

Persian Studies

at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill



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The Persian Studies Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill offers an academic resource for studying, and appreciating Persian language and culture. Through studying the Persian language, students become familiar with its literature, history, geography, arts, and more. UNC-Chapel Hill is fortunate to boast a number of significant strengths in Persian studies including scholarship of its faculty, student interest and demand for Persian courses, and Persian library acquisitions.

Visiting Scholar Spotlight: Dr. Moein Kazemifar *by Stefani Papa, UNC '16*

Dr. Moein Kazemifar, a recent PhD graduate from Tarbiat Modares University in Tehran spent three months this past fall at UNC as a visiting scholar. Dr. Kazemifar's research focuses on Persian Literature, specifically on the works of Ruzbihan, a 12th century Sufi poet from Shiraz.

When asked about the reasons behind his choice to come to UNC during his first opportunity to visit a foreign institution, Dr. Kazemifar explained that his choice was made easier by the wealth of secondary resources available in Persian studies here at UNC. His research on Ruzbihan is partially fueled by the desire to make more well-known his works, as Ruzbihan has been a largely neglected figure in the realm of Persian studies, both in Iran and abroad.

Dr. Kazemifar's research on Ruzbihan is a result of wanting to introduce a new figure into the canon of Persian poetry and Sufism. He argues that although figures like Rumi, Sadi, and Hafiz Shirazi are the face of Iranian Sufi literature now, he feels that Ruzbihan could be a new face with fundamentally different ideas that would introduce concepts previously unseen by the western world. These features are a result of Ruzbihan's perceptions of spirituality and the aesthetics of life. According to Dr. Kazemifar, unlike the major figures in Sufism, Ruzbihan argues that there is no contradiction between the human body and the human soul.

This introduces the fact that spiritual life and everyday life are in fact intertwined. Such a claim suggests that one can indeed maintain both the physical and spiritual components of life without having to sacrifice physical needs in exchange for spiritual growth because of the profound relationship between the body and the soul.

Upon his return to Tehran, Dr. Kazemifar hopes to continue his research on the works of Ruzbihan and their relevance to modern life. Specifically, he intends to focus on the tone of prophecy in Ruzbihan's work. He intends to assess Ruzbihan's spiritual autobiography describing his heavenly experiences to show how putting oneself in a prophet's shoes, so to speak, can be taken as an existentialist approach to the world. Dr. Kazemifar hopes that in the future his research on spirituality, according to Ruzbihan, will contribute to the solving mental and spiritual difficulties that are present in our modern, technological, and objective lifestyles.

Dr. Kazemifar wishes to extend his sincere appreciation and thanks to Prof. Ernst, and his wife, Judy, for their kindness, knowledge imparted on him, and for Prof. Ernst's perspectives on the world and our lives in it. He would also like to extend his gratitude to the directors and staff at the Carolina Center for the Study of the Middle East and Muslim Civilizations, the Iranian Cultural Society of North Carolina, Beatrice Manz at the American Institute of Iranian Studies for providing him with the



opportunity to conduct research at UNC, Dr. Mohsen Kadivar, Dr. Omid Safi, Dr. Adali, and UNC's Middle East librarian Mohamed Hamed for their invaluable assistance.

Photo: unc.academia.edu/moeinkazemifar

Notable Events: Fall 2016

Dr. Trita Parsi: "The US & Iran – Can the Nuclear Deal Bring Friendship?"

November 3, Dr. Trita Parsi presented a lecture on the Iran nuclear deal and Iranian-American relations to an audience of approximately 150 people at the FedEx Global Education Center.



Photo: www.tritaparsi.com

Dr. Parsi is the founder and president of the National Iranian American Council and an expert on US-Iranian relations, Iranian foreign politics, and the geopolitics of the Middle East. Originally from Iran, He founded NIAC to provide a non-partisan, non-profit organization through which Iranian-Americans could participate in American civic life. NIAC is a vocal proponent of dialogue and engagement between the US and Iran, which Parsi consistently has argued would enhance our national security by helping to stabilize the Middle East and bolster the moderates in Iran.

