



Tel Aviv University International

Iran and Regional Politics

Dr. Elisheva Machlis

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Fall Semester

Tuesday 14:00-16:00

Thursday 14:00-16:00

Course Overview

This course will evaluate the current relations between Iran and the region, while exploring questions of identity, resources, interests and strategy. The Islamic Republic's geo-strategic aims as they developed over the past thirty five years reflect the complexity of the Iranian identity that incorporates nationalism, Shi'i sectarianism and universal Islamic aspirations. Accordingly, the importance of the Iranian nuclear project is linked to the country's revolutionary agenda but also its desire for regional hegemony. The nuclear negotiations with the five world powers demonstrate the dynamism of this regime and the centrality of Iran in an unstable region. The aim of this course is to understand the unique elements of the Iranian model, but also the potential for flexibility and change, in order to assess Iran's regional policy. Iran will also serve as case-study to discuss regime stability under authoritarian countries and the place of rationalism and irrationalism in decision-making in these regimes, in both the national and geo-strategic levels.

Topics and Reading Material:

1. Iranian nationalism and the Islamic Revolution

Samih Farsoun and Mehrdad Mashayekhi (eds.), *Iran: Political Culture in the Islamic Republic* (Routledge, 2005), 1-29.

2. Political Authority:

Wilfried Buchta, "Who Rules Iran: The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic", *The Washington Institute* (2000).

3. Foreign policy and Rohani's presidency:

Suzan Mallony, "Why Rouhani Won -- and why Khamenei Let Him", *Foreign Affairs* (June 16, 2013).

Nazila Fathi, "The Rouhani Paradox", *Foreign Policy* (June 13, 2014).

4. Regime Stability:

Alem, Yasmin. "Duality by Design: The Iranian Electoral System", *International Foundation for Electoral Systems* (2011).

5. Iran and the Arab Spring:

Elisheva Machlis, "Iran's Spin on the Arab Spring", *Iran Pulse* 46 (Nov 13, 2011).

Charles Kurzman, "The Arab Spring: Ideals of the Iranian Green Movement, Methods of the Iranian Revolution", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 2012.

6. The Nuclear Issue:

Gawdat Baghat, "Nuclear Proliferation: The Islamic Republic of Iran", *Iranian Studies*, 2006.

7. Competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia:

Shahram Chubin and Charles Trip, "Iran-Saudi Arabia Relations and Regional Order", *Adelphi Series*, (June 8, 2005).

K Barzegar, "Iran and the Shiite Crescent: Myths and Realities", *Brown J. World Affairs*, 2008.

8. The Pragmatism of the Gulf Countries:

Christopher M. Davidson, *After the Sheikhs: The Coming Collapse of the Gulf Monarchies* (Oxford University Press, 2013), ebook, 155-190.

Stephanie Cronin and Nur Masalha, "The Islamic Republic of Iran and the GCC States: from Revolution to Realpolitik?", *Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States: LSE*, 17 (Aug., 2011).

9. Iran and Turkey:

F. Stephen Larrabee, Alireza Nader, *Turkish-Iranian Relations in a Changing Middle East RAND* (2013).

10. Revolutionary Guards-Hizbullah-Syria Axis:

Ali Alfoneh, "The Revolutionary Guards' Role in Iranian Politics", *Middle East Quarterly*, 2008.

"The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps", *RAND* (2009).

11. The Question of Resources:

Suzanne Maloney, "The Revolutionary Economy", *The Iran Primer*

J Barnes, AM Jaffe, "The Persian Gulf and the Geopolitics of Oil", *Survival* (2006).

12. The Threat of the Jihad Movement:

Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future* (2007), 145-166.

Hassan Mneimneh, "The Jihadist International: Al Qaeda's Advance in the Levant", *American Enterprise Institute* (May 1, 2009).

Evaluation:

Attendance and participation – 10%

Midterm exam – 20% (20 Nov)

Final exam – 70% (due five days after the end of term)