



The Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies

مرکز شرین و بیشن مصور رحمانی برای مطالعات ایران و خلیج فارس



 PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

Director's Report July 2015 – December 2016

It is a pleasure to be writing once again to report on developments within the Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies. We have had a busy last academic year and fall semester, with a good deal of activity in respect of papers, meetings and presentations; we have seen the launch of our [Princeton University YouTube playlist](#) and [website video gallery](#) featuring a number of our public presentations; and we have inaugurated some exciting new research initiatives, as well as appointed two new Associate Research Scholars that began earlier this fall. In respect of strategic developments for the future, we have been gearing up to welcome spring-term visitors whose work intersects with the critical areas of international diplomacy and security, politics, environmental science and public health. We have also been in discussion with Princeton's Vice Provost for International Affairs and Operations to address areas of opportunity and challenge for relationship-building with Iranian institutions in order to promote research travel and facilitate future scholarly exchange. Now read on!

Staff

Our Manager Reagan Maraghy has done a magnificent job of managing the Mossavar-Rahmani Center's major activities as well as our finances, and in particular has picked up the burden of handling a good deal of the Director's business during his period of leave. It is hard to find words adequate to praise Reagan's hard work, diligence and commitment to the Center, and indeed simply to list her achievements in respect of organizing its activities would require a several-page report in itself! Our Senior Research Specialist, Mona Rahmani, has been responsible for much of the coordination attached to our major research initiatives. Some idea of their work and contribution can be gathered from the appended lists of our projects and events across the past year and a half, where they have been involved and essential to virtually every aspect of our work.

Executive Committee

One of our strengths is the support, encouragement and input of members of our Executive Committee. This is the third year of our existence and also the final year of service for several members of the Committee who now rotate off. I would like to express my gratitude to all those who have supported us so ably during this initial period of our activity: thanks to Prof. Mark Beissinger (PIIRS), Prof. Michael Cook (NES), Prof. Charles Barber (Art & Archaeology), Prof. Brent Shaw (Classics) and Dimitri Gondicas (Hellenic Studies), all of whose expertise and enthusiasm for our project has been exceptional and who will be greatly missed. In their stead we recently welcomed new members of the Executive Committee: Prof. Beatrice Kitzinger (Art & Archaeology), Prof. Miguel Centeno (Sociology), Prof. Daniel Sheffield (NES), Prof. Christian Wildberg (Classics) and Prof. AnneMarie Luijendijk (Religion). Prof. Cyrus Schayegh (NES) continues his tenure for one more semester before his departure to the Graduate Institute in Geneva in fall 2017, while those who sit with the Committee now include Dimitri Gondicas, Dr. David Magier (Firestone Library), and Prof. Muhammad Q. Zaman (Chair, NES), along with our postdoctoral and associate research scholars, Dr. Rose Wellman, Dr. Amin Moghadam and Dr. Khodadad Rezakhani. We would like to offer our sincere congratulations to Cyrus Schayegh on his new post. He has been a stalwart supporter of the Center and has made a significant contribution to the development of our projects and activities from the beginning.

Center Offices, Research and Teaching Spaces

We have been very comfortably settled within our expanded accommodation in Green Hall, both in respect of office space for faculty, administration, researchers, and visitors, but also in terms of the study space we provide for graduate and undergraduate students who are affiliated with our work or wish to pursue Iran and Gulf-related research. Due to a timely intervention from Reagan, the Center Manager, we have also been able to acquire the use of a further office, so that in the



coming semester we can comfortably accommodate all our incoming researchers and those collaborating with the Mossavar-Rahmani Center on related research projects. In May 2016, our facilities served as the headquarters for the inaugural “Dissertation Bootcamp” for graduate students pursuing research related to Iran and the Persian Gulf (additional information on page 8) and we continually host classes, reading groups, and a diverse array of topical seminars, conferences, and activities promoting academic, cultural, and political discourse.

Mossavar-Rahmani Center Researchers

Dr. Rose Wellman is now in her third and final year as a postdoctoral research associate in the Mossavar-Rahmani Center and has been offered (and has accepted) a tenure-track position of assistant professor of anthropology at the University of Michigan – Dearborn. She will begin this position in fall 2017, and her first project will entail conducting research among Shi'i Iraqi immigrants and Syrian refugees. We offer our heartfelt congratulations to Rose for this richly-deserved achievement! Rose is an anthropologist whose main research interest is contemporary Iran, but also is in the process of researching other subjects including other parts of the Middle East and the Persian Gulf, migrants and diaspora. Her work focuses on kinship, domestic politics, and contemporary religious practice. Her current book project, now in negotiation with potential publishers, is titled *The Family, Shi'ism, and the Making of Post-Revolutionary Iran*. This work draws from ethnographic research in the Fars Province between 2007-2010 and explores how conservative state-supporting Muslim families are organizing their households, values, ethics and lives in the context of the Islamic Republic.



Rose has published numerous articles on various topics, including “Sacralizing Kinship, Naturalizing the Nation: Food and Prayer in Post-revolutionary Iran,” forthcoming in the *American Ethnologist*, and “Regenerating the Islamic Republic: Commemorating Martyrs in Provincial Iran” in the *Muslim World Journal*. In addition, her first book, *New Directions in Spiritual Kinship: Sacred Ties across the Abrahamic Religions*, will be printed by Palgrave Macmillan in early 2017. This co-edited volume draws from anthropological work among religious constituents of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism to understand how people form and combine religious and political solidarities in the 21st century. In addition to representing the Mossavar-Rahmani Center at a number of conferences in Yale, Cambridge, Turkey, and Abu Dhabi, Rose served as the chair of the 2015-16 seminar series and was instrumental in developing and liaising with speakers for successful events such as *Understanding Iran: Perspectives in Practice*, an event which brought Ambassadors Limbert and Mousavian together with journalist Laura Secor to discuss the Iran nuclear deal, Iran-U.S. foreign policy, and the lifting of sanctions.



April 6, 2016 Panel “Understanding Iran: Perspectives in Practice” cosponsored by the Mossavar-Rahmani Center, Woodrow Wilson School, Council of the Humanities, and Program in Science & Global Security

Starting in fall 2016, **Dr. Amin Moghadam** joined the Mossavar-Rahmani Center as an Associate Research Scholar. With advanced degrees in Urban and Regional Planning, in Geography, Regional Planning, Environment and Flow Logistics, as well as in Sociology and Anthropology, he is an expert on patterns of migration in the Gulf region. His dissertation, completed and defended in 2013 at the University of Lyons II, was entitled *The other shore: the reconstituted Iran of Dubai. A Study of the practices and discourse of Iranian migrants*, receiving high honors and a special commendation from the jury. He has an impressive publication record to date, and his research focuses on migration policy and practices, diaspora studies, cities and migrations, transnationalism and circulation and regional integration in the Middle East, with particular focus on the Persian Gulf region (especially Southern Iran and the United Arab Emirates), the city of Tehran, the Kurdistan Regional Government and the countries of the Caucasus countries, especially Armenia. As well as his native Farsi, he is fluent in French and English and has a good working knowledge of Arabic.



Beginning at the same time as Dr. Moghadam, we similarly welcomed the appointment of **Dr. Khodadad Rezakhani** as an Associate Research Scholar. Khodadad completed his Ph.D. at



UCLA in 2010 and works on the history, economy and politics of late ancient and medieval Iran, with special focus on the Sasanian empire (3rd – 7th c. CE). He began his career as an undergraduate at Texas A&M University and has held research or teaching positions in London, Berlin and Vienna as well as at the University of Nevada. He has an impressive list of publications to his name. In addition to native Farsi and English, he has an equally impressive range of languages at his disposal including German, French, Swedish and Arabic, as well as Middle Persian, Bactrian, Greek, Syriac, and Old Norse! His appointment in particular arises from our recent acquisition of the Schaaf Collection of Sasanian silver coins, offering a unique resource for research into the social, economic, cultural as well as political and financial history of the Sasanian world.

Mossavar-Rahmani Center Visitors

As part of our focus on bringing attention to the role and importance of the Persian Gulf region and Iran in the contemporary world, we look forward to welcoming two visitors this spring:

Dr. Hamid Pouran and Dr. Banafsheh Keynoush.

Dr. Hamid Pouran holds a Ph.D. in Environmental Engineering (University of Sheffield/UK), an MSc. in Material & Environmental Chemistry (Stockholm University/Sweden), and an MSc in Soil Chemistry (Ferdowsi University/Iran). An environmental scientist, consultant and advisor in industry and academia, he has made a substantial media contribution, including Radio RFE/RL, Voice of America and BBC World. Dr. Pouran is behind the development of *Floating Solar Islands*, a radical new approach to tackling the water crisis in Iran by reducing evaporation from water reservoirs and generating clean energy. The design and its deployment proposal were presented to Iran's Vice President for Science and Technology during his visit to New York in September 2015. A pilot scale deployment is planned for this year. While at Princeton, Dr. Pouran will be focusing on a feasibility study setting out the key themes required for a collaboration to address environmental challenges and public health problems, and in particular of establishing a multidisciplinary scientific collaboration between the U.S. and Iran, with the focus on environmental sustainability and public health.

Dr. Banafsheh Keynoush is an international geopolitical consultant, foreign affairs scholar, and the author of *Saudi Arabia and Iran: Friends or Foes?* (Palgrave Macmillan, February 2016). With three decades of experience in high level international diplomacy, as well as in policy and communications roles within the U.S. private sector, she will bring a strong internationalist focus to the Center's work. Dr. Keynoush has extensive background working with members of the press, and has interacted closely with major U.S. media outlets including CNN, NBC, Fox, and Public Television. She has worked in the field of international development with the World Bank, the Asia Foundation and the Swiss Academy for Development, in addition to volunteering work to the United Nations Political Department and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Dr. Keynoush has served as policy advisor to multiple international non-governmental organizations in Washington, Tehran and Geneva. Previously an assistant and adjunct professor for over thirteen years teaching Middle East politics, she also served as an accredited English-Persian interpreter with the European Commission. For two decades, Dr. Keynoush worked as a free-lance interpreter and translator at the United Nations, the International Labor Organization, the U.N. Human Rights Commission, and the U.S.-Iran Claims Tribunal, in dual-track diplomatic initiatives, with multiple international news outlets, and with four of Iran's presidents and nobel laureate. She obtained her master's and Ph.D. degrees in international relations from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, and holds a second master's degree in applied linguistics from the Tehran Islamic Azad University. Her work at Princeton will focus on contemporary Gulf politics, diplomacy, and Saudi-Iran relations.

On the historical side, the Center also welcomes, through joint appointment with Firestone Library, **Dr. Razieh Taasob**, as cataloguer of the Schaaf collection. The successful purchase of the Schaaf Collection has enormously increased our significance as an important center for research into the world of pre-Islamic Sasanian Iran. Dr. Taasob's recently-completed Ph.D., entitled *The Early Kushan Coinage in the Context of Contact and Exchange across the Indo-Iranian Borderlands*, was defended at the University of Vienna in 2015. Starting in January 2017, she will hold a one-year post in which she will provide detailed description of over one thousand coins from the Sassanian Empire. Her work will include examination of coins, comparison with published descriptions when available, data entry in a specialized database, and digital photography, among other specialist tasks. Reporting to the Curator of Numismatics, Dr. Taasob will join a strong team of campus-based researchers on the Sasanian and medieval Persianate worlds, which includes Dr. Khodadad Rezakhani and Prof. Daniel Sheffield, recently appointed as Assistant Professor in Medieval Persian Studies with the Department of Near Eastern Studies.

