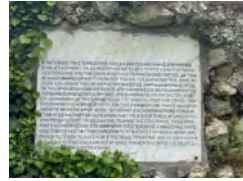
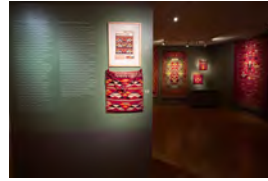




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UCLA

Stavros Niarchos Foundation
Center *for the* Study of Hellenic Culture



Community members, faculty, and students celebrate the end of the academic year at our annual glendi (photo: Don Liebig).

Letter from the Director



Dear friends of the UCLA SNF Hellenic Center,

In June, I attended the SNF Nostos 2026 Conference in Athens, the annual celebration held by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation. This year, the conference commemorated the Foundation's 30th anniversary, and our Center was featured as one of the nodes on a world map displaying the Foundation's grantees. I had the pleasure of speaking at the conference and conducting a tour of our *Weaving Dreams* exhibition for the participants. During the conference, I also met with the directors of other SNF-sponsored Hellenic Centers, which provided the opportunity to discuss collaborations and future programs. Alexandra Minna Stern, Dean of Humanities, joined me in Athens

to attend Nostos, and also to meet with Mr. Isidoros Kouvelos, President of the Hellenic Olympic Committee, about our Center's programming for the Games and plans for the Olympic and Paralympic Village, which will be hosted at UCLA. While in Athens, I was also very happy to meet with Mrs. Maira Myrogianni, Secretary General for Greeks Abroad & Public Diplomacy; the graphic novelist Soloup; the famous gelato-maker Konstantinos Karakatsanis; the parent of an incoming UCLA student; and many of our board members. These meetings and many others, both in Athens and in the countryside, demonstrate the close connections our Center – and UCLA – enjoy with our partners in Greece. These connections continue to expand as we grow. UCLA's presence in Greece is manifested as Professor John Papadopoulos directs excavations at the Athenian Agora, Professor Kathryn Morgan presents her research at multiple conferences, Professor Laurie Hart undertakes anthropological fieldwork, and our graduate students, supported by the Center's many fellowships, work and study at sites across the country, including Athens, Lesbos, Mystras, Mount Athos, the Pindos mountains, and elsewhere. In the coming months, two UCLA professors, David Schneller (Art History) and David Goldstein (Linguistics and Program in Indo-European Studies), will take up residential fellowships at the Leigh Fermor House in Kardamyli, and Tiffany Barber will begin planning a workshop at the same location. These important collaborations and ongoing relationships must be nurtured, and we are grateful to the Stavros Niarchos Foundation for its continuing support and encouragement.

In this newsletter, we foreground the rapid growth of our young Center through new appointments to our teaching staff, Faculty Advisory Committee, and Community Advisory Board. We also emphasize the many awards and new positions that faculty of Hellenic descent and scholars of Greek culture are garnering on campus. Through articles about our Geraki weaving project, we mark the end of *Gefyra*, our three-year collaboration with Simon Fraser University. We also herald a new association with the Hellenic Olympic Committee as we begin to focus on programs related to the Games, from the ancient period up through the modern day. This programming, organized by our Center's new Associate Director, Professor Kathryn Morgan, includes a series of nine lectures that will be held in collaboration with the Getty Villa Museum.



Dean of Humanities Alexandra Minna Stern and Center Director Sharon Gerstel meet with Mr. Isidoros Kouvelos, President of the Hellenic Olympic Committee, Stefanos Chandakas, Secretary General, Petros Synadinos, OG Los Angeles 2028 Chef de Mission, Peter Rozakis, OG Los Angeles 2028 Ambassador of California, and Sofia Grafanaki, Director of Hellenic Olympic House LA, at the headquarters of the Hellenic Olympic Committee in Athens (photo: Hellenic Olympic Committee).

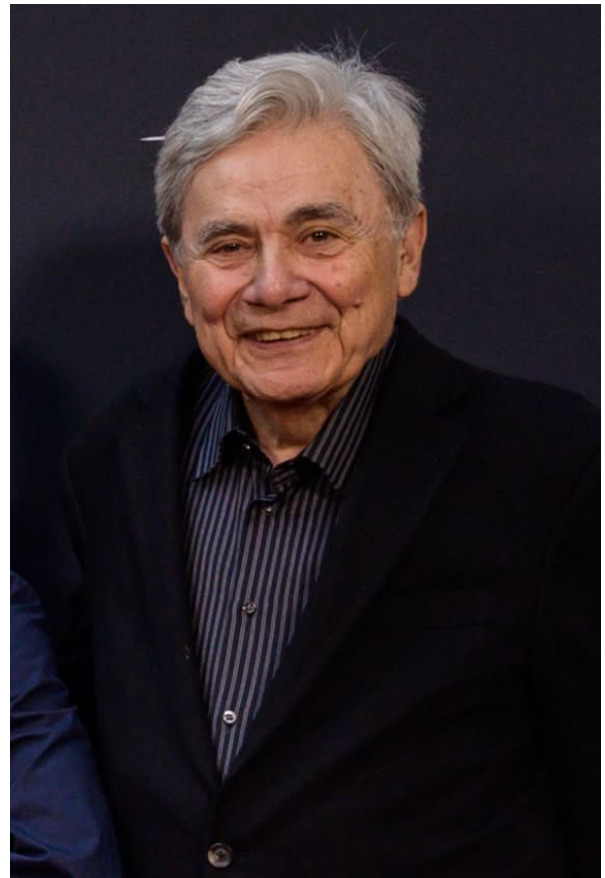
This year, we are expanding our Zoom book club meetings by reviving our Greek literature reading group, in which we will focus on Modern Greek classics. In the fall quarter, we are thinking about Asia Minor. For our English-translation group, we will discuss the experience of Pantelis C. Karatasakis, a soldier in the Asia Minor Campaign, whose diary was translated into English by his son, Alec P. Karys, and by Gregory Kontos (Greek Ancestry). For our Greek book club, we look at Asia Minor through the eyes of the great author Elias Venezis, who describes in lyrical terms the lands of his childhood in his masterpiece *Αιολική γη*. We are also excited to welcome to our Center the poet Eleni Sikelianos, whose recent publication, *Memory Rehearsal*, unearths the story of her famous great-grandparents, Eva Palmer and Angelos Sikelianos. This in-person event celebrates a story that is revealed through prose, poetry, imaginary performative texts, fiction and nonfiction, and archival and family photographs.

Finally, with this newsletter, we honor the memory of George P. Kolovos, who established the George P. Kolovos Family Centennial Term Chair in Hellenic Studies at UCLA. Funds from this chair have supported innumerable students, visiting lecturers, publications, film projects, and, most recently, our weaving exhibition at the Ghika Gallery-Benaki Museum, where George's name appeared alongside that of his wife, Tina. Over the last ten years, George Kolovos played an active role in our Center as an advisor, advocate, and bridge between Los Angeles and Greece. His death is a tremendous loss to our Center, UCLA, and community.

We will continue to honor George's memory through activities connected to the chair he established. May his memory be eternal and may our Center continue to fulfill his vision for honoring Hellenic culture.

On behalf of our Center, I wish you a very happy beginning of the academic (and Byzantine) year. I hope to see you frequently as you make *our* Center *your* home.

Sharon E. J. Gerstel, Director



For Center news and recordings of past events:

Website: <https://hellenic.ucla.edu/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/UCLASNFCenter/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/uclasnfhellenic/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@uclasnfhelleniccenter5902>

Meet our Associate Director, Professor Kathryn Morgan!



We are thrilled to announce that Kathryn A. Morgan, Joan Palevsky Professor of Classics at UCLA, has been named Associate Director of the UCLA SNF Hellenic Center for 2026–2028. Professor Morgan will focus on the historical context of the Olympics and will serve as an ambassador for the 2028 Olympic activities on behalf of our UCLA community. Professor Morgan's interests range broadly over Greek literature of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. She regularly teaches graduate seminars in Attic tragedy, Pindar and Greek lyric, and Plato, and her research moves between projects connected with Plato and

with Pindar. The former is represented by her book *Myth and Philosophy from the Presocratics to Plato*, by many recent papers, and by her current book project on Plato and Thucydides. Her book, *Pindar and the Construction of Syracusan Monarchy in the Fifth Century B.C.* (2015), was a groundbreaking reading of the poetry written by the lyric poet Pindar for Hieron of Syracuse. Professor Morgan served as Chair of the UCLA Department of Classics from 2014–2020 and was a founding member of our Center, for which she has also served as chair of our Faculty Advisory Committee.

Eleni Tsaggouri Awarded Endowed Lectureship



We are thrilled to announce that Eleni Tsaggouri, who joined our Center and the Department of Classics in 2025, has been named Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) & Ioannis P. and Eirini Caloyeras Lecturer in Modern Greek. In addition to teaching Modern Greek at the beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels, Tsaggouri administers the Ellinomatheia exams at UCLA and also serves as advisor to the Hellenic Culture Club, our student association. At the moment, she is preparing a new course for our curriculum on *Λαογραφία* (folklore), an advanced level class that will be taught in Greek and will take advantage of the Charlie and Mary Kyriacou Collection of publications on Greek folklore and ethnography housed at our Center.

