a performed history remain. The work examines the cultural and emotional resonance of place and memory in relationship to personal histories of violence.

8. Events

Fall 2023

In the Fall 2023 semester CAST co-sponsored a number of events.



The Clear Blue Skies: Diaries from Ukraine Theater Play

October 1, 2023

"The Clear Blue Skies," a play based on messages sent by Ukrainian youth to their acting teacher in the days and weeks following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, premiered at Brandeis. The audience learned how these young people experienced the chaos and catastrophe of those early days of the war.



Actors on Strike Panel Discussion

October 16, 2023

The leadership of New England's Screen Actors Guild and American Federation of Television and Radio Artists union - President Andrea Lyman and Vice President Tom Kemp, and Brandeis faculty experts Tom Doherty (Film Studies) and Dan Breen (Legal Studies) spoke about what led to the strike that brought film and tv production across the country to a standstill, what striking actors and writers aimed to achieve, and why this matters far beyond Hollywood.



Neighbors in Memory: The Entangled Legacy of the Armenian Genocide Screening and Discussion

October 29, 2023

The event offered a unique look at one of the most consequential human rights violations in history. A special combination of an academic perspective and journalistic storytelling, this event explored the history of and ongoing debates about the Armenian genocide of 1915.