

Iran Colloquium Presents

Theorizing the Revolution of 1979 in Iran

The Iranian revolution of 1979 seems at first glance to be one of the most enigmatic events of the twentieth century. How could a country which appeared to be taking ambitious strides toward modernization (albeit authoritarian in nature and imposed from above), turn almost overnight toward a revolutionary Islamic practice marked by fanaticism and xenophobia? This talk attempts to shed light on this enigma by reflecting on the social processes at work in Iran since the early twentieth century. The process of modernization upon which Iran embarked in that era involved the creation of a complex set of institutions including modern military, bureaucratic and educational systems. This set of changes was instrumental in generating a rudimentary form of agency among different classes and strata in Iran which gradually engendered the potential for revolutionary action among large segments of society. Yet this rudimentary form of agency—what in the talk is referred to as “inchoate agentification”—only reached the level of a revolutionary ethos, lacking the capacity to create fully democratic institutions.



Farzin Vahdat **Independent Scholar**

Farzin Vahdat is a sociologist working on conditions and notions of modernity and their applications to Iran, Islam and the Muslim world. He is the author of “God and Juggernaut: Iran’s Intellectual Encounter with Modernity.” His forthcoming book, entitled “Islamic Ethos and the Specter of Modernity,” analyses major elements of contemporary Muslim thought in relation to the modern world. He is also author of numerous articles, some of which have been translated into different languages. Vahdat has taught at Tufts, Harvard, and Yale Universities, as well as Vassar College. He is currently conducting research and writing a book on cinema and social change in Iran in Boston area.

Friday, October 3, 12:00 - 1:30 pm

Luce 202, 34 Hillhouse Ave.

Light lunch will be provided

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