He is author of "A Single Roll of the Dice: Obama's Diplomacy with Iran" and "Traacherous Alliance". Dr. Parsi is a former Public Policy Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. In 2010 he received the Grawemeyer Award for Ideas Improving World Order, and he is frequently consulted by Western and Asian governments on foreign policy matters.

"The very idea that the United States and Iran could ever sit at the same table and talk directly to each other was once deemed hopelessly naive – but today, Iran's foreign minister and ... Secretary of State John Kerry are Facebook friends," said Parsi.

The event was sponsored by UNC Persian Studies, in conjunction with the Duke Islamic Studies Center, Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies, and Carolina Center for the Study of the Middle East and Muslim Civilizations.

Lectures by UNC Persian Studies Program Director Carl Ernst

- September 3-4, "Enigmas of translation in the Kamaru Pancasika, an early Persian work on yoga," The Third Perso-Indica Conference: The Sultanate Period and the Early Mughal Empire, University of Delhi

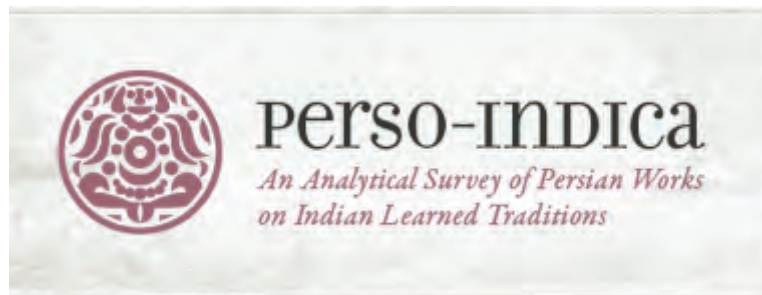
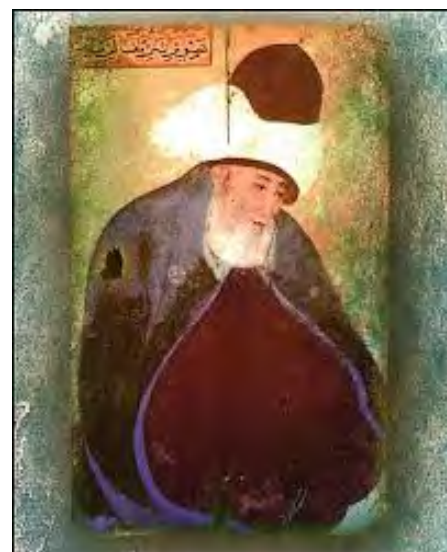


Photo: <http://www.perso-indica.net/>, see <http://www.perso-indica.net/events-news/20> for information about the conference

- September 8, "An Illustrated Anglo-Persian Taxonomy of Indian Religions: the 'Order of Yogis' by Sital Singh 'Bikhwud'", University of Delhi



- November 6, "Sufism in the Modern World: Do Rumi and Hafiz Still Speak to us Today?", Emerson Waldorf School, Chapel Hill, NC



Notable Events continued

Two Nights of Film on Iranian Art

In November, the Friends of the Library sponsored two Nights of Film on Iranian Art in the FedEx Global Center, Nelson Mandela Auditorium. These events were both free and open to the public with Question & Answer sessions after the screenings.

- November 4, "Going Up the Stairs: Portrait of an Unlikely Iranian Artist"

Warm, revealing and often surprisingly funny, Iranian filmmaker Rokhsareh Ghaem Maghami's portrait of an unlikely artist shows us that true talent will refuse to be stifled and you don't need an education to channel your emotions into art. The protagonist of the film, Akram, is an illiterate 50-year-old Iranian woman who became a painter unexpectedly when her young grandson asked her to work on a drawing...When invited to exhibit in Paris, she is at the mercy of her conservative husband: will he let her go showcase her raw talent or give in to his sense of tradition and keep her home?

