

# A 10-Year Educational Partnership Celebrating Greek Cinema

## LMU Classics & Archaeology x Los Angeles Greek Film Festival



For 25 years, **Loyola Marymount University's Classics & Archaeology Department** has been at the forefront of teaching Greek cinema, integrating film into the study of culture, history, and identity. Central to this mission is its decade-long partnership with the Los Angeles Greek

Film Festival (LAGFF). This vibrant collaboration connects academia and the film industry through education, mentorship, and hands-on experience.

As LAGFF celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2026, the festival is marking this major milestone with the launch of LAGFF-doc, its inaugural Documentary Festival, dedicated to filmmakers whose stories give voice to lived experience and truth. LMU Classics & Archaeology is proud to co-host this new initiative celebrating documentary films from Greece and Cyprus, as well as filmmakers of Greek or Cypriot descent, and stories rooted in the region's culture and history. The festival features a dynamic mix of contemporary and retrospective documentaries amplifying diverse voices and perspectives.

LAGFF-doc is presented as part of **LMU Greek Cinema Week**, transforming festival screenings into a space for scholarly inquiry and dialogue. Under the guidance of Prof. Katerina Zacharia, LAGFF Director of Education, students in the course "*Representations of Greece: Ancient and Modern*" play an active role in the festival, supporting programming and participating in award selection.

"*Representations of Greece: Ancient and Modern*" is a unique course that offers students the opportunity to study complex issues of representation through an interdisciplinary approach. The course highlights four interconnected areas of study: politics and economics; food, travel, sports, and music; theater and arthouse films; and family, religion, and the state. Students examine features attributed to "the other" in encounters between cultures of asymmetrical power, explore how stereotypes emerge through contextual negotiations of identity, and consider how such identities have been shaped by representations of Greece from antiquity to the modern era.

Faculty from LMU's **Bellarmine College of Liberal Arts** (BCLA) will also contribute their expertise

to the festival by participating in post-screening panels following select documentary films. Drawing on disciplines across the humanities and social sciences, these faculty-led conversations will offer historical, cultural, and critical perspectives on themes such as disability, environmental justice, LGBTQ+ experiences, Greek Jewish history, and other pressing social issues explored in the films.

### The LMU Prize for Social Justice

BCLA-Classics & Archaeology will select and award the LMU Prize for Social Justice to the best feature documentary at the LAGFF-doc on February 1, 2026, and to the best feature fiction film, and best fiction short film at the 20th LAGFF on June 7th, 2026. Students in Prof. Zacharia's courses will select the short fiction film. The LAGFF jury and Prof. Zacharia will select the best feature films for this award. At the LAGFF closing ceremonies, Prof. Zacharia will present the award.

### A Model of Experiential Learning

Since the launch of the LMU-LAGFF internship program in 2014, over 220 LMU students have completed supervised internships administered by Prof. Zacharia. Students gain first-hand experience across all facets of festival production, including programming, industry labs, event production, videography, filmmaker interviews, film reviewing, and digital content creation. Interns work closely with the Festival Manager and the Discovery Days, Development, and Production teams.

In addition, more than 135 students have participated in Greek cinema summer courses and written essays on the LAGFF films, while more than 15 LMU School of Film and Television faculty have also served as LAGFF jurors over the years.

Student interns contribute to research-driven blogs that combine film analysis with reflections on professional growth and skills development. The 2025 master blog was curated by **Tanya Rasheesa** '25 (Classics & Archaeology and English; Jewish Studies minor) and **Nare Tendjoukian** '26 (English major; Classics & Archaeology minor). An overview of the course, student blogs, and internship reports is available at: <http://zacharia.lmu.build>.

For the LAGFF-doc, two LMU interns have been working tirelessly on the creation of the website, and on the promotion of the films across campus: **Zachariah Michelena** '28 (Political Science and Classics & Archaeology, with minors in Asian and Pacific Studies and History), and **Julia Pinto Ribeiro Sereno** '26 (Screenwriting; minors in Classics & Archaeology, and in Animation). We are deeply grateful for their contributions.

