**The George Washington University**

**Politics of Modern Iran**

Spring 2024

**Course**: PSC 2993-13 & PSC 6489-80

**Time**: Thursdays 5:10-7:00 pm.

**Location**: Bell 104

**Instructor:** Sina Azodi, PhD.

Email: [sinas69@gwu.edu](mailto:sinas69@gwu.edu)

**Office Hours:** By Appointment. Email me to set up an appointment. I respond to inquiries as quickly as I can.

**Course Description:**

Iran stands as one of the world's oldest civilizations, with a historical lineage extending from the Achaemenids and Sassanians to the Safavids and the Islamic Republic. This course provides an in-depth investigation of the politics of modern Iran, spanning from the ascendancy of the Shiia-Safavid Empire to the demise of the Pahlavi Dynasty and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Through a comprehensive examination of major historical and political episodes, students will gain a nuanced understanding of the evolving socio-political landscape that has shaped Iran's contemporary statehood. The aim of this course is to familiarize students with important episodes, unique characteristics, and the making of modern Iran and how those characteristics influence Iran’s view of itself and its foreign and security policies.

**Learning Objectives:**

By the end of the semester, students taking this course should:

* Have an overall knowledge of major historical episodes and political developments of modern Iran.
* Have a general understanding of Iran’s contemporary issues, such as democracy, gender relations human rights, etc.
* Improve their ability to critically analyze Iran’s foreign and security policies, including the nuclear challenge and U.S.-Iranian relations.
* Advance their research, writing, and presentation skills, focusing on the history and politics of modern Iran.

**Required Textbooks:**

* Amanat, Abbas. *Iran: A modern history*. Yale University Press, 2017. (Available [here](https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv19prrqm))
* Keddie, Niki *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, Yale University Press, 1981.
* Ansari, Ali M. *Iran, Islam and democracy: The politics of Managing Change*. Gingko Library, 2019. (available online [here](file:///Users/sinaazodi/Desktop/Teaching/GWU/Ansari,%20Ali%20M.%20Iran,%20Islam%20and%20Democracy:%20The%20Politics%20of%20Managing%20Change.%20Gingko,%202019.%20https:/doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvhrcxqj.))
* Axworthy, Michael. *Revolutionary Iran: a history of the Islamic republic*. Oxford University Press, 2013.
* Abrahamian, Ervand. *A history of modern Iran*. Cambridge University Press, 2018.
* Mackey, Sandra.*The Iranians: Persian, Islam and the Soul of a Nation.* (Penguin Publications: New York, 1998)
* Pezeshkzad, Iraj. *My Uncle Napoleon: A Novel*. Modern Library, 2006.

**Average minimum amount of out-of-class learning expected per week:**

More information about GW’s credit hour policy can be found at: [provost.gwu.edu/policies-](https://provost.gwu.edu/policies-forms) [forms](https://provost.gwu.edu/policies-forms) (webpage); or [provost.gwu.edu/files/downloads/Resources/Assignment-Credit-Hours-7-2016.pdf](https://provost.gwu.edu/files/downloads/Resources/Assignment-Credit-Hours-7-2016.pdf) (form).

**General Course Requirements**

**Attendance &Class Participation:** The course will follow a lecture format, with significant time for class discussion. Each member of the class should come prepared to discuss the assigned readings for the week, with prepared notes and outlines. Attendance and participation constitute a key component of your course grade. We will spend some class time in each session on current events in Iran. Read from multiple media sources—and from regional sources when you can.

**Life events are for everyone. If you know that you will miss a class, please inform the instructor before the missed class occurs. Please note that absences of two or more will impact your course performance.**

***Note****: I welcome and encourage different points of view. However, I expect all students to be respectful of others and their views, especially when you disagree with them. I will not tolerate any form of disrespect or the use of offensive language in the class. Be courteous to fellow students and respect the rights of others to think differently.*

**Group Presentation:**

In each session, a designated group of students will be tasked with summarizing the assigned readings, elaborating on key ideas, and formulating thought-provoking questions to facilitate class discussion. Presentations are expected to adhere to a 30-minute time limit, with the understanding that the **instructor may intervene if necessary**. While presenting, it is advised to refrain from delving excessively into the minutiae of the readings and instead emphasize the overarching themes and arguments.

In preparation for group presentations, each group is tasked with formulating intellectually engaging questions that prompt thoughtful discussion. Other students are encouraged to actively contribute to the discussion with insightful responses.

