

HISTORY 5098

# Iran before Islam (Online)

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ON-CAMPUS OFFICE HOURS: TU/TH 2:00PM-3:00PM

& BY APPOINTMENT

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SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY

HIST 5098 is an advanced interdisciplinary introduction to pre-Islamic Iran. Organized as a reading colloquium with an emphasis on critical thinking, analytical writing, and group discussion, this course provides exposure to prominent events, processes, and sources across the long history of pre-Islamic Iran. We shall proceed chronologically, starting with the first “world empire,” Achaemenid Persia. Following some consideration of Alexander the Great, the Hellenistic age, and the rebirth of Iranian political life under the Parthian Arsacids, we shall explore the Sasanian Empire, the great rival of the Christian Roman Empire (Byzantium) based at Constantinople. This course is built around the following themes: the bases of royal authority and its projection in texts and art; pre-Islamic Iranian religions, including Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism; the cross-cultural dimensions of Iranian culture, including those drawing together the rival Iranian and Romano-Byzantine worlds; and the intersections and divergences of history and archaeology. Upon the successful completion of HIST 5098 you will be equipped with the tools to conduct advanced research in pre-modern Iranian, Near Eastern, and Eurasian history.

## ***REQUIREMENTS, PROCEDURES, & GRADING***

Enrollment implies the acceptance of all the requirements and policies set forth in this syllabus. Course provisions and procedures are non-negotiable. All students must carefully review the syllabus by the end of the first week and communicate questions to Dr Rapp immediately.

HIST 5098 is an online course conducted entirely through SHSU’s Blackboard interface. There you will access some of the assigned readings, discuss required books and articles, and submit written work. At various points of the semester, phone/Skype conferences with the instructor may be required. *Because of the nature of this course, it is essential that you check announcements on Blackboard AND log into your university e-mail account at least once every two-three days (excepting the Thanksgiving recess).*

Active participation in all **online discussions** comprises 25% of the total course grade. Each unit’s discussion takes place within a fixed timeframe and involves all assigned materials. Your postings must deeply engage the readings and, *inter alia*, explore issues raised in written reviews and pose other historical and/or historiographical questions. You are required to introduce at least one original thread in each discussion unit. For more information, see “Online Discussion: Requirements & Expectations” below.

Written work counts for 75% of the total course grade: **five critical review/analysis papers** comprise 25% (5% each) and the **final paper** makes up the remaining 50%. Unless otherwise indicated, written work is due no later than 9am Central Time (Huntsville, TX, USA) on the final deadlines indicated in the schedule. All papers must have a strong critical/analytical dimension and must not be limited to a description of the source(s). Papers must be submitted electronically through the appropriate Blackboard

link in standard Microsoft Word .doc or .docx format. Complete requirements are set forth in the guidelines below.

Dr Rapp's task as a professional historian is to evaluate your written work for clarity, persuasiveness, and quality of scholarly analysis. To this end, papers shall be returned in a timely manner with abundant comments. It is imperative that