



HERITAGE WEEKEND & CLASSIC

Scottsdale, Arizona

OCTOBER 9 - 12, 2025



Speaker's Guide



SPEAKING PROGRAM

Friday, October 10

NEW PERSPECTIVES PANEL

Panelists:

Paris Karasso
Kostas Koeman
John Saracakis
Katerina Sokou

HERITAGE GREECE PERSPECTIVES PANEL

Panelists:

Claudia Carydis
Peter Chrysanthakes
Alexis (Alex) Phylactopoulos
Edward C. "Ed" Wingenbach

Saturday, October 11

ROBOTICS & AI PANEL

Panelists:

Dr. Nicholas G. Bourbakis
Niovi Christopoulos
Alexandros Dimakis
Dr. Nicholas Theodore
James Charles Theofilos
Evie Tsarnas



MODERATOR - WILLIAM J. ANTHOLIS

William J. Antholis is the Director and CEO of the Miller Center for Public Affairs at the University of Virginia. Previously, he was Managing Director at the Brookings Institution, where he guided policy research initiatives and co-authored books including *Fast Forward: Ethics and Politics in the Age of Global Warming* and *Inside Out India and China: Local Politics Go Global*. His early career included roles in the White House National Security and Economic Councils, and the State Department, particularly on climate and international economic affairs. He earned his BA from the University of Virginia and a PhD in Politics from Yale University.



SPEAKING PROGRAM



DR. NICHOLAS G. BOURBAKIS

Nikolaos G. Bourbakis is a Greek computer scientist and professor, currently serving as an Ohio Board of Regents Distinguished Professor of Information Technology at Wright State University, where he also directs both the Information Technology Research Institute and the Assistive Technologies Research Center. His expertise lies in image processing, autonomous robotic vision, and assistive technology, and he is the founder and editor-in-chief of the International Journal on Artificial Intelligence Tools. He earned his mathematics degree from the University of Athens and his PhD in computer engineering and informatics from the University of Patras in 1983 and has been honored with the IEEE Computer Society Technical Achievement Award for his pioneering contributions.



NIOVI CHRISTOPOULOU

Niovi Christopoulou is an attorney with a multi-jurisdictional presence in New York, Washington, D.C., and Athens, serving formerly as global legal lead in Amazon's Payments group. She holds an LL.M and JD (Harlan Fiske Stone Scholar) from Columbia University School of Law, and her practice spans mergers & acquisitions, private equity, fintech, digital assets, AI policy, and complex partnership arrangements. She is currently a venture partner at NextGen Venture Partners, advises on AI-driven product and policy development, serves as a mentor in entrepreneurship accelerators, and previously was Assistant General Counsel at Libra Capital. In 2024, she was the first U.S.-based candidate to stand for election to the European Parliament with New Democracy where she championed issues affecting the Greek diaspora.



ALEXANDROS G. DIMAKIS

Alexandros G. Dimakis is a professor in the Department of Electrical Engineering & Computer Sciences at UC Berkeley. He earned his PhD from UC Berkeley and a Diploma in Electrical and Computer Engineering from the National Technical University of Athens. His research—spanning generative models, information theory, and distributed coding and learning—has appeared in over 150 publications. He has received several prestigious awards, including the NSF CAREER, Google Research Award, and the IEEE James L. Massey Award, and serves in editorial and reviewer roles for top ML conferences and journals.

SPEAKING PROGRAM



PARIS KARASSO

Paris Karasso is a Senior Advisor at Calamos Wealth Management, providing comprehensive investment and wealth advisory services to high-net-worth clients and institutions. Previously, he served as Chief Investment Officer and General Manager at Alpha Asset Management and Eurobank Asset Management. He started his career on Wall Street as a quantitative strategist and proprietary trader in fixed-income desks at firms including Bear Stearns, Deutsche Bank, and Bankers Trust. Paris holds both a Master's degree and a PhD in Mechanical Engineering from Stanford University and serves on the Board of the American College in Greece.



KOSTAS KOEMAN

Kostas Koeman founded the Hellenic Archaeological Exploration Society in 2022 to support academic research and non-profit institutions in fulfilling their missions through cutting edge technology. He participated in the Mentor Shipwreck Excavation Program in 2023 and produced a film about the program's history and aspirations for the future that is available online and portions will be displayed at the underwater archaeological museum under construction in Piraeus, Greece. He has ongoing projects assisting non-profit foundations in the Pacific Northwest and will be expanding support of historians and archaeologists in Greece in the coming year.



DR. NICHOLAS THEODORE

Nicholas Theodore, MD, is an award-winning professor researcher who joins the University of Arizona's College of Medicine as Chair of the Department of Neurosurgery at Banner-University Medical Center. He was the Director of Johns Hopkins University Neurosurgical Spine Program and Co-leader of the Carnegie Center for Surgical Innovation at Johns Hopkins. He specializes in spinal trauma, minimally invasive and robotic spine surgery, spinal cord injury treatment, and personalized medicine, and has authored hundreds of publications.

Dr. Theodore completed his MD at Georgetown University, neurosurgery residency and spinal fellowship at Barrow Neurological Institute, and has held distinguished faculty and leadership roles, including as the Donlin M. Long Professor of Neurosurgery. He is attributed with 400+ journal papers and has received substantial grants from NIH, DARPA and other sources. Dr. Theodore served our nation as a neurosurgeon in the United States Navy.



SPEAKING PROGRAM



JAMES CHARLES THEOFILOS

James Theofilos is a business and finance leader with deep expertise at the intersection of AI and cloud technology. Most recently, he served as Senior Finance Manager for Azure & AI at Microsoft, where he was the Go-to-Market Finance Lead for AI Apps & Agents, including Azure OpenAI, AI Foundry, and GitHub Copilot. Over his six years at Microsoft, James drove strategy across healthcare, financial services, telecom, and enterprise solutions—shaping investments, P&L performance, and go-to-market initiatives that accelerated AI adoption at scale. James is now joining Google Cloud as the Go-to-Market Lead for AI Infrastructure, where he will help build the ecosystem and compute capacity required to support Google's most strategic AI customers.

James also serves on the Board of Directors at electroCore, Inc., a medical technology company pioneering innovation to improve patient outcomes. He holds both a BSBA and a Master's in Finance from Washington University in St. Louis' Olin Business School. James is also a proud Heritage Greece alumnus from the class of 2015.



EVIE TSARNAS

Evie is a Heritage Greece Program Alumnus serves as a Customer Success Account Manager at Microsoft, where she partners with clients to drive digital transformation, optimize cloud strategies, and achieve ambitious business goals. With over six years of experience at Microsoft, she began her career as an Associate Consultant in Secure Infrastructure through the MACH program, focusing on Azure, hybrid cloud, and enterprise modernization. Evie has also been a strong advocate for women in technology, previously serving as a Student Ambassador with Indiana University's Center of Excellence for Women in Technology. Her background leading technology initiatives for nonprofits and her passion for innovation uniquely position her to help organizations harness the power of AI, cloud, and emerging technologies to lead in their industries.

SPEAKING PROGRAM

HERITAGE GREECE PROGRAM PARTNERS



CLAUDIA CARYDIS

Claudia Carydis has been serving as Vice President of Public Affairs at The American College of Greece (ACG) since June 2012. In this role, she handles relationships with government, public authorities in Greece and the U.S., and foreign missions, and has been instrumental in legal and policy developments around private tertiary education in Greece. She also directs the College's sustainability efforts—including overseeing reporting, awareness, and community engagement—and under her leadership, ACG earned a Gold STARS rating from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education in 2020. Carydis has been part of ACG since 2005, previously heading Alumni Relations and College Events, and holds a B.A. in Business Administration from Deree-ACG and an M.A. in International Relations & Communication from Boston University.



PETER CHRYSANTHAKES

Peter Chresanthakes has served as Vice President for Institutional Advancement at Anatolia College (including the American College of Thessaloniki – ACT) since June 2010. In that capacity, he leads strategic branding, marketing, and fundraising initiatives—working closely with the President and the Board's Institutional Advancement Committee—to broaden donor engagement and support. Prior to this, he held roles in financial analysis, venture advisory, and banking (both in Greece and the U.S.), including positions in private equity, real estate capital markets, and startup financing; he also served on boards of financial startup and banking.



ALEXIS (ALEX) PHYLACTOPOULOS

Alexis Phylactopoulos has played a central role in College Year in Athens (CYA), serving as its President from 1986 until June 2023, and then becoming Executive Chair of its Board of Trustees in July 2023. He holds a first degree from the University of Athens, as well as postgraduate degrees from Princeton University and the University of Cambridge and specializes in the Law of the Sea. An early career diplomat, he served in Greek embassies in Washington, D.C. and Mexico City, and beyond CYA, has held leadership or board roles at Athens College, the Greek Archaeological Society, the Hellenic-Canadian Chamber of Commerce, and several other educational and cultural institutions.



SPEAKING PROGRAM



EDWARD C. “ED” WINGENBACH

Edward C. Wingenbach serves as the President of the American College of Greece. He is a scholar and higher-education leader who became the eighth President of Hampshire College in August 2019. During his tenure there, he led a comprehensive turnaround—overseeing enrollment growth, fundraising initiatives, curricular reform, and achieving carbon neutrality; under his leadership applications more than doubled and the institution’s finances stabilized. Of July 1, 2025, he will become the President of the American College of Greece. He earned a B.S. in Marketing from the University of Illinois (1985), an MBA from Pennsylvania State University (1989), and is a Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA).

AMERICAN HELLENIC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



JOHN D. SARACAKIS

John Saracakis is President of the Board of Directors of the American Hellenic Chamber of Commerce USA. He is a third-generation entrepreneur and Chairman of the Saracakis Group of Companies, a family-owned enterprise established in 1922 that operates across sectors such as mobility, defense, construction & industrial equipment, agricultural machinery, energy, and environmental services. He holds a B.Sc. in Business Administration from Babson College and completed the Advanced Management Program at Harvard Business School. John is Secretary-General of the Association of Motor Vehicle Importers-Representatives and holds board or executive roles in several other business associations, including the Delphi Economic Forum and ALBA Graduate Business School.



KATERINA SOKOU

Katerina Sokou serves as the Executive Director of the American Hellenic Chamber of Commerce USA. She is a historian-turned-journalist serving as the Washington, D.C. correspondent for the Greek daily Kathimerini and SKAI TV, and contributing as a columnist focusing on transatlantic relations, foreign policy, financial diplomacy, U.S. politics, and international organizations. She is also a non-resident Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council’s Europe Center, a Research Fellow at ELIAMEP, Principal at the communications consultancy News Intelligence, a director at The Hellenic Initiative Canada, and involved with the Hellenic American Women’s Council. She graduated with her BA history from the University of Ioannina, and holds postgraduate degrees in International Studies at the University of Warwick, and Journalism at Columbia University.



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Thank You for Joining Us!

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