Overview:

More than 30 years have passed since 1979, the year when a self-styled Islamic Revolution unfolded in Iran. Historian Eric J. Hobsbawm branded this revolution as "one of the central social revolutions of the twentieth century"; and social scientist Richard Cottam described it as perhaps "the most popular revolution in the history of mankind." Whatever the case may be, we are now permitted to use the benefit of hindsight to revisit the 1979 revolution. In the first part of the course we will review the manifold causes of the 1979 revolution in a historical perspective, tracing the social, political, economic and cultural bases of the rise of the revolutionary movement and political Islam (or Islamism) in Iran. We will then move on to situate the revolution in a global context. This will enable us to examine Iranian history since 1979 in comparative perspective as well as integrate the revolution into the "entangled histories" of modernity of which it is part. At the same time we will examine the cultural dimensions of the post-1979 state in Iran. We will consider cultural production in the Islamic Republic of Iran as a site of state domination and oppositional resistance. We will suggest that the Islamic Republic is a "scopic regime," developing a symbolic Islamism as a tool of propaganda and hegemony. At the same time, literature, cinema, and the visual arts have been sites of resistance.

Course Requirements:

1. Active participation: 20%.
2. Class presentation: 10%.
3. Final paper: 70%.

Topics and Required Readings:

1. Shi‘ism and Iranian Shi‘ism: a Socio-Historical Overview

Readings:

Hamid Dabashi, Authority in Islam from the Rise of Muhammad to the Establishment of the Umayyads (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1993), 95-120


Class presentation:


2. Qajar Iran: Colonialism, Nationalism, Revolution
   Readings:
   Class presentation:
   Hamid Dabashi, Iran: A People Interrupted (New York: The New Press, 2007), 32-104

3. Secularism and Religion at the Turn of the Century
   Said Amir Arjomand, “The Ulama’s Traditionalist Opposition to Parliamentarism,” Middle Eastern Studies 17 (1981), pp. 174-190
   Class presentation:
   Mangol Bayat, Mysticism and Dissent (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1982), chapter 5

4. Nationalism, Gender, and Memory at the Constitutional Revolution and after
   Readings:
   Class presentation:
   Afsaneh Najmabadi, Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 1-25

5. The Pahlavi Dynasty: "Great Civilization" and/or Prelude to Revolution?
   Readings:


Class presentation:


6. **An “Islamic” Revolution?**  
Readings:


Class presentation:


7. **Memory and Power in the Revolution and its Aftermath**, Parts 1 & 2  
Readings:

Talinn Grigor, "Preserving the Antique Modern: Persepolis ’71," *Future Anterior* 2 (Summer 2005): 22-29


Class presentation:

Haggai Ram, “Mythology of Rage: Representations of the Self and the Other in Post-Revolutionary Iran,” *History and Memory* 8 (Spring\Summer 1996): 67-87

8. **Sexual Politics in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Parts 1 & 2**

**Readings:**


*Divorce Iranian Style*, a film by Kim Longinotto and Ziba Mir-Hosseini, UK, 1998

*Be Like Others*, a film by Tanaz Eshaghian, Canada, Iran, UK, 2008

9. **The United States and Iran before and after 1979**

**Readings:**


**Class presentation:**


10. **Israel and Iran before and after 1979**

Haggai Ram, "To Banish the 'Levantine Dunghill' from Within: Toward a Cultural Understanding of Israeli Anti-Iran Phobias," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 40 (May): 249-268

**Class presentation:**

Trita Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the U.S.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), several excerpts

11. **The Dialectics of Diaspora and Homeland, Part 1: Iranian Jewry**

**Readings:**

Class presentation:
Ella Shohat, "The Invention of the Mizrahim." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 29 (Autumn 1999): 5-20

12. The Dialectics of Diaspora and Homeland, Part 2: Women Writers in Exile

Readings:

*Persepolis*, a film by Marjane Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud, 2007, France

Class Presentation: