

Iran Colloquium Presents

## Female Religious Authority in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Iran

The significant role of women in participating in, and shaping, the scholarly tradition through the centuries is still hardly reflected in either Western scholarly or public perceptions. Nearly all classic accounts of religious authority in Islam proceed from the assumption that this authority is male: the possibility that women might exercise various aspects of religious authority is usually not discussed. Yet, when we dissect religious authority into its various manifestations (leading prayer, preaching, providing religious counselling, issuing fatwas, transmitting hadiths, judging in court, shaping the Islamic scholarly tradition), nuances emerge that call the exclusively male character of religious authority in Islam into question. This talk provides an overview of the study of women as Islamic authorities, and discusses in more detail several examples from modern Iran.



**Mirjam Künkler**  
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Mirjam Künkler (Ph.D., Columbia University) is Assistant Professor in the Department for Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University, USA. She has published on religion-state relations and Islamic thought in 20th century Iran and Indonesia, and edited with Alfred Stepan, *Indonesia, Islam and Democracy*, Columbia University Press (2013), and with John Madeley and Shylashri Shankar, *A Secular Age: Beyond the West*, (2015). Her articles have appeared or are forthcoming in the journals *Comparative Studies of Society and History*, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, *Journal of Law and Religion*, *Democratization*, *Politics and Religion*, *Journal of International Affairs*, *Party Politics*, as well as in edited volumes. In her next project, she turns to questions about the post-revolutionary transformation of the legal system in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and female religious authority in Shi'i Islam. Künkler is co-PI of the Oxford-Princeton research cluster on "Traditional authority and transnational religious networks in contemporary Shi'i Islam," and of the "Iran Social Science Data Portal" funded by the Social Science Research Council (SSRC).

Friday, April 24, 12:30 - 1:50 pm

Luce 202, 34 Hillhouse Ave.

*Light lunch will be provided*

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