IR 329/385: PREMODERN IRAN

This course covers the history of the Iranian plateau and adjacent areas from the eve of the Muslim conquest of the Sasanian Empire (early 7th century) to the eve of the Constitutional Revolution of 1906. It aims to provide a comprehensive introduction to Persian culture and Iranian history, including sessions on Persian literature, socio-political thought, and the visual arts. Each session will comprise a lecture and a discussion of the assigned readings.

Requirements: each week students must turn in a one-page paper in response to one of the items on the reading list for that week. A total of eleven papers will be expected from each student in the course of the semester, and each paper will account for 5% of the grade. Class participation will count for 15% of the grade. There will be a final cumulative exam which will count for 30% of the final grade. A student can miss up to two lectures; for every additional lecture missed the final grade will be taken down one level (an A will become an A- etc.). Cell phones are not allowed in class; a student found texting will be asked to leave the class.

Required readings include books and articles; they are available on Blackboard. Office hours are Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00-3:00 and Wednesday by appointment. The instructor can be reached at 617 358 0193.

Students are expected to know and understand the provisions of the CAS academic code. Cases of suspected academic misconduct will be referred to the Dean’s Office. Students are expected to know and understand the provisions of the CAS academic code. No make-up exams will be given except in very exceptional circumstances – travel arrangements will not count as such.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1
January 17: Introduction to the Geography of the Iranian plateau
January 19: Pre-Islamic Iran

Readings:

Week 2
January 24: The Islamization of Iran
January 26: Beginnings of Persian Awakening

Readings:
David Morgan, *Medieval Persia 1040-1797*, pp. 1-21
**Week 3**
January 31: Ferdowsi and the *Shahnameh*
February 2: *Shahnameh* and the arts of the book: Museum visit or lecture

Readings:
Excerpts from the *Shahnameh*.

**Week 4**
February 7: The Persian Language
February 9: Persianate Political Culture

Readings:
Gilbert Lazard, *The Origins of Literary Persian*.

**Week 5**
February 14: The Encounter with Turks
February 16: Political History of Pre-Mongol Iran

Readings:

**Week 6**
February 21: No class
February 23: The Mongol Invasions

Readings:
Week 7
February 28: Pragmatism and Antinomianism in Persian Literature
March 1: Sufism and Hafiz

Readings:
Sa‘di of Shiraz, *The Rose Garden.*
Hafiz, *Ghazals.*

Week 8
March 6: Zoroastrians in Medieval Iran
March 8: Jews in Medieval Iran

Readings:
More to be announced.

Week 9
March 20: The Legacy of the Timurids
March 22: The Rise of the Safavids

Readings:

Week 10
March 27: Shah Abbas
March 29: Safavid Society

Readings:

Week 11
April 3: The Safavids’ Relations with Europe and Persia in the European Imagination

April 5: Film on Isfahan

Readings:

**Week 12**

April 10: The Religious Sphere under the Safavids

April 12: The Eighteenth Century

Readings:

**Week 13**

April 17: Early Qajar Rule: 1796-1848

April 19: Late Qajar Rule: 1848-1906

Readings:

**Week 14**

April 24: Non-Muslims in Iran

April 26: The Beginnings of Iranian Modernism

Readings:
Abbas Amanat, “The historical roots of the persecution of Babis and Baha’is in Iran,” in Dominic Parviz Brookshaw and Seena B. Fazel, eds., *The Baha’is of Iran: Socio-historical studies*, pp. 170-183.
Mehrdad Amanat, “Messianic expectation and evolving identities: the conversion of Iranian Jews to the Baha’i faith,” in ibid., pp. 6-29.
**Week 15**
May 1: Conclusions

Readings: