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# MEDIA & POWER IN MODERN IRAN

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Course Syllabus



## **INTRODUCTION**

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From former President Ali Khatami to current President Hassan Rouhani, successive leaders have struggled to navigate the fraught political-cultural space of media in the Islamic Republic, skirting the line between embracing western communications technologies and ethos and rejecting them, from condemning social networking sites as foreign treachery, and promoting themselves on Facebook. How has the regime succeeded and failed to maintain a monopoly on mass communications in the new information age? How has the regime sought to appropriate western communications technology and culture in the service of resistance to western hegemony and in support of regime ideology? This class will consider these questions through a number of inflection points in recent Iranian history.

## **EXPECTATIONS:**

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Students are expected to abide by the honor code and be respectful and polite to one another during class discussions.

## **GRADES:**

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### **JOURNAL: 25 PERCENT (GRADED ON 1-5 SCALE, 5 BEING THE BEST)**

Students are required to keep a journal on the assigned readings through the Drop Box feature on Collab. A journal entry is required for each reading assignment (usually one to two articles). Each entry should be saved as a separate Word doc in the following format: Your last name, date of the next class, or when the assignment is due, in day-month form, and the last name of the author(s) or origin of source if primary document.

For example:

Blout\_01.12\_Srebrny.doc --or--

Blout\_25.03\_US Embassy Tehran and Ansari.doc

Each entry should consist of a summary of the reading and at least one critical question. The question should probe the validity of the author's claim, or the validity of the source material used, or another aspect of the or text.

Entries should be about 200 words, give or take. Quality of thinking always outweighs quantity of prose.

Journal entries will be graded RANDOMLY throughout the semester on a 1 to 5 scale.

The objective of this exercise is to hone your critical analysis skills and to encourage you to think like a historian and a social scientist. These are also core skills required for writing a literature review as part of an (undergraduate or graduate) thesis or to be published in a journal (usually a book review).

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We will be discussing each reading at the beginning of class, so you will have an opportunity to demonstrate your comprehension of the text and critical thinking skills and earn points for class participation. Your entries will also be a valuable resource for your mid-term and final exam preparation.

**PARTICIPATION: 10 PERCENT**

- Attend all classes
- Regularly make a meaningful contribution to class discussion and group activities
- Regularly demonstrate engagement with assigned material

**MID TERM EXAM: 20 PERCENT**

- In class
- Basic geography, dates and facts
- Multiple choice, fill in the blank, short answer

**GROUP PRESENTATION: 15 PERCENT**

- Assigned topic relating to one of the mass communications media covered (satellite television, internet)
- Must include a research question and hypothesis
- Must include a list of primary and secondary sources

**TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM: 30 PERCENT**

- Several short essays
- Must use Farsi sources (google translate) and/or foreign news translation (FBIS, BBC)
- Must use a new primary source ("new" meaning having not already been analyzed in the class)

**OFFICE HOURS**

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Tuesdays (12-2) and by appointment; [elb3n@virginia.edu](mailto:elb3n@virginia.edu); Wilson 229

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Number, Topic &amp; Assignment</b>	<b>Date</b>
I. Intro & Theoretical Foundations	1  <b>Course Introduction</b>	21 Jan
	2  <b>Iran History 101</b>  <b>Reading:</b> Ansari, Ali. <i>Iran: A Very Short Introduction</i> . Oxford University Press, 2014.	26 Jan
	3  <b>Ideology and Mass Communication</b>  <b>Readings:</b> Salamini, Leonardo. “Leonardo Gramsci and Marxist Sociology of Knowledge.” <i>Sociological Quarterly</i> 15.3 (1974).  Thompson, John B. <i>Ideology and Modern Culture: Critical Social Theory in the Era of Mass Communication</i> . Stanford University Press, 1990. pp.264-71	28 Jan
	4  <b>Power and Legitimacy</b>  <b>Readings:</b> Beetham, David. <i>Legitimation of Power</i> . Humanities Press, 1991. pp. 3-41.  Gallarotti, Giulio M. “Soft Power: What It Is, Why It’s Important, and the Conditions for Its Effective Use.” <i>Journal of Political Power</i> 4.1 (2011).	2 Feb
II. Iran under Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi	5  <b>Iran under the last Pahlavi Shah: From WW II to the CIA coup and the “White Revolution”</b>  <b>Readings:</b> Ansari, Ali. <i>Modern Iran</i> . Pearson Longman Press, 2006. Ch. 5-7, pp. 159-246	4 Feb
	6  <b>Birth of television, nationalization, and the founding the modern mass communications monopoly</b>  <b>Readings:</b> Armed Forces Information Service. “History of AFRTS: The First 50 Years.” United States Department of Defense, 1993. Ch. 18, 19	9 Feb

<p>Chelkowski, P. in Avery, G. R. G. Hambly, and C. Melville (eds). "Popular Entertainment, Media and Social Change in Twentieth-Century Iran," <i>Cambridge History of Iran</i>, 1991. pp. 808-814</p>	
<p>7</p> <p><b>Westoxification, Islamic Ideology, live viewing of 22 Bahman (Islamic Revolution Day)</b></p> <p><b>Readings:</b> Abrahamian, Ervand. "Ali Shari'ati: Ideologue of the Iranian Revolution." <i>MERIP Reports</i> 102, 1982.</p> <p>Al-e Ahmed, Jalal and R. Campbell and Hamid Algar. <i>Occidentosis: Plagued by the West</i>. Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1984. Forward, Introduction, Ch. 1, 8 and 10, pp. 1-27; 102-112; 122-138.</p>	<p>11 Feb</p>
<p>8</p> <p><b>"Islamic" Revolution, Part 1: Khomeini and the revolutionary period</b></p> <p><b>Readings:</b> Mackey, Sandra with Scott Harrop. <i>The Iranians</i>. Plume Books, 1998. Ch. 10 "Double Revolution, pp. 277-300</p> <p>Abrahamian, E. <i>Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic</i>. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993. Introduction and Ch. 1, pp. 5-38.</p> <p>Khomeini, R. and Hamid Algar (trans). <i>Governance of the Jurist</i>, Institute for the Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, (ud). pp.1-28.</p>	<p>16 Feb</p>
<p>9</p> <p><b>"Islamic" Revolution, Part 2: Role of media</b></p> <p><b>Readings:</b> Arjomand, Said Amir. <i>The Turban for the Crown: The Islamic Revolution in Iran</i>. Oxford University Press, 1988. Ch. 8, "Consolidation of Islamic Theocracy," pp. 147-74</p> <p>Sreberny, Annabelle and Ali Mohammadi. <i>Small Media, Big Revolution: Communication, Culture, and the Iranian Revolution</i>. University of Minnesota Press, 1994. Ch. 8, "Heavy Artillery," pp. 119-135.</p>	<p>18 Feb</p>

III.  
Founding of the  
Islamic Republic

10	<p><b>Islamic Republic of Iran realized: the first decade and the Iran-Iraq War</b></p> <p><b>Readings:</b> Chelowski, P. and Hamid Dabashi. <i>Staging a Revolution</i>. New York University Press, 1999. pp. 272-79; 282-91.</p> <p>Ansari, Ali M. <i>Modern Iran</i>. Pearson Longman, 2006. pp. 287-307.</p>	23 Feb
11	<p>Introduction to historical method; Using digital archives and microfiche</p> <p><b>**Meet at Alderman Library, Alderman 421 (electronic classroom) **</b></p> <p><b>Readings:</b> Amant, Abbas. “The Study of History in Post Revolutionary Iran: Nostalgia, Illusion, or Historical Awareness?” <i>Iranian Studies</i> 22, no. 4 (1989): 3–18.</p> <p>Stearns, Peter. “Why Study History?” <i>American Historical Association</i> (2010), pp. 1-5.</p> <p>Leetaru, Kalev. “The Scope of FBIS and BBC Open Source Media Coverage, 1979-2008.” <i>Studies in Intelligence</i> 54:1 (2010), pp. 17-35.</p>	25 Feb
12	<p><b>Group presentation assignments, review for mid-term</b></p>	1 March
13	<p><b>*Mid-Term Exam*</b></p> <p>[Spring Break]</p>	3 March

