New York University
Gallatin School of Individualized Study
Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies
Spring 2013
ELEC-GG 2755/ SAME AS NEST-GA 2785
1 Wash Pl, Room: 401
Tuesday: 3:30-6:10 PM

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Contemporary Everyday Life in Iran
This seminar will explore social and cultural theories and practices of everyday life. We will study various theoretical approaches to the understanding of everyday realities and focus on Iran as a contemporary case study. Theories of everyday life focus on the elusive character of our reality called "everydayness," the commonplace, ordinary, familiar and generally taken-for-granted world. What are the social and cultural elements that constitute life as ordinary reality? Study of everyday life is a highly powerful representation of how physical public space can be infused with the full richness and ambiguity of the imaginary—in a material context where the future path of a society is being decided through people’s ‘innocuous’ everyday actions (gathering to drink tea or coffee, playing music, or going shopping). A ‘lifestyle’ expresses a political allegiance, however murkily and grainily understood. It is ‘below’ the level of rational discourse, in imaginatively infused habitus. We will particularly focus on the variety of everyday practices in post-revolutionary Iran under the Islamic Republic. The class starts with a brief section on the social and cultural history of modern Iran and studies important scholarly works
on the Iranian Revolution of 1979. We will also examine the social and cultural changes taking place in Iran over the past three decades. Most of the course will focus on various forms of everyday life practices in Iran. Some areas of everyday life we will examine are: consumption and lifestyle; youth and underground culture; love and sexual experiences; public and private sphere; new and old religiosity; leisure time and secularization of time; and war as an ideological practice.

**Important Note:**

The class meets for two and half hours once a week. We will lecture for about one hour. The remaining ninety minutes will be spent in student presentations and reports reflecting on readings and discussing the short essays.

**Class Discussion Leaders:**

This course is organized as a seminar requiring critical and engaged in-class discussion. In addition to reading the class materials, students will be assigned to read background texts and present reports to class.

Each student will choose to participate in preparing for and leading the discussion of readings for a particular week. The student will work with the instructors to develop a critical, analytical summary of the readings to be sent by email to the class by noon of day before class. This critical summary will lay out key terms, concepts, and arguments within the text. The Student will also develop a set of discussion questions or a participatory activity for class. Class discussions should focus on a close reading of the text/s, critically analyzing theoretical contributions and may then apply concepts and theories to addressing related issues/problems (it is helpful to choose passages from the readings to consider in order to focus class discussion).

**Mid-term Essay:** Students are asked to write one analytic essay in which they will compare and contrast central issues, assumptions, and concepts in a set of readings. The instructors will provide the question. The essay will be 6-10 pages.

**Course Requirements:**

Students are evaluated and graded based on the followings:

1. Quality of Class Discussions and your role as discussion leader (30%)
2. The Mid-term Essay (30%)
3. Research Paper (40%)

**Required Readings:**


5. Behzad Yaghmaian, *Social Change in Iran*.

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**Course Outline**

**(Week 1)**

**January 29th: Everyday Life an Introduction**

**Readings:**

**(Week 2)**

**February 5: Theories of Everyday Life: Critical theory and Cultural studies:**

**Readings:**

**Suggested Reading:**

**(Week 3)**

**February 12: Introduction to Iranian society**

**Readings:**
• Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*.

**Suggested Readings:**

• Arjomand, Said Amir, *After Khomeini*.

**(Week 4)**

**February 19: Ideology, War and Everyday life**

**Readings:**

• Roxanne, Varzi, *Warring Souls: Youth, Media and Martyrdom in Post-revolution Iran*.

**(Week 5)**

**February 26: Love, Sex and Politics**

**Readings:**


Suggested Readings:
Kamran Talatof, *Modernity, Sexuality, and Ideology in Iran*.

**(Week 6)**

**March 5: Iranian Films and Everyday Life: Farhadi and Kiarostami**

**Readings:**

Nancy Jean- Luc, *The Evidence of Film*.

**Suggested Readings:**

Hajnal Karaly, *Abbas Kiarostami and New Wave of The Spectator*.
(Week 7)

**March 12: Contemporary Iranian Literature**

**Readings:**


Forough Farokhzad, *Another Birth and Other Poems*, Translated by Hasan Javidi and Susan Sallee.

**March 19 No class (Spring Break).**

(Week 8)

**March 26: Music and Youth Culture: Underground Everyday Life in Iran**

**Readings:**


Massimo Leone, My Schoolmate: Protest Music in Present-day Iran, Critical Discourse Studies, 2012, 1–16

(Week 9)

**April 2: Religiosity: New and Old?**

**Readings:**


Abdolmohammad Kazemipur a & Mohsen Goodarzi, Iranian Youth and Religion: An Empirical Study. Middle East Critique, Vol. 18, No. 2, 161–176, Summer 2009,

(Week 10)

April 9: Virtual Everyday life in Iran

Readings:


Suggested Readings:


The Role of The Internet in Political Struggles: Some Conclusions From Iran and Egypt, New Political Science, Volume 34, Number 2, une 2012.

(Week 11)

April 16: Iranian Intellectuals and Everyday Life

Readings:

Ali Mirsepassi, *Democracy in Modern Iran*.

Suggested Reading:

Ali Mirsepassi, *Political Islam, Iran, and Enlightenment*.

(Week 12)

April 23: Consumption and Practice of Everyday Life

Readings:

Behzad Yaghmaian, *Social Change in Iran*, Chapter 1-5(7-117).

Asef Bayat, *Islamism and the Politics of Fun, Public Culture*. 
Suggested Readings:

Azadeh Moaveni, Lipstick Jihad.
Aliakbar Jafari, Two Tales of a City.


(Week13)

April 30: Green Movement and Repoliticization of Everyday Life

Readings:

Asef Bayat, “Revolution without Movement, and Movement without Revolution: Comparing Islamic Activism in Iran and Egypt.”