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Youth Culture in Iran

TR 10:30-12:00, Williams 29

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Islamic Republic of Iran sought to create for its citizens a new Islamic subjectivity, and today's young people, all born after the Revolution of 1978-79, were the targets of that process. By probing the political, cultural, and artistic interests that the young people in Iran have engaged since the Revolution, we might evaluate the effectiveness of that project. To what extent has the Iranian youth conformed to or resisted the kind of citizenship that its government determined for it? Do we sense ambivalence or apathy towards that subjectivity? In this course, we will attempt to answer these questions by examining a wide-range of materials, including music videos, graphic novels, documentaries, graffiti, narrative films, and cutting-edge anthropological works. We will engage these cultural products in order to locate and explore the different languages (musical, visual, written) that have emerged in order to articulate various youth cultures in Iran.

This course will also serve as an introduction to Iran's post-Revolution history. By examining the texts and images that the Iran's youngest citizens have generated in order to engage this history, we will gain a better sense of centrality of the youth movement to the country's major events from the last thirty years. This course will be conducted, as much as possible, in seminary style, with student interaction and participation constituting a majority of class time.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and Participation: You are required to attend class regularly and to participate actively and consistently throughout the semester. All reading and viewing assignments must be completed before each session. You should demonstrate your command of the assigned materials by contributing meaningfully to class discussion. More than two absences will adversely affect your grade.

Reaction Papers: Throughout the course of the semester, you will write **four** short (2-3 pages) reaction papers based on the course materials. These papers should focus closely on the text you are examining rather than solely on the socio-political context. Early in the semester you will sign up for four books, films, images, or videos. On the day that you submit your paper, you will be responsible for taking a lead in the classroom discussion. **Late papers will not be accepted.**

Midterm Exam: A comprehensive midterm exam will provide the opportunity to review important terms and to make sure that you have completed all of the assigned reading in the first half of the semester. The exact format of the exam will be discussed well in advance, but it will not be an essay exam. The midterm is tentatively scheduled for **February 28, 2012.**

Final Paper: As a way of engaging your interests within the broad rubric of “youth culture in Iran,” you will write an 8-10 page research paper on a topic of your choosing. You will be required to submit a paper proposal (February 21) and I must approve your paper topic. Your paper should draw heavily on the course materials and discussions, but you are welcome to introduce new texts and research. More details to follow. Final papers must be submitted electronically by **May 3, 2012.**

GRADING

Participation:	25%
Reaction Papers:	40%
Midterm:	15%
Final Paper:	20%

MATERIALS

Films

Our Times... (Rakhshan Bani-E'temad, 2002)
No One Knows About Persian Cats (Bahman Ghobadi, 2009)
Be Like Others (Tanaz Eshaghian, 2008)
Dog Sweat (Hossein Keshavarz, 2010)
Tehran Has No More Pomegranates (Massoud Bakhshi, 2007)

Books

Dehqan, Ahmad. *Journey Heading to 270 Degrees*, trans. Paul Sprachman. Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2006.

Mahdavi, Pardis. *Passionate Uprisings: Iran's Sexual Revolution*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008.

Mandanipour, Shahriar. *Censoring an Iranian Love Story*, trans. Sarah Khalili. New York: Knopf, 2009.

Moaveni, Azadeh. *Lipstick Jihad: A Memoir of Growing up Iranian in America and American in Iran* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005)

Satrapi, Marjane. *The Complete Persepolis*. New York Pantheon, 2007.

Varzi, Roxanne. *Warring Souls: Youth, Media, and Martyrdom in Post-Revolution Iran*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006.

Other Course Material

Additional articles and videos will be posted on **Blackboard** in the "Course Documents" section and organized according to date.

CODE OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: The Penn Code of Academic Integrity is in effect in this class. Submitting any assignment or exam that is not your own, or that you did not participate fully in doing, is a violation of that code. For more information: <http://www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity/>

DISABILITIES: All students with disabilities who seek an accommodation at Penn have the responsibility to identify themselves to SDS. Identification may take place at admissions or at any time during the student's course of study. All students with disabilities have the responsibility to provide documentation at their own expense in order to be considered for accommodations. After documentation of disability has been approved and accommodations have been proposed, students must give permission for letters to be sent to all instructors in whose classes accommodations are being requested. Instructors should review the proposed accommodations (see below). After there is agreement on the appropriate accommodation, students are encouraged to introduce themselves to professors directly and to initiate a dialogue about their particular needs. See the following website for more information: http://www.upenn.edu/provost/PennBook/guidelines_for_addressing_academic_issues_for_students_with_disabilities

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS: Students who wish to observe religious holidays must inform their instructors within the first two weeks of each semester of their intent to observe the holiday even when the exact date of the holiday will not be known until later so that alternative arrangements convenient to both students and faculty can be made at the earliest opportunity.

Course Topic Outline

I. Historical and Political Perspectives

- A. Youth and the Revolution of 1978-19
- B. Youth, Martyrdom, and the Iran-Iraq War
- C. The Reformist Movement
- D. The Green Movement

II. Emerging Art Forms

- A. Underground Music Scene
- B. Religious Pop
- C. Visual Arts

III. Social Networking

- A. Love and Sexuality
- B. In the City
- C. Alternative Lifestyles
- D. Social Networking and New Media

IV. Toward a Theory of Youth Culture in Iran

- A. Comparative Perspectives
- B. Conclusions



Course Schedule

Introduction

January 12: Introduction to the class

- Introductions
- Syllabus
- What is youth culture? Why is it important to the study of Iran?