Mossavar-Rahmani Center Affiliated Scholars

Dr. Jo-Ann Gross is a Visiting Research Collaborator with the Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies and a Professor of History at The College of New Jersey. She specializes in Middle Eastern and Central Eurasian History and Sufism and directs the **Badakhshan Digitization Initiative** described on page 11. This will be Jo-Ann's second year with the Center, where her formal affiliation provides her with an office, access to campus resources and libraries, and, most importantly, the opportunity to collaborate with Princeton colleagues across different departments on this interdisciplinary initiative.

Dr. Michael Barry is an Associate Research Scholar with the Woodrow Wilson School's Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination, specializing in the greater Middle East and Islamic world. Well-known across campus for his courses on classical Persian literature, Islamic culture and art, Dr. Barry has been informally associated with the Center for two years, where he has presented popular lectures, taught courses in the Center's seminar room, and held an office.

Dr. Seyed Hossein Mousavian is Middle East Security and Nuclear Policy Specialist with the Woodrow Wilson School's Program on Science and Global Security, where he is based. As former Ambassador of Iran to Germany, Mousavian continues to work on contemporary U.S.-Iran diplomatic and political issues, exploring the potential for peace and stability in the Persian Gulf region. For the 2016-17 academic year, the Center has made a contribution of \$10,000 to support Dr. Mousavian's scholarship and research into long-term strategies for energy security in the region, while increasing political, economic, socio-cultural, and military cooperation among its states.

Lindsey Stephenson is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Near Eastern Studies working on migration from the south of Iran to Kuwait and Bahrain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thematically, she is particularly interested in drawing Indian Ocean history into the study of the modern Middle East, and argues that the field of Middle East Studies needs to rethink the organization of space through the lens of everyday networks (social, cultural, trade, intellectual, etc). She is also interested in how this network-based re-orientation of the Gulf towards Iran and the Indian Ocean in the early twentieth century affects periodization of the Middle East more broadly. An active user of the Center's student work/study facilities, Lindsey is also the primary organizer of the Graduate Dissertation Bootcamp (described on the next page) and has received Center funding support for her research in Iran, Bahrain, Kuwait, and London.

Daniel Tavana is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Politics at Princeton University. Previously, he worked as a research associate at the Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED). Tavana also holds degrees from Cambridge University and the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, where he worked at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs and co-founded Harvard's *Journal of Middle Eastern Politics and Policy*. His research interests include elections, comparative political behavior, and public opinion in the Middle East and North Africa. Together with Prof. Kevan Harris (UCLA), Daniel has been a key player in the development and launch of the Iran Social Survey (ISS) described in Project updates on page 10. As part of his ISS involvement, Dan received Center funding support to present his work on electoral mobilization in Iran at the recent conference *Surveying Iran: The Future of Social Research after the Nuclear Thaw* (Budapest, September 2016).

A full listing of the Center's affiliated faculty members and graduate students appears on the Center's website at www.princeton.edu/iran/people. Profiles for affiliated graduate students were added in 2016, soon to be followed by profile sections for Center-based and visiting researchers.

Funding Awards for Scholarly Research and Language Study

Over the past academic year the Center made a number of awards to graduate students and postdoctoral research fellows for Iran-related research or language study. Amounting to just under \$30,000, these were awarded to the following recipients: Thomas Benfey (Near Eastern Studies), Cevat Dargin (Near Eastern Studies), Merle Eisenberg (History), Brian Ho (French and Italian), Lee Mordechai (History), Ramina Sotoudeh (Sociology), Lindsey Stephenson (Near Eastern Studies), Mazdak Ttamjidi (Anthropology), Xiyue Wang (History), Rose Wellman (Mossavar-Rahmani Center) and Stefan Kamola (Council of the Humanities & History). Research topics ranged from exploring the effects of international sanctions on the 80s generation in post-Revolutionary Iran, to the contemporary importance of *rahn* in Iranian society, to understanding the changing identities and roles of Christian communities across Europe, Syria, and Persia during the end of the Roman Empire.

Graduate Dissertation Bootcamp

During the spring of 2016 the Center was pleased to host a *Graduate Dissertation Bootcamp*. Borrowing a workshop format used by the Princeton Graduate School, four Near Eastern Studies graduate students conducted a customized “dissertation bootcamp” in the Mossavar-Rahmani Center. Modeled after the Graduate School’s now famous “Dissertation Bootcamps” to provide a “quiet space to write, focused writing time, camaraderie, and the opportunity to reflect on the writing process,” the atmosphere and forum were recreated on a smaller scale at the Center. Every day for one week the students were required to come to work from 9:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. on various writing projects. Every morning they set daily goals, and at 1:00 p.m. they met to discuss their progress and to offer feedback and suggestions to one another. Most of the time the students continued to work until evening. The participants were very enthusiastic about the results of the bootcamp and requested that it be repeated in 2016-17 and beyond.

