Modern Iran
TTH 3:30-4:45

Dr. Roxanne Varzi
414 East Juan Carlos Center, 53 Washington Square South
212-998-3614
Office Hours: T and Th 5-6

This course will explore modern Iran through film, literature, photography, travel writing, philosophy and social science texts. An engagement with modern Iran introduces students to important concepts in post-colonial studies, social thought, war culture, religion (Iran is home to Bahai's, Jews, Moslems, Christians, Zoroastrians among other mystical traditions) and media as experienced through the paradigm of a non-Western modernity. Because of Iran's geo-political positioning and engagement with both western and non-western neighbors throughout the past century, a study of Iran will lend a different perspective to the study of modernity, geopolitics and artistic and philosophical influences of the past century.

Requirements

Regular attendance at lectures and outside screenings; vigorous and timely reading of assignments, class attendance and attendance at sectionals is required of all students. There will be a map quiz, an alphabet quiz, three short papers in addition to a mid-term and a final ethnographic project.

You should come to class having read the readings listed under that date and having watched the films listed under “view” for that date.

Books available at NYU bookstore

_Taj Al Saltana, Crowning Anguish, Memoirs of a Persian Princess from the Harem to Modernity_ Abbass Ammanat
_My Uncle Napolean_  
_Savashun_ Simin Daneshvar
_Mantle of the Prophet_ Roy Mottahedeh
_A lonely Woman_ Michael Hillman
_Persepolis_ Marjan Sartrapi
_Franny and Zoe_, Salinger

Selection of readings available on-line.

Important Web resources: TehranAvenue.com (an entertainment and cultural guide for Tehran) And The Iranian.com
January 20
Introduction to Modern Iran:
Assignment: Begin learning the Persian Alphabet, Map of Middle East
Persian alphabet at:

January 22
Looking/studying/reading/picturing and writing Iran
Read: Orientalism selections online

Jan 27
Ways in which Iran is seen at turn of century and ways in which Iran sees itself
Read: travel selections on line

January 29
What is ethnography? Ethnographic project will be discussed here.
Read: ethnographic selections on line

February 3
Elizabeth Smith’s lecture on Ethnicity

February 5
Qajars and Modernity
Read: Introduction pages 11-102 of Amanat’s “Crowning Anguish, Taj al Saltana,”

February 10
Qajar’s continued
Screening: Makhmalbaf’s Images from the Qajar Dynasty (18 min)
Read: Amanat, Taj al saltana pages 107-182
First Paper due: 3 pages
(Written in the first person, you are a young Iranian college student in the 1920’s and you
have been asked to assist Freya Stark in learning about Iranian Culture, in a page and half
describe what you would tell her about Iran based on what you have read, and in the
second page and a half, give your impressions of her).

February 12
World War II and Reza Shah and the Anglo-Soviet Invasion
Read: Finish Daneshvar’s Savashun

February 17
Continue with WWII
Read: My Uncle Napolean

February 19
1950's Mossadeg and Nationalization of Oil; The Shah and the U.S (CIA coup)
My Uncle Napolean

February 24
Amir Naderi?
(View Naderi film)
Second writing assignment due
(In three pages talk about the ways in which Iran was "informally colonized" before and during allied occupation. Also discuss how Iranians resisted foreign influence. Use examples from readings.)

February 26
The 60’s and 70’s Art House and Popular Culture
Read: Furugh Farokhzad

March 2
View: The house is Black
Read: Furugh Farokhzad

March 4
Public intellectuals; Anti-colonialism and the Shah
Al Ahmad, Daneshvar, Shariati, Fanon
Begin Reading Mantle of the prophet, excerpts from “Westoxification”

March 9
Makhmalbaf and the bridge between pre and post Revolution

March 11
In-Class Mid-Term Exam

March 23
Sakkakhuneh movement in Art/ Cultural Islam Vs. political Islam
Mantle of the prophet

March 25
Khomeini and uses of tradition the Hajj and Muhharam
Chelkowski lecture
Mantle of the prophet

March 30
The Revolution
Khomeini uses of Western theorists (Kate millet and Foucault in Tehran)
Read Persepolis
Look at staging a Revolution on reserve in Bobst

April 1
Taziyeh
Ghaffari’s lecture

April 6
The War

April 8
Culture of Martyrdom
View: Making Martyrs

April 13
Aftermath of War
View: the Scent of Yusef’s shirt
Read: Varzi, “Ghost in the Machine”

April 15
Daily life in Iran, Popular Secular youth culture
View: the May Lady

April 20
Youth culture Cont.
View: Exam

April 22
View Pari
Read Franny and Zoe

April 27
Iranian film from world cinema Perspective
Guest Godfrey Cheshire
Read: Cheshire projections
Chesire NY Press
View: close-up Kiarostami

April 29
Returning/Diaspora
Read: Varzi, The Pelican
Bahrampour: Persians on the Pacific
Iranian.com

Ethnographic projects due on May 4th.