

Course Information

Course Number: INTA 675
Course Title: Religion and Politics in Iran: From the Islamic Revolution to the Present
Section: 650X
Time: Tuesday/Thursday, 6:30-9:10 pm
Location: 1620 L St, NW, Suite 700 Washington DC
Credit Hours: 3.0

Instructor Details

Instructor: Alan R. Pino
Office: 1620 L St, NW, Suite 700 Washington DC
Phone: 703-674-9187
E-Mail: alanpino@tamu.edu; alanrenepino@gmail.com
Office Hours: No specific hours but am generally available. I encourage you to call on me not

only regarding the class but also for career and other advice. For an appointment, I suggest emailing me with two preferred options, and I will generally be able to accommodate one of your choices.

Course Description

The US has faced no more vexing challenge than that posed by Iran since the Islamic revolution in 1979. Shia Iran's cleric-led government has advanced a revolutionary Islamic agenda by working to subvert leading Sunni states and conducting terrorist attacks against the US and the West. Iran's foreign policy has become more pragmatic since the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989, but the clerical regime has not abandoned the revolutionary impulses that animated its rise to power. Iranian leaders continue to express hostility toward Israel and the US, and Iran has exploited the civil wars in Syrian, Yemen, and Iraq spawned by the Arab Spring to expand its military presence and influence, increasing the threat it poses to Israel, the US, and US allies in the region. The risk that Tehran might acquire a nuclear weapon has galvanized the efforts of US administrations from George W. Bush to Donald Trump and remains a top security concern for the United States. The clerical regime has faced growing challenges domestically fueled by reform movements and protests calling for political, economic and social change, and increasingly, the overthrow of the regime.

The course will examine the causes of the 1979 revolution, Iran's enduring hostility toward the United States, and the evolution of Iran's foreign policy since the revolution. We will consider

efforts by pragmatists, reformers and opposition groups in Iran to shift the country's policies in a more moderate direction or bring about fundamental change. The course will examine the impact of key events-- including the Iran-Iraq war during the 1980's, the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, and the Arab spring-- on Iran's policies and influence in the Middle East. We will examine Iran's efforts to acquire a nuclear weapon, international efforts to prevent such a development, and the implications of Iran as a nuclear power. We will conclude the course by considering scenarios for Iran's future role in the Middle East and their implications for stability in this troubled part of the world.

Course Prerequisites

Graduate classification.

Course Learning Outcomes

- On completing this course, students will be able to do the following:
- Identify the causes of the Iranian revolution and the historical background to this historic event. Understand how the revolution unfolded and how its outcome has shaped the nature of Iran's clerical regime and its domestic and regional policies;
- Evaluate how key events in the region have influenced the Islamic Republic's trajectory and the key factors shaping current trends in Iran and prospects for the clerical regime's hold on power and role in the region;
- Identify and assess Iran's policy toward the United States, and key regional actors, particularly Saudi Arabia and Israel and how they have responded to the challenge posed by Iran;
- Prepare written products to describe, evaluate and assess Iranian domestic dynamics, foreign policies and their impact on the Middle East and US interests; and
- Communicate more effectively in oral briefing.

Textbook and/or Resource Materials

Ray Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution: Iran and the World in the Age of the Ayatollahs* (Oxford University Press, 2009).

Alex Vatanka, *The Battle of the Ayatollahs in Iran: The United States, Foreign Policy, and Political Rivalry Since 1979* (I.B. Tauris, 2021).

Shaul Bakhash, *Reign of the Ayatollahs* (Basic Books, 1984).

Suzanne Maloney, edited, *The Iranian Revolution at Forty* (Brookings Institution, 2020)

Other assigned readings will be available on the TAMU Libraries' E-Reserves site (<http://library-reserves.tamu.edu/areslocal/index.htm>) and/or on the Internet.

Students also should keep up with current developments and engage in wider reading regarding the topics we will cover.

Grading Policy

The final grade in the class will be calculated as follows:

- each class member will prepare one, 2500-word paper; the paper will be due by the start of the seventh-class session. It will count for 25% of the grade.
- students also will be responsible for preparing a 5000-word paper; students will select the topic and get instructor's approval by the fifth-class session. The paper will be due at the start of the final session of the semester. It will count for 45% of grade.
- Each student will give a roughly 15-20 minute presentation during one class session on a topic related to that class, beginning with the sixth class session. This briefing will count for 20% of the grade.
- Class participation will count for 10% of the grade.
- *The assignments will be graded with a numerical grade on the following 100-point scale: A=95, A/B=90, B=85, B/C= 80, C=75, D=65, F=0. Final grades will be assigned according to the following scale: A=90-100, B=80-89, C=70-79, D=60-69, F=below 60.*

Late Work Policy

The instructor will accept late work (submitting a deliverable after the established deadline), but an appropriate penalty, depending on circumstances, will be assigned. The penalty will not be more than one letter grade for each day the work is late.

Students are expected to attend all classes. If an absence is excused, the instructor will either provide the student an opportunity to make up any work that contributes to the final grade or provide a satisfactory alternative by a date agreed upon by the student and instructor. The make-up work must be completed in a timeframe not to exceed 30 calendar days from the last day of the initial absence. The reasons absences are considered excused by the university are listed below. See Student Rule 7 for details (<http://studentrules.tamu.edu/rule07>).

Course Schedule

#1. June 3: Introduction--Review of Syllabus, expectations for the course, key student deliverables. Instructor will discuss key themes and issues covered in the course. The instructor also will use the first session to introduce himself and get to know students.

#2. June 5: Why did the 1979 Iranian Revolution take place? Why does the Islamic Republic harbor enduring hostility toward the United States. Class will discuss the US-sponsored coup in Iran in 1953, Iran-US relations under the Shah, and events that gave rise to the Revolution.

Readings: Steve Marsh, "Continuity and Change: Reinterpreting the Policies of the Truman and Eisenhower Administrations Toward Iran, 1950-54," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, July 2005. (e-reserves)

Balzer, Kyle, "Policy, Perception and Misconception: The United States and the Fall of the Shah," Marine Corps University Press, 2019.
(<https://doi.org/10.36304/ExpwMCUP.2019.03>) (e reserves)

Phil Gordon, *Losing the Long Game: The False Promise of Regime Change in the Middle East* (St. Martins Publishing Group, 2020), pp. 25-45. (e reserves)

Ray Takeyh, *Hidden Iran: Paradox and Power in the Islamic Republic* (Henry Holt and Company, LLC, 2006), Chapter 1 (e reserves)

#3. June 10: The 1979 Revolution: How did it unfold, who was involved, how did the clerics consolidate power? What role did the US-Iranian hostage crisis play?

Readings: Bakhash, Chapters 1-4

Elaine Kamarck, "The Iranian Hostage Crisis and its Effect on American Politics," in Suzanne Maloney, edited, *The Iranian Revolution at Forty* (The Brookings Institution, 2020), pp.88-91.

Robin Wright, *The Last Great Revolution* (Vintage Books, 2001), Chapter 1. (e reserves)

Students will select a topic for the first paper and review it with the instructor by the fourth class.

#4. June 12: The Khomeini Era: His ideology and leadership and how it shaped Iran's domestic institutions and domestic and foreign policies. What is Iran's political system and who holds power? What impact did the Iran-Iraq war have on Iran's domestic and foreign outlook? What role did terrorism play as a tool of the revolution?

Readings: Bakhash, Chapters 5-6.

Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution*, Chapters 1-4.

Gary Sick, "Iran's Quest for superpower Status," *Foreign Affairs*, Spring, 1987. (e reserves)

Dan Byman, "The Iranian Revolution's Legacy of Terrorism," in Suzanne Maloney, edited, *The Iranian Revolution at Forty*, pp. 129-134.

#5. June 17: Iran's Evolution After Khomeini: What did his death mean for the internal dynamic between radicals, conservatives and pragmatists in the leadership? How did Iran's foreign policy outlook change?

Readings: Takeyh, *Guardians*, Chapters 5-6.

Vatanka, Chapters 6-7.

Shireen Hunter, "Post-Khomeini Iran," *Foreign Affairs*, Winter, 1989-90. (e reserves)

Students must email topics for 5000-word memo to instructor by the start of the sixth class. Instructor will review topic choices and discuss with students.

First 15-20 minute briefing will take place during the sixth class.

#6. June 19: Iran in the Region: What Role Did Iran Seek to Play in the Region? What drove Iran's early support for groups such as Hizballah, Hamas, and Palestine Islamic Jihad?

Readings: Takeyh, *Hidden Iran: Paradox and Power in the Islamic Republic* (Henry Holt and Company, 2006), Chapter 3, "Iran's Place in the Greater Middle East." (e reserves)

Martin Indyk, *Innocents Abroad: An Intimate Account of American Diplomacy in the Middle East*, Chapter 9, "Iran's Breakout." (e reserves)

Jeff Feltman, "Hizballah: Revolutionary Iran's Most Successful Export," in Maloney edited, *The Iranian Revolution at Forty*, pp. 143-155

Students will turn in 2500-word paper by the start of seventh class.

#7. June 24: The Iran-Saudi Rivalry: Its Origins, Evolution and Impact on the Region

Readings: Suzanne Maloney and Bruce Riedel, "Origins of the Iran-Saudi Battle," in Maloney edited, *The Iranian Revolution at Forty*, pp. 156-167.

F. Gregory Gause III, "Beyond Sectarianism, The New Middle East Cold War," (Brookings Institution, 2014), Chapters II-V. (e reserves)

H-Diplo/ISSF, Policy Roundtable, 2-4: The Saudi-Iranian Cold War, February 20, 2018. The Robert Jervis International Security Studies Forum, <https://issforum.org/roundtables/policy/2-4-Saudi-Iranian> (e-reserves)

Students will turn in an outline for their 5000-word paper by the start of the 9th class.

#8. June 26: The Fate of Attempts by Reformers in Iran to Shift the Country's Policies in a More Moderate Direction: The Khatami era and the Green Movement

Readings: Vatanka, Chapter. 8

Takeyh, *Guardians*, Chapter 8.

Martin Indyk, *Innocents Abroad*, Chapter 11, “Engaging Iran, pp. 215-238. (e reserves)

Suzanne Maloney, “Clerical Error: Can Iran’s Reformer’s Exploit Fissures in the Regime?” *Foreign Affairs*, June 19, 2009.

Abbas Varij Kazemi, “Appropriating the Past: The Green Movement in Iran,” *Global Dialogue*, April 28, 2013.

#9. July 8: 9/11, the US invasion of Iraq and their impact on the regional balance of power.

Readings: Takeyh, *Hidden Iran*, Chapter 5, “Under the Shadow of 9/11,” pp. 117-135. (e reserves)

Takeyh, *Guardians*, Chapter 9, “9/11 and the Politics of Hope, Fear, and Necessity,” pp. 205-222.

Vali Nasr, “When the Shiites Rise,” *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2006. (e reserves)

Ray Takeyh, “Time for Détente With Iran,” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April, 2007. (e reserves)

Mohsen Milani, “Tehran’s Take: Iran’s US Policy,” *Foreign Affairs*, July/August, 2009. (e reserves)

#10. July 10: Iran and the Arab Spring: Expanding Influence, Building a Proxy Network. What was Iran’s initial response to the uprisings? What role has Iran played in the civil wars in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and the fight against ISIS? What are the implications of Iran’s apparent “victory” in the proxy wars spawned by the Arab uprisings?

