

CHRISTIAN C. CASPARIAN

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Education

- 1987-1991: Princeton University, A.B. Degree Candidate, in the Department of Comparative Literature, and Program in European Cultural Studies, for graduation in June 1991. Departmental and Minor GPA: 3.48; Overall: 3.39
- Completed two Junior independent research projects; Senior Thesis: "Political and Social Presence in Algerian Literature."
- Awards: John McDonnell Fellowship, '87-90; Classes of '34 and '39 Fellowships, '89; President's Endowment, '89; Jules H. Falcer Endowment, '90-91.
- 1981-1987: Harvard School, graduated Magna Cum Laude. GPA: 3.85. Awards: Sentinel Academic Award (for top 5%), 1984-87. Bank of America Social Sciences Award, 1986. Brown Book Award for English Literature, 1987.

Employment History and Summer Activity

- Summer, 1990: Accountant, Alfred Music Publishing Company, Los Angeles, California. General accounting tasks; 30 hours/week.
- 1989-present: Research Assistant to Princeton Sociology Professor Suzanne Keller. Create bibliographies on given topics in the fields of economics, sociology, history, politics, and literature; write analyses of texts. 12 hours/week.
- Summer, 1989: Legal Assistant, Debevoise & Plimpton, Paris, France. Translated merger and acquisition charters, venture capital agreements; and general secretarial tasks. 30 hours/week.
- Summer, 1989: Participated in New York University's Program in Paris; enrolled in Advanced French Composition and French Language and Culture.
- 1988-89: Researcher for a New York City attorney, using Princeton libraries. Located primary and secondary sources for given topics (usually personalities or cultural phenomena), and drafted summaries of the literature available. 250 hours total.
- Summer, 1988: Deputy of the Los Angeles County Court. General secretarial duties. 30 hours/week.
- 1987-present: work-study dishwasher at Princeton Department of Food Services. Between 8 and 20 hours per week, done concurrently with non-summer jobs listed.

Chief Extracurricular Activities

- Member of Chicano Caucus and Third World Center, organizations devoted to minority unity (two and four years, respectively).
- Student Volunteer Council participant (four years): Special Olympics; annual Thanksgiving and Christmas food and clothing drives; adult and child day care; tutoring.
- Program Director of the Mentor for the Gifted high school project, 1989.
- Secretary of Alumni Relations, Chi Phi Fraternity, 1989-90. Director of Community Service, Chi Phi Fraternity, 1988-89.
- Captain of Annual Giving Telethon, an alumni fundraising event held twice each year. Four years.
- Department of Comparative Literature Student Representative.
- Student hiking group (Outdoor Action) leader, four years.

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Through the Past, Lightly

- Aucun fil n'est jamais rompu pour qui recherche ses origines.
[No line (to the past) is ever broken for those who seek out their origins.]
--Kateb Yacine, Nedjma, 1956

Before discussing my reasons for applying for this internship, and my discussion of why I feel that I am an eligible candidate, I would like to explain my ethnic background. Of course, I bear an Armenian family name, Casparian. But the history of this name, Christian C. Casparian, in itself reveals a lot about my interests, the things that I value. I was born Christian Nassour Abi-Ad, to an Armenian-American mother and Lebanese father; my parents divorced four years later. My mother and I then went to live with her parents, with whom I spent the majority of my early childhood. Sometime in my twelfth year, my grandfather, Casper Casparian, explained to me the geneology of the family name Casparian, as well as the various traditions of the Armenian church in which he was raised. My great-grandfather was born a Mammeshian, but his father deserted the family when he was quite young. The former therefore took his mother's maiden name, which I thought a very good idea (after all, why should a child carry on the name of a family other than that in which he was raised?). In an analogous situation, having not seen my father for several years, I decided to carry on what now has become almost tradition: I took the name Casparian for my own. From September, 1981, until now, I have been known as Christian Casper Casparian, after my grandfather.

Such an early, and conscious, decision reveals a lot about what I value and hold dear. As with many other things done at that age, the decision to change my name appears more significant to me now than it had at the time. Being a Casparian means a good deal more than having a particular name: it means that I value the heritage and traditions of the family that brought me up. I often think about how my ancestors came here not knowing a word of English, and now, 60 years later, I'll be going to Penn Law School, which demands about as good a mastery of the language as one can get. I am very proud to be the first Casparian to go to college, to go on to professional school. Being in college, however, at least one like Princeton, has meant that I cannot learn much about my cultural origins in the classroom. Whatever little I know now has only been gathered on my own, and through oral history. And unfortunately, there is a limit to my grandfather's and great-grandmother's historical knowledge. Every time that one of them answers, "I'm not really sure," to a question, I feel many more thousands of miles away from Yerevan than one can trace on a map. I am excited about the possibility of learning more about the history and the ways of those who bear my name.

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who look like me, as well as about being able to use my research skills outside of the university environment.

I would be honored to be selected for the Diocesan Summer Internship for this summer, and I believe that my academic experience and personal interests make me a qualified applicant. Naturally, every applicant will emphasize the importance of learning about his or her ethnic background, so I will not dwell on that too much. Rather, I would like to explain my interest in working in the Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center, and conducting independent research as part of the internship.

I would like to complete a research project, and final paper, on the subject of the French and English views of the "Armenian question," from the 1880s to the 1920s, including the Genocide. Specifically, I plan on examining contemporaneous French and English documents, from diplomats and international officials, which would reveal the actual state of affairs at the time, but through a European lens. This topic would raise again one of my favorite issues, that of the possibility of ethnographic "objectivity," and more exactly, views from Europe about Armenia. That is, while the European documents certainly come from other-than-Ottoman, Armenian, or Middle Eastern sources, to say that they therefore provide objectivity is to make certain (redoubtable) assumptions about "normalcy." To me, this topic seems to be quite fertile, allowing the examination not only of the issues and facts of the Armenian situation, but also of the particular European conceptions of the Near and Middle East, called by Edward W. Said "Orientalism."

My disciplinary background, in Comparative Literature and European Cultural Studies (ECS), should be most useful in creating the theoretical framework for approaching the subject; my practical experience in researching and writing research papers should prove valuable to the final completion of the project. Through the ECS program's workshops, seminars, and colloquiums I have been exposed to several issues of examining and defining cultures and peoples "other" than the "self," which might be easily translated to the Armenian situation. For instance, we have examined issues of historical distance, the history of histories, concentrating especially upon the "historian's ways of establishing authority and constructive descriptions," in the words of Renato Rosaldo.

Furthermore, I have had extensive experience with conducting research and writing research papers. While in college, I have conducted research on countless projects, not only for myself but for my employers. I am no stranger to the library--I know the location of books in Princeton's Firestone library just by the call numbers. But more importantly, this experience in conducting research, and writing about the

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given topics has given me terrific practice for completing my own independent research. In the past two years, I have conducted three independent research projects, all on literature written in French, the "magnum opus" being my 85-page Senior Thesis, on Algerian literature. Even in this last work, I continued independent study of (part of) my ethnicity. (In my construction, Algeria is a paradigm of the influence of European culture in the Arab world: Algerian intellectuals and authors still write in French.) In any case, through my own work as a student and researcher, I have gained the skills necessary to complete the Information Center research project this summer.

Finally, I would like to state that this internship position with the Diocese is absolutely my first choice for summer work. For its promise of helping me learn about my history and culture, and of allowing me to use what has become probably my best skill, I could not think of a better way to step out of college and into the rest of my life.