Financial Summary (Fiscal Year 2016 ending on June 30, 2016)

The Mossavar-Rahmani Center’s endowment continues to accrue income and the combined endowment payout for FY16 (for the Mossavar-Rahmani and Pahlavi funds) was \$806,578. The center’s total combined expenses for the fiscal year came to \$787,180. Per custom, any unspent amounts from the fiscal year roll into the next. These funds – along with the gift from Anahita Naficy-Lovelace ’75 – were expended towards the endeavors outlined by this report, which include: postdoctoral research, staff, and associated faculty appointments; seminar and lecture series events; Center projects (translation series, Iran Social Survey, library, and language initiatives); student and faculty research, Persian language study, and academic conferences, among other expenditures described herein.

Center Contributions and Co-Sponsorships

One of our most essential resources is the library and as part of the Center’s mission to help expand Princeton’s Persian and Iranian library collections, the Mossavar-Rahmani Center has contributed significantly to support Firestone Library’s **Persian “5 year gap-filling project”** over the past academic year. Guided by the expertise of Firestone’s Associate Librarian for Collection Development, this project emerged from the critical need to replenish Princeton’s Iranian holdings for the five-year period of 2008 to 2012, during which the traditional vendor’s inventory declined in scope and variety. With the strategic shift to a new vendor (Iran Farhang), the Library’s collection staff identified significant omissions from the five-year period, which they have now been able to replenish - while the titles are still available - with Mossavar-Rahmani Center support.

In addition, our **Library resources working group** continues to support Firestone Library in the ongoing digitization of Iran-related materials, especially ephemera and printed matter that requires conservation. As well as expanding our collections and conserving older material, we continue to pursue our aim of making our collection second to none in the USA in as many Iran-related fields as our mission requires.

In addition to our own self-organized projects and events, the Mossavar-Rahmani Center has also co-sponsored, co-organized and/or contributed funding to numerous events and projects with the following departments and organizations:

Internal: Princeton University Art Museum, Woodrow Wilson School for Public and International Affairs, Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies, Center for Collaborative History, Department of Anthropology, Department of Art & Archaeology, Program in Near Eastern Studies, Persian Language Talk Series, Program on Science & Global Security, Council of the Humanities, Department of Near Eastern Studies, Committee for the Study of Late Antiquity, and the Department of French and Italian (see events listings on pages 12-15 for more information.)

External: The Association for the Study of Persianate Societies, Princeton University Press, New York University's Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies Department and the Gallatin School (ISI-NYU), the University of Pennsylvania's Middle East Center, PeopleAnalytics Inc/IranPoll.com and Endangered Language Alliance (see project updates for more information).

Project updates

a. Mossavar-Rahmani Center Translation Series

Directed by Prof. Kevan Harris (UCLA) and Sr. Research Specialist Mona Rahmani, the Mossavar-Rahmani Center Translation Series facilitates high quality translations of social science and humanities scholarship for students and professors in Iran. The first book to be published in the series is the classic work by Princeton historian Joseph Strayer, *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State* (Princeton University Press 1970, 2nd ed. 2005), translated by Dr. Hossein Badamchi, Assistant Professor of History at the University of Tehran. The translation will be published in 2017 by Moaser Publishing. The Translation Series ensures that international copyrights are acquired for the Iranian market, and works with local publishers to ensure high editorial standards. Future texts will be translated based on recommendations by leading scholars in Iranian Studies.

b. Iran Graduate Student Workshop (IGSW)

In conjunction with the New York University Iranian Studies Initiative and the University of Pennsylvania Middle East Center, the Mossavar-Rahmani Center convened the first Iran Graduate Student Workshop (IGSW) on April 29-30, 2016, directed by Prof. Cyrus Schayegh (NES) and Sr Research Specialist Mona Rahmani. Three doctoral students from North America and Europe were selected as IGSW Junior Scholars. The program was a valuable venue for cross-disciplinary academic exchange and production, with 35 participants from other regional universities in attendance, including Yale and Columbia. The next meeting will be held in Spring 2018 at one of the sister campuses. The IGSW committee is chaired by Prof. Cyrus Schayegh (Princeton, Near Eastern Studies), and includes Prof. Kevan Harris (UCLA, Sociology), Prof. Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet (University of Pennsylvania, History; Director, Middle East Center), Prof. Arang Keshavarzian (NYU, Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies), and Prof. Ali Mirsepassi (NYU, Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies; Director, Iranian Studies Initiative).

c. Iran Social Survey (ISS)

The Iran Social Survey (ISS) is a large-scale collection of key data on social and economic changes occurring in contemporary Iran. An ISS phone poll of a nationally representative sample of 5,000 individuals took place in November/December 2016, with questions on generational changes in occupation and educational status, social and cultural participation, and electoral preferences. With 98% of the population of Iran accessible by landline or mobile phone, the principal investigators worked closely with IranPoll/People Analytics Inc. to implement a rigorous and methodologically reliable survey. The ISS is based on similar social and political surveys conducted in countries such as Turkey, Egypt, India, China, and other major developing regions. No such project has existed for Iran for the past three decades. The survey questionnaire was refined over a year of discussions with leading scholars in political science and sociology, and pilot tested across Iran in August 2016. Results from the ISS will be presented in 2017 along with a series of briefings and talks at Princeton University and policy centers in New York and Washington, D.C.

d. Affiliated Projects

The center continues to support the **Badakhshan Digitization Initiative**, directed by Professor Jo-Ann Gross, who serves as Visiting Research Collaborator with the Mossavar-Rahmani Center. As outlined in last year's report, the aim of this project is to preserve and make available the largest single collection of historical sources on the history and culture of the Isma'ilis of Badakhshan in Tajikistan, which is contained in the private manuscript library of Umed Mamadsherozodshoev in Khorog, Gorno-Badakhshan, Tajikistan. The collection consists of 10,000 manuscripts and 3,000 documents in Persian and includes rare Isma'ili theological and legal materials, genealogical and local histories, correspondence, recorded oral traditions, literary texts, tax records, land deeds, biographies, photographs and more. Following the work completed during 2015-16 at the Mossavar-Rahmani Center, it has been decided to focus specifically on Ismaili genealogical histories, correspondence and documentary sources. These have never been photographed or digitalized, are kept under poor conditions, and are in danger of being lost. They are neglected as historical sources, yet they are essential to understand the social and religious history of the Ismaili communities of Iranian populations in the Pamir. Narrowing the focus to these unique texts, moreover, eliminates any potential duplication with an ongoing Institute of Ismaili Studies (London) project dealing with different types of endangered documents.

