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*Turkey and Modernity Speaker Series*

## Sibel Bozdogan

“Everyday Modernity, Urban Space and Citizenship: Public Beaches in Early Republican Istanbul”

Monday, February 4, 2013

12:30 p.m.

Mershon Center for International Security Studies

1501 Neil Ave., Columbus, OH 43201

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To register for this event, RSVP on [Eventbrite](#) by Thursday, January 31, 2013. If you have any questions or concerns, please email Ann Powers at [powers.108@osu.edu](mailto:powers.108@osu.edu).

Sibel Bozdogan is affiliate professor at the Graduate Architecture Program of Istanbul Bilgi University. Her interests cover cross-cultural histories of modern architecture and urbanism in Europe, the United States, Mediterranean and the Middle East with a specialization on Turkey.

She has taught architectural history and theory courses at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (1986-91), MIT (1991-99), and the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University (part-time since 2000). She has also served as director of liberal studies at Boston Architectural Center (2004-06).

In addition to numerous articles on these topics, her publications include a monograph on the Turkish architect Sedad Hakki Eldem (1987); an interdisciplinary volume *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* (1997), which she co-edited with Resat Kasaba; a major book *Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic* (University of Washington Press, 2001), which won the 2002 Alice Davis Hitchcock Award of the Society of Architectural Historians and the Koprulu Book Prize of the Turkish Studies Association; and most recently, *Turkey: Modern Architectures in History* (Reaktion Books, 2012), which she co-authored with Esra Akcan.



Sibel Bozdogan  
Affiliate Professor  
Istanbul Bilgi University

In Fall 2010, she curated the 1930-1950 section of the collaborative *Istanbul 1910-2010: City, Built Environment and Architectural Culture Exhibition* at the Santral Museum, Istanbul Bilgi University. Based on this research, she is currently working and lecturing on the relationship of urbanism and politics in the continuous making, unmaking and remaking of modern Istanbul since the turn of the 20th century.

She holds a professional degree in architecture from Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey (1976) and a PhD from University of Pennsylvania (1983).

### **Abstract**

After more than a decade of relative insignificance in the shadow of the new capital Ankara, the first efforts to renew Istanbul's crumbling urban infrastructure and to transform the city from an oriental, imperial capital to a modern republican city took off in the 1930s, primarily through the work of the French urban planner Henri Prost who worked for Istanbul Municipality between 1936 and 1951.

In this period, urban planning became an integral dimension of the republican project of re-making the city into a theater of modern life, and its people, into modern citizens. As the most visible forms of displaying healthy bodies (especially women's bodies) in public space, promenading, swimming and dancing came to be seen as quintessentially "modern" activities. Consequently parks, beaches and *gazinios* (music halls) became the paradigmatic spaces of modernity representing the "opening up" of a traditional Muslim society along secular western models of mixed-gender recreation while evoking the prevailing cult of body, youth and health that had captured Europe's imagination in the interwar period.

Within this broader historical context, this lecture focuses on the emergence of beaches along Istanbul's Bosphorus and Marmara shores, presenting them as symbolically charged urban sites where republican notions of modernity, secularization and citizenship acquired spatial expression. Rather than reading them as unequivocal expressions of a top-down state ideology however, they will be discussed as ambivalent sites where the official republican project of modernity and "social engineering" from above came in contact with the everyday lives of ordinary Istanbulites from below.

The lecture concludes with some critical reflections on the eventual disappearance of beaches and beach culture and the implications of this for ongoing debates on modernity, public space and collective memory in Istanbul today when the twin forces of neoliberal urbanism and Muslim conservatism continue to transform the city and its urban waterfront in unprecedented ways.

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