Sultan Doughan, PhD
Postdoctoral Fellow
Boston University
Lessons and Legacies Conference 2020

**After Blood: Holocaust Memory and the Limits of Belonging**

Scholars have recently attended to the phenomenon of national belonging by pointing to local practices in their transnational articulation as a complex claim to homeland or exclusion thereof. This paper aims to build on and contribute to these debates by attending to the atoned relationship to the Holocaust as a practice of belonging in Germany. Instead of making a spatial-territorial argument, however, this paper seeks to explore how the notion of secular temporality *after* genocidal violence shapes secular-liberal forms of citizen-subjectivity. Since citizenship law was changed to conditional birthright in the year 2000, the question of being German shifted from blood to history. This shift intersected with security concerns after 9-11 and found particular expression in a newly defined form of "Islamic extremism," one that needed to be combated with secular history and temporality. By bringing the relation to the genocidal past into the debate of national belonging, this paper discusses how German citizens of Middle Eastern descent have been engaged in performing their belonging through the Holocaust as a universal articulation of citizenship. By closely attending to a case of a German-Palestinian civic educator this paper presents how a former model teacher of tolerance has sparked a controversy, because she compared the Holocaust to the Nakba. The paper does not make a case for comparability, but rather seeks to explore how different violent memories intersect in a multicultural society and what kinds of power-asymmetries come into play between host-society and migrant communities. In analyzing how the relation to the Holocaust as a paradigmatic event structures national belonging, this paper accounts for the limits of Holocaust memory as an all-inclusive memory and points out the racializing effects on Middle Eastern immigrants when they in fact engage and internalize this history as their own.