Readings: Payam Mohseni and Hussein Kalout, “Iran’s Axis of Resistance Rises,” *Foreign Affairs*, January 24, 2017. (e reserves)

Ehud Yaari, “Iran’s Ambitions in the Levant,” *Foreign Affairs*, May 1, 2017. (e reserves)

Vali Nasr, “Iran Among the Ruins: Iran’s Advantage in a Turbulent Middle East,” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2018. (e reserves)

Robert Malley, "Why the Middle East is More Combustible than Ever," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2019. (e reserves)

Mark Lynch, "The New Arab Order: Power and Violence in Today's Middle East," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October, 2018

#11. July 15: The Election of Ruhani as President, Iran's Nuclear Program and the US Pursuit of a Nuclear Deal. We will examine Ruhani's surprise victory in 2013 and its implications. We will analyze Iran's motivation to acquire a nuclear weapon, the international efforts to prevent such a development, and the implication of Iran as a nuclear power or a threshold state. We will also analyze how the collapse of the nuclear deal undermined the moderates in Iran.

Readings: Vatanka, Chapter 10, "The Coming of Hasan Ruhani," pp. 173-196.

Suzanne Maloney, "Why Rouhani Won," *Foreign Affairs*, June 16, 2013. (e reserves)

William Burns, *The Back Channel: A Memoir of American Diplomacy and the Case For Its Renewal* (Random House, 2020), Chapter 9, "Iran and the Bomb: The Secret Talks," pp. 337-387. (e reserves)

Trita Parsi, "The Iran Deal Worked: Here's How to Make it More Effective," *Foreign Affairs*, July 11, 2016. (e reserves)

Daniel Levy, "Israel's Iran Deal Enthusiasts," *Foreign Affairs*, August 12, 2015.

Moshen Milani, "Iranian Politics After the Deal," *Foreign Affairs*, July 15, 2015.

#12. July 17: The Rise of the Hardliners and the backlash. We will examine Supreme Leader Khamenei's efforts to put hardliners in control of all key institutions., We will also discuss the effect of popular unrest over poor economic conditions, and government repression and ineffectiveness. We will look at the emergence in 2022 of the Women, Life, Freedom movement and what this may mean for the future survival of the Islamic Republic. We will discuss possible scenarios for the future of the Islamic Republic and its role in the Middle East in the years ahead.

Readings: Robin Wright, “Iran Moves Toward a One Party State,” *New Yorker*, June 16, 2021. (e reserves)

Mohammad Ayatollahi Tabaar, “Ebrahim Raisi and the Triumph of the Hardliners,” *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2021. (e reserves)

Mohammad Tabaar, “The Death of an Iranian Hardliner,” *Foreign Affairs*, May 24, 2024.

Suzanne Maloney, “Will Raisi’s Death Destabilize Iran?” *Brookings Commentary*, May 20, 2024.

Akbar Ganji, “Will Iran’s next Supreme Leader Be its Last?,” February 13, 2025, *Foreign Affairs*.

Karim Sadjadpour, “The Question is No Longer Whether Iranians will Topple the Ayatollah,” *New York Times*, December 12, 2022. (E-Reserves)

Eric Edelman and Ray Takeyh, “Iran’s Protestors Want Regime Change,” *Foreign Affairs*, January 2, 2023. (E-Reserves)

#13. July 22. The Implications of Israel’s Military Successes against Iran and its allies after Hamas’ 7 October attack on Israel. How significantly have Israel’s military successes weakened Iran and its Axis of Resistance and what are the implications for Iran’s stability, pursuit of a nuclear weapon, presence and influence in the region, and relations with the US?

Readings: Amos Yadlin and Avner Golov, “An Israeli Order in the Middle East,” *Foreign Affairs*, December 17, 2024.

Suzanne Maloney, “Iran, Israel, and the Delicate Balance of Power,” *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2025

Hamidreza Azizi, “How Iran Lost Syria,” *Foreign Affairs*, December 23, 2024.

Richard Nephew, “A Last Chance for Iran,” January 2, 2025, *Foreign Affairs*.

Kenneth Katzman, “Iran’s Options Narrowing Rapidly,” *Arab States Gulf Institute Washington*, January 6, 2025.

