

Portland Community College

Spring 2023 Term

PS 299 - Introduction to Iranian Politics (CRN: 25370) 4 credits

In-person, Sylvania campus, Room SS 116, Tuesday and Thursday, 12pm - 1:50pm

Instructor: Robert Asaadi, Ph.D.

Office location: Sylvania Campus, SS Building, Room 201-33

Email: robert.asaadi@pcc.edu

Office Hours:

Mondays, 12:00-2:00pm, via Zoom, email in advance for appointment

Wednesdays, 12:00-2:00pm, via Zoom, email in advance for appointment

Course description

This course aims to deepen knowledge of Iran's modern political history and to enrich understanding of Iran's regional foreign policy. The course shifts our line of inquiry from the usual emphasis on U.S.-Iran relations toward a more regionally grounded approach to understanding the complexities of Iranian domestic politics and foreign policy. The topics we will explore include the following: nuclear politics, proxy conflict, political Islam, terrorism, the politics of oil, and regional security and stability. The course also emphasizes the historical context and current status of Iran's relations with other great powers, such as Russia and China.

Learning objectives

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Describe the modern political history of Iran
- Explain Iran's political institutions and policymaking processes
- Analyze the characteristics of Iranian foreign policy, both toward its neighbors in the Middle East region and toward great powers beyond the Middle East (with particular attention to Iran's relations with China and Russia)
- Explain ideas and concepts effectively, and be able to formulate and defend novel arguments of their own

Course Materials

The course has one required text. Copies of the book have been ordered for purchase at the PCC Bookstore. Ervand Abrahamian (2018). *A History of Modern Iran: Revised and Updated*. Cambridge University Press.

Course Requirements and Grading

Attendance and Participation - 15%

Course Journal, Part I - 25% - due at the end of Week 5, prior to 11:59pm on Sunday, May 7

Course Journal, Part II - 25% - due at the end of Week 10, prior to 11:59pm on Sunday, June 11

Term Paper - 30% - due prior to 11:59pm on Thursday, June 15 (during Finals Week)

Reflection Paper - 5%

All course work will be uploaded via the Assignments tab on the course website. Instructions for the Course Journal and Papers will be reviewed in class.

Attendance will be scored according to the following guidelines: 0 or 1 unexcused absences = 15/15; 2 unexcused absences = 14/15; 3 unexcused absences = 13/15; 4 unexcused absences = 12/15; 5 unexcused absences = 11/15; 6 unexcused absences = 10/15; 7 or more unexcused absences = 0/15

Please notify the instructor prior to an assignment deadline if you are experiencing an extenuating circumstance that prevents you from completing your work on-time. If I don't hear from you prior to the course deadline, then late work will not be accepted.

[PCC Grading Guidelines \[www.pcc.edu/resources/student-records/grading/\]](http://www.pcc.edu/resources/student-records/grading/)

[Drop/Withdraw deadlines \[www.pcc.edu/enroll/registration/dropping.html\]](http://www.pcc.edu/enroll/registration/dropping.html)

Expectations of the Professor

While I expect you to attend class meetings, complete all of the course readings, and submit the course assignments in a timely manner, let me assure you that I will be there to help you. I will be around to meet, either during Zoom or in-person office hours or other times, and to discuss any issue you have. My door is always open. You can email me anytime as well. Please contact me with any issue you have and we will work together for a solution.

Email Communication

Please use my email address posted at the beginning of the syllabus. Please use your @pcc.edu email address; email sent from an outside account will likely be screened to my Spam folder and I may not see it. Please note that I do not check email after 5PM on weekdays and only very infrequently (effectively not at all) over the weekends. I will make every effort to respond to your emails as promptly as I can; however, on occasion, there may be times when I am traveling or otherwise engaged where it is not possible to respond as quickly as I would like to, so I appreciate your flexibility and patience.

Class Schedule

**The instructor may revise the class calendar, modify content, and/or substitute assignments in response to institutional, weather, or class situations.*

Week 1

Tuesday, April 4 - Introduction

Introduction to the geography and demographics of Iran and the Middle East. How does Iran compare to its neighbors? Overview of the trajectory of the course.

Abrahamian, Introduction, p. 1-7

Thursday, April 6 - Late-19th century Iran (Qajar Era)

Who were the Qajar rulers? What was the relationship between the Qajar state and Iranian society? Weakness of the late-Qajar rulers. Concessions to foreign powers. British and Russian influence. Underdevelopment.

Abrahamian, Chapter 1, p. 8-34

Week 2

Tuesday, April 11 - Constitutional Revolution

Iran's early historical experience with democracy. How did the constitutional revolution seek to re-make state-society relations? Limiting the power of the monarchy. Parliament. Constitution.

Abrahamian, Chapter 2, p. 35-64

Thursday, April 13 - Reza Shah Era

Transition from Qajar to Pahlavi dynasty. Reza Shah's rise to power. Personality and ideology of Reza Shah. Principles of rule.

Abrahamian, Chapter 3, p. 65-99

Week 3

Tuesday, April 18 - Socialism, Nationalism, and the 1953 coup, part I

Thursday, April 20 - Socialism, Nationalism, and the 1953 coup, part II

Post-WWII territorial issues. Kurdish and Turkic secession? Rise of Socialism (Tudeh) and Soviet influence. Rise of Nationalism (National Front) and Mohammad Mosaddegh. Oil nationalization. Politics of oil in Iran. 1953 coup against the Mosaddegh government. Growth of power of the monarchy. Authoritarian revival in Iran.

Abrahamian, Chapter 4, p. 100-125

Week 4

Tuesday, April 25 - NO CLASS MEETING, Collegewide in-service day

Thursday, April 27 - Mohammad Reza Shah Era

Encounter with modernity. Modernization and secularization theses. Suppression of traditional authority (religious institutions); land reforms. Effects on Iranian society. Political protest and violence. Dissent from the traditional authorities (particularly religious figures / institutions). State repression. SAVAK. Growing popular discontent.

Abrahamian, Chapter 5, p. 126-158

Week 5

Tuesday, May 2 - The Islamic Revolution, part I

Thursday, May 4 - The Islamic Revolution, part II

Understanding causes and consequences. Consolidation of the diverse interests of the revolution around Khomeini and the Islamist factions. Revolution-counter-revolution cycle.

Abrahamian, Chapter 6, p. 159-204

Week 6

Tuesday, May 9 - Islamic Republic Political System, part I

Thursday, May 11 - Islamic Republic Political System, part II

Overview of post-revolutionary Iran. Iran-Iraq war. Post-Khomeini politics. 1990s factionalism. 1997 Khatami election and reform movement. 2005 Ahmadinejad election and conservative resurgence. 2013 Rouhani election. 2018-2022 protest era. 2021 Raisi election.

Assigned Reading TBA

Week 7

Tuesday, May 16 - Iranian society, part I

Thursday, May 18 - Iranian society, part II

Demographics. Economic structure and key indicators. Social Movements. Politics of ethnicity, religion, gender relations. Public attitudes and the media. Political culture and values.

Assigned Reading TBA

Week 8

Tuesday, May 23 - Iran and the Arab world, part I

Thursday, May 25 - Iran and the Arab world, part II

Overview of Iran's role in the Arab region historically. Iranian policy under the Shah. Disruption and reorientation following the Islamic Revolution. Iran and Non-Alignment. Iran and Shi'ism. 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war as focal point. History of Iran-Syria relations. Iran's strategic interests in the Levant. Economic development and rising power of the GCC.

Ehteshami, Anoushiravan. (2009) "Iran's Regional Policies since the End of the Cold War," p. 324-347, *Contemporary Iran: Economy, Society, Politics*, ed. Ali Gheissari.

Razavi, Sam. (2013) "Iran's Levantine ambitions," p. 120-136, *Iranian Foreign Policy since 2001: Alone in the world*.

Kamrava, Mehran. (2013) "Iran and its Persian Gulf neighbors" p. 104-119 *Iranian Foreign Policy since 2001: Alone in the world*.

Week 9

Tuesday, May 30 - Iran and Russia

Historical legacies in Iran-Russia relations. Economic interests. Military and strategic interests. Nuclear politics. Counter-terrorism. Institutional cooperation (Shanghai Cooperation Organization). Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Katz, Mark N. (2013) "Iran and Russia," p. 167-177, *Iranian Foreign Policy since 2001: Alone in the world*.

Thursday, June 1 - Iran and China, part I

Historical overview of Iran-China relations. Security and military cooperation. Arms trade. Energy relations. Economic relations. China's Belt and Road Initiative. Iranian perceptions of China.

Dorraj, Manochehr, and James English. (2013) "Iran-China relations and the emerging political map," p. 179-194, *Iranian Foreign Policy since 2001: Alone in the world*.

Kamel, Maha S. (2018) "China's Belt and Road Initiative: Implications for the Middle East," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 31, No. 1, p. 76-95.

Week 10***Tuesday, June 6 - Iran and China, part II***

Dilemmas for Iran-China relations. China's interests and stakes in Iran. China's Muslim minority population. Iran's nuclear program. Iran-China-U.S. triangular relations and the role of UN and U.S. sanctions. The Covid-19 Pandemic.

Hong, Zhao. (2014) "China's Dilemma on Iran: between energy security and a responsible rising power," *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 23, No. 87, p. 408-424.

Akbarzadeh, Shahram, and Mahmoud Pargoo. (2021) "The China Model and Its Detractors in Iran," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 28, p. 78-95.

Monshipouri, Mahmood, and Javad Heiran-Nia. (2020) "China's Iran Strategy: What Is At Stake?" *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 27, p. 157-172.

Thursday, June 8 - Prospects for the Future

Questions of representation. Understanding Iran's place in the international community. Legacies of Cold War thinking. Effects of American unipolarity, hegemony, empire. Evaluating isolation versus engagement.

Rajaei, Farhang. (2013) "Conclusion: Why 'alone'?" p. 208-220 *Iranian Foreign Policy since 2001: Alone in the world.*

Dabashi, Hamid. (2010) excerpt (p. 85-111), *Iran, The Green Movements and the USA.*

Heradstveit, Daniel and Bonham, Matthew G. (2007) "What the Axis of Evil Metaphor Did to Iran" *Middle East Journal* 61, no. 3, p. 421-440.

Additional Course Policies and Resources**PCC Academic Calendar****Accessibility and Accommodations**

Portland Community College seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the instructor and to disability services:

[Accessible Ed & Disability Resources website](#)

Plagiarism Warning

This course adopts a zero-tolerance policy in regard to plagiarism cases. Plagiarism, using others' work without proper citation, is a serious offense. Plagiarism cases will be reported to the relevant authorities and may result in severe consequences. Since written work is part of the course requirements, you may need to consult various sources that describe how to cite references. Plagiarism has become an issue particularly in the age of the internet; one can just copy and paste entire papers or portions of papers in a matter of seconds. **Just changing the wording of the passages you use does not save you from plagiarizing. You need to refer to any source even if it is an internet one.** If you have any further questions, please see me for clarification. Any case of cheating or plagiarism will result in a zero for that assignment and possible further action.

Title IX/Non-Discrimination statement

Portland Community College is committed to creating and fostering a learning and working environment based on open communication and mutual respect. If you believe you have encountered sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, sexual assault, or discrimination based on race, color, religion, age, national origin, veteran status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability please contact the [Office of Equity and Inclusion](#) at (971) 722-5840 or equity.inclusion@pcc.edu.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

We are all here to learn. Any behavior that gets in the way of learning and disrupts the class should be avoided. From time to time, students may come across classroom content that is disturbing or challenging to them in various ways. This is to be expected and is part of learning/being in college. I will make every attempt to create a fair, respectful and open classroom atmosphere. However, part of that includes students potentially hearing ideas and viewpoints that they do not agree with. Being exposed to challenging ideas and different viewpoints or experiences is a core part of a diverse and vibrant college.

The classroom is a place to discuss complex and important political and social issues and concerns. Central to our ability to do this is the commitment to and fostering of free speech. Protecting the right of dissent, minority voices and speech that might offend is important to the continuation of democracy and to our class's success. However, this does not mean that criminal behavior such as harassment or personal attacks are protected or welcome (quite the opposite). Students who cannot tolerate other viewpoints and a diverse set of political and personal experiences and beliefs being expressed should not take this course.

[PCC Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook](#)

PCC is a sanctuary college. For more information and resources, see [DREAMers Resource Center](#)

Technical Support is available through the [IT Service Desk](#)

PCC Tutoring Services can provide both in-person and online content support for enrolled students.