- November 17, "Ardeshir Mohasses: The Rebellious Artist"

Ardeshir Mohasses was Iran's foremost political cartoonist, satirist, painter and illustrator. Drawing upon his intimate knowledge of Iran's culture, history, and sociopolitical situation, Ardeshir attracted the attention not only of the intellectuals, poets and writers of Iran of the time but also the international community. Filmmaker Bahman Ghaghsoudlou seeks to portray the beauty of Ardeshir's purpose and power in crafting his art to convey the plight of the oppressed, and his universal sense of justice and tyranny, expressed through a satirical visual history of Iran since the Qajar era. This feature documentary admirably displays the depth of Ardeshir's observations and his extraordinary free spirit.



Image: Ardeshir Mohasses, Untitled (1978), ink on paper, 17 x 12 1/12 inches

Persian Lecture Series by Dr. Mohsen Kadivar: Commentary of the Persian Mystical Works of Avicenna

Avicenna or Ibn Sina (Abū 'Alī Husain ibn Abdullah) (980-1037) was a Persian philosopher and physician who is regarded as one of the most significant thinkers and writers of the Islamic golden age. He wrote more than 100 books. His most famous works are "The book of Healing" - a philosophical and scientific encyclopedia, and "The Canon of Medicine" - a medical encyclopedia. Although he was an Aristotelian philosopher, his short mystical treatises influenced Suhrawardi and Ibn Tufail.

Professor Mohsen Kadivar is an Iranian philosopher and research professor of Islamic Studies at Duke University. He taught Avicenna's philosophy for two decades in Iran. In this Persian lecture series, Kadivar comments on the mystical works of Avicenna, and explains his special style in mysticism and symbolic language. This event is open to all who speak Persian or love Persian mystical literature, and the series is sponsored by the Iranian Circle of Culture and Wisdom and hosted by the Carolina Center for the Study of the Middle East and Muslim Civilizations.

The fall sessions took place in the FedEx Global Education Center at UNC Chapel Hill on:

- September 11
- October 9
- November 13

The sessions were dedicated to topics such as "Salaman wa Absal," one of the first symbolic philosophical mystical treatises among Muslims and Iranians, and "The Recital of Love," a semi-philosophical semi-mystical recital on love.



This lecture series has successfully continued into the spring semester.

"A Little Indicates Much': Structure and Meaning in the Prefaces of Rumi's Masnavi (Books I-III)," by UNC Persian Studies Program Director Carl Ernst

These events explored Persian Sufi mystic poets Rumi & Hafiz in the modern world. In addition to the lecture by Dr. Ernst, Ali Kadivar performed live Persian Music.

- December 4, Iranian Cultural Society of NC, 4003 FedEx Global Education Center, UNC-Chapel Hill
- December 6, at a private home in Winston-Salem with supporters of UNC's Persian studies program, NC



Photo: Mehdi Emamian, Dr. Ali Jarrahi, Ali Kadivar, Dr. Carl Ernst, Shaida Horner, Vance Horner, Dr. Hooman Sadri

A LITTLE INDICATES MUCH STRUCTURE AND MEANING IN THE PREFACES OF RUMI'S MASNAVI

(BOOKS I-III)

Professor Carl W. Ernst

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

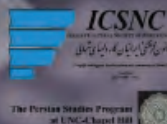


Date: Sunday December 6th 2015 at 4PM

Location: Winston-Salem/Lewisville area

For (free) registration and more information RSVP
by November 30th to

icsnc@icsnc.org



Contact Persian Studies

<http://persian.unc.edu/>

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"Persian art, language and culture, which is identified with modern Iran and adjoining regions, is one of the most formidable cultural traditions in the world – going back to the ancient Persian empire of Cyrus the Great, over 2500 years ago."

-Carl W. Ernst, Persian Studies Program Director and Kenan Distinguished Professor



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