On a smaller scale (\$3,000), the center is also contributing to the **Zaza Language Project** initiated by the Endangered Language Alliance. Zaza, a Northwest Iranian language in the wider Indo-European language family, is spoken by an estimated 1 to 2 million people. The vast majority of speakers belong to the Kurdish and Alevi populations of eastern Turkey, who face unprecedented threats and a deteriorating political situation. Despite being a major Iranian language of regional significance, Zaza is little known to outsiders, and it has hardly been documented by linguists. In the context of global language loss and repression in eastern Turkey, the language is endangered today. Linguistic diversity is under threat worldwide, especially in the conflict zones of the Middle East. The dispersal of the last major Aramaic-speaking populations of Iraq and Syria in the last few years, with potentially devastating consequences for those languages, is but one example. The case of Zaza – often overlooked even in comparison to other minority languages of the region, such as Kurmanji – is similar. The need for rigorous documentation and preservation of the region's linguistic heritage is urgent.

Academic Associations

The Center has continued our membership with the *International Society of Iranian Studies*, the *American Institute of Iranian Studies*, and the *Association for the Study of Persianate Societies*. We are pleased to note that associated faculty member Prof. Cyrus Schayegh (NES) has been nominated for and accepted a place on the International Board of Trustees for the *American Institute of Iranian Studies*. Moreover, the Mossavar-Rahmani Center will be co-sponsoring the Eighth Annual *Association for the Study of Persianate Societies* (ASPS) convention in Shiraz in March 2017 with the theme “Civil Society, Culture, and the State in Iran and the Persianate World.” It will be the largest international scholarly conference in Iran since the Islamic revolution of 1979 and as such is expected to be an event of major historical significance in the opening of Iran to international exchanges and interaction. Co-sponsorship will give the Mossavar-Rahmani Center increased visibility in the Persianate world. Other sponsors include the National Library of Iran, the Iranian Academy of Language and Literature, the Iran Heritage Foundation, and the Research Institute for Culture, Art and Communications in Tehran.

2015-16 Center-Organized and Sponsored Events

September 28, 2015

Richard Nephew, Columbia University

U.S.-Iran: The Nuclear Talks and Beyond

(co-sponsored with the Department and Program in Near Eastern Studies)

October 2-3, 2015

Ethnography of Iran: Past and Present

Organizer: Rose Wellman, Postdoctoral Research Associate, Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies

(co-sponsored with the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies/PIIRS and the Department of Anthropology)

October 19, 2015

Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, University of Pennsylvania

Passing through the Persian Gulf: Histories of Commerce and Consumption

(co-sponsored with the Department and Program in Near Eastern Studies)

November 12, 2015

Traditional Persian Music: Amir Vahab and Ensemble

(co-sponsored with the Princeton University Art Museum)

November 19, 2015

Introduction to the Music of Badakhshan, Tajikistan with Haydar Tavakkalov

(co-sponsored with the Department and Program in Near Eastern Studies as part of the Persian Language Talk series)

December 8, 2015

Assef Ashraf, Yale University

Fitting Tributes and Fine Brocades: The Politics of Gift Giving in Early Qajar Iran

December 10, 2015

Ali Ansari, University of St. Andrews

Britain and the British Question: Iranian Nationalists and the Idea of Britain

December 14, 2015

Jo-Ann Gross, The College of New Jersey and Visiting Research Collaborator, Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies

Sayyid Genealogy, Narrative Tradition and the Sacred Landscape in Badakhshan

(co-sponsored with the Department and Program in Near Eastern Studies)

February 1, 2016

Rashid Khalidi, Columbia University

The Iran Nuclear Deal and U.S. Foreign Policy

(co-sponsored with the Department and Program in Near Eastern Studies)

February 9, 2016

Michael Barry, Princeton University

The Persian Romance of Alexander the Great

March 9, 2016

Richard Payne, University of Chicago

The Silk Road and the Iranian Political Economy in Late Antiquity

(co-sponsored with the Department and Program in Near Eastern Studies, the Center for Collaborative History, the Committee for the Study of Late Antiquity, and the Department of Art & Archaeology)

April 4, 2016

Negin Nabavi, Montclair State University

Reading Rooms and Print Culture in Late Qajar Iran

(co-sponsored with the Department and Program in Near Eastern Studies)

April 6, 2016

Understanding Iran: Perspectives in Practice

Laura Secor, author of *Children of Paradise: The Struggle for the Soul of Iran*

Amb. (ret.) John Limbert, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Iran, author, and Visiting Professor of Public and International Affairs, Woodrow Wilson School

Amb. (ret.) Seyed Hossein Mousavian, former Ambassador of Iran to Germany; Assoc. Research Scholar, Program on Science & Global Security

Moderator: Daniel C. Kurtzer, S. Daniel Abraham Visiting Professor in Middle East Policy, Woodrow Wilson School

(co-sponsors: Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Council of the Humanities, and Program on Science and Global Security)

April 18, 2016

Andrea Piras, University of Bologna; Institute for Advanced Study

The Letters of the Persian King. Communication and Ideology in Ancient Iran

(co-sponsored with the Department and Program in Near Eastern Studies)