We Welcome Dr. Christos Papakostas!

We are delighted to welcome Dr. Christos Papakostas, who will be joining us as Visiting Associate Professor to teach two classes in winter 2027. Papakostas, who received his Ph.D. from the Department of History, Archaeology, and Social Anthropology at the University of Thessaly, is Professor of Folklore and Greek Traditional Dance in the Department of Primary Education at the University of Ioannina. He has taught anthropology, folklore, anthropology of dance and music at various universities in Greece (Thessaly, Ioannina, Western Greece, the Hellenic Open University, and the



Technological Educational Institute of Epirus) and to many folk-dance groups in Greece. He has also taught Greek traditional dance in Europe, Canada, and the United States. In the U.S., he has served as a judge for the Greek Orthodox Folk Dance Festival (FDF) and the Hellenic Dance Festival (HDF). His research interests focus on dance anthropology, music, folklore, and identity. In 2014, he published his first book, *Σαχά ισί βαρό νινάι. Ρόμικες μουσικές και χορευτικές ταυτότητες στη Μακεδονία (Saha isi varo ninai: Roma Dance and Musical Identities in Northern Greece)*. His many articles include: “Dancing and Singing in the Wedding Ritual: Case study from Arkadia, Greece,” *International Journal of Latest Research in Humanities and Social Science* (2023); “Framing Tradition: The Representations of Greek Traditional Dance in Television,” *International Journal of Latest Research in Humanities and Social Science* (2024); and “‘Anatomy of a Dance’: An Ethnochoreological and Musicological Approach – Case Study from Arkadia, Greece,” *International Journal of Latest Research in Humanities and Social Science* (2024).

At UCLA, Professor Papakostas will be teaching two courses: Greek Folk/Traditional Dance in Practice: Movement, Music, and Cultural Context (Dance 12) and Anthropology of Greek Folk/Traditional Dance: Culture, Identity, and Performance (Classics 88GE). While on campus, he will also be advancing research on a number of publications and working with our undergraduate Hellenic Culture Club. We are very excited about having Christos Papakostas join UCLA and share his passion for folklore and Greek traditional dance with our students and community!



Sotiris Masmanidis, New FAC Chair

Sotiris Masmanidis (Ph.D. California Institute of Technology) is a Professor in the Department of Neurobiology. His research group investigates the brain's reward prediction system, i.e., how animals learn to anticipate appetitive events, a function important for better understanding mechanisms of disorders, such as drug addiction and Parkinson's disease.



Beyond the lab, Masmanidis' Greek connections run deep.

He was born in Thessaloniki and returns to Greece annually to experience its rich cultural heritage and teach his children the language. He is an Ancient Greek history enthusiast, and his lifelong dream is to participate in an archaeological dig. His favorite reward is *bougatsa*.

We are thrilled that Professor Masmanidis has taken on the role of Chair of our Faculty Advisory Committee and we thank Professor Arion Hadjioannou for his past service in this important position!



FAC members Arion Hadjioannou (l) and Nicolas Christou (r) with Director Sharon Gerstel.

Faculty Advisory Committee (2026–2027)

Nicolas Christou
Michael Cooperson
Stella Ghervas
Arion Hadjioannou
Ella Haselswerdt
Sotiris Masmanidis, Chair
Kathryn Morgan
Jennifer Poulakidas
David Schneller



Community Advisory Board

Aris Anagnos
Minos Athanassiadis
Lia Bozonelis
Alexander Caloyeras
Stephen Demopoulos
Eleni Hioureas
Yorgos Karamihos
Arianna Papalexopoulos
Michele Patzakis, Chair
Lilian Evgenidis Polydor
Joseph Skarzenski
Anna Yallourakis

Lia Bozonelis Joins our Community Advisory Board!



An innovative and forward-thinking creative with over 20 years experience in entertainment as a producer, development head and screenwriter, Bozonelis currently serves as Chief Content Officer of Heavy Metal International, where she is successfully leveraging the extensive library of IP across film, television, publishing, and beyond. Previously, she built groundbreaking film and television slates and analyzed thousands of projects for industry titans such as Netflix, Ridley Scott's Scott Free Productions, HBO, New Line Cinema, George Clooney's Smokehouse Pictures, and many others. Bozonelis has written, produced, and sold a number of original feature and television projects, including thriller feature *Safer at Home* for Voltage Pictures, which had an international theatrical release before landing on Hulu, as well as subversive female sketch comedy streaming series *Sorry Not Sorry*, where she served as Head Writer & Consulting Producer for Sony's *Astronauts Wanted*. Her romantic comedy feature *Eat, Drink & Be Married* streams on Amazon Prime. Bozonelis also recently founded Bean By Bean Entertainment,

Inc., under which she is producing multiple independent feature films and documentary projects. Bozonelis started her entertainment career at New Line Cinema and Picturehouse Films and her writing career as a staff writer for *Fortune* magazine, covering hard news across the globe.

At the center of Bozonelis' profession is her extensive nonprofit and volunteer work for organizations including: The Hellenic Initiative, where she serves on the New Leader Executive Committee and has for many years; and Los Angeles Greek Film Festival, where she served six years on the Board and currently serves as a Trustee, as well as Co-Founder and Co-Leader of the Global Greek Film Initiative. An established mentor, she was a recipient of the 40 Under 40 Award from the Greek America Foundation.

News from our Community Advisory Board

Dr. Michele Patzakis, Chair of our Community Advisory Board, hosted the board's spring meeting. We welcomed Arianna Papalexopoulos, who shared her enthusiasm about the Center's work and vision. Following the meeting, members of the board attended *Antigone* at the Antaeus Theatre. The board is actively discussing the Center's programming, including events related to the Olympic Games. As we expand membership on our Board, we are thinking creatively about ways to connect the diaspora community closely to Greece through the Center's activities and sponsorships. The Board is excited to support the Center's rapid growth and increased collaborations and outreach.



Lilian Evgenidis Polydor, Eleni Tsaggouri, John Anagnos and Anna Yallourakis at our most recent Community Advisory Board meeting (photo: M. Patzakis).

Honors and Awards

Professor Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris named Dean

We are excited that Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris has been named dean of the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs. For more than 30 years, Loukaitou-Sideris has helped shape UCLA Luskin through her scholarship, mentorship and extraordinary service to the school and university. As interim dean, she led with transparency, compassion and vision during a pivotal time for higher education. “I am deeply honored to serve as the dean of the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, a school that has uniquely shaped my own career as a scholar,” Loukaitou-Sideris said. “I am also grateful and excited for the opportunity to work with the Luskin community — faculty, students, staff, alumni, and board members — to continue the school’s upward trend and extend its visibility and impact locally, nationally, and globally.” Loukaitou-Sideris is a distinguished professor of urban planning and a core faculty member of the UCLA Urban Humanities Initiative. She joined UCLA in 1989 and served as associate dean of UCLA Luskin from 2010 to 2022 and as interim dean from January 2023 to May 2026. Loukaitou-Sideris has collaborated actively with our Center, partnering in the visit of former Prime Minister George Papandreou and co-hosting a tribute to former Governor of Massachusetts Michael Dukakis.



Dr. Areti Tillou honored with teaching award

The UCLA SNF Hellenic Center congratulates Dr. Areti Tillou, Professor of Surgery, who has been honored with a UCLA Distinguished Teaching Award. This prestigious award celebrates teaching excellence and educational innovation, helping to elevate the practice of teaching. The award recognizes deserving instructors for their creativity in the classroom, dedication to helping students thrive, and commitment to continually enhancing the educational experience. ΑΞΙΑ! In addition to her teaching and scholarship, Dr. Tillou has helped innumerable members of the Greek community, has served as a long-term member of the Center's Faculty Advisory Committee, and is an active member of the Academic Committee of the PanHellenic Scholarship Foundation.



Professor Bryant Kirkland completes fellowship at the Leigh Fermor House



Bryant Kirkland, Associate Professor of Classics at UCLA, enjoyed his time as a fellow at the Patrick and Joan Leigh Fermor House, an architectural marvel near Kardamyli. Accustomed to the near-Mediterranean climate of Los Angeles, Kirkland felt at home in the rainy but mild days of coastal Mani. At the Leigh Fermor House, which is administered by the Benaki Museum, he drafted the better portion of a book chapter on the meaning of landscape in the writings of the ancient Greek orator Dio Chrysostom. No doubt, the song of the European blackbird and the varying greens of cypress and olive provided an atmosphere conducive to writing about ancient ravines and shorelines. He also learned much from the serendipitous scholarly company of the other fellows, which included a Byzantinist, an

architectural historian, a scholar of modern Greek literature, and a global historian. Re-reading *Mani* during his stay, Bryant savored anew Patrick Leigh Fermor's effusive sense of Greece's distinctive allure.

