

SUMMER SCHOOL *The Balkans. Spaces, Societies, History*



IMPERIAL SEAS

SPACES AND SOCIETIES FROM THE ADRIATIC TO THE BLACK SEA

1. Places of memory, heritage, material and immaterial traces

7-11 September 2026

Istanbul, Galatasaray University and ANAMED (Koç University)

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

This summer school is a multidisciplinary training on the history, spaces, and societies of the “imperial seas” bordering the Balkan Peninsula (Black Sea, Aegean Sea, Adriatic Sea), from the Roman Empire to the present day. It offers an introduction to maritime history and a critical examination of national and regional historiographies devoted to maritime affairs in the Balkans. The 2026 edition focuses on memory and heritage processes.

Since the publication of two books by Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell (*The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*, 2000, followed by *The Boundless Sea: Writing Mediterranean History*, 2020), research on the Mediterranean has undergone a revival thanks to contributions from various disciplines (anthropology in particular), and the introduction of aspects more in line with current research concerns on migration, bottom-up phenomena, gender categories, places of memory, etc. The very recent volume devoted to the Black Sea (*Handbook on the History and Culture of the Black Sea Region*, 2025) incorporates these issues and offers a number of perspectives for doctoral work.

The now well-established division between the western and eastern Mediterranean leads us to focus on the eastern area, not only due to its lesser coverage in scientific output, but also and above all because it allows us to associate two other “meso-regions,” namely the Adriatic and the Black Sea. Our definition of “imperial seas” therefore encompasses several layers which, like a palimpsest, stretch from the Greek colonies to the successive empires of Rome, Venice, the Ottomans, Russia, and the Soviet Union, which partially dominated the three seas. These empires also defined a socio-linguistic paradigm that we wish to examine in terms of lexical melting pot and “lingua franca.”

Admittedly, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Adriatic, and the Black Sea have in common the fact that they do not have a “national narrative,” but do exhibit “trend cultures,” to borrow Louis-Jean Calvet’s phrase (*La Méditerranée. Mer de nos langues*, 2016), who notes that the Mediterranean does not issue passports but unites through “smells, colors, and tastes,” characteristics that also apply to the Adriatic and the Black Sea.

Belonging to various empires and, much later, to various nation states gave rise to what Angelo Ara and Claudio Magris called, in relation to Trieste, a “border identity” (*Trieste. Un'identità difrontiera*, 1982). However, it also characterizes all the cities of the eastern Adriatic, which were areas of contact between the Mediterranean, Ottoman, Balkan, and Germanic worlds. More recently, Egidio Ivetić refers to the “frontier of the Mediterranean” (*Un confine del Mediterraneo. L'Adriatico orientale tra Italia e Slavia (1300-1900)*, 2014). The summer school aims to restore two continuities: vertical, by considering the three seas over the long term, and horizontal, by systematically studying the circulation between them, whose permanence contradicts the attempt to make each of them a “*mare nostrum*” or “*mare clausum*”.

We invite contributions related to:

1. Memory studies and the notion of traces, tangible (places of memory) or intangible (narratives).
2. The construction of historicity through archaeology.
3. The creation of traditions that intermingle, are taken up, rejected or diverted by successive powers (the Roman Empire, Venice, the Ottoman Empire and then Turkey, Greece, Russia, Italy, Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Georgia).
4. The adaptations and changes that transcend economic and national divisions, including in the environmental sphere.

Multidisciplinarity is a key element of the summer school: contributions from history (and art history), anthropology, geography, political science, sociology, literary studies, and civilization studies are welcome.

This summer school will gather up to fifteen students in different disciplines addressing heritage and memory issues. It welcomes methodological and theoretical proposals based on concrete case studies.

Our aim is to promote collective and small-group working formats, which favour brainstorming and intensive training activities. Thus, the introduction and/or some keynote lectures will be framed as round-table discussions, mixing invited speakers and researchers of the hosting institutions. The working sessions will be designed as discussion spaces. It is therefore planned to propose, before the workshop, reflective texts clarifying aspects of the theme of each workshop, which will allow participants to enter into dialogue.

Each half-day will revolve around one or two communication(s) given by invited speakers, followed by a doctoral workshop. Theoretical and methodological insights will be provided by speakers from different disciplines and a wider range of geographical areas.

Beside presentations and discussions, *in situ* experiences developed in collaboration with the host institutions (walkshops, film screening, workshops) will make specific openings toward both academic and extra-academic approaches.

Application

We welcome applications from PhD and M2 students in history, art history, geography, anthropology, sociology, political science and literature. The working language is English; a passive knowledge of French will be appreciated. Transportation costs must be covered by the students' educational institutions. The organisers provide accommodation in Istanbul and meals.

Applications should be made online via the [Missions de l'EFA](#) platform before **January 31, 2026** and include:

- a Curriculum Vitae.
- a letter of motivation.
- one reference letter.
- a short description of the thesis (max. 3000 signs).
- a paper proposal connected to the summer school's topic (max. 3000 signs).

The selection of participants will be published by February 28, 2026. **Participants must commit themselves for the whole duration of the training.**

Contact: dir.moderne@efa.gr



Photos: *Arrivée à Constantinople*, *bateau sur le Bosphore*, and *Bosphore, fortification médiévale*, by Joseph Chamonard, 1908. Archives EFA.