VI. Post- Revolutionary Iran & the Crisis Over Satellite	14	<b>Building IRIB and context of crisis over satellite</b>  Readings:	15 March
	15	<b>Group presentations, Part 1</b>  Discourse in opposition to satellite dish ban (2 groups)  Readings:	17 March
	16	<b>Group presentations, Part 2</b>  Discourse in support of satellite dish ban (2 groups) Outcome and justification (1 group)  Readings:	22 March
V. Iran under Ahmadinejad & the Green Internet Revolution	17	<b>Birth of the internet, rise of blogs</b>  Readings:	24 March
	18	<b>Ahmadinejad: Iran's media savvy president</b>  Readings:	29 March
	19	<b>Election crisis of 2009</b>  <b>Readings:</b> Ansari, Ali M. <i>Crisis of Authority: Iran's 2009 Presidential Election</i> . London: Chatham House, 2010.	31 March
	20	<b>Double edged sword: the web as a weapon of resistance, hegemonic power</b>  Readings:	5 April

	21	<b>Group presentations, Part 3</b>  Discourse of opposition movement (2 groups)  Readings:	7 April
	22	<b>Group presentations, Part 4</b>  Discourse of ruling establishment (2 groups) Outcome and justification (1 group)  <b>Readings:</b>	12 April
	23	<b>Guest Speaker</b>  Readings:	14 April
	24	<b>Internet, post-election crisis</b>  Readings:	19 April
	25	<b>Return to theory: Communications and power construction in Iran</b>  Readings:	21 April
IV. Media and Power Construction in the Islamic Republic	26	<b>What media can tell us about Iran and the future of US-Iran relations</b>  Readings:	26 April
	27	<b>Wrap-up, review for final exam</b>	28 April
	28	<b>*Take Home Final Exam*</b>	3 May

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## BOOKS AND ONLINE RESOURCES:

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### Assigned Books (UVA bookstore)

Ansari, Ali M. *Crisis of Authority: Iran's 2009 Presidential Election*. London: Chatham House, 2010.

Ansari, Ali M. *Iran: A Very Short Introduction*. 2014.

### Online Reference & Media News

*Encyclopedia Iranica*  
<http://www.iranicaonline.org>

*Iran Data Portal*, Princeton University  
<http://www.princeton.edu/irandataportal/index.xml>

*Iran Media Program*  
<http://www.iranmediaresearch.org/en>

*Yearbook of the United Nations*,  
<http://unyearbook.un.org/index.html>

*Iran Primer* <http://iranprimer.usip.org/>

*Iran Chamber Society, Calendar Converter*  
[http://www.iranchamber.com/calendar/converter/iranian\\_calendar\\_converter.php](http://www.iranchamber.com/calendar/converter/iranian_calendar_converter.php)

*Iran Wire* <http://en.iranwire.com>

*Reporters without Borders*  
<http://en.rsf.org>

*Tehran Bureau*  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/>

### Primary Sources & Translations

*Foreign Broadcasting Information Service (FBIS)* (see UVA library resources page)

*BBC Summary of World Broadcasts* (use Factiva, EastView, or library resource page)

*Google translate*

*US National Archive*:  
<https://aad.archives.gov/aad/>

*UK National Archive*  
<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk>

*Central Intelligence Agency, Freedom of Information Electronic Reading Room*  
<http://www.foia.cia.gov/>

*Department of Defense, Freedom of Information Electronic Reading Room*  
<http://www.dod.mil/pubs/foi/rdroom.htm>

*Department of State, Freedom of Information Electronic Reading Room*  
<https://foia.state.gov/>

*National Security Archive, Electronic Briefing Books*  
<http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/index.html>

*National Archives and Records Administration, Access to Archival Databases*  
<https://aad.archives.gov/aad/series-list.jsp?cat=WR43>