Students will turn in their 5000-word papers by the start of the final class session.

#14. July 24: US Policy Toward Iran: What Options does the US have in dealing with Iran? How should the outcome of current nuclear negotiations affect US calculus? Should the US emphasize diplomatic, economic, or military options in seeking to counter Iran’s policies in the region?

Readings: Richard Haass, “The Iran Opportunity: What America Needs to Do to Achieve a Breakthrough,” *Foreign Affairs*, January 6, 2025

Phil Gordon, “America has a Historic Opportunity in the Middle East,” February 19, 2025, *Foreign Affairs*

Steven Cook, No Exit: Why the Middle East Still Matters to America,” *Foreign Affairs*, November/December, 2020. (e reserves)

Suzanne Maloney, “The End of America’s Exit Strategy in the Middle East,” *Foreign Affairs*, October 10, 2023.

University Policies

Attendance Policy

The university views class attendance and participation as an individual student responsibility. Students are expected to attend class and to complete all assignments.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about excused absences, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Makeup Work Policy

Students will be excused from attending class on the day of a graded activity or when attendance contributes to a student’s grade, for the reasons stated in Student Rule 7, or other reason deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about makeup work, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Absences related to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 may necessitate a period of more than 30 days for make-up work, and the timeframe for make-up work should be agreed upon by the student and instructor” ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.1](#)).

“The instructor is under no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence” ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.2](#)).

Students who request an excused absence are expected to uphold the Aggie Honor Code and Student Conduct Code. (See [Student Rule 24](#).)

Academic Integrity Statement and Policy

“An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do.”

“Texas A&M University students are responsible for authenticating all work submitted to an instructor. If asked, students must be able to produce proof that the item submitted is indeed the work of that student. Students must keep appropriate records at all times. The inability to authenticate one’s work, should the instructor request it, may be sufficient grounds to initiate an academic misconduct case” ([Section 20.1.2.3, Student Rule 20](#)).

You can learn more about the Aggie Honor System Office Rules and Procedures, academic integrity, and your rights and responsibilities at aggiehonor.tamu.edu.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy

Texas A&M University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Resources office on your campus (resources listed below) Disabilities may include, but are not limited to attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability related needs with Disability Resources and their instructors as soon as possible.

Disability Resources is located in the Student Services Building or at (979) 845-1637 or visit disability.tamu.edu.

Title IX and Statement on Limits to Confidentiality

Texas A&M University is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws prohibit gender-based

discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

With the exception of some medical and mental health providers, all university employees (including full and part-time faculty, staff, paid graduate assistants, student workers, etc.) are Mandatory Reporters and must report to the Title IX Office if the employee experiences, observes, or becomes aware of an incident that meets the following conditions (see [University Rule 08.01.01.M1](#)):

- The incident is reasonably believed to be discrimination or harassment.
- The incident is alleged to have been committed by or against a person who, at the time of the incident, was (1) a student enrolled at the University or (2) an employee of the University.

Mandatory Reporters must file a report regardless of how the information comes to their attention – including but not limited to face-to-face conversations, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post. Although Mandatory Reporters must file a report, in most instances, a person who is subjected to the alleged conduct will be able to control how the report is handled, including whether or not to pursue a formal investigation. The University’s goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and to ensure access to the resources you need.

Students wishing to discuss concerns in a confidential setting are encouraged to make an appointment with [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (CAPS).

Students can learn more about filing a report, accessing supportive resources, and navigating the Title IX investigation and resolution process on the University’s [Title IX webpage](#).

Statement on Mental Health and Wellness

Texas A&M University recognizes that mental health and wellness are critical factors that influence a student’s academic success and overall wellbeing. Students are encouraged to engage in healthy self-care by utilizing available resources and services on your campus

Students who need someone to talk to can contact Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) or call the TAMU Helpline (979-845-2700) from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. weekdays and 24 hours on weekends. 24-hour emergency help is also available through the National Suicide Prevention Hotline (800-273-8255) or at [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org).