



TEL AVIV אוניברסיטת
UNIVERSITY תל אביב

The Lester and Sally Entin Faculty of Humanities
The Zvi Yavetz School of Historical Studies

Contextualizing the Self: Creating and Recreating the First Person

An Interdisciplinary Workshop 2017 – 2018

Tuesday, May 22, 2018

14:15 – 15:45

Gilman Building, room 449

Chairman: **Prof. Aviad Kleinberg**

Lecture by:

Nükhet Varlık

Rutgers University, Newark

"Death, Body, and Health:

Making of the Self in Early Modern Ottoman Society"

Like all premodern societies, early modern Ottoman society was intimately familiar with death. Individuals died as a result of natural and unnatural causes, including from accidents, illness, and violent crimes, and more importantly, during mass mortality events caused by wars, epidemics, fires, famines, riots and rebellions, along with natural disasters (earthquakes, floods, and climate events). Yet even at ordinary times, higher rates of infant and child mortality and the prevalence of endemic and epidemic diseases resulted in low life expectancy, which meant that individuals faced death much earlier than their modern counterparts. Whether caused by catastrophic or natural reasons, death was a well-integrated component of life in early modern Ottoman society, and perhaps most visible in the context Istanbul. The picturesque cemeteries that surrounded the city were as much a constant in reminding individuals of death, as were routine funeral processions, prayers, and rituals. Yet one particular Ottoman death rite stands out: they made individual graves for every single person, even at times of extraordinary mortality like at the height of plague outbreaks. In my presentation, I will argue that early modern Ottoman attitudes about death can offer critical insights about notions of the self. Drawing from textual and visual sources, I will discuss the emphasis placed on the integrity of the body in the context of medicine, health, and death, as a marker of individuality in early modern Ottoman mentalities.

*** The lectures will be held in English

<https://www.contextualizing-the-self-workshop.com/>