Course Description

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) signed in 2015 by Iran and the permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany was a historic achievement, a victory of diplomacy, perseverance, and political sense over political posturing and threats of military actions. It was also the first official agreement between Iran and the United States since 1979 Iranian revolution. President Obama considered implementation of the JCPOA as an opportunity for a better relations with Iran in pursuit of common goals.

Two years after the deal’s success in achieving its explicit goal in halting Iran’s nuclear program, in exchange of broad sanctions relief, many challenges remain. The Trump administration seems determined to take a hard stance toward Iran replacing reconciliation with confrontation as the guiding principle of the US policy toward Iran. The US has imposed tough new sanctions and Trump has threatened to deny certification of Iran’s compliance, determined to pull out of the accord reached after years of painstaking negotiations between the United States and international powers.

Iran was a major ally of the United States throughout the Cold War period, but the Iranian revolution of 1979, overthrow of Iran’s pro-American regime, and the hostage crisis altered the friendly relationships to an enduring hostility and distrust. The JCPOA while limited in scope, proved that outstanding issues between adversaries can be resolved through diplomacy and open communication.

Iran is strategically important country located at the crossroad between Europe, Russia, Central and South Asia with a longest shoreline on Persian Gulf. It is an ancient empire, ethno-linguistically diverse with a strong sense of cultural identity, national pride, and historical continuity. It is a solid state with functioning institutions, with an industrial base, large reserves of oil and natural gas, and significant economic and military potentials. It has a vibrant civil society, and demographically young and educated population that is pro-American unlike many Arab states.

Rouhani administration has no interest in escalating tension with Washington, but the US finds Iran’s ballistic missile program and its activities in Syria, Lebanon and Yemen provocative and threatening to its regional allies and its own interests in the Persian Gulf.

This course examines history of U.S.-Iran alliance and deterioration of relationship, Iran’s foreign policy objectives, its relations with neighboring countries, Obama’s diplomatic outreach and Trump administration policy in the context of the current situation and future challenges.
Course Objectives: The course will provide a historical understanding of the U.S.-Iran relations with focus on the key issues in U.S.-Iran relations, and Iranian foreign and domestic policies. We analyze different scholarly approaches and viewpoints and discuss points of controversy and disagreement in the context of US politics and Iran’s relations with its neighbors.

The course will be conducted as a graduate seminar, part history and part policy analysis, on both American and Iranian sides. We discuss the future of nuclear deal, Iran’s relations with European Union, military and economic ties with Russia and China, and the domestic and foreign policy challenges facing Iran and the US in the region. We discuss the need for a new approach beyond the nuclear agreement for the cause of stability and order in the Middle East.

Topics: We review the U.S.-Iran alliance at the end of WWII. Readings include the Cold War partnership with Iran; the ways that issues of security and access to oil shaped the U.S. policy and its intervention, both overt and covert in Iranian politics. We study newly released CIA documents of the US role in the 1953 coup and its consequences, crisis of cultural identity leading to the 1979 revolution, and the hostage crisis. We discuss the Iran-Iraq war, the US policy of containment, and the controversy over Iran’s nuclear program. Readings include Iran’s regional policies, its capabilities and potentials as a major regional player, sectarian violence and geopolitical rivalry between Iran-Israel, Saudi Arabia and its allies in the Persian Gulf. We discuss Obama administration’s policy to engage Iran, the nuclear agreement, civil war in Syria, instability in Iraq and its impact on the Islamic Republic’s crucial ties with its regional allies. We study transformation of the society under the clergy, demographic shift, Iran’s economic crisis, its regional political ambitions and its implications for the future state of Iran’s relationship with the United States in Trump administration.

The course encourages critical thinking and analysis of current issues and debates through class discussions, documentary films, videos, scholarly papers, and occasional guest lectures.

Learning Outcomes: At the end of the course students should be able to demonstrate:

- Ability to critically assess the historical and political developments of U.S.-Iran relations.
- Appreciate a wide range of alternative views, question and rethink their “understanding” of Iranian history, politics and society.
- Analyze America’s strategy in the Middle East and US policy toward Iran since 1979 revolution.
- Identify differing Iranian/American framing of the conflict, and provide insight into viable alternative policy options that could avoid further escalation with unintended consequences.

Required


Recommended

3.
Selected Websites

http://iranicaonline.org
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/806268.stm
http://countrystudies.us/iran/
http://iranprimer.usip.org
www.gooya.com (Iranian media)
www.iranian.com (Iran’s news and views)
www.albawaba.com (Middle East gateway)
www.merip.org (MERIP)
http://payvand.com
http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/middleeast (BBC World Service)
http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/publications/2008/mapping_Irans_online_public

Country Profile Iran: BBC
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/country_profiles/790877


Iran: Politics, Human Rights ,and U.S. Policy

Congressional Research Service
www.crs.govRL.32048

Foreign Relations of the United States Iran 1951-54
http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1951-54iran/pg_I


Iran and the West, BBC Documentary 3 parts

Course Requirements and Evaluation

1 - Class Participation: 30% of your final grade.