Mike Katakis wins Gus and Judie Christopoulos Award in Modern Greek



Congratulations to Mike Katakis, recipient of this year's Gus and Judie Christopoulos Award in Modern Greek! This annual honor recognizes a UCLA undergraduate student who has demonstrated exceptional skills and dedication in Modern Greek language acquisition. Throughout the academic year, Mike set a stellar example in the Beginning Greek class. With his vibrant enthusiasm, he consistently volunteered for role-play exercises and elevated the classroom environment with his positive attitude and insightful questions. Mike's passion for the language is deeply rooted in his family heritage and connection to Greece, particularly to the island of Crete. Beyond his linguistic achievements, Mike is a Psychology major, an active member of the Hellenic Culture Club, and a dedicated practitioner of jiu-jitsu. We congratulate Mike on this well-deserved honor!

News from the Classroom

by Eleni Tsaggouri, Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) & Ioannis P. and Eirini Caloyeras Lecturer in Modern Greek

The 2025–2026 academic year was an exceptional one for Modern Greek language classes at UCLA, characterized by lively, engaging, and highly productive classrooms. We have created a hands-on and culturally immersive curriculum for our students. I am delighted to have joined UCLA and am looking forward to developing an exciting curriculum in Modern Greek Language and Culture.

Introductory Modern Greek: Building Connections

Students in the beginning class made remarkable progress over the past year. Last September, they began learning the Greek alphabet. By June, they were confidently presenting detailed information about their families, studies, occupations, historical figures, and geography. They also mastered practical language skills for shopping, sports, and giving directions.

Beyond language mechanics, the curriculum integrated cultural immersion by exploring the nuances of everyday gestures, greetings, and interactions. Etymology served as a bridge to the past, allowing students to trace modern expressions back to ancient and Byzantine times, thereby understanding them more fully.

Language lessons were frequently connected to daily life and cultural traditions. Students actively participated in hands-on cultural activities, which included: baking *Vasilopites* and crafting March bracelets, flying kites on *Kathara Deftera*, cracking red eggs for Easter, and learning to play *tavli* (backgammon). Multimedia tools, including contemporary films, short reels, music, and short stories, enriched their listening and comprehension skills. The class fostered lasting memories and deep cultural connections. The class also provided a critical students for Greek students across campus to meet one another and share their stories. All who are not graduating this summer will advance to the Intermediate Greek level this fall.



Professor Eleni Tsaggouri with Introductory Modern Greek students.



Students display their March bracelets.

Advanced Seminar: Culture, History, and Architecture

The Advanced Seminar, conducted entirely in Greek, met twice weekly to analyze topics of cultural and professional interest. The curriculum remained highly flexible, adapting fluidly to complement the students' individual research fields and academic interests. In the Winter Quarter, which focused on urban transformation and architecture, students conducted independent research and presented findings on topics ranging from the ancient Athenian Agora and churches in Laconia dedicated to St. Demetrios to neoclassical architecture in Athens and modern artistic projects. The class examined how Athens transformed during the 20th and 21st centuries and analyzed its contemporary urban functions. We studied modern Greek history to help us understand the transformation of these shifting urban settings. We saw films, such as *America Square*, *Z*, and *Giannis in the Cities*, in which architecture and our perception of the city play a major role. Students synthesized these themes by writing about their personal observations and research visits to Athens. A major highlight was welcoming film director Eleni Alexandrakis for a vibrant classroom discussion. In preparation for this meeting, students read parts of Giannis Atzakas' *Θολός βυθός*.

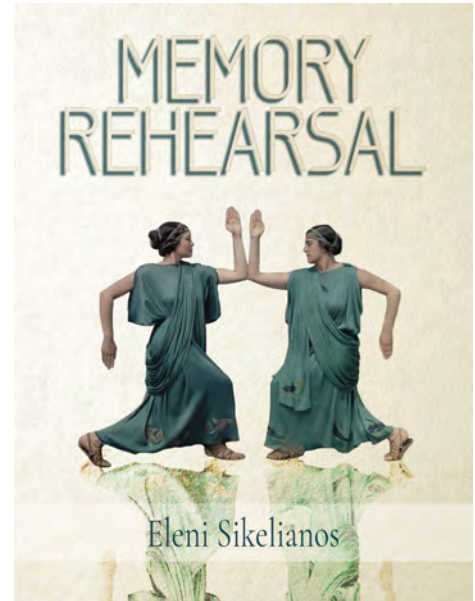
In the Spring Quarter, which focused on immigration, diaspora, and fine art, the seminar shifted its focus to Modern Greek history through the lens of migration, examining the dual historical experiences of Greeks as refugees or immigrants and Greece as a host country. Students analyzed these complex themes through traditional and contemporary songs, digital blogs, documentaries, and short fiction. The quarter concluded with a study of Modern Greek art, including the works of Yannis Tsarouchis and contemporary Greek street graffiti. Throughout these advanced cultural deep-dives, students consistently worked to refine their grammar and expand their professional vocabulary. The high level of student engagement made this seminar a true success and a joy to teach.



Advanced Modern Greek students meet with film director Eleni Alexandrakis to discuss her film, *Giannis in the Cities*.

Fall Programming: *Memory Rehearsal*

Please join us on November 14 at 4 pm in Royce Hall for an exploration of two of the most impactful figures in Modern Greek culture. In 1901, Eva Palmer abandoned her life as a privileged New York socialite, moving to Paris with her lover, the writer and salonist, Natalie Barney. The two Americans became the center of a wild tangle of lesbian love affairs and backyard performances based on intentional reimaginings of Sappho's work and life. A chance encounter led Eva to Greece, where she married Angelos Sikelianos, a visionary poet who would become a Greek national hero. Celebrated American poet Eleni Sikelianos grew up knowing little of these illustrious ancestors, her great grandparents, who, in the early 20th century staged a revival of the ancient Delphic festivals, convinced that it would open a path to world peace. It was not until the age of 20, on her first trip to Greece, that she encountered the breadth of their legacy. In her new book, *Memory Rehearsal*, Sikelianos unearths the story of her search for these pioneering ancestors, in a text that shifts between prose, poetry, imaginary performance texts, fiction, and nonfiction, with archival and family photographs. Eleni will read from and discuss *Memory Rehearsal*, which *Kirkus* calls a "moving family memoir and a triumph of cultural archaeology."



West Coast Hellenic Book Club:

Diary of a Soldier in the Asia Minor Campaign, 1919-1921

by Pantelis C. Karatasakis

edited by Alec P. Karys and Gregory Kontos

(Published by Alec P. Karys, 2023)

Παντελής Χ. Κατασάκης

Ημερολόγιο ενός Στρατιώτη
στη Μικρασιατική Εκστρατεία, 1919-1921

Pantelis C. Karatasakis

Diary of a Soldier
in the Asia Minor Campaign, 1919-1921

επιμέλεια: Αλέκος Π. Κατασάκης, Γρηγόρης Κόντος
editors: Alec P. Karys, Gregory Kontos

This discussion will feature book editors
Alec P. Karys and Gregory Kontos.

The conversation, conducted in English, will be facilitated by
Professor Sharon Gerstel, Director of the UCLA SNF Center for the
Study of Hellenic Culture, and Dr. Eirini Kotsoyili, Senior Lecturer
in Global Humanities at Simon Fraser University.

This program is made possible thanks to the
Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF).

Saturday, October 3, 2026

10:00 a.m. Los Angeles | 8:00 p.m. Greece

Via Zoom

For more information and to RSVP for this book club meeting:
<https://hellenic.ucla.edu/event/diaryofasoldier>

Λέσχη Ανάγνωσης Ελληνικών Βιβλίων της Δυτικής Ακτής

**ΑΙΟΛΙΚΗ ΓΗ
του Ηλίας Βενέζη**

(Εστία, 2020)

Τη συζήτηση θα συντονίσουν η Δρ. Σάρον Γκερστέλ,
διευθύντρια του Κέντρου Μελέτης Ελληνικού Πολιτισμού
Ίδρυμα Σταύρος Νιάρχος στο UCLA, και η Δρ. Ειρήνη
Κωτσοβίλη, λέκτορας Παγκόσμιων Ανθρωπιστικών
Σπουδών του Πανεπιστημίου Simon Fraser.

Η διάλεξη θα γίνει στα Ελληνικά

Το πρόγραμμα αυτό πραγματοποιείται χάρη στη
γενναιόδωρη υποστήριξη του
Ιδρύματος Σταύρος Νιάρχος (ΙΣΝ).

Σάββατο, 7 Νοεμβρίου 2026

10:00 π.μ. Λος Άντζελες / 8:00 μ.μ. Ελλάδα
Μέσω Zoom

Για περισσότερες πληροφορίες και για να δηλώσετε συμμετοχή
στη συνάντηση της Λέσχης Ανάγνωσης:
<https://hellenic.ucla.edu/event/landofaetolia>

ΑΙΟΛΙΚΗ
ΓΗ
ΗΛΙΑ ΒΕΝΕΖΗ



ΒΙΒΛΙΟΠΩΛΕΙΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΕΣΤΙΑΣ



Marble votive relief with an arrhephoros at the loom, from the Athenian Acropolis, fourth century BC. Acropolis Museum 2554. © Acropolis Museum, 2012. Photo by Socratis Mavrommatis.

The UCLA Department of Art History
Art Council Lecture Series

Dr. Ellie Mackin Roberts

Teaching Fellow in Ancient Greek History
University of Leeds

**From Loom to Goddess:
Weaving, Cognition, and Women's Religious
Experience in Ancient Greece**

October 6, 2026 | 4:00 PM | 247 Dodd Hall

For more information visit:
https://hellenic.ucla.edu/event/from_loom_to_goddess

UCLA

Stavros Niarchos Foundation
Center for the Study of Hellenic Culture

UCLA

College | Humanities
Art History

UCLA Winter 2027 Courses Instructed by:

Christos Papakostas

Visiting Associate Professor,
UCLA Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance

Greek 140:

**Anthropology of Greek
Folk/Traditional Dance:
Culture, Identity, and
Performance**

**Tuesdays & Thursdays
11.00am - 12:15pm**

Dance 12:

**Greek Folk/Traditional Dance in
Practice: Movement, Music, and
Cultural Context**

**Tuesdays & Thursdays
3.00pm - 4:30pm**

Photo: Kurt Bauschardt from Edmonton, Canada, CC-BY-SA/2.0-4https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/, via Wikimedia Commons

Dr. Papakostas joins the UCLA faculty as a Scholar-in-Residence, hosted by the UCLA SNF Center for the Study of Hellenic Culture

UCLA

Stavros Niarchos Foundation
Center for the Study of Hellenic Culture

This Scholar-in-Residence appointment is made possible with support from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF).

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR UCLA STUDENTS 2026-27

Graduate Student Fellowships

The George and Cleola Gavalas Fund for Archaeology

This fund is used to support students studying archaeology in Greece, from any period of the country's history.

Award: up to \$2,500

Application Deadline: November 15, 2026

Peter and Vivi Demopoulos Endowed Graduate Research Fellowship

This fellowship supports graduate student travel to Greece for research during the summer.

Award: up to \$4,000

Application Deadline: November 15, 2026

James and Carolyn Kolokotronis Endowed Graduate Research Fellowship

This fellowship supports graduate student travel to Greece for research during the summer.

Award: up to \$4,000

Application Deadline: November 15, 2026

George Olympios Family Endowed Graduate Research Fellowship

This fellowship supports graduate student travel to Greece for research during the summer.

Award: up to \$2,000

Application Deadline: November 15, 2026

Undergraduate Scholarships

Vlahakis-Hanks Undergraduate Scholarship

This annual undergraduate scholarship is available to continuing UCLA undergraduate students in the UCLA College of Letters and Science. Eligible students must demonstrate leadership in Hellenic causes, environmental issues, or community empowerment.

Award: up to \$3,000

Application Deadline: December 15, 2026

Student Awards

The Gus and Judie Christopoulos Award for Modern Greek Language Study

Annual award provided to the student with the best performance in the first year of Modern Greek language courses.

For application requirements and procedures, visit:

hellenic.ucla.edu/studentsupport/

Inquiries:

Email hellenic@humnet.ucla.edu
or call 310-825-5323

UCLA

Stavros Niarchos Foundation
Center for the Study of Hellenic Culture

On the Path to the Olympics!

The 2028 Summer Olympics in L.A. are now less than two years away, and the Center is already planning how to enhance our appreciation and understanding of the games in the months leading up to the great event. The Olympics, as we all know, originated in Greece, but they were only the most prestigious example of a more widespread athletic culture that shaped the thought-world of Greece for centuries. They were one of four “crown contests” (the Olympic, Pythian, Nemean and Isthmian Games) where the prizes awarded to the victor were wreaths of foliage, but many other local contests existed, from the Athenian Panathenaia to the games at the sanctuary of Zeus on Mt. Lykaion in Arkadia. We have decided to explore the culture of the ancient games in a series of eight public lectures, starting in April 2027 with an introductory lecture on ancient athletic contests delivered by Professor Kathryn Morgan and ending just before the Olympics with a lecture on the refounding of the Olympics at the end of the nineteenth century. In collaboration with our friends at the Getty Villa, we will investigate the training of ancient athletes, the role played by the games in Hellenistic and Roman Greece, and the athletic and musical contests of the games in Athens, where the prize consisted of the famous and recognizable amphoras filled with olive oil and decorated on one side with the figure of Athena, protectress of the city and on the other with an illustration of the contest in which the victory was won. Of course, we will also focus on the importance and legacy of the Olympic Games themselves. We hope that you will join us for this journey of exploration and celebration, and that we will see you in April for the lecture introducing the series. Check <https://hellenic.ucla.edu/events/> for more details.



Panathenaic Amphora, 500–480 B.C., attributed to Kleophrades Painter (active 505 - 475 B.C.), The J. Paul Getty Museum, Villa Collection, Malibu, 77.AE.9. Digital image courtesy of Getty's Open Content Program.

Stories of the Games: Tegea (Arcadia) and the Olympic Torch Relay

by Sharon E. J. Gerstel, Director of the UCLA SNF Hellenic Center

In the ancient period, the powerful city of Tegea was known for the Aleaia, games and contests dedicated to the goddess Athena Alea. In the modern period, Tegea has become associated with the introduction of an ancient sports ritual — the torch relay — into the modern Olympics.



End of the lampadedromia, Attic red-figured krater signed by Nikias, ca. 420–400 BCE. British Museum, London (photo: Creative Commons).

This ritual is based on the ancient *lampadedromía*, a night-time relay race in which torches were passed as batons. Athens organized several such relay races (as competitions between its ten tribes) for its young citizen men (ephebes), but the most famous one occurred on the occasion of the Panathenaia, the city's great festival in honor of Athena. It started at the Academy (the precinct of the civic hero Akademos and also the site of a gymnasium and, later, of Plato's school), passed through the Kerameikos gate, and proceeded along the Sacred Way until reaching the altar of Athena on the Acropolis. For a team to be victorious, its final runner had to arrive at the altar of Athena with the torch still lit, so that he could light a fire on the altar. At the end of the fifth century, the winning team received an ox.



Medal design from the Amsterdam Olympics featuring a lit torch, 1928 (photo: JLK/Alamy).

Early on, the lighting of the torch — and by extension, the symbolic use of light — was incorporated into modern Olympic philosophy and into the design of objects associated with the games. Pierre de Coubertin, father of the modern Olympic Games, repeatedly made reference to the lit torch and burning flame. The first part of his maxim, “May the Olympic Torch follow its course throughout the ages for the good of a humanity ever more ardent, courageous and pure,” first uttered at the closing of the Stockholm Games in 1912 was written on the scoreboard at the closing of the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics. Exemplifying this ideal, the reverse side of the participation medal for the 1928 Olympic Games in Amsterdam features a male and female athlete raising a torch over a burning tripod.

The addition of a torch relay to the Olympic Games was only officially approved during the 32nd session of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), held from May 16–19, 1934 in Athens. The meeting, which coincided with the 40th anniversary of the revival of the Olympic Games, was full of symbolic references to the ancient past and the reestablishment of the international sporting event. The session opened at the National Academy in the presence of the president of the Hellenic Republic, Mr. Alexandros Zaimis. At the conclusion of the meeting on May 19, the delegates gathered on the Acropolis, where the mayor of Athens made a speech and then offered each member an olive branch, a discus, and a medallion. The copper discuses, commemorating the Olympic Truce, were inscribed with the names of Heracles, Iphitos, and Lycurgos at the center; the surrounding text read (in translation) “Greeks, in ancient times, organized games in Olympia and at the same time declared truce.” On the following day, May 20, the delegates met at the Olympic stadium, where IOC president Count Henri de Baillet-Latour made an impassioned speech, ending with the optimistic note that “the young generation, imbued by our principles, will help to develop amongst the nations that atmosphere of cordiality and chivalry, which endures amongst Olympic teams.” Following the speech, those assembled in the stadium witnessed a reenactment of the ancient Games followed by a “March Past of Greece through the ages.” As part of the ceremony, the delegates laid wreaths at the foot of the monument raised to the memory of Georgios Averoff, the great benefactor of the Panathenaic Stadium, and on the graves of Dimitrios Vikelas, Timoleon Philimon, Ioannis Phokianos, Spyridon Lambros, and Ioannis Chyssafis, men who were deeply involved in the revival of the Games in 1896.



Students from the Physical Education Academy competing in the hoplite race as part of a reenactment of the ancient Games (photo: Hellenic Olympic Committee).

The bronze commemorative medal created for the delegates featured the Parthenon surmounted by the Olympic rings on one side and the Olympic stadium on the other. Further cementing the connection between ancient Athens and the modern games, the official, gold-plated session badge (28 x 43 mm), created by Huguenin Frères, a Swiss watchcase and medal manufacturer, featured the Goddess Athena at its center surrounded by the French legend, “XL ANNIVERSAIRE. RETABLISSEMENT DES JEUX OLYMPIQUES. ATHENES 1934” (40th anniversary. Reestablishment of the Olympic Games. Athens 1934).