April 29-30, 2016

Iran Graduate Student Workshop

Organizers: Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies; New York University's Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies Department and the Gallatin School (ISI-NYU), and the University of Pennsylvania's Middle East Center

April 30, 2016

A Film Screening: The Fabulous Life and Thoughts of Ahmad Fardid (Persian version)

Ali Mirsepassi, New York University

May 26, 2016

Frame by Frame: Film Screening and Producer-led Discussion

Introduction and Discussion with Baktash Ahadi, Associate Producer
(Reunions Event, co-sponsored with Near Eastern Studies)

Fall 2016 Center-Organized and Sponsored Events

September 19, 2016

Bernard Haykel, Princeton University

The Causes and Effects of the Rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia

(co-sponsored with the Department and Program in Near Eastern Studies)

October 3, 2016

Lindsey Stephenson, Princeton University

Debts and Death: Bahrain Court Records and the Iranian Everyday, 1920-1945

(co-sponsored with the Department and Program in Near Eastern Studies)

October 17, 2016

L'Escale (Stop-Over)

Directed by Kaveh Bakhtiari

This film is part of the *Filming at the Borders: Migrating to Europe Today* series

(co-sponsored with the Department of French and Italian)

October 26, 2016

Banafsheh Keynoush, Foreign Policy Advisor

Saudi Arabia and Iran: Building Understanding for Improved Ties

(co-sponsored by Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies (PIIRS))

November 9, 2016

Khodadad Reza Khani, Associate Research Scholar, Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies

East Iran in Antiquity: Silk Road and Central Asia outside the Paradigm of Eurasian Trade

December 1, 2016

Fatemeh Keshavarz, University of Maryland

My Poor Heart Sometimes Runs, Sometimes Whirls: Meet Sa'di the Comedian

Associated Courses

Fall 2015

WWS 375, The United States and Iran: Ghosts in the Room, Dr. John W. Limbert

This course examines the complex relationship between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran. For 36 years the two countries' interaction has consisted mostly of trading insults, threats, and accusations. In the last two years there has been a partial thaw, but deep differences remain. We will examine how the relationship between the U.S. and Iran affects domestic politics in both capitals and will consider alternatives to the current enmity, prospects for change, and policy choices for both sides.

NES 201 / HIS 223, Introduction to the Middle East, Prof. Cyrus Schayegh

A broad background that could help you understand the complicated relationship between the United States and the Middle East. We reach back into the Middle Eastern past--the rise of Islam, the Caliphate, the coming of the Turks, the European expansion, the discovery of oil--and use these developments to explain the unsettled political, social, economic, and religious landscape of the region today. Thus we will set ourselves to explain why Turkey is a secular republic whereas Iran is an Islamic one, why religious extremism has increased, why democratic aspirations erupted in an "Arab Spring," and what role oil plays in all this.

NES 245 / HIS 245 / MED 245, The Islamic World from its Emergence to the Beginnings of Westernization, Prof. Michael Cook

Begins with the formation of the traditional Islamic world in the 7th century and ends with the first signs of its transformation under Western impact in the 18th century. The core of the course is the history of state formation in the Middle East, but other regions and themes make significant appearances. The course can stand on its own or serve as background to the study of the modern Islamic world.

NES 327 / GSS 326 / HUM 328, Youth and Youth Movements in the Modern Middle East, Dr. Sara Pursley

The course will examine the experiences of young people as a lens onto the texture of everyday life in the Middle East, including during the historical upheavals of decolonization, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the 1979 Iranian revolution, the Lebanese Civil War, and the Arab Spring. We will also look at a variety of oppositional youth movements over the past century; political and cultural, secular and Islamic, reformist and revolutionary; to explore questions around generational ruptures and affinities, as well as how these might relate to other affiliations such as those of nation, class, and gender.

NES 553, Studies in Islamic Religion and Thought, Prof. Hossein Modarressi

This course focuses on reading texts that are illustrative of various issues in Muslim religious thought. The texts are selected according to students' needs.

NES 227, Approaches and Paradigms in the Study of Women and Gender in the Middle East and North Africa, Prof. Satyel Larson

This course provides a broad-ranging survey of the study of women and gender in the Middle East and North Africa. Its aim is two-fold: to introduce beginners to the main concepts and themes of scholarly research in the humanities and social sciences during the last century, focusing on women and gender in regions where there are significant Muslim communities; and, to examine how human beings in a variety of historical and cultural contexts in the Middle East and North Africa experience or have experienced gender - what it means to be or become a man or a woman, and the power relations that inhere in gender as a social institution.

REL 328 / GSS 328, Women and Gender in Islamic Societies, Prof. Shaun Marmon

Topics include: Women and the Law; Women and Sexuality; Gender and Seclusion; Women and Modernity; Gender and Post-Colonial Societies; Women's Voices; Women and Film; Politics of Women's Bodies; Women and Modern Islamic Revivalism. No prior background in Islam or Gender Studies required. Readings from fields of history, religious studies, anthropology, sociology and politics. Weekly primary sources in translation include: religious texts, popular literature, court records, letters, novels, poetry, autobiography, newspapers and subtitled films.

NES 539 / COM 539, Studies in Persian Literature 900 - 1200 A.D., Dr. Michael Barry

This two-term exploration of Classical Persian literature in the original acquaints students with the principal authors of chronicles, epics, imaginative tales, and stories of spiritual initiation throughout the Persian-speaking world (Iran and Central Asia and also medieval India and Anatolia) from the 10th to 19th centuries. Part I, ca. AD 900 - ca. AD 1200, addresses the formation and gradual Islamization of the ancient epic tradition, the writing of "mirrors for kings" for the Ghaznavid and Seljuk sultans, and the impact of Neoplatonic mysticism.

LIN 350 / CLA 351, Deciphering Ancient Languages, Dr. Timothy Barnes

This course is an introduction to linguistics decipherment. We will survey cases of successful - and unsuccessful - decipherment, beginning with Ancient Egyptian and covering such languages as Old Persian, Akkadian, Ugaritic, Mycenaean Greek and Mayan. Throughout the focus will be on the methodologies employed, and on the conditions that need to be present for decipherment to be possible.

Spring 2016

WWS 556D, Topics in International Relations - The US and Iran, Visiting Professor Dr. John Limbert

This course examines the complex relationship between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran. For 36 years the two countries' interaction has consisted mostly of trading insults, threats, and accusations. In the last two years there has been a partial thaw, but deep differences remain. We examine how the relationship between the U.S. and Iran affects domestic politics in both capitals and consider alternatives to the current enmity, prospects for change, and policy choices for both sides.

NES 412, The Modern World: Middle Eastern Perspectives, Prof. Cyrus Schayegh

Although the Middle East is often seen as exceptional, it is part of our globe: through connections and in being part of worldwide processes. This seminar's double goal is to study the Middle East from this perspective, and thereby also to explore how the modern world emerged. We will use Irye, Osterhammel, and Rosenberg, ed., A History of the World, 2 vols., covering 1870 to the present, as the backbone of the course; and in parallel read case studies on the Middle East in the world, including global cultural patterns, social webs, economic ties, imperial action, state building and international system, and the spread of political ideas.

NES 406, The Great War in the Middle East, Prof. Michael Reynolds

World War I changed - and ended - the lives of millions. Its impact upon the Middle East is widely acknowledged but not often explored. The war destroyed the old imperial Ottoman order, paving the way to the elimination of the Caliphate and the emergence of nation-states across the Middle East and the Caucasus. It fundamentally altered concepts of identity, patterns of authority, notions of religion, and ethnic and political borders. This seminar examines the Great War in the Middle East from right before WWI through the immediate post-war period. Topics include geopolitics, empire, Pan-Islam, nationalism, ethnic conflict, Zionism, and oil.

HIS 406 / AMS 406 / GSS 406 / NES 426, Cultures of Imperialism: Britain, the United States, and the Middle East, Cotsen Fellow Dr. David Minto & Cotsen Fellow Dr. Sara Pursley

Viewing culture as a technology and battleground of imperialism, this course explores transitions and overlaps between European and American empire in the Middle East through a cultural lens. Parsing the pursuit of hegemony by Western actors, it also tracks resistance to cultural domination on the ground. Imperial culture is formed by and produces power asymmetries, with effects felt both in the region and at home. We will test that proposition by attending to Orientalism, Americanization, anticolonial acts, spies and counterinsurgency, oil culture, humanitarian appeals, developmental interventions, sexual politics, and the War on Terror.

NES 529, Empire and Global Regimes, Prof. Michael Reynolds

Course investigates the relationship of empires to global regimes and processes. Students apply theoretical perspectives on empires and global regimes drawn from the disciplines of history, political science, and sociology, and seek to develop their understanding of the role of empires as mantles of global exchange and as sources of the rules and norms that have governed global affairs. Offered as part of a John E. Sawyer Seminar, this one-time-only course features five guest lecturers.

NES 544, Writing Histories of the Modern Middle East: Trends, Topics, Problems, Prof. Cyrus Schayegh

This seminar has one goal: to help turn historians "of the modern Middle East" into "historians" of the modern Middle East. We go about this task in three steps. Weeks 1-4 discuss four key questions that underlie all history writing: What is history?; the fact; time/periodization; and scale. Weeks 5-10 are three two-week-long segments that introduce three historiographic debates that have been central in the last 2-3 decades and that correspond to the research interests of many Middle East historians: gender, cultural history, and transnational/global history. In weeks 11-12 we discuss pre-circulated first drafts of students' seminar papers.

JRN 440, The Literature of Fact - Subcultures and Social Worlds, Visiting Journalism Professor Amy Waldman

This course will focus on subcultures and social worlds -- Freegans and trolls, the urban poor and the "one percent", Wagnerites and goths, Iraq war veterans and Iranian immigrants, the deaf and their families: subcultures shape the news and culture but also emerge as responses to them. Writing on such groups, and their origins, rituals, and beliefs, has made for some of the best non-fiction of the past half-century. Students will read from that body of work in the service of creating their own, using reporting on the subcultures of Princeton, its surrounds, and the Internet.

NES 371 / GSS 371, Gender and the Social History of the Pre-modern Middle East, Prof. Eve Krakowski

This course offers an introduction to pre-modern Middle Eastern social history focused on gender and women's lives. Proceeding chronologically from late antiquity through the eighteenth century, we will use secondary scholarship and primary sources (including legal and literary texts, court records, and letters) to examine pre-Islamic and Islamic ideas and practices surrounding male and female modesty, mobility, honor, kinship, social ties, access to property, legal status, and sexuality; how these ideas and practices shaped men's and women's experiences within households and in the public sphere; and how they changed over time.

NES 525 / GSS 525 / ANT 525, Ethnography of Gender and Islam, Prof. Satyel Larson

The 21st century has witnessed the explosion of public and scholarly interest in gender in Islamic cultures. Within this context, anthropology has advanced path-breaking approaches in diverse localities from the Middle East to the United States. This course surveys theoretical and ethnographic approaches to the study of women, gender and sexuality in Islamic cultures, focusing on work written in the last decade.

REL 337 / NES 357, Slavery, Gender & Religious Difference in Islamic Societies, Prof. Shaun Marmon

In 2014, ISIS distributed a pamphlet of authoritative responses (fatwas), based in Classical Islamic law, to questions about the enslavement and sexual exploitation of non-Muslim women and girls. This revival of slavery shocked the Muslim world and led to questions about the history of slavery and "concubinage" in Islam. We will address some of those questions through close reading of texts in translation and modern scholarship. What is the history of slavery in Islamic law and practice? What role do sex and gender play in slavery, specifically in Islamic societies? How "Islamic" is slavery? We will also include a comparative perspective.

REL 542 / NES 542, Islamic Thought and Society, 18th-20th centuries, Prof. Muhammad Q. Zaman

Using primary sources in translation, this seminar introduces students to the thought of key Muslim figures active between the 18th and the 20th centuries. What are the legal, theological, and other traditions with reference to which their writings are to be understood? How do we relate their work to the social and political contexts in which it was produced? How have the questions to which they were responding changed during this time?

NES 347, Islamic Family Law, Prof. Hossein Modarressi

This course examines the outlines of Islamic family law in gender issues, sexual ethics, family structure, family planning, marriage and divorce, parenthood, child guardianship and custody, etc. The course starts with a general survey of Islamic legal system: its history and developments, structure and spirit, and the attempts of the Muslim jurists to come to terms with the challenge of time.

NES 555, Themes in Islamic Law and Jurisprudence, Prof. Hossein Modarressi

Selected topics in Islamic law and jurisprudence. The topics vary from year to year, but the course normally includes reading of fatwas and selected Islamic legal texts in Arabic.

NES 503, Themes in Islamic Culture - Middle Eastern History, Prof. Michael A. Cook

This semester the course will be a chapter and paper clinic. Each participant will be expected to submit at least one draft chapter or paper to the seminar, and will receive intensive comments and suggestions on both form and substance from the other participants and the instructor. Chapters and papers may relate to any period or aspect of Middle Eastern or Islamic history.

AST 309 / MAE 309 / PHY 309 / ENE 309, Science and Technology of Nuclear Energy: Fission and Fusion, Prof. Robert J. Goldston

Concern about climate change and need for energy independence has driven recent growth in nuclear fission power. However the events at Fukushima Daichi and the negotiations with Iran illustrate some of the issues. Fusion energy is moving towards realization of an alternative approach to nuclear power, with fewer dangers, but not yet ready to be commercialized. In this course we will study the science and technology of both fission and fusion. You will gain a good physical understanding of how both approaches work, including their benefits and risks, through applying and expanding your scientific and mathematical skills.

PER 102, Elementary Persian II, Amineh Mahallati

PER 107, Intermediate Persian II, Amineh Mahallati

PER 305, Advanced Persian: Iran through Film, Amineh Mahallati

This course will engage students thoughtfully with modern Iranian society and politics through documentaries. Each week, students will watch a documentary and prepare for a lively in-class discussion of the issues. Students will be heavily exposed to colloquial Persian.

NES 540 / COM 540, Studies in Later Persian Literature 1200 - 1800 A.D., Dr. Michael Barry

Course acquaints students with the literature of the second great classical language of Islam and its legacy of epics, chronicles, lyric poems, mystical writings and imaginative tales from the traditional Persian-speaking world - including not only from present-day Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan but also from Anatolia, Central Asia and the Indian sub-continent. Continuation of NES 539. Treats the literature from 1200 to 1800.

Fall 2016

NES 229, The History of Iran from the Sasanians to the Mongols, Prof. Daniel J. Sheffield

This course is designed as an introduction to the political, religious and social history of Late Antique and Medieval Iran. Beginning with the rise of the Sasanian Empire in the 3rd century CE, we will trace the history of the idea of Iran as a political and cultural entity. Next we will examine the Arab conquests of Iran and the profound social changes experienced by Iranians during the early Islamic period. Finally we will conclude with a study of Iran in the centuries leading up to the Mongol conquest, focusing on the institution of kingship within the Islamic world. Throughout the course, a close reading of primary sources is emphasized.

ART 580, Islam and Modern Art, Staff

The course is dedicated to encounters between 'Islamic Art' and culture on one hand and Western modernity on the other. It reconstructs the historical and theoretical framework of this encounter and studies the following artistic realms: calligraphy and ornament (graffiti -pentagonal tiling and the motif 'woman in ornament'); architecture and contemporary museum presentation of 'Islamic Art', modern painting and Islamic culture (Klee, Matisse); contemporary artists with Iranian or Arabic background; and photography and film (women photographers from Iran and the Arab world and Iranian filmmakers).

FRE 538 / COM 538 / MOD 579, Le Monde par la bande, Prof. André Benhaïm

This course explores representations of the World and History in major bandes dessinées (or graphic novels) published in French from the 1930s to the present, and produced by authors of various backgrounds (French, Belgian, Italian, Jewish, Iranian). Informed by theoretical readings, discussions will address key aesthetical, political, and ethical issues, including Exoticism, Orientalism, (Post)colonialism, national and individual identity, as well as the theory of reception, to critically assess the fluctuations of these visions between fantasy and testimony.

PER 101, Elementary Persian II, Amineh Mahallati

PER 105, Intermediate Persian II, Amineh Mahallati

PER 302, Advanced Persian Reading I, Amineh Mahallati

This course is designed to improve the student's proficiency in the reading and comprehension of Persian texts. The emphasis is on reading and understanding and translating modern and classical prose. In the Advanced Persian course students are also expected to write essays in Persian during the course of the semester. Advanced Persian Reading class will be conducted in Persian.