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Photo from the West Coast premiere for the biopic film *Stelios* about the Greek singer Stelios Kazantzidis (1931-2021), presented by the Los Angeles Greek Film Festival (LAGFF) at Harmony Gold Theater in West Hollywood on May 4, 2025.

Photo credit: Lizeth Ramirez photography @lizethography

From Left, Back Row: Antonella Borjas ('26, International Relations), Landen Strazdas ('27, Psychology, English minor), BCLA Dean and Prof. Richard Fox, LAGFF Artistic & Festival Director Aris Katopodis, LAGFF Director of Production Eleni Kafetzi

From Left, Middle Row: Gilberto Perez ('26, Business Administration), Prof. Katerina Zacharia, Mariana Gómez-Nieves ('26, Finance), LAGFF Co-founder Ersi Danou, LAGFF Director of Development Katerina Hoyo-Frederickson

From Left, Front Row: Angelos Vamvakas ('26, Economics), Karis Song ('25, Film, TV & Media Studies), Zachariah Michelena ('28, Political Science, and Classics & Archaeology majors), Philippe Alexandrov ('26, Entrepreneurship), Matthew Wong ('27, Psychology, Health & Human Sciences minor).



**Katerina Zacharia** is a Professor of Classics at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. Her publications include *Converging Truths: Euripides' Ion and the Athenian Quest for Self-Definition* (2003), *Hellenisms: Culture, Identity and Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity* (2008), and articles on classical antiquity in visual culture, Greek cinema, tourism, and cultural politics. She wrote, directed, and produced the award-winning short documentary *Blessings and Vows* (2018), which has screened at 36 film festivals and garnered 9 international awards, and she published "["Into the Light: Making Blessings and Vows"](#)" (*Ergon* 2021).

Prof. Zacharia co-created *Enthralled*, a new conversation game for higher education, drawing on classical drama. Her work has been supported with fellowships from the A.S. Onassis Foundation, A.G. Leventis Foundation, Heritage Management Organization, Stanford University, and innovative teaching awards, including the 2023 Society of Classical Studies Excellence in Teaching at the University level; the LMU inaugural 2024 Bellarmine College of Liberal Arts Excellence in

Teaching award; the 2018 LMU President's Fritz B. Burns Distinguished Teaching Award, and the 2019 LAX Chamber of Commerce Eddy Award. Prof. Zacharia is an experienced dramaturge and has produced theatrical performances and workshops including the U.S. tour for Oscar-winning Michael Cacoyannis' cabaret adaptation of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* (2006), and Stanford Repertory Theater's productions of the *Wanderings of Odysseus* (2012) and *Hecuba* (2018) at the Michael Cacoyannis Foundation in Athens. She served as LAGFF juror (2014) and programmer (2015-18). As the Director of Education for the Los Angeles Greek film festival, she has created a vibrant student internship program with Loyola Marymount University since 2014.

### Impact Beyond the Classroom

The success of this partnership is reflected in an 80% response rate to a 2020 alumni survey and overwhelmingly positive feedback, featured in the LMU Newsroom article "[Connecting the Liberal Arts, Classics and Film](#)" (March 4, 2021). Alums consistently highlight how the program's integration of Greek history, culture, and film theory prepared them to engage critically with contemporary cinema and produce high-quality reviews and research.

The [Representations of Greece](#) digital booklet, featuring over 80 alum testimonials, further documents the program's impact and supports ongoing efforts to expand collaborations and attract new partners and donors.

LMU Classics & Archaeology is deeply grateful to the Los Angeles Greek Film Festival for this enduring and inspiring partnership. Together, we continue to cultivate the next generation of scholars, filmmakers, and cultural critics while celebrating Greek cinema as a living, evolving art form.



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