

Iran Colloquium Program in 2007-2008 Academic Year:

Fall 2007:

21 September 2007: “Iranian Studies at Yale: A Survey”

By Kishwar Rizvi, Professor History of Art, Yale University
Asghar Rastegar, Professor Internal Medicine, Yale University
Abbas Amanat, Professor of History, Yale University

Kishwar Rizvi gave a survey of resources available for history of art in Persianate societies in the university. Asghar Rastegar spoke about Iranian medical doctors who have received some type of training at Yale. Abbas Amanat gave a survey of Iranian studies at the Departments of History and Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

5 October 2007: “Edward G. Browne in the Persian Mirror: Orientalism and Modern Iranian Nationalism” by Farzin Vejdani, PhD Candidate, Department of History, Yale University

Edward G. Browne’s career provides an instance of problematizing Orientalism the way Edward Said defines it. Browne’s writing and exchange with Iranian intellectuals at the turn of the twentieth century helped bring about a revival of nationalism and secularism in the country.

12 October 2007: “Reflections on the Iranian Intellectuals and Their Discontents” by Daryoush Ashouri, Iranian Studies Fellow, Yale University

Iranian intellectuals who have come of age in the aftermath of the 1953 coup have been constrained by the repressive policies of the late Pahlavi and the Islamic Republic periods. Some of these intellectuals became disillusioned with political activities and turned to cultural production and reform. Others lost their lives. Still others continued their political activities but without being able to effect significant political change.

2 November 2007: “Contending Visions of Iranian National History” by Daryoush Ashouri, Iranian Studies Fellow, Yale University

Iranian national history is characterized by distinct narratives formulated by Iranian intellectuals of diverse shades. These narratives are colored by competing visions of what future Iran should look like.

9 November 2007: “Persian Language and Literature, and Demands of Modernity” by Daryoush Ashouri, Iranian Studies Fellow, Yale University

Although Persian has a long history of literary production, the language has to develop certain methods in order to properly address the demands of modern scientific production that is almost always in other languages. These methods themselves must be based on solid and consistent linguistic foundations.

30 November 2007: "Iskandar at the Kaba in Illustrated Manuscripts of the *Shahnama*"
by Marianna Shreve Simpson, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, MD

In the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century paintings of Firdawsi's *Shahnama* one is struck by the historical and cultural incongruity of the portrayal of Iskandar (Alexander the Great) in Ka'ba, Mecca. Since the story of Iskandar in Ka'ba is one of the many minor subnarratives in the *Shahnama*, one sees that artists of this period went far beyond the actual text of Firdawsi and the poetic setting became the pictorial subject.

Spring 2008:

25 January 2008: “The Strange Case of Mirza Abul Hasan Khan Ilchi Shirazi: Qajar Diplomat, Early Traveler, Fictional Character” by Naghmeh Sohrabi, Assistant Director, Crown Center for Middle East Studies, Brandeis University

Mirza Abu'l-Hasan Khan Ilchi Shirazi was an early nineteenth-century Qajar diplomat who traveled to England and produced a travel account of his experience abroad in Persian. This individual and part of his experience are featured in James Justinian Morier's *The Adventures of the Hajji Baba of Ispahan* which satirizes Iranian culture.

15 February 2008: “Covering Iran: The Pitfalls of Reporting on Iran for the US Media” by Kouross Esmaeili, Independent Filmmaker and Journalist

The US media coverage of Iranian society has by and large been biased and overshadowed by politics. There are certain trends of what can and cannot be said about Iran in the media, and it is often not possible for journalists to break these patterns.

7 March 2008: “Bihzad's Herat: The Painter and His City in the 15th Century – and Today” by Michael Barry, Consultative Chairman of Department of Islamic Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City; and Lecturer of Islamic Culture, Near Eastern Studies Department, Princeton University

Bihzad's paintings could be understood as mystical commentaries on the writings of classical Persian poets. Through his work, historians could moreover learn much about the social and political culture of his times.

28 March 2008: “Islamic Secularization: The Case of the Youth in the Holy City of Qom” by Farhad Khosrokhavar, Professor of Sociology, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), Cadis, Paris; and Visting Scholar, Council on Middle East Studies and Department of Sociology, Yale University

Young Iranians in Qom (the most religious and conservative city in the country) display characteristics that indicate the way they relate to society and culture has grown more rational and secular. Though very significant, this secularization is uneven in different areas of their lives.

18 April 2008: “The Cultural Politics of Martyrdom in Iran and the Middle East,” by Ali Banuazizi, Professor of Psychology Research and Political Science, Boston College

1 May 2008: “Literary Modernity between Persian and Arabic Prose: Jurji Zaydan’s ‘Riwayat’ in Persian Translation” by Kamran Rastegar, Lecturer in Arabic and Persian Literatures, University of Edinburgh