



The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Syllabus

The Puzzle of Iran: Intellectual History and Society in the 20th and 21st Centuries - 38013

Last update 07-10-2024

HU Credits: 2

Degree/Cycle: 1st degree (Bachelor)

Responsible Department: Islamic & Middle East Stud.

Academic year: 0

Semester: 1st Semester

Teaching Languages: English

Campus: Mt. Scopus

Course/Module Coordinator: Prof. Simon Wolfgang Fuchs

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Coordinator Office Hours: Monday, 13-15

Teaching Staff:

Prof. Simon Fuchs

Course/Module description:

The transformation of Iran from an authoritarian, secular regime to an Islamic Republic is one of the most fascinating story of the 20th century. In this course, we will explore which intellectual shifts the country has experienced until today and how these have affected Iranian society.

Course/Module aims:

Learn about the troubled history of Iran in the modern period and develop an understanding of its many unexpected twists and turns. Deepen your understanding of the country's complexity in terms of political viewpoints, social phenomena, ethnic backgrounds, and religious observance. Gain skills in academic writing, reading, and analyzing primary and secondary sources.

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

- Describe the major transitions of Iran since the late 19th century from empire to secular, authoritarian nation state to Islamic Republic
- Appraise the attempts at modernization and social engineering in Iran
- Embed Iran within the Middle East and beyond
- Develop an appreciation of the many (political) paths not taken and visions of modern Iran not realized as proposed by leftists, liberal, and minority groups
- Debate the consequences of the Iranian Revolution on Iran's society with a particular emphasis on gender and the Revolutionary Guards Corps
- Investigate current trends in society, film, and literature in Iran

Attendance requirements(%):

100

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: Lectures, discussions, group-work, analysis of primary sources

Course/Module Content:

Iran is one of the most puzzling countries on earth. While the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei recites Quranic verses in the garb of a senior Shi'i religious scholar during Friday prayers, Iran's partying, drug-consuming young population seems to be more

removed from traditional Shi'i values than ever. How did we get to this seeming bifurcation? How "real" is this sharp contrast in the first place beyond being just a (media) construction? What is the deeper history of the Islamic Republic and how has it been able to weather many storms, such as a long war with Iraq, frequent protests, and economic sanctions? Moving back in time, how can we conceptualize the regime of the Shah and its downfall? How did Iranians encounter modernity in the first half of the 20th century? In this course, we will explore various visions proposed for modern and contemporary Iran and how and why these did (or failed to) come to fruition. We will pay particular attention to the ethnic and linguistic diversity to demonstrate that modern Iran is much more than simply the "mullah regime" as it is often portrayed.

Required Reading:

Sample list of required readings (full details on Moodle):

Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982)

Janet Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906 - 1911: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy, & the Origins of Feminism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996)

Roham Alvandi, ed. *The Age of Aryamer: Late Pahlavi Iran and Its Global Entanglements* (Chicago: The Gingko Library, 2018)

Narges Bajoghli, *Iran Reframed. Anxieties of Power in the Islamic Republic* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019)

Mazyar Ghiabi, *Drugs Politics. Managing Disorder in the Islamic Republic of Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019)

Kevan Harris, *A Social Revolution: Politics and the Welfare State in Iran* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2017)

Mary Elaine Hegland, *Days of Revolution. Political Unrest in an Iranian Village* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013)

Pamela Karimi, *Alternative Iran. Contemporary Art and Critical Spatial Practice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2022)

Charles Kurzman, *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004)

Roy P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet. Religion and Politics in Iran* (New York: Oneworld Publications, 2014)

Nahid Siamdoust, *Soundtrack of the Revolution. The Politics of Music in Iran* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017)

Lior Sternfeld, *Between Iran and Zion. Jewish Histories of Twentieth Century Iran* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019)

Farzin Vejdani, *Making history in Iran : Education, Nationalism, and Print Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015)

Additional Reading Material:

A full syllabus with required readings and supplementary readings will be distributed in class and will also be made available on Moodle.

Grading Scheme:

Essay / Project / Final Assignment / Home Exam / Referat 60 %

Active Participation / Team Assignment 20 %

Mid-terms exams 20 %

Additional information:

Please note that regular attendance is mandatory. Absences will result in a deduction from your grade. If a student accumulates more than three absences (excluding reserve duty and exceptional circumstances supported by documentation), they will be required to discontinue the course. Students are expected to come to the sessions prepared for discussion, having read the assigned material at home. Preparedness for the sessions is accompanied by short writing assignments before each class, which are mandatory (ungraded). The course cannot be completed without submitting these assignments on time.