*Students will submit to the instructor, an anonymous peer-reviewed report. In less than a paragraph, members of each group will evaluate the performance of their group members in preparation for the presentation.*

**You are not required to use PowerPoint presentations, but it is certainly encouraged. Be creative; feel free to use media to enhance your presentation.**

**Take-home exam**: More details will be announced as we approach the date. Your exams are due March 21, 2024.

**Final Paper:**  Students will submit a 10-15 page paper- double spaced- at the end of the semester. Come see me to discuss your final paper topic first. A draft proposal of your final paper is due on **March 28, 2024.** Submit a hard copy to me in class.

Final papers are due on Thursday, May 2, 2024

***Note: Students enrolled in the Graduate level are required to write a 20-25 page paper- double-spaced.***

**Grading Criteria:**

Attendance & Participation 25%

Group Presentations 20%

Take Home Exam 25%

Final Paper 30%

*Note: I expect all students to stay updated with Iran-related news. In each class, we will spend 10-15 minutes and will discuss the latest news from Iran. Be prepared to bring the class up to date and critically analyze. Remember: “think out of the box.”*

**Extra Credit Opportunity – At the discretion of the instructor, extra credit opportunities will be provided.**

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** The University wishes to remind students of the GW Code of Academic Integrity, which states: “Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” For the remainder of the code, see: <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>

Please feel free to come and see me if you have any questions.

**AI Policy**

We are entering a new technological era with the rise of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), such as ChatGPT and other large language models, that are driving an ongoing conversation about their academic uses. We are also learning about the potential benefits and misuse of AI and how it can be applied in the classroom. Learning to use generative AI is an emerging skill, however, we must use generative AI tools effectively and responsibly. For more information see GWU’s policy on AI. <https://provost.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs5926/files/2023-04/generative-artificial-intelligence-guidelines-april-2023.pdf>

* Copying and pasting all or part of generated content without proper attribution to the GAI tool. If you **copy anything from a generative AI tool**, you absolutely must cite it. Otherwise, this is in direct violation of the honor code [Code of Academic Integrity](https://studentconduct.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs4831/files/2022-08/code-of-academic-integrity-final-2022-20223-1.pdf).

**Support For Students Outside the Classroom**

*DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (DSS)*

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. Any student with three final examinations within a twenty-four hour period is entitled to take an alternate exam at a mutually-agreed time and place. For additional information please refer to: <http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/>

***UNIVERSITY COUNSELING CENTER (UCC) 202-994-5300***

The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include:

* crisis and emergency mental health consultations
* confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals

**htt**[**p://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices**](http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices/)

**University Policy on Observance of Religious Holidays**

In accordance with University policy, students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance. For details and policy, see: students.gwu.edu/accommodations-religious-holidays

**Late work policy:** Deadlines for written work should be taken very seriously. Unexcused late submissions will lose a third of a grade for each day they are late (e.g. A >>> A-). Extensions will only be granted in case of emergency and with the instructor’s prior approval. Come see me if you have a question.

**Makeup exams: There are none, with the exception of** **extraordinary circumstances. Those** **include but are not limited to, family or medical emergencies. The instructor, nevertheless, reserves the right to require documentation for those circumstances. Please note that routine doctor’s appointments are not “emergencies.” Bottom line: do not skip your exam unless it is truly an unforeseen emergency situation.**

**Schedule of Class**

***I reserve the right to adjust the readings and schedule of the class if deemed necessary***

**Week 1: 01/18.**

**Introduction: Syllabus review, expectations.**

Watch this short, interactive documentary on Persepolis[**https://persepolis.getty.edu**](https://persepolis.getty.edu)

Amanat: Introduction

Mackey, Intro, Ch 1-2

**Week 2 01/25**

**The Safavid order**

* Amanat Ch.1-3
* Mackey, Ch. 3
* Floor, Willem, and Mohammad Faghfoory. "Shah Esmaʿil, Deputy of the Hidden Imam?." 375-388.
* Matthee, Rudi. "Iran’s Relations with Europe in the Safavid Period." *The Fascination of Persia* (2013): 6-39. (Skim)

# Watch the short documentary, Battle of Chaldiran - Ottomans vs Safavids (1514). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GnxN4WsyOEY>

**Week 3: 02/01**

**Qajar and the emergence of modern Iran**

* Keddie, Ch. 1-4
* Amanat Ch. 4-6
* Abrahamian Ch. 1&2
* Mackey, Ch.5

*Short Pieces:*

* Rolland Brown. Iran’s American Friend: William Shuster. IranWire. August 2, 2016. <https://iranwire.com/en/society/61929/> (all three)
* Thompson, Charles. “How Russia Came to Make War on W. Morgan Shuster.” NYT. November 26, 1911. <https://nyti.ms/3tIAUgV>
* Aslan, Reza. “An American Martyred himself for the People of Iran. Here’s his story.” October 13, 2022. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/an-american-martyred-himself-for-the-people-of-iran-heres-his-story/>
* Watch: Professor Ali Ansari on Iran’s Constitutional Revolution of 1906 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K5G0odvmQJ0>

**Week 4: 02/08.**

**Rise of Pahlavi order**

* Keddie, Ch5 *and* pp. 105-123
* Amanat, Ch.7 & 8
* Abrahamian, Ch. 3
* Mackey, Ch. 6
* Hess, Gary R. “The Iranian Crisis of 1945-46 and the Cold War.” *Political Science Quarterly* 89, no. 1 (1974): 117–46. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2148118>.

