In her dissertation, Hazal Özdemir explores Armenian circular mobility between the Ottoman Empire and the United States between 1896-1908. By 1896 the administration of Abdulhamid II encouraged Armenians to emigrate but required them to denaturalize and sign documents attesting that they would never return. As part of this process, Armenians – who had become undesirable subjects – were required to submit two identity photographs. In this talk, Özdemir examines how and why the Hamidian regime archived these photographs – asking how the production, distribution and archiving of denaturalization records contributed to engineering a new kind of emigration database to keep Armenians from reclaiming their subjecthood or returning to the empire. She investigates how the circulation of photographs and denaturalization records created a bureaucratic network serving the demographic aspirations of the Hamidian government. Creating an emigration database and requiring Armenian migrants to denaturalize, Özdemir argues, were complementary techniques of bureaucratization and border-building.

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