Readings: Syllabus includes assigned texts as well as additional readings that will be posted on Blackboard throughout the semester.

Attendance: You are expected to attend all classes and be well prepared to discuss weekly topics. Attendance is mandatory and prepared class participation is ESSENTIAL to your grade. In addition to being physically present, you are expected to be actively engaged in class discussions, make comments, raise questions, and analyze the issues. You are expected to complete all assigned readings before each class meeting. You will not be able to do well in class discussion if you did not complete the readings. The purpose is to be engaged in class and be well prepared prior to each week’s class meeting. The class will be conducted as graduate seminar, part lecture, part discussion in which each person assumes responsibility for
sustaining discussion and contribute constructively to an environment of mutual learning. It is crucial that you come to class well prepared, having read and thought about the assigned texts, and participate in class discussion. Your class participation grade will be based on your preparation, and contribution to class discussion. Your grade is evaluated by the quality of your comments and questions.

2- Short paper 20% of the final grade.
Write five to seven pages report on any of the required or recommended books listed in the syllabus. Due October 26

3-Class Presentation: 20% of your final grade. Each student is charged with formulating a policy recommendation on contemporary issues related to U.S.-Iran relations in the regional context and follow these general guidelines:
   a) Introduction: Clearly state the issue/problem you are investigating, clarify it and make your classmates realize the nature or the scope of the issue/problem.
   b) Investigate your topic from historical perspective. Present in a logical, clear manner, include any pertinent background information, current range of thinking about the issue, and present opposing views/positions objectively.
   c) Conclude with policy recommendation and thoughtful questions for class discussion.

Each presentation should be about 15 minutes, with slides, maps, videos, and other relevant materials.
The presentations should have a clear focus, articulating the topic’s main points.
Present opposing themes objectively with well-argued position
Do not read from the notes or use the computer as a teleprompter.
Suggested topics for class presentation:
   1- The United States, Iran, and the Syrian Civil War.
   2- The United States and Iran: Nuclear and other Issues.
   3- Iran and the Surrounding World.
   4- U.S.-Iran in Trump Era: should nuclear deal be revoked? What Policy do you recommend for the U.S. administration? Please indicate controversies, opposing views, and concerns of U.S. traditional allies?
   5- Iran, Iraq, and IS. What are the implications for Iran, the U.S. policy and its national security concerns in the region?
   6- Future of Iran’s nuclear program
   7- Regime change once again?
   8- The crisis of regional order in the Persian Gulf
   9- How Iran views its regional role?
   10- Diplomacy or military confrontation and consequences?

4- Final Research Paper 30% of final grade. You are expected to write a research paper fifteen to twenty pages, and to undertake an in-depth analysis of a particular issue covered in the course syllabus. Topics to be considered:
The US-Iran relations under the Shah, 
Iranian revolution of 1979 in comparative perspective, 
How religion became a political ideology in the regional conflicts. 
Challenges to Iran’s domestic and foreign policy since the nuclear deal, 
The role of IRGC in domestic and regional affairs, and political economy of the Islamic Republic. 
Iran and regional rivalry, Iraq crisis and its impact on neighboring Iran, 
Nuclear deal, sanctions and the impact on Iran’s political economy, 
Iran-Russia military cooperation in Syria and beyond. 
The assessment of your paper will be based on the quality of your research, analysis of the issue, clarity, creativity, and coherence. The choice of subject for the final paper should be cleared in advance with the instructor. No two students can write on the same topic. List of recommended books will be provided. Please note: final paper is Due December 7.

Grading:
A 100%- 95%  A- 94%- 90%
B+ 89%-87%  B 86%- 82%
B- 81%-78%  C+ 75-77%
C 74%-71%  C- 70-73%
D 67-70%  F 66%

Academic Integrity: Students are required to follow rules and regulations of Academic Integrity Code. Please make sure you read it closely and be sure to ask me if you have any questions. The code is available online at: HTTP://WWW.AMERICKAN.EDU/PROVOST/REGISTRAR/REGULATIONS/REG80.CF

Class Sessions

August 31: Introduction to the Course

• Syllabus: We will go over the syllabus week by week and review outline of the course structure, readings, and requirements. We will discuss the current state of U.S. –Iran relations and watch interviews regarding JCPOA and Trump administration’s policy toward Iran.

