Religious Studies 181B

Political Islam and the Response of Iranian Cinema

Fall 2012

Wednesdays 5-7:50 PM

HSSB 3001E

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Course Description
Artistic Iranian Cinema has been influenced by the French New Wave and Italian neorealist styles but has its own distinctly Iranian style of visual poetry and symbolic language, bringing to mind the delicate patterns and intricacies of much older Iranian art forms, the Persian carpet and Sufi mystical poems. The many subtleties of Iranian Cinema has also stemmed from the filmmakers’ need to circumvent the harsh censorship rules of the state and the financial limitations imposed on independent filmmakers. Despite these limitations, post-revolutionary Iranian Cinema has been a regular feature at major film festivals around the globe. The minimalist Art Cinema of Iran often blurs the borders between documentary and fiction films. Directors employ non-professional actors. Male and female directors and actors daringly explore the themes of gender inequality and sexual exploitation of women in their work, even though censorship laws forbid female and male actors from touching one another. In the process, filmmakers have created aesthetically sublime metaphors that bypass the censors and directly communicate with a universal audience. This course is an introduction to contemporary Iranian cinema and its interaction with Political Islam. Special attention will be paid to how Iranian Realism has
developed a more tolerant discourse on Islam, culture, gender, and ethnicity for Iran and the Iranian plateau, with films about Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia.

REQUIRED TEXTS


ADDITIONAL REQUIRED READINGS ARE SCANNED AND AVAILABLE AT:

http://www.religion.ucsb#12057E

Books are on reserve at the library

SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS


**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

1. Shorter films, or segments of films, will be shown in class, others are assigned for viewing at home. The latter can be found on Netflix or at the UCSB library.

2. **GROUP PRESENTATIONS (20%)**: Groups of 4-5 students will be responsible for a 30-minute presentation on a particular director. Read the assigned essays several times and take good notes. Look up the director’s films in the library. Many are on reserve or can be found on web. Also find appropriate visual clips for your presentation. **Produce a power point and be creative with your presentation.** You might want to use the class computer for your power point and bring a personal computer for clips of the videos you show in class. **Please give the students and the instructor a copy of the outline you have produced.** The entire class is expected to do the readings and take notes from each presentation.

3. **INDIVIDUAL ESSAYS (30%)**: *One week after your group presentation,* each student should hand in an essay on the significance and contribution of the director they had selected. Each essay must focus on a particular theme. Some possible topics are: Attitudes about faith and religion, gender concerns with an emphasis on women, constructions of masculinity, role of children, ethics and morality, documentary vs. fiction, or various schools of realism in Iranian cinema. Read widely on the subject and try to watch most of the director’s films. Give direct examples from dialogues in the films.

**PAPERS SHOULD BE 6 PAGES TYPED. FONT 12.**

4. **WEEKLY PAPERS (30%)**:

All the other students are expected to turn in a weekly two-page essay on the director/s whose work was discussed the previous week. Combine your
observations of the films with assigned readings. Please provide footnotes for references or quotes you use. Since you are expected to use your weekly paper in composing your final project, try to find a theme for your papers as soon as possible and build on that as the weeks progress.

PLEASE OBSERVE THE FOLLOWING
1. Do NOT provide a summary of the film. Everyone has seen the film and is aware of the story
2. Do Not give detailed summaries of the filmmaker’s life and his/her collaborators
3. Do NOT repeat the lecture
4. Read the assigned readings for that week before writing the paper
5. Try to relate the film to the assigned readings, focusing on what you have read about Iranian history, culture, religion, and ethnicity
6. Relate this film to others we have discussed in class.
7. Provide textual evidence for your argument
8. Proof read your paper several times
9. Turn in a printed version of your essay. Email attachments and late assignments are not accepted

5. FINAL PROJECT (20%):

The final project will be similar to the Individual Essay except broader in scope. You may use segments of your weekly papers for this project. Focus on a particular theme in the works of TWO OR THREE directors we have discussed in class. For example, you can focus on the theme of gender and sexuality in the works of Mehrjui, Milani, Bani’Etemad, Farhadi, or Keshavarz; or you could examine the theme of war in the films of Makhmalbaf and Beizai.

PAPERS SHOULD BE 8-10 PAGES TYPED. FONT 12.

Final Project is due December 11, 2012.

Attendance Policy: More than (2) excused or unexcused absences will bring your grade down
Cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses and will not be tolerated. They are violations of university regulations. Please note the following:
Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating of information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, presenting another author’s ideas or words as one’s own (this includes but is not limited to the worldwide web), or tampering with the academic work of other students. Such actions will be subject to disciplinary action. If you have any questions about academic integrity, please consult the instructor. A single act of cheating or plagiarism will result in a failing grade on that assignment. Depending on the severity of the case, further disciplinary actions may be taken based on University policy. I will regularly check your writing via the Internet.

Class Schedule

Week I: (October 3) The New-Wave Iranian Cinema: Blending Documentary and Narrative Styles
Lecture: Forough Farrokhzad Dabashi, “Forough Farrokhzad: The House is Black” in Masters, 39-70 (WEB)

Screening:Nader Takmil Homayoun, Iran: A Cinematographic Revolution
Screening:F. Farrokhzad, The House is Black
Supplementary Readings:

Weeks II (October 10):
Lecture: Dariush Mehrjui: Contentious Heterosexuality
Naficy, A Social History, “Introduction” to volume I
Dabashi, “Dariush Mehrjui: The Cow,” in Masters, 107-134

Screening: The Cow (Netflix)

Week III (October 17)
Lecture: Moshen Makhmalbaf: Revolution, Virtual Realism and Surrealism
Class Presentation: Mehrjui’s Cinema

Dabashi, “Mohsen Makhmalbaf” in Masters
Dabashi, “Interview with Makhmalbaf,” in Close Up

Supplementary Readings:
Egan, The Films of Makhmalbaf
Screening: The Moment of Innocence or Marriage of the Blessed

Week IV (October 24)

Lecture: Abbas Kiarostami, Jafar Panahi: Elyptical Cinema with Moral Ambiguity
Class Presentation: Makhmalbaf
Dabashi, “Kiarostami” in Close Up, 33-75
Saeedvafa & Rosenbaum, Abbas Kiarostami

Supplementary Readings:
Williamson, “Art Matters: The Films of Abbas Kiarostami” 90-104 (WEB)
Elena, The Cinema of Kiarostami
Dabashi, “Abbas Kiarostami: Through the Olive Tree” Masters, 283-324

Screening: Ten (Netflix)
Watch at home: No One Knows about Persian Cats (Netflix)

Week V (October 31)
Lecture: Bahram Bayzaie & Majid Majidi: Children in New Iranian Cinema

Class Presentation: Kiarostami and Panahi
Rahimieh, “Making Gender and Difference,” in The New Iranian Cinema, 238-253

Supplementary Readings:
Screening: Selections from Bashu  
Watch at home: Baran (Netflix); Bashu  
Full link to Bashu:  
part1: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vltw9rYhlRg  
part3: http://youtu.be/gIBdQy-TcFk  
part4: http://youtu.be/Ush5zEGzTUQ  
part5: http://youtu.be/vj8HEHFU4QM  
part6: http://youtu.be/fU1_jhOawj4  
part7: http://youtu.be/fpPOyLfMyHg  
part8: http://youtu.be/A3Hh4F4yZPc  

Week VI (November 7)  
Class Presentation: Children in Iranian Cinema  
Lecture: Gender and Women’s Rights in Modern Iranian society  
Screening: The Day I Became a Woman  

Week VII (November 14)  
Class Presentation: Rakhshan Bani E’temad, Tahmineh Milani: Social Realism and Gender  
Supplementary Readings: Whitaker, “Rakhshan Bani Etemad” (WEB)  
Naficy, “Veiled Vision” (WEB)  
Screening: The Hidden Half  

Week VIII (November 21) Thanksgiving Holiday  

Week IX (November 28): Exploring Sexuality and Ethnicity  
Screening: Keshavarz, Circumstances (Amazon Library JA)  
Class Presentation: Asghar Farhadi, Bahman Ghobadi  

Week X (December 5):  
Oral Presentation of Final Papers  
Papers are Due: December 11, 2012 (please send as attachment)  

Major Films (those with asterisks are available at UCSB Library):
Rakhshan Bani E’temad
Under the Skin of the City
The Blue Veiled
*Nargess
Canary Yellow
Off Limits
*May Lady
Our Times

Bahman Beyzai
*Bashu: The Little Stranger
*Travelers

Masud Dehnamaki
Ekhrajiha

Mehdi Fakhimzadeh
Hamsar

Asghar Farhadi
Fireworks Wednesday
The Beautiful City
About Elly
A Separation

Bahman Ghobadi
A Time for Drunken Horses (Netflix streaming)
Half Moon
Marooned in Iraq
No one Knows about Persian Cats (Netflix streaming)

Ebrahim Hatamikia
Glass Agency
From Kharkhe to Rhine
Minoo Tower
The Low Attitude
**Manijeh Hekmat**  
Women’s Prison (Netflix streaming)

**Varuj Karim Masihi**  
The Last Act

**Abbas Kiarostami:**  
Life Goes On  
Through the Olive Trees  
The Wind Will Carry US  
*Close Up  
*Where’s the Friend’s House  
Ten (Netflix streaming)  
Shirin (Netflix streaming)  
Taste of Cherry  
Tickets

**Majid Majidi**  
The Songs of Sparrows  
Baran  
*The Children of Heaven  
The Color of Paradise

**Mohsen Makhmalbaf**  
*The Peddler  
The Marriage of the Blessed  
The Moment of Innocent  
*Once Upon a Time Cinema  
*Kandehar  
Salaam Cinema  
Gabbeh  
*Bicyclerun  
*Nasir al-Din Shah  
*Silence

**Samira Makhmalbaf**
The Apple
Blackboards
Five in the Afternoon
Two-Legged Horses

Dariush Mehrjui
*The Cow (Netflix streaming)
*Santuri
*Leila (Netflix streaming)
*Hamoun (Netflix streaming)
Sara
Pari
*The Pear Tree
The Tenants
Mom’s Guests

Marzieh Meshkini
The Day I Became a Woman (Netflix streaming)
The Stray Dogs

Tahmineh Milani
Super Star
Cease Fire
*The Unwanted Woman
*Two Women

Jafar Panahi
The Circle
Offside
Crimson Gold
White Balloon

Kiomars Pourahmad
The Night Bus

Kamal Tabrizi
There’s Always a Woman in Between
*The Lizard
A Mother’s Love
Leili is With Me

**Documentary:**
Mahnaz Afkhami
The Ladies Room

**Maziar Bahari**
An Iranian Odyssey: Mossadegh, Oil, and the 1953 CIA Coup

**Ziba Mirhosseini-Longinotto**
Divorce Iranian Style