**Week 5: 02/01**

**Nationalism, Moassadeq, and America’s Original Sin**

* Amanat, Ch.9 (Skim)
* Go through these documents: <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB126/index.htm>
* Keddie, Ch 6
* Katouzian, Homa. “Mosaddeq’s Government in Iranian History: Arbitrary Rule, Democracy, and the 1953 Coup.” In *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran*, edited by Mark J. Gasiorowski and Malcolm Byrne, 1–26. Syracuse University Press, 2004. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1j5d815.6>.
* Byrne, Malcolm. “The Road to Intervention: Factors Influencing U.S. Policy Toward Iran, 1945–1953.” In *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran*, edited by Malcolm Byrne and Mark J. Gasiorowski, 201–26. Syracuse University Press, 2004. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1j5d815.11>.
* Gasiorowski, Mark J. “The 1953 Coup d’État Against Mosaddeq.” In *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran*, edited by Mark J. Gasiorowski and Malcolm Byrne, 227–60. Syracuse University Press, 2004. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1j5d815.12>.

*Short Piece:*

# Azodi, Sina. It's been 70 Years Since the CIA-assisted Coup in Iran. Responsible Statecraft. August 16, 2023. <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2023/08/16/its-been-70-yrs-since-the-cia-assisted-coup-in-iran/>

**Week 6: 02/22 (no presentation)**

**Guest Speaker**

* Keddie ch.7
* Abrahamian Ch. 5
* Mackey Ch. 7-9
* Nuri, Maqsud Ul Hasan. “THE THREAT PERCEPTIONS OF IRAN UNDER SHAH.” *Pakistan Horizon* 39, no. 4 (1986): 69–90. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41394231>.
* Watch: Oral History: Former Iran Hostage John Limbert: <https://www.c-span.org/video/?465051-1/iran-hostage-john-limbert-oral-history-interview>

*Graduate students: Amanat, Ch. 10*

**Week 7: 02/29**

**Revolution of 1979 and its roots**

* Skocpol, Theda. “Rentier State and Shi’a Islam in the Iranian Revolution.” *Theory and Society* 11, no. 3 (1982): 265–83. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/657269>.
* Ansari, Iran, Islam, and Democracy. Ch.1
* Amanat Ch. 13 & 14
* Axworthy, skim Prologue, Ch 1-2
* Abrahamian, Ervand. “Structural Causes of the Iranian Revolution.” *MERIP Reports*, no. 87 (1980): 21–26. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3011417>.
* Mirsepassi-Ashtiani, Ali. “The Crisis of Secular Politics and the Rise of Political Islam in Iran.” *Social Text*, no. 38 (1994): 51–84. <https://doi.org/10.2307/466504>.

# Watch: SYND 12/16/1971 Persepolis Parade: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FvdI3FTpXfk>

# Watch: The Shah of Iran and SAVAK (1976) | 60 Minutes Archive. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9RH2wXQtFdo&t=10s>

# Watch: Songs of the Iranian Revolution: *Ey Shahid* (O! Martyr)

# <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lPp0BDGuSGc> also performed by North Korean Orchestra: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=na4EpQFyOlI>

**Week 8: 03/07**

**Iran-Iraq War: Ordeals of a total war**

* Axworthy, Ch. 4
* Amanat Ch. 16
* Ansari, Iran, Islam, and Democracy. Ch. 3 (skim)
* Ramazani, R. K. “The Iran-Iraq War and the Persian Gulf Crisis.” *Current History* 87, no. 526 (1988): 61–88. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45316027>.

