

CALL *for* CONTRIBUTIONS

Inaugural AUA Political Science Conference

Hosted by AUA, Co-Sponsored by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the Zoryan Institute

November 14 - 15, 2019

Armenia's Transformation in a Comparative Context: Restarting Democratization?

Deadline for abstract submissions: April 28, 2019

The 2018 “Velvet Revolution” in Armenia aspired to fundamentally transform Armenian society and the political landscape of the country. Peaceful mass protests and the resulting change in government continue to serve as sources of both popular inspiration and numerous questions among democracy practitioners and scholars alike. For example, in his September 2018 address to the UN General Assembly, the Secretary-General referred to Armenia as a “fantastic example... of hope”; in December, The Economist named Armenia “country of the year”. One year after the change of government, what has Armenia achieved and what are the challenges ahead? How does Armenia compare with other countries that experienced massive anti-government protests?

A year-and-a-half after the dramatic events of the “Velvet Revolution,” this **two-day conference** will bring together **social scientists from Armenia and abroad** to discuss various aspects of the Revolution and its aftermath. The objective of the conference is to **critically reflect on the Armenian developments and to place them in the broader context** of similar events, worldwide.

The main target community is that of scholars working in political science and international relations, but contributions from the fields of economics, media studies, sociology, history, anthropology, legal studies, and other overlapping disciplines are welcome. This conference seeks to place Armenia in the larger regional context by comparing it with other post-Soviet and Middle Eastern countries with successful or failed attempts at similar social and political transformations. Papers from/about Serbia, Georgia, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Russia, and the Middle Eastern countries involved in the Arab Spring uprisings are particularly welcome. The language of the conference is English, but Armenian panels with simultaneous translation can be scheduled, if requested.

The following panels are proposed for the conference (subject to modification, based on accepted abstracts):

1. Post-Soviet Heritage: Stagnant Democratization, Rising Aspirations

This panel might focus on the overall contexts in countries before uprisings occur. What socio-economic conditions and/or political events lead to mass protests against incumbent governments? How was Armenia similar to or different from countries on the verge of Color Revolutions or the Arab Spring? The panel can also include comparisons with Latin America, South Africa, or similar cases in other countries.

2. Contentious Politics, Mobilization, and Media Use: From Digital Engagement to Street Presence

This panel might focus on social movements and street politics at the core of mass uprisings. We invite papers on the use of social media for mobilization, interactions between governments and protesters, tactics and counter tactics, negotiations, framing of the messages, shifting and conflicting discourses, use of visuals, and so on.

3. Revolution, Transfer, or In-between: How Systemic are the Changes?

This panel might focus on the extent and sustainability of the political change in the aftermath of mass uprisings. It discusses institutions (such as the legislature, political parties, state security apparatuses, public administration, the media) and policy areas (such as tax policies, welfare policies, anti-corruption reform, foreign and security policies, the electoral code). Papers on the economic implications of the aftermath of sudden government changes are also welcome. In addition to papers on Armenia, the focal point of this panel will be on countries that experienced rather abrupt government change, similar to the Armenian case.

4. International Relations After a Political Upheaval: Continuity or Rupture?

The debate in this panel might center on the impact of the spring 2018 events in the sphere of international and foreign relations, drawing implications for Armenia and the larger region. It might also explore Armenia's abilities to manoeuvre and re-negotiate its position vis-à-vis the big powers. Similar to other panels, this panel could aspire to compare Armenia with similar cases, attempting to answer the question of why foreign policy re-orientation happens in some countries undergoing major internal political shifts, while other countries opt for no change in foreign policy.

5. Human Rights, Justice and Rule of Law: Stability vs. Change

This panel will examine human rights, judicial systems, and the rule of law in times of abrupt changes and transformations of social and political structures. It can include questions on transitional justice (advantages and disadvantages of various models), tradeoffs between stability and reform in the judicial branch, and the importance of the rule of law in consolidating democracies. Papers on experiences of other countries and lessons learned from those experiences are welcome.

Submissions will be vetted for publication consideration in an edited volume – an inaugural publication of the newly established AUA Press.

About the Host University

Founded in 1991, The American University of Armenia provides a high-quality, graduate and undergraduate education that encourages civic engagement and promotes democratic values, fostering scholarship in a setting that values and develops academic excellence, free inquiry, integrity, scholarship, leadership, and service to society.

AUA's graduate program offers master's degrees in nine fields of study: Business Administration, Industrial Engineering and Systems Management, Computer and Information Science, Political Science and International Affairs, Economics, Strategic Management, Public Health, Law, and Teaching English as a Foreign Language. These programs are intended to develop critical analysis and depth of knowledge through advanced coursework, independent study, and research.

AUA's undergraduate program offers bachelor's degrees in English and Communications, Engineering Sciences, Computer Science, Data Science, and Business. Through its undergraduate courses, the University provides students depth of knowledge for career preparation and further studies as well as the breadth and a foundation of general knowledge and skills for life-long learning.

About the Co-Sponsor

Zoryan Institute, a non-profit organization, serves the cause of scholarship and public awareness relating to issues of universal human rights, genocide, and diaspora-homeland relations. This is done through the systematic continued efforts of scholars and specialists using a comparative and

multidisciplinary approach and in accordance with the highest academic standards. To these ends, the Institute undertakes and supports multi-disciplinary research, documentation, lectures, seminars, colloquia, and publications. As an academic and scholarly center, Zoryan provides research assistance to scholars, writers, journalists, film-makers, government agencies, and other organizations.

Conference Timeline

April 28: submission of abstracts

June 2: decision on abstract acceptance communicated to authors

June 23: travel grant application deadline

September 20: early registration deadline (reduced registration fee)

October 20: paper submission deadline, late registration deadline

November 14-15: conference

Abstract Submission Guidelines

An abstract of **300-500 words** should be submitted to psiaconference2019@aua.am by **April 28, 2019**. Please include your name, institutional affiliation, and the title of the panel to which your paper most closely relates. Please indicate if you believe your paper might fit into more than one panel. We are also accepting full panel proposals (3-4 papers per panel). If the organizers find that your abstract is a better fit for a panel different from the one you've indicated, the organizers reserve the right to place the paper in a different panel.

To be considered for review, the abstract should include:

- A working title that clearly relates to the theme of the conference
- A research question, a hypothesis or a statement of empirical or theoretical concern
- A short summary locating the topic of the paper within a wider body of literature
- A brief statement on methodology and/or data to be used in the paper
- The main argument of the paper or the line of enquiry to be pursued

Please note: abstracts must be submitted in English. Abstracts not corresponding to the formal requirements listed above will be declined without further notice.