Youth and the Revolution of 1978-1979

January 17: Setting the Stage

- Warring Souls*, "Prologue," "Introduction," and "Chapter One," pg. xiii-43
- Begin *Persepolis 1*

January 19: The Story of a Childhood

- Persepolis 1*, pg. 1-155

January 24: The Story of a Return

- Persepolis 2*, pg. 156-341

Youth, Martyrdom, and the Iran-Iraq War

January 26: Setting the Stage

- Warring Souls*, "Chapter Two," pg. 45-75
- *Journey to Heading 270 Degrees*, pg. 1-22

January 31: Mystics and Martyrs

- Journey Heading to 270 Degrees*, pg. 23-118
- Watch "And Life Went On" (posted on Blackboard in the January 31 folder)

February 2: Carnivals and Fronts

- Journey Heading to 270 Degrees*, pg. 119-182

The Reformist Movement

February 5: *Film Viewing*

- Our Times...* by Rakhshan Bani-E'temad
- Time: 2:00 PM
- Location: Van Pelt 425

February 7: Setting the Stage

- Warring Souls*, "Chapter Eight," pg. 195-208
- Read Khatami's Speech to the UN on Dialogue Among Civilizations (posted on Blackboard)

February 9: Electing Khatami

- Our Times...* by Rakhshan Bani-E'temad

The Green Movement**February 14: New Shades of Green**

- Negar Mottahedeh "Green Is the New Green: Social Media and the Post-Election Crisis in Iran, 2009" (posted on Blackboard in the February 14 folder)
- Watch "A Death in Tehran" (posted on Blackboard in the February 14 folder)

Underground Music**February 16: Setting the Stage**

- "The Language of Rock: Iranian Youth, Popular Music, and National Identity," pg. 69-93
- Watch the music videos posted on Blackboard in the February 16 folder.

February 19: *Film Viewing*

- No One Knows About Persian Cats* by Bahman Ghobadi
- Time: 2:00 PM
- Location: Van Pelt 425

February 21: Persian Cats and Dogs

- *No One Knows About Persian Cats* by Bahman Ghobadi
- **Due: Final Paper Proposal**

Visual Arts**February 23: Visionary States**

- Warring Souls*, "Chapter Four," pg. 106-130
- Look at "Iran" by Newsha Tavakolian (posted on Blackboard in the February 23 folder)
- Watch "Tehran Ratz" (posted on Blackboard in the February 23 folder)
- Watch "A Short Documentary about Iranian Graffiti in Iran" (posted on Blackboard)

February 28: MIDTERM

Love and Sexuality

March 1: Setting the Stage

-*Passionate Uprisings*, "Prologue" and "Chapters 1-2," pg. 1-103

March 3-11: Spring Break!!

March 13: Meeting, Mating, and Cheating in the Islamic Republic

-*Passionate Uprisings*, "Chapters 3-4" pg. 104-183

March 15: Sex and the City

-*Passionate Uprisings*, "Chapters 5-8," pg. 184-298

March 20: Representing Love I

-*Censoring an Iranian Love Story*, pg. 3-145

March 22: Representing Love II

-*Censoring an Iranian Love Story*, pg. 146-304

Alternative Lifestyles

March 25: *Film Viewing*

- *Dog Sweat* by Hossein Keshavarz
- Time: 2:00 PM
- Location: Van Pelt 425

March 27: Gay in Iran

- "The Case of Mohammad Khordadian, an Iranian Male Dancer"
- Watch the videos posted on Blackboard in the March 27 folder.
- Read excerpts from *Sexual Politics in Iran* (posted on Blackboard in the March 27 folder)

March 29: A Dog's Life

-*Dog Sweat* by Hossein Keshavarz

April 1: *Film Viewing*

- Tehran Has No More Pomegranates* by Massoud Bakhshi
- Time: 2:00 PM
- Location: Rainey Auditorium, Penn Museum

April 3: Iran: Sex Change Capital of the World?

- Watch *Be Like Others* (posted on Blackboard in the April 3 folder)
- Read "Truth of Sex" (posted on Blackboard in the April 3 folder)

In the City**April 8: In the City**

- Warring Souls*, "Chapter Five," pg. 130-154

April 10: A Musical, Historical, Comedy, Docu-drama, Love Story, Experimental Film

- *Tehran Has No More Pomegranates* by Massoud Bakhshi

Social Networking and New Media**April 12: Guest Speaker**

- Assignments TBA

Comparative Perspectives: Iranian/American Youth**April 17: Iranian in America**

- Lipstick Jihad*, pg. 1-121

April 19: American in Iran

- Lipstick Jihad*, pg. 125-246

Conclusions**April 24: Last Day of Class ☹**

- "Iran, Where a Water Fight Can Land You in Prison" (posted on Blackboard, April 24 folder)
- Concluding Remarks
- Presentation of Final Papers