*Short piece:*

* Azodi, Sina & Dadpay, Ali. *How the Iranian Air Force turned the tide of the Iran-Iraq War in 1980.* Atlantic Council. September 23, 2020. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/how-the-iranian-air-force-turned-the-tide-of-the-iran-iraq-war-in-1980/>

# Watch: “Up to a million suffering effects of chemical weapons in Iran.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEf9twbGtxk>

* Watch: Ahangaran, Iran & the Concept of Martyrdom. Panegyrics of Sadeq Ahangaran Iran-Iraq War: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_qmCwn3zOFM&t=236s>

# The 8th Minute: The 'Forgotten' US Shootdown of Iranian Airliner Flight 655

# <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xulAVo85wWM>

* Watch: *Mamad Nabudi (*Mohamamd, you were not there [to see]) with English subtitles. Panegyrics of Iran-Iraq War <https://www.aparat.com/v/52ue0>

# Watch: “Javad Zarif on why Iran is developing ballistic missiles.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ReaHBggqiiM&t=122s>

*Graduate students: Chapter 5: “They Were Dispensable”* inTabatabai, Ariane*. No Conquest, No Defeat : Iran’s National Security Strategy. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020*

**Week 9: 03/14**

**Spring Break: No classes**

**Week 10: 03/21**

**Take-Home Exam Due**

**Islamic Republic in the post-war era**

* Axworthy, Ch. 5
* Keddie, Ch. 11 & 12
* Ansari, Iran, Islam, and Democracy. Ch 4-6

# Watch: Iran's Supreme Leader In 1989: 'I Am Not Qualified' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWtAjWz3B9M&t=4s>

# Watch: Iran’s President Hashemi Rafsanjani (1997) | 60 Minutes Archive. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8jd4vsfxps>

# Watch: ‘How Iran's former president Rafsanjani played kingmaker and political counterweight.’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bhrZvHYIBX4>

**Week 11: 03/28**

**Politics of Reform**

* Ansari, Iran, Islam, and Democracy, Ch.7-10
* Axworthy, Ch.6 & 7
* Mackey, Ch. 13

# Watch: CNN September 08: 1998 Khatami interview (watch all available parts) Originally aired January 07, 1998. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qiK6KOKQNqg>

**A one-page synopsis of your final paper project is due**

**Week 12: 04/04**

**Media and politics in Iran.**

**Guest speaker**.

* Amanat CH.17
* Tabaar, Mohammad A. "The beloved Great Satan: The portrayal of the US in the Iranian media since 9/11." *Vaseteh: Journal of the European Society for Iranian Studies* 1, no. 1 (2005): 63-78.

**Week 13: 04/11**

**Modern Iranian political thought**

* Keddie, Ch. 8
* Amanat, pp. 689-700 & Ch. 14
* Faghfoory, Mohammad. "Clergy-state relations in Iran: 1979-present”
* Dabashi, Hamid. “Gharbzadegi: The Condition of Coloniality.” In *The Last Muslim Intellectual: The Life and Legacy of Jalal Al-e Ahmad*, 140–77. Edinburgh University Press, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctv1kd7x89.10>.
* Sadri, Mahmoud. “Sacral Defense of Secularism: The Political Theologies of Soroush, Shabestari, and Kadivar.” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 15, no. 2 (2001): 257–70. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20020114>.
* Kadivar, Mohsen. "Islam and Democracy: Perspectives from Reformist and Traditional Islam." *The Politics of Islamism: Diverging Visions and Trajectories* (2018): 23-45.

<https://english.kadivar.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Kadivar-Islam-and-Democracy.pdf>

# Watch: Islam and the Modern World - Interview with Dr. Seyyed Hossein Nasr - Respect Talks. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8itpkXTxo6c>

*Graduate students: Kadivar, Mohsen. "Wilayat al-faqih and Democracy." In Islam, the State, and Political Authority: Medieval Issues and Modern Concerns, pp. 207-224. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2011.*

<https://fds.duke.edu/db/attachment/2481>

**Week 14: 04/18**

**Institutions and Decision-Making in the Islamic Republic**

* The Structure of Power in Iran. PBS frontline. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/tehran/inside/govt.html>
* “The Islamic Republic’s Power Centers.” Council on Foreign Relations. September 23, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/article/islamic-republics-power-centers>
* “Iran’s Revolutionary Guards.” Council on Foreign Relations. April 20, 2023. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/irans-revolutionary-guards>
* Abrahamian ch.6
* Khalaji, Mehdi. “How Khamenei Makes Decisions.” The Washington Institute. March 2014.<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/sites/default/files/pdf/PolicyFocus126_Khalaji.pdf>
* Shahram Akbarzadeh & James Barry (2016) State Identity in Iranian Foreign Policy, British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, 43:4, 613-629, DOI: [10.1080/13530194.2016.1159541](https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2016.1159541)
* Tabatabai, Ariane. “Nuclear Decision Making in Iran: Implications for US non-Proliferation Efforts.” Columbia University Center on Global Energy Policy. August 2022. <https://www.energypolicy.columbia.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/IranNuclear_CGEP-Report_111522.pdf>

**Week 15: 04/25 (Open discussion)**

**Iranian literature.**

**Read :** *My Dear Uncle Napoleon*

**Final Papers are due on Thursday, May 2, 2024.**