Abstract:

While much of the international community regards the forced deportation of Armenian subjects of the Ottoman Empire in 1915, where approximately 800,000 to 1.5 million Armenians perished, as genocide, the Turkish state continues to officially deny it, insisting instead that what occurred took place during war and that the losses on their side were just as great. In this talk based on my recently published book, I delve into the roots of this denial and explain why it still persists. I specifically focus on the denial of collective violence committed against Armenians throughout Ottoman and Turkish history, demonstrating its occurrence many times before 1915. To capture the negotiation of meaning that leads to denial, I qualitatively analyze 315 memoirs published in Turkey from 1789 to 2009 in addition to numerous secondary sources, journals, and newspapers. My analysis reveals that denial is a multi-layered, historical process with four distinct yet overlapping components: the structural elements of collective violence and modernity on one side, and the emotional elements of collective consensus and legitimating events on the other. In the Turkish case, denial emerged through four stages, beginning with the imperial denial of the origins of collective violence committed against Armenians that commenced in 1789 and continued until 1907, followed by the Young Turk denial of violence lasting for a decade from 1908 to 1918, then an early republican denial taking place from 1919 to 1973, and culminating with the late republican denial of the responsibility for the collective violence started in 1974, which continues to this day.


Date and Time: Monday, 18 January 2016, 17:30

Venue: CEU, POPPER Room