Session badge from the 1934 meetings.

At the committee's meeting on Friday, May 18, the subject of a torch relay was placed before the delegates. According to the *Official Bulletin of the International Olympic Committee*, "S. E. Dr. Lewald reported a plan, thought out by the Organizing Committee, which would consist of lighting the torch on the Marathon Tower with a flame transmitted from Olympia to Berlin. Before asking the concurrence of the Olympic Committees of Greece, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Hungary, Austria and Czechoslovakia to organize the transport by their athletes of the sacred flame across their territories, S. E. Dr. Lewald wished to communicate the plan to the Committee." The plan, which had already been discussed between Otto Diem (Germany) and Baillet-Latour, was placed before the committee and the concept was accepted. The proposal of 1934 and its positive reception were undoubtedly strengthened by the meeting's location in Athens.



Members of the IOC visit Epidauros in 1934 (photo: Hellenic Olympic Committee).

Following the conclusion of the meetings, according to the *Official Bulletin of the International Olympic Committee*, "led by [the Greek archaeologist Anastasios] Orlandos, the members of the International Olympic Committee had the opportunity of visiting in great comfort the archaeological treasures of Athens, Sunium (sic), Daphne, Mycene (sic), Nauplia, Epidauros, Sparta and Olympia." Photographs record the visits of the delegates to several of the sites, including the ancient theater at Epidauros.



Church of the Dormition (Palaia Episkopi), Tegea. View of the church and the retaining wall of the Hellenistic theater (photo: S. Gerstel).

On May 22, 1934, the mayor of Tripoli, Theodoros Petrinos, and the Tegean Association (*Tegeatikos Syndesmos*) sponsored a lunch for the IOC members in the lush parkland adjacent to the Church of the Dormition, the *Palaia Episkopi*. Walking to the site of the gathering, the IOC delegates would have passed by the impressive church, constructed in the second half of the 10th century, but restored in the late 19th century by the German-born architect Paul Ziller, brother of the great architect of Athens, Ernst Ziller. Adjacent to the church, they would have noticed the excavated remains of Tegea's ancient theater, erected by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 BCE). The stage was set for further discussion.

Among those present at the lunch were the IOC's president, Count Henri de Baillet-Latour; vice president J. Sigfrid Edström (Sweden), representatives Kano Jigoro (Japan), Franjo-Bučar (Yugoslavia), Stanisław Rouppert (Poland), Count Paolo Thaon de Revel (Italy), Pieter Scharroo (Netherlands), and the German delegates Karl Ferdinand Ritter von Halt and Theodor Lewald. Present, as well, was Michail Rinopoulos, secretary general of the Hellenic Olympic Committee. Tegea's role was critical in creating an environment where Greece's past was displayed vividly before the eyes of the delegates. Undoubtedly, the lunch was memorable for the visitors, who would have dined in a rich archaeological setting, and for the villagers, who would have taken enormous pride in hosting the prestigious international guests. According to sources, the torch relay was the subject of further and lively discussion.

Three months following the Tegea visit, the villagers affixed a plaque to the city's medieval wall, at the very site where the IOC members had dined. The second part of the plaque's inscription reads: "In commemoration of this event, which attracted the attention of humanity to the Greek spirit, which throughout the centuries and still now is teaching the peaceful co-existence of all the nations of the world and the cooperation in noble contests for the sake of the ideals of art, science, well-being and progress of humanity, the Tegean Association is laying the plaque today, August 17, 1936, a day on which the people of Tegea are performing annual popular games which close the festivities of the fair taking place on the occasion of the feast of the Theotokos, as the ancient ancestors used to celebrate the Aleaia Games in honor of Athena Alea and the goddess Hygeia." Above the text is a carved relief of the five Olympic rings. At their center, emerging from splayed branches, is a hand holding a lit torch. Connections between the modern Games and the ancient Aleaia, mirroring Athenian connections between the modern Olympic stadium and the Parthenon, were expanded through association with the Theotokos.



Plaque honoring the IOC lunch at Tegea (photo: S. Gerstel).

On May 23, the delegates spent the day at Olympia. Michail Rinopoulos provided a tour of the site. The delegates later posed for a photograph flanking the marble stele erected in 1927 in honor of Pierre de Coubertin's revival of the Olympic Games. There, they laid several wreaths at the foot of the monument. The identification of the assembled delegates allows us to recognize additional participants in the Tegea lunch, including executive board member Clarence, Lord Aberdare of Duffryn (Great Britain), as well as board members Angelos Bolanaki (Greece), Ernst Krogius (Finland), Barón de Güell (Spain), Theodor Schmidt (Austria), and Gyula von Muzsa (Hungary).



Secretary General Michail Rinopoulos gives a tour of the ancient remains at Olympia to members of the IOC (photo: Hellenic Olympic Committee).



Photograph in front of the Coubertin stele, Olympia, May 23, 1934. To the left of the monument are: Count Henri de Baillet-Latour, Angelos Bolanaki, Kano Jigoro, Pieter Scharroo, and J. Sigfrid Edström. At the far left are the members of the German and Austrian delegations, including Ritter von Halt and Theodor Lewald, who is followed by Franjo-Bučar (Croatia-Yugoslavia). Michael Rinopoulos, Secretary General of the Hellenic Olympic Committee, stands in front of the stele (photo: Hellenic Olympic Committee).

On October 8, 1936, Otto Diem — one of the originators of the plan — visited Tegea and wrote: “On 22 May 1934 the IOC ate lunch here, in the shade of old plane-trees, with lots of good wine. In festive mood they also talked about the torch relay. The people of Tegea believed that the torch relay was first thought up here and so, on 17 August, they set up a marble plaque on the wall of the very grotto where we ate [...]. I was extremely pleased, in peace and unrecognized, to see the plaque of my work there and to take a photo of it.”

Inspired by the discussions held at Tegea on May 22, 1934, the village’s Folklore Museum, located adjacent to the site, displays a collection of Olympic torches. Like the traditional costumes, farm implements, woven objects, and photographs exhibited in the Folklore Museum and the ancient works housed in the Archaeological Museum of Tegea, these treasures of the modern Olympic Games form part of the fabric of the village’s long and proud history.

*Professor Kathryn Morgan kindly contributed information about the Athenian lampadedromia for this article. We express our gratitude to Dr. Vassiliki Tzachrista, head of the Historical Archive of the Hellenic Olympic Committee, and Shirley Ito, Digital Library Manager for the LA84 Foundation, for their assistance in securing photographs and primary documents for this study. For additional readings on the Olympic torch relay, see: Robert K. Barney and Anthony Th. Bijkerk, “The Genesis of Sacred Fire in Olympic Ceremony,” *Journal of Olympic History*, 13 (2005): 2-27; Walter Borgers, “From Myth to Torch Relay,” *Journal of Olympic History*, 13 (2005): 28-48. Reports from the IOC meetings held in May 1934 are available on-line through the LA84 Foundation’s Digital Library. For the church of the Dormition, see K. Siountri, “Restoration and Consolidation of the Byzantine Church of Palaia Episkopi in Tegea, Arcadia,” in A. Moropoulou et al. (eds.) *TMM_CH* 2018. *Communications in Computer and Information Science*, 962 (2019), 78-87.*



Olympic torches exhibited at the Tegea Folklore Museum (photo: S. Gerstel).

On the Path to LA28!

Do you ever wonder what it takes to make an Olympic athlete? The community of Santa Barbara recently hosted a group of rising stars in track and field, their coaches, and chaperones. The athletes, who are students at high schools and universities in Greece, represent the future of Greek athletics. Before heading to Eugene, Oregon, the site of the World Athletics U20 Championships, they stayed for a week at the University of California, Santa Barbara to adjust to the time difference, continue training, and mentally prepare for the competition. According to Sofia Pitouli, UCLA Ph.D. candidate and former member of the Greek national track and field team, “In 2012, I took part as a 17-year-old in the World Athletics U20 Championships as a mid-distance runner. My participation there opened opportunities to study in the United States with a track scholarship, which changed the trajectory of my life.” Among the Greek students who took part in the U20 Championships was Alexandra Chernova, an incoming UCLA freshman interested in studying Media Arts. Alexandra had an excellent performance in the hammer throw. In case you are wondering how the athletes performed in Eugene? They were amazing!

Professor Helen Morales, James and Sarah Argyropoulos Professor in Hellenic Studies at UCSB, accompanied the students on a field trip in Santa Barbara and the athletes were treated to a delicious dinner cooked by the leaders of AHEPA Chapter 243 at St. Barbara Greek Orthodox Cathedral. We are very grateful to our Community Advisory Board member Minos Athanassiadis for rallying the community to support the team. There are lots of ways to support our Greek athletes. Please contact us for some ideas.



Student athletes and their coaches at St. Barbara Greek Orthodox Church in Santa Barbara.

Gefyra Update: Weaving and Community Conference

From April 29-May 2, with support from *Gefyra*, the UCLA SNF Hellenic Center sponsored “Weaving and Community: Perspectives from the Past and Present,” a conference that brought together scholars and weavers to discuss the history and practice of weaving in Greece, from the Bronze Age to the modern day. Organized by Professors Sharon Gerstel and Kathryn Morgan, the first day of the conference offered lectures by Dimitri Nakassis (Professor, Department of Classics, University of Colorado Boulder), Ellie Mackin Roberts (Teaching Fellow in Ancient Greek History, University of Leeds), Stella Spantidaki (President, Centre for Research and Conservation of Archaeological Textiles, ARTEX), Anna S. Uhlig (Associate Professor of Classics, University of California, Davis), Pari Kalamara (Director, Historical Archive of the National Bank of Greece), Stavroula Pisimisi (Director, Aggeliki Chatzimichali Museum of Folk Art and Tradition), Annie Kontogiorgi (Assistant Professor of Art History, University of Ioannina), and Katerina Konstantinou (Lecturer, Department of Social Anthropology, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences).

The second day of the conference featured presentations by Chrysoula Stamatopoulou (Weaver, Geraki), Strategoula Cheila (Weaver, Kalamata), Zoe Papadaki (Weaver, Crete), Angeliki Giannakidou (Founder & President of the Ethnological Museum of Thrace & Riza), Fotini Michaleou (Weaver and Curator, Thessaloniki), Efrosini Filippa (Weaving Collector, Lefkada), Sofia Pitouli (Ph.D. Candidate, UCLA & Paul Mellon Fellow, CASVA), Alexandra Bissa (Weaver, Athens), Maria Sigma (Textile Designer & Weaver, Athens), Ismini Samanidou (Textile Designer & Weaver, Athens), and Virginia Matseli (Ethnographer, Social Anthropologist). Central to the discussion was the proposed formation of an association of Greek weavers. This conference comes at a time of renewed interest in traditional Greek crafts and marks the first opportunity for dialogue among a community of scholars, weavers, collectors, and curators, encouraging collaboration in support of the preservation of Greece’s weaving traditions.



Participants at the Weaving and Community Conference in Kardamyli, Mani (photo: Gefyra).

The warm atmosphere of the Patrick and Joan Leigh Fermor House led to conversations across fields and comparative approaches to weaving. The house was quickly festooned with woven textiles from Geraki, Lefkada, Crete, and Thessaloniki, providing a colorful backdrop to the excellent presentations and lively discussion. Trips to the “Weaving Dreams” exhibition at the Ghika Gallery-Benaki Museum in Athens and the Victoria Karelis Collection of Modern Greek Costumes in Kalamata provided the opportunity for the participants to consider the display and exhibition of textiles for the general public.

We thank the Benaki Museum for providing us with a beautiful setting for our workshop and Myrto Kaouki, Vini Qupi, and Almonda Tafciu (Benaki Museum) for their attention to every detail of our stay. The UCLA SNF Hellenic Center is grateful for our close partnership with the Benaki Museum, which includes sending scholars each year for residencies at the Leigh Fermor House.



Scholars and weavers engaged in meaningful conversations about weaving and community in the past, present, and future (photo: Gefyra).

Weaving Dreams: Kilims from Geraki, Laconia

An exhibition at the Ghika Gallery-Benaki Museum, April 23-July 26, 2026

Numerous visitors had the opportunity to view “Weaving Dreams: Kilims from Geraki, Laconia” at the Ghika Gallery-Benaki Museum from April 23 to July 26, 2026. Co-curated by Sharon Gerstel and Sofia Pitouli, the exhibition was the culmination of a long-term collaboration between UCLA and the Cultural Society of Geraki, supported by *Gefyra* through the generosity of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF). The dramatically lit installation presented twenty works on loan from private collections in Athens, Geraki, Sparta, and Xylokastro, all exhibited publicly for the first time. A painting by Yannis Tsarouchis from the Benaki Museum’s collection connected the weaving tradition of Geraki to the broader collection of the Ghika Gallery. Photographs of the village, as well as a dowry contract, immersed visitors in a moment in time when many houses in Geraki had a loom and women from the village regularly wove kilims for commissions.

According to a review in *ελculture.gr*: “in the hall of the Ghika Gallery, a branch of the Benaki Museum, it is not merely textiles that are on display. It is lives. Memories, weddings, mourning, journeys, hopes. An entire world is on display that until recently lived locked away in trunks, protected, passed down from mother to daughter as a dowry, as a blessing, as a legacy. The exhibition ‘Weaving Dreams. Kilims from Geraki, Laconia’ is small in size but immense in significance. It is not a folkloric reference to an old, lost art. It is the revelation of a living tradition that not only has not faded away, but has found a way to return to the present with vigor.”

On April 22, the opening night of “Weaving Dreams: Kilims from Geraki, Laconia” drew an enormous crowd of public officials, representatives of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, generations of Gerakites from the village and from Athens, artists, curators, collectors, contemporary weavers and their students, and members of the general public eager to bask in the colorful works of the skilled weavers of Geraki. Present at the opening were: Dimitrios Ptochos, Governor of the Peloponnese Region and Deputy Governors Theodoros Veroutis, Spyros Tzinieris, and Thanos Michelongonas (the exhibition was held under the auspices of the Region of the Peloponnese); Stavros Papastavrou, Minister for the Environment and Energy; Athanasios Davakis, Deputy Minister of National Defense of Greece and Member of Parliament for Laconia; and Nagia Grigorakou, Member of Parliament for Laconia. We especially thank Dimos Verdos, Mayor of Evrotas, and Yorgos Tsolomitis, President of the village, for their support of our work in Geraki. Members of the Board of the Cultural Society of Geraki also traveled to Athens to celebrate the village and its weaving tradition.



Yorgos Karamihos' magical reading of parts of the book *Remembrance of the Past*, written by Sharon Gerstel, transported the assembled crowd to the village of the 1930s.

We are grateful to George Manginis (Academic Director), Xenia Politou (curator), Pavlos Thanopoulos (designer), Naoum Kokkalas (conservator), Maria Resta (conservator), and the entire staff of the Benaki Museum for hosting this beautiful exhibition. The presence of representatives from the SNF at the opening signaled the Foundation's overwhelming support for the project, and more broadly, its commitment to works in Laconia and to our Center. George and Tina Kolovos, unfortunately unable to attend the opening, were very much present as sponsors of the accompanying catalogue. We wish to recognize the Geraki weavers, who have persisted in keeping this art form alive, and the Cultural Society of Geraki. At the opening, we were thrilled to see so many weavers, collectors, and families who loaned their precious textiles for the exhibition. Grandmothers proudly showed their family treasures to grandchildren, mothers came with their sons, sisters arrived together — all to celebrate a small but important community in the heart of Laconia. No one was prouder than Chrysoula Stamatopoulou, “the last weaver of Geraki,” who has worked closely with our team throughout this project and whose artistry and efforts have inspired us and many others.

It is not a folkloric reference to an old, lost art. It is the revelation of a living tradition that not only has not faded away, but has found a way to return to the present with vigor.

- elculture.gr



In the weeks following the opening, Gerstel and Pitouli led multiple tours of the exhibition for cultural groups, students, and interested visitors. Pitouli spoke passionately about the exhibition on the radio and television. They also lectured about Geraki weaving at the SNF 2026 Nostos conference, both in Vamvakou and in Athens.

Our work on the weaving tradition of Geraki continues. Members of the Center are currently engaged in scientific analysis of synthetic dyes, which were sold at a shop in Geraki in ca. 1900. In the fall term, undergraduate and graduate students working with Professor Gerstel will begin writing the second volume of the catalogue before heading to Geraki to study weaving in person and assist in the village's olive harvest.



Mayor Dimos Verdos, co-curators Sharon Gerstel and Sofia Pitouli, officers of the Cultural Society of Geraki Evangelia Kontogeorgou (President), Athanasios Stamatopoulos (Vice President), Dimitris Angeletos (Treasurer), and Yannis Kritsidimas.



Acclaimed actor Yorgos Karamihos reads a celebratory text in front of Dimitrios Ptochos, Governor of the Peloponnese Region, Stavros Papastavrou, Minister for the Environment and Energy, Nagia Grigorakou, Member of Parliament for Laconia, and attendees.



Stavros Papastavrou, Minister for the Environment and Energy, admires a 19th-century dowry kilim uniquely woven with the representation of a bridal procession.



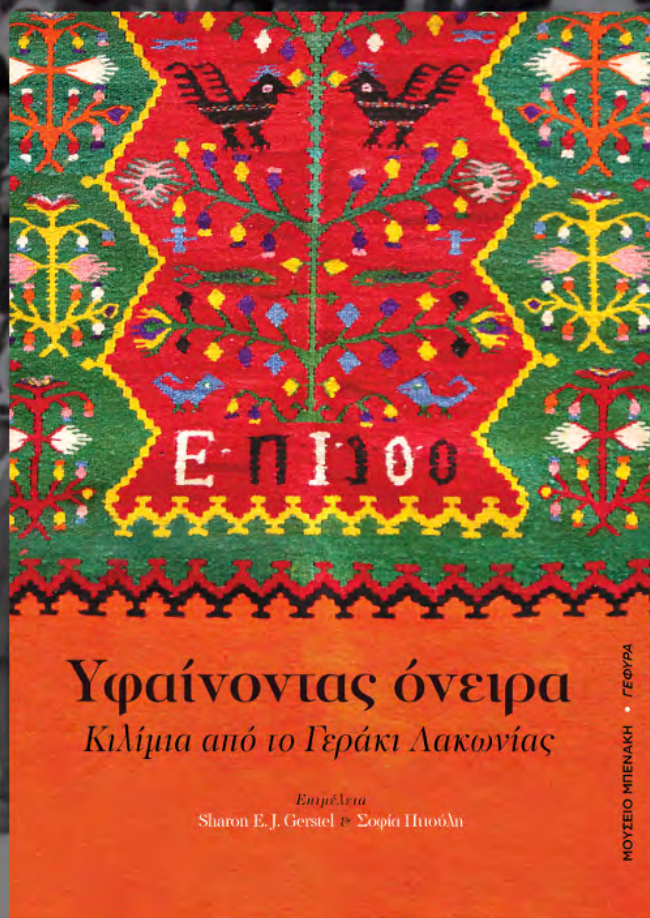
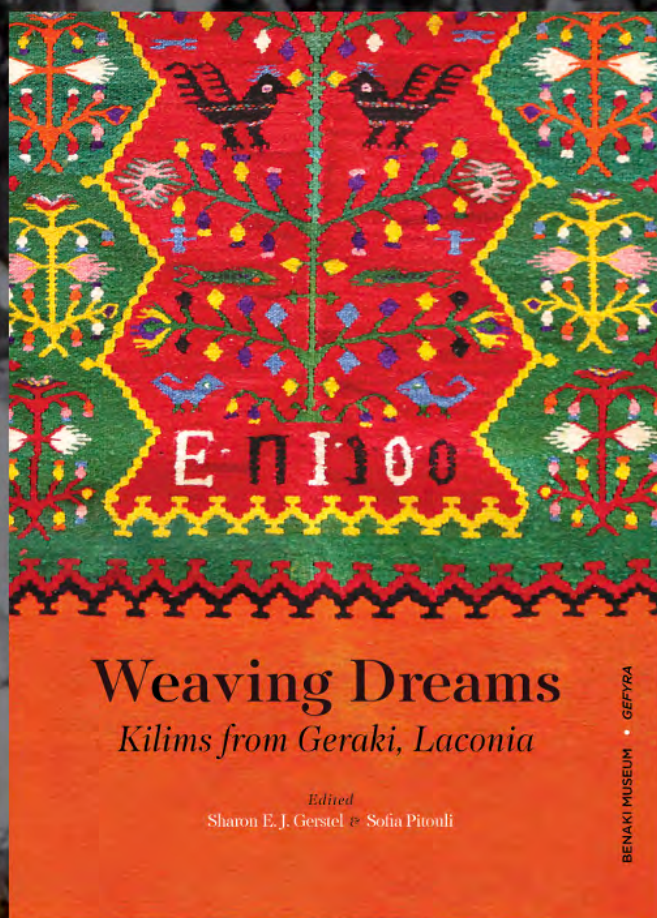
Athanasios Davakis, Deputy Minister of National Defense and Member of Parliament, with Chrysoula Stamatopoulou, Geraki weaver, and co-curators Gerstel and Pitouli.



Deputy Governor of the Peloponnese Region Theodoros Veroutis with Chrysoula Stamatopoulou, Geraki weaver and weaving instructor.

Now in its second edition, all proceeds from the sale
of this book directly benefit the weavers of Geraki
and the Benaki Museum.

Purchase your copy today:
<https://hellenic.ucla.edu/weaving-dreams/>



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Student Awards

The UCLA SNF Hellenic Center provides fellowships and scholarships that allow UCLA students to advance their studies and research in Greece. We are pleased to congratulate the following 2026 recipients:

Peter and Vivi Demopoulos Endowed Graduate Research Fellowships

Selman Oğuzcan Ünal, Ph.D. Student, Department of Art History



Selman Oğuzcan Ünal's project, "Houses of Memory and Exchange: Greek and Ottoman Elite Domestic Painting in the Nineteenth-Century Aegean," examines elite domestic wall and ceiling paintings in the Aegean as a visual language through which Greek and Ottoman households articulated memory, identity, and exchange. Focusing mainly on the Komninakis Krallis Mansion on Lesbos (Greece) and the Çakır Ağa Mansion in Birgi (Turkey), Ünal investigates how paintings reflected shared commercial and artistic networks. Comparison with Ottoman period mansions in both Greece and Turkey, such as the House of Giannakos in Molyvos (Lesbos), the Vareltsidena House in Petra (Lesvos), the Edwards (Murat) Mansion, and the Yahya Hayati Paşa Mansion in İzmir/Smyrna, reveals how decorative styles and techniques crossed the Aegean, from Venice and Campania to the coast of Asia Minor. Ünal's investigation forms part of the Αποθετήριο Ιστοριών Αιγαίου | Aegean Stories Vault sponsored by *Gefyra*, a program supported by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation and directed by Professor Dimitris Krallis (Simon Fraser University).

Stamatis Hamouzas, M.F.A. Student, Department of Design/Media Arts

Hamouzas' project investigates Koukeri ritual practices in northern Greece and the Balkans as active systems of cultural and ecological survival. Rather than treating these figures as folklore, the research approaches them as operative structures, ritual technologies that organize relationships between human communities, seasonal cycles, memory, and forces that resist easy classification. Koukeri traditions persist across landscapes marked by migration, economic pressure, and historical rupture. Their continued activation suggests not only preservation, but adaptation: a system that recalibrates itself under shifting borders and geopolitics. Masks, bells, fur, and movement function not only as symbols, but as interfaces, tools through which communities negotiate instability, ward off perceived threats, and rehearse renewal. Through site-based research, photographic documentation, and conversations with practitioners, Hamouzas focuses on the underlying frameworks that sustain these rituals beyond performance. The aim is to trace how knowledge is carried, altered, and reactivated across generations. This fellowship supported travel and extended fieldwork in Balkan villages where these practices remain embedded in daily life, providing Hamouzas direct engagement with the material and social conditions of the ritual. This research contributes to a broader investigation into how cultural systems endure within environments shaped by crisis, and how older cosmologies continue to operate quietly but persistently inside the present.

James and Carolyn Kolokotronis Endowed Graduate Research Fellowship

McKenna Lincoln, Graduate Student, Department of Art History

In preparation for their master's thesis and later dissertation, Lincoln's travel this summer facilitated in-person close viewing of the objects of their research. They focused on a small but significant group of Attic red and black-figure vases from the late sixth and early fifth centuries BCE depicting female erotic bodies in intimate domestic spaces, including scenes of potential female-female erotic intimacy. They paid particular attention to objects at the National Archaeological Museum in Athens and utilized the American School of Classical Studies' Blegen Library for research. Lincoln researched, imaged, and finalized a corpus of objects on which they will write their master's thesis. Additionally, this fellowship facilitated Lincoln's first research trip to Greece, which allowed them to see the objects and sites of their scholarship for the first time.



George and Barbara Olympios Family Endowed Graduate Research Fellowship

Carson Greene, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of History

Greene's dissertation, "An Image of Heaven: Philosophy and Theology as History in Neoplatonic Literature," investigates the ways in which late antique Neoplatonic philosophers constructed a genealogical history of philosophy based around the transmission of a primeval form of wisdom. More specifically, the dissertation argues that late antique Neoplatonists conceptualized philosophy as originating not only beyond the bounds of the Greek world, but also well beyond the bounds of more conventional historical narratives. Because these philosophers conceptualized their profession as having such distant temporal and geographic origins, they also had to create a genealogy of transmission in order to explain how this wisdom made it to their own contemporaneous time. In order to analyze the different strategies Neoplatonists employed in creating this history, Greene will read the more technical treatises of Neoplatonic philosophy in conjunction with the numerous biographies these philosophers also produced. Thanks to the George and Barbara Olympios Family Endowed Graduate Research Fellowship, Greene traveled to Greece during the summer and conducted research at the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. While there, he investigated the Gennadius Library's rare books and manuscripts collection, which houses a number of Renaissance era reproductions of Neoplatonic texts from Late Antiquity. While these manuscripts date to the fifteenth and sixteenth century, they nonetheless speak to the enduring afterlife of Neoplatonism, and the continued interest in primeval forms of wisdom.



George and Cleola Gavalas Fund for Archaeology Fellowships

Talia Neelis, Graduate Student, Cotsen Institute of Archaeology



Talia Neelis is pursuing a Ph.D. at the Cotsen Institute of Archaeology at UCLA with a focus in prehistoric Cypriot archaeology. Her fieldwork in Cyprus and Greece has inspired her to pursue an interdisciplinary research focus, investigating craftwork as a relational process across regions, landscapes, and social networks during the 3rd and 2nd millennia BCE. This research examines object materiality through archaeometric methodologies which center the ontological relationships between humans and earthly matter. The George and Cleola Gavalas Fund for Archaeology Fellowship provided support for Neelis to participate in the Ceramic Petrology Course at the British School of Athens' Fitch Laboratory in spring 2026. Learning the fundamentals of ceramic petrology is integral to her research into the *longue durée* of human-environment interactions within culturally-specific crafting traditions. Residency in Athens this summer, with

access to libraries and nearby archaeological sites, helped to expand her geographic, scientific, and social focus across the broader Greek world in order to understand relationships between Cypriot craftspeople and their Aegean neighbors. The Gavalas Fund also gave Neelis the opportunity to meet with Greek scholars who take archaeometric approaches to crafting technologies, and local craftspeople whose experiential knowledge is a critical resource for research into communities of practice and human-material relationships.

Katrina Kuxhausen-DeRose, Ph.D. Candidate, Cotsen Institute of Archaeology



Katrina Kuxhausen-DeRose continued her study of the “wandering” buildings of the Athenian Agora. Five sacred monuments and their component parts traveled from near and far: the Altar of Zeus Agoraios, the Southwest Temple, the Temple of Ares, the Altar of Ares (likely moved c. 27 BCE–14 CE), and the Southeast Temple (likely moved c. 100–150 CE). After the Herulian Invasion of 267 CE, many blocks of these now-destroyed monuments were repurposed for the construction of the post-Herulian Wall. In an effort to examine the movement, reuse, and reinterpretation of sacred architecture in Greece during the Roman Empire (c. 1st century BCE–3rd

century CE), Kuxhausen-DeRose’s project documents the physical modifications on reused blocks, visualizes the networks that they traveled, develops a model for conceptualizing itinerant reuse, and analyzes the high-stakes negotiations between ritual, identity, memory, and authority. During the summer, she conducted archival research on excavation notebooks, scanned documents at the Blegen Library, and compiled a block inventory with the help of undergraduate research assistants. She also conducted on-site documentation of the blocks, finds, and secondary foundations at the Agora. Finally, she assembled reference data of the original foundations (Pnyx, Acharnai, Sounion, Thorikos, Pallene) and comparative Greek sites flourishing during the Roman era (Calydon/Patras, Corinth, and Actium/Nicopolis).

Christine Muron, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Art History

Christine Muron's dissertation investigates the visual and material culture of the cult of St. Demetrios, patron saint of the Palaiologoi, from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. Drawing on written, visual, architectural, and archaeological evidence, she examines how imperial veneration of the saint, reflected in the expansion of his cult across Byzantine cities, resonated among communities in the Byzantine provinces and rural villages of Laconia. The George and Cleola Gavalas Fund for Archaeology enabled Muron to conduct primary research and on-site analyses of churches dedicated to St. Demetrios or decorated with scenes from his *Life*. These churches also reveal visual relationships between St. Demetrios and portraits of prominent healers, including St. Nikon Metanoieite, the patron saint of Lakedaimon (Sparta), whose legacy was rooted in religious authority and healing knowledge. Like St. Demetrios, St. Nikon was associated with therapeutic oil and miraculous cures. Written sources confirm that his monastery, a major foundation built in the heart of Lakedaimon in the tenth century, remained active into the Late Byzantine period. Muron demonstrates that the widespread presence of his portrait in Laconian churches, together with the reuse of building materials (*spolia*) in areas affiliated with his monastery, preserved and reinforced his memory within the landscape. This fellowship has allowed her to draw meaningful connections between provincial and local healing cults, whose rituals and veneration contributed to the consolidation of Byzantine power in the region.

**Vlahakis-Hanks Undergraduate Scholarship****Eli Mckoy Beiser**, Undergraduate, Department of Political Science

Eli Mckoy Beiser is a Political Science major at UCLA, where his academic work is grounded in a commitment to community empowerment, ethical leadership, and evidence-based policy analysis. His coursework emphasizes analytical rigor and quantitative reasoning, which informs his approach to examining housing policy and structural inequality. Alongside his studies, Mckoy Beiser led a legal aid internship addressing homelessness in the East Bay area of Northern California. Through that program, he coordinated student researchers, analyzed Point-in-Time Count data, and engaged directly with unhoused community members to connect policy trends with lived experience. At UCLA, he extends these values through leadership and service roles that prioritize civic responsibility and collective action. As an Alumni Scholar, he contributes to service initiatives supporting unhoused populations and strengthening community partnerships. Across his academic and leadership experiences, he emphasizes leadership rooted in empathy, transparency, and the ability to connect individuals to their strengths. Together, Mckoy Beiser's studies and community-focused leadership reflect an integrated commitment to addressing structural inequities and fostering responsible civic and environmental stewardship.



Hellenic Culture Club

The Hellenic Culture Club at UCLA enters the fall quarter ready to engage students and foster community. For years, the club has served as an important hub where students can connect, build friendships, and share a passion for Hellenic culture. Meeting biweekly at the offices of the UCLA SNF Center for the Study of Hellenic Culture, the Hellenic Culture Club has planned a variety of events for the coming year, including celebrations for Oxi Day and Easter. The club will also participate in UCLA's Enormous Activities Fair at the start of the Fall quarter, providing an opportunity to introduce new students to the organization and expand its membership.

Cultural organizations like the Hellenic Culture Club play a meaningful role in campus life. The club provides a welcoming environment where students can explore and celebrate Greek language, history, and traditions while sharing these rich cultural experiences with the broader university community. Beyond fostering social connections, the Hellenic Culture Club supports students' academic and professional development by creating opportunities to network with peers who share similar interests. Whether students are seeking community, cultural enrichment, or new experiences, the Hellenic Culture Club offers a vibrant and meaningful way to participate in the UCLA community. The Hellenic Culture Club at UCLA is open to all undergraduate and graduate students.

To join the club, please contact: uclahellenicclub@gmail.com

Hellenic Culture Club Officers (2026–2027)

Zoe French
(President)

**Dimitri Gavallos
and
Sophia Voudouris**
(Vice Presidents)

Lara Alsalek
(Secretary)

Anna Gabriel
(Treasurer)

**Vasiliki Georgakopoulos
and
Lauren Han**
(Heads of Social Media
and Marketing)

Isabella Lugo
(Special Events Chair)



Members of the Hellenic Culture Club create March bracelets for the Bruin Day for First Years event, held in April 2026 (photo: Z. French).

Glendi!

We had an amazing *glendi* at UCLA on May 17! It was a pleasure watching our students and members of the community dance to the music of Alekos Sioris, Peter Deneff, and Nondas Evangelatos. We are very grateful to the Mary Calfas Janos Program Fund and the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) for supporting this fun event! We thank Vasiliki (Vasi) Georgakopoulos, UCLA undergraduate, member of the Hellenic Culture Club, and dancer at the Assumption Greek Orthodox Church in Long Beach, for offering beginners an excellent introduction to the *kalamatiano*. Same time next year?



FALL 2026 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

FOR MORE DETAILS, VISIT [HTTPS://HELLENIC.UCLA.EDU/EVENTS/](https://hellenic.ucla.edu/events/)

OCTOBER 3

10:00 AM

ZOOM

BOOK CLUB

Pantelis C. Karatasakis, *Diary of a Soldier in the Asia Minor Campaign, 1919–1921*
Discussion led by Professor Sharon Gerstel, Director, UCLA SNF Hellenic Center and Dr. Eirini Kotsovoli, Senior Lecturer, Global Humanities, Simon Fraser University, featuring the book's editors Alec P. Karys and Gregory Kontos

OCTOBER 6

4:00 PM

247 DODD HALL

ART COUNCIL LECTURE

Ellie Mackin Roberts (University of Leeds), *From Loom to Goddess: Weaving, Cognition, and Women's Religious Experience in Ancient Greece*

OCTOBER 9

6:00 PM

2117 ROLFE HALL

GAME NIGHT

Backgammon

OCTOBER 28

11:00 AM

ROLFE COURTYARD

OXI DAY CELEBRATION

Commemoration and celebration for faculty, students, and members of the community

NOVEMBER 7

10:00 AM

ZOOM

ΛΕΣΧΗ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΗΣ

Ηλίας Βενέζης, *Αιολική Γη*

Discussion led by Professor Sharon Gerstel, Director, UCLA SNF Hellenic Center and Dr. Eirini Kotsovoli, Senior Lecturer, Global Humanities, Simon Fraser University

NOVEMBER 14

4:00 PM

314 ROYCE HALL

PRESENTATION

Memory Rehearsal by Eleni Sikelianos, PoetINVEST IN PIONEERING RESEARCH
AND RICH CULTURAL PROGRAMS!

The UCLA SNF Center for the Study of Hellenic Culture prides itself on advancing pioneering scholarship and immersive field research by UCLA faculty and students, and offering robust public programs with local and international educational and cultural organizations. Your support enables us to continue preserving and promoting our vibrant Hellenic culture through these worldwide endeavors! Please consider making a donation through our website or the QR code below. Join us as we broaden a future filled with cultural enrichment and unique educational opportunities.



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