• Video - The Iran Nuclear Deal - Two Years Later
PBS news hour: Trump signals he might pull out of the Iran nuclear deal (July 26,17) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J6WzV6XuAe

• Democracy Now: Is Trump trying to sabotage the nuclear deal? (July 24,17) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ly6316Z4OvD
September 7  Construction of Modern State: Pahlavi Era (1921-1979)

- E.Abrahamian , A History of Modern Iran, chap.3

September 14 : Cold War and the US-Iran Alliance

- A.Abrahamian ,A History of Modern Iran ,chap. 4
- Talia Yerogova ,”The Iran Crisis of 1945-46: A View from Russian Archives”
  http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/working%20paper%20%2315.pdf
- US Diplomatic Report December 12,1946
  http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1946v07/d425

September 21 : Regime Change : US and the 1953 Coup

- CIA Confirms Role in 1953 Iran’s Coup
  http://nsarchive.gwu/NSAEBB435/
- Foreign Relations of the United States :Iran 1951-54.
  Http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1951-54Iran/pg_1
- M.Gasiorowski, “ New Details on the 1953 Coup in Iran.” Lobelog(July 12 ,2017)
- S.Kinzer, All the Shah’s Men, chap.12 and Epilogue.
• **Video:** Democracynow.org. Newly Declassified Documents Confirme US backed 1953 Coup in Iran [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBxbyjjoUf1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBxbyjjoUf1)

**September 28 : From Coup to Revolution**


• Ahmad Ashraf ,”From the White Revolution to the Islamic Revolution,” in Saeed Rahnama & Sorab Behdad eds..*Iran after the Revolution : crisis of an Islamic State*.


David Frost interview with the Shah  [www.youtube.com/watch?v=KerIO4YXZyM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KerIO4YXZyM)

Declassified-Ayatollah Khomeini [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYt80jYwpQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYt80jYwpQ)

**October 5  Politics and Society in Islamic Republic**


• Abrahamian , “Why the Islamic Republic has Survived,” *MERIP* vol.39 (Spring 2009)

• Misagh Parsa ,*Democracy in Iran* ,chapter 1,pp.1-30.


**October 12 : Policy challenges : US and Iran-Iraq War**

• Nida Alahmad&Arang Keshavarzian, “A War on Multiple Fronts” MERIP vol.40(Winter 2010)
• Joost Hiltermann,”Deep Trauma ,Fresh Ambitions,” MERIP vol.40(Winter 2010)

October 19: Nuclear Diplomacy part 1

• Trita Parsi , Losing an Enemy: Obama, Iran, and the Triumph of Diplomacy, Chapters. 1-8


October 26: Nuclear Diplomacy part 2

• Trita Parsi ,Losing an Enemy ,chapters 9-16
• ------------, “For Netanyahu and Saudis opposing diplomacy with Iran was never about enrichment” The Intercept (8/11/207) http://theintercept.com/2017/08/11/netanyahu-israel-saudi-iran-deal-enrichment/?

November 2: Iran and the Persian Gulf States

November 9: Iran and Regional Conflicts

- ----------------------,”The Houtis are not Hezbollah,” Foreign Policy.com/2017/02/27

November 16: U.S. Strategy toward Iran

- Paul Pillar,”The Persistence of Falsehoods about the Iran Nuclear agreement,” Lobelog.com/
Robin Wright,”Iran’s moderates win election. But it won’t matte New Yorker, (May 20, 2017)
Josh Rogin,”The war over the Iran deal,” Washington Post, (August 7, 2017)

November 23  Thanksgiving Holiday

November 30: Iran’s Sanctions and ‘Regime Change’

• Bijan Khajehpour,”The real footprint of the IRGC in Iran’s economy,”
• Ray Takeyh, “ It’s time to prepare for Iran’s political collapse,”
• Raymond Tanter, “ Preparing for Regime change,”
  http://washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/preparing-for-regime-change-in-iran
• Elizabeth Rubin, “ An Iranian Cult and it’s American Friends,”
• Seymour Hersh, “Our Man in Iran?” New Yorker (April5,2012)
Majid Rafizadeh, “Senior U.S. Senators meet Iran opposition leaders in Albania,” Huffington Post (8/12/17)
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/senior-us-senators-meet-iranian-opposition-leaders-in_us_598f68fae4b063e2ae058020
December 7  Facing the Future: From Conflict to Confrontation

- Trita Parsi, “the Mask is off: Trump is seeking war with Iran,”
  http://lobelog.com/the-mask-is-off-trump-is-seeking-war-with-iran/
- Michael Axworthy, “Regime Change in Iran would be a Disaster for Everyone,” Foreign Policy (July 18, 2017)
- Peter Jenkins, “Provoking Iran into tearing up the 2015 nuclear deal,” (8/2/2017)
  http://lobelog.com/provoking-iran-into-tearing-up-the-2015-nuclear-deal/

- Course Review and Group Discussion
- Final Paper Due

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

In the event of an emergency, American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Blackboard, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of an emergency, students should refer to the AU Student Portal, the AU Web site (www.prepared.american.edu) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university-wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean’s office for course and school/college-specific information.