HST 410: Shi'ism and Revolution, 656-1979

Spring 2011, TTh 10:00-11:20am, 16 Pacific Hall

This course aims to explore the historical connection between Shi'i sectarianism (broadly defined) and the revolutionary movements it produced from the origins of Islamic history until the 20th century. The focus of the course is broad in scope and will in the first half the class fall on revolutionary movements during the formative period of Shi'ism, from the 6th to the 11th centuries C.E.—and in the latter half of the course we will also explore subsequent periods as well: the rise of Safavid state and the conversion of Iran to Shi'ism in the 15th century, the Iranian revolutions of the 20th century and the rise of Shi'ism political activism in its various modern guises throughout the modern Arab World. Throughout this historical overview, we will explore issues such as the relationship of sectarianism and apocalypticism to political activism, religious discourse and state ideology, and the ramifications of Shi'i revolutions for the path of Islamic history more generally speaking.

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Course Website. Please consult the course website regularly for announcements. The website is accessible via UofO's Blackboard system (see http://blackboard.uoregon.edu). The site contains general course information, reading assignments, research guides, lecture handouts, study questions for discussion, paper assignments, visual images, links to other sites, etc.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING
The course consists of two 80 minute meetings per week; normally, Monday will be dedicated to lectures, with Wednesday set aside for half-lectures and discussions (some weeks may vary). Please read the assigned materials during the week they are assigned, and come to discussions prepared with questions and observations on the readings.

Readings: Assigned readings for each week are indicated on the attached schedule of lectures. All books on the syllabus been placed on reserve at the library; all articles and primary readings can be found online at the library website via e-reserve. There is also a link to these e-reserves on blackboard. Reading assignments given by author only on the syllabus (e.g., “Momen, 1-25”) refer to the books listed below, which are available for purchase from the university bookstore.
Momen, Moojen. _An Introduction to Shi'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism_. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale UP, 1987)

Kurzman, Charles. _The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran_ (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 2005)


In addition to the assigned readings, a number of other works have been placed on reserve in the library. Some of these may be of assistance to you if you wish to explore particular subjects in more detail.

**Discussions:** Pay special attention to the readings marked off in **bold** in the syllabus, which are primary sources in translation, and to the study questions found on the course website. Also, be prepared to discuss these sources in class on the appropriate days.

**Papers:** Two short papers on assigned topics will be required. These stand in lieu of essay questions on an examination. The purpose of these papers is two-fold: 1) to stimulate you to think more carefully about certain questions covered in the course and to formulate your ideas on them; 2) to exercise your skills in writing an historical essay.

Your **first paper** will be a historical biography of a revolutionary individual from Shi‘ite history. I will post a list on blackboard on which you can sign up for a specific person. There will be 4 stages to this assignment: 1) you will hand in a bibliography of sources to be checked by me; 2) you will submit a draft of your paper for peer review to your classmates; 3) you will write a peer reviews for a select number of your classmates’ papers (randomly assigned); and 4) you will revise your paper and hand it in to me for you final grade.

Your **second paper** will be your opportunity to weigh in on the central question of this course: Is Shi‘ism a religion of revolution and/or protest? Emphasis in grading will be placed on clarity of thought, clarity of expression, written polish, and effective support of your arguments with available evidence. Assigned readings given throughout the quarter should provide adequate material for you to formulate and substantiate your ideas on this topic; use of outside material is welcome, but receives no extra credit even (though such sources will likely aid you in achieving full credit).

**Papers must be handed in punctually.** Papers may be submitted until 4:00pm on the days indicated in the syllabus below at my office of in MacKenzie Hall. **Please also submit to me an electronic copy of your paper, as a Word file, by emailing it to Islamic.history.papers@gmail.com by 4:00pm Pacific Standard Time on the due date.** (This is an address to which only I have access to and utilize to keep my Oregon mailbox from getting cluttered.) Delays are unacceptable; they not only complicate grading but are unfair to others who have striven to submit their
essays on time. For this reason, penalties will be assessed for lateness. Please do not ask for extensions: if you have sports or work commitments or requirements for other courses, you are expected to plan ahead and manage your time effectively so that the assignment can be submitted on time. If you have legitimate concerns, please contact me well in advance (at least 2 weeks).

