



Serkan Yolaçan

Assistant Professor of Anthropology

Bio

BIO

Serkan Yolaçan's research broadly focuses on the interplay of past and present in the lives of individuals, diasporas, and states. In all his projects, Yolaçan combines broad space and deep history empirically, and history and anthropology methodologically, to generate geo-historical frames that speak to questions of human mobility, international order, and social change.

His book project, *Empire as Invitation: Peaks and Passages in Caucasus Worlds*, weaves the modern experiences of Turkey, Iran, and Russia through the lens of a diasporic people from the region of Azerbaijan. By placing mobile Azeris at the center of three major states, he ties together their near-synchronous transformations from constitutional revolutions at the beginning of the twentieth century to expansionist agendas in the twenty-first.

Yolaçan's second project is a comparative study of millennial and messianic movements. It explores how embodied authority, eschatological beliefs, and textual traditions interact to create invisible forms of sovereignty.

He is also part of a collaborative project that opens a new inquiry in political anthropology by studying two ubiquitous figures of the 21st century: strongman and informal diplomat. By shifting the basis of understanding their partnership from bureaucracies to networks, law to trust, and protocols to rituals, the project renders these opaque figures legible to ethnographic and historical inquiry while offering new methodological approaches to the study of populism, authoritarianism, diplomacy, and internationalism.

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- Assistant Professor, Anthropology

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

- PhD, Duke University , Cultural Anthropology (2017)
- MA, Central European University , Sociology and Social Anthropology (2008)

LINKS

- OTES – Ottoman and Turkey Encounters @Stanford: <https://mediterraneanstudies.stanford.edu/initiatives/ottoman-and-turkey-encounters-stanford>
- Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies @Stanford: <https://islamicstudies.stanford.edu/people/serkan-yolacan>

Research & Scholarship

CURRENT RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY INTERESTS

Serkan Yolaçan's research broadly focuses on the interplay of past and present in the lives of individuals, diasporas, and states. In all his projects, Yolaçan combines broad space and deep history empirically, and history and anthropology methodologically, to generate geo-historical frames that speak to questions of human mobility, international order, and social change.

His book project, *Time Travelers: Pasts and Possibilities in the Caucasus*, weaves the modern experiences of Turkey, Iran, and Russia through the lens of a diasporic people from the region of Azerbaijan. By placing mobile Azeris at the center of three major states, he ties together their near-synchronous transformations from constitutional revolutions at the beginning of the twentieth century to expansionist agendas in the twenty-first. Yolaçan's second project is a comparative study of millennial and messianic movements. It explores how embodied authority, eschatological beliefs, and textual traditions interact to create invisible forms of sovereignty.

He is also part of a collaborative project that opens a new inquiry in political anthropology by studying two ubiquitous figures of the 21st century: strongman and informal diplomat. By shifting the basis of understanding their partnership from bureaucracies to networks, law to trust, and protocols to rituals, the project renders these opaque figures legible to ethnographic and historical inquiry while offering new methodological approaches to the study of populism, authoritarianism, diplomacy, and internationalism.

Teaching

COURSES

2024-25

- Anthropological Research Methods: ANTHRO 306 (Win)
- Method and Evidence in Anthropology: ANTHRO 91 (Spr)
- Time Travel: Pasts, Places, and Possibilities: ANTHRO 312 (Win)

2023-24

- Anthropological Research Methods: ANTHRO 306 (Win)

2022-23

- Anthropological Research Methods: ANTHRO 306 (Win)
- Cults: Mystics and Messiahs in a Modern World: ANTHRO 102 (Win)
- Time Travel: Pasts, Places, and Possibilities: ANTHRO 312 (Aut)

STANFORD ADVISEES

Valeria Vergani

Doctoral Dissertation Reader (AC)

Sarina Adeline McCabe, Miray Cakiroglu, Ronald Chen, Benjamin Perez, Alek Sigley, Valeria Vergani

Orals Chair

Michelle Ha, Alek Sigley

Doctoral (Program)

Ronald Chen, Poornima Rajeshwar, Mahder Takele Teshome

Publications

PUBLICATIONS

- **A Seven-Headed Public: Empire and Satire in Revolutionary Caucasus** *COMPARATIVE STUDIES IN SOCIETY AND HISTORY*
Yolacan, S.
2025
- **Text, time, and travel: temporal pathways of postsocialism and Islam** *JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSTITUTE*
Yolacan, S.
2024
- **Strongman's Brokers: Old Diasporas and New Networks in the Age of Populism**
Yolaçan, S., Lutfi, A., Mathew, N.
Routledge.2024
- **Time as Method** *JOURNAL OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE ORIENT*
Yolacan, S.
2023; 66 (7): 983-987
- **Iron fist or nimble fingers?: An anatomy of Erdogan's strongman politics** *HISTORY AND ANTHROPOLOGY*
Yolacan, S.
2021
- **Strongmen and informal diplomats: Toward an anthropology of international relations** *HISTORY AND ANTHROPOLOGY*
Lutfi, A., Mathew, N., Yolacan, S.
2021
- **Azeri networks through thick and thin: West Asian politics from a diasporic eye** *Journal of Eurasian Studies*
Yolaçan, S.
2019; 10 (1): 36-47
- **The Idea of the Northern Tier: A New Order in the Middle East?**
edited by Yolaçan, S.
NUS Middle East Institute.2019