**Final Grade Tally:** Course grades will be computed as follows: Historical Biography, 30%; Peer Review of Historical Biography, 20%; Class Participation, 20%; Final Paper, 30%.

**Reference Works** A selection of basic reference dealing with Islamic history and civilization be found at the Knight Library and accessed via the library’s online resources. Below is a list of the most authoritative and useful:

- *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition; the gold standard of Islamic studies and abbreviated as *EI*, it’s also available online via the library’s proxy servers @ [http://www.brillonline.nl.libproxy.uoregon.edu/](http://www.brillonline.nl.libproxy.uoregon.edu/)

- *Encyclopaedia of Islam THREE*; the third edition of *EI* is underway but still in its infancy, most including articles falling under the letter ‘A’.

- *Encyclopedia Iranica*; an undertaking even more massive than *EI*, *EIr* covers the entirety of Iranian history and culture. Although its printed version has only reached the initial parts of ‘K’, a great deal of important articles to appear in print in the future can still be accessed online via [http://www.iranica.com](http://www.iranica.com)


- *Cambridge History of Egypt*

- *Cambridge History of Iran*

- JSTOR: useful for essentially any class you’ll take here at Oregon, by logging into jstor.org via Oregon’s proxy server and/or at the library, you have access to a wealth of scholarly articles on Islamic history and civilization. If you’re looking for a place to find sources on the Internet, this should be one of your first stops (Wikipedia tends to be VERY unreliable and/or ideological for early Islamic history).
LECTURE AND READING SCHEDULE — SPRING 2011

Week 1

Mar 29  Organization/What is Shi‘ite Islam? Who are the Shi‘a?

READINGS  Momen, chs. 2-4.

Mar 31  The Discontents of Fāṭima and ‘Alī, or ‘Was ‘Alī a Revolutionary?’


Week 2

Apr 5, 7  al-Ḥusayn at Karbalā’: From Tragedy, to Myth, to Cult


Week 3

Apr 12  Umayyad Shi‘ism and ‘Abbāsid Da‘wa

READINGS  Elr, s.v. “Kaysāniya” (S. Anthony); F. Daftary, The Ismā‘īlīs: Their History and Doctrines, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 2007), 52-86; Excerpt from the Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays, trans. P. Crone

Apr 14  ‘Abbāsids and the Shi‘a (Historical Biography Bibliography Due)


1 http://iranica.com/articles/hosaynb-ali
2 http://www.jstor.org/stable/1570949
Week 4

Apr 19, 21  Revolution of the Mind: Occultation and Shi'i Apocalypticism

READINGS  Momen, 147-171; Elr, “Gayba” (S. Arjomand); Two disputations on the ghayba written by Ibn Qiba.

Week 5

Apr 26  Ismā'iliyya and the Fāṭimid Caliphate


Apr 28  Ḥasan-ı Şabbāh and the Assassins


Week 6

May 3  Şafavī Order and Empire


May 5  Şafavids and Iranian Shi'ism (Paper Due for Peer Review)


4 http://iranica.com/articles/gayba
5 http://www.jstor.org/stable/609140
**Week 7**

May 10  The 5th *madhhab* and the Constitutional Revolution

**READINGS**


May 12  Qumm and Najaf

**READINGS**


**Week 8**

May 17  1979’s Unthinkable Revolution

**READINGS**


May 19  A Gendered Revolution?

**READINGS**

J. Afary, *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran*, chs. 9,10; excerpt from Murtaza Mutahhari, *The Human Status of Woman in the Qur’an*

**Week 9**

May 24  Hezbollah and the Lebanese Shiʿa

**READINGS**

Norton, *Hizbollah; Muhamamd Husayn Fadlallah, Islamic Unity and Political Change and September 11th, Terrorism, Islam, and the Intifada*

May 26  Revolutionary Gender: Women’s Public Shiʿi Piety in Lebanon and Political Activism

**READINGS**


**Week 10**

May 31  The New Shiʿi Politics of Iraq

June 2  Is Shiʿism a Religion of Protest?
READINGS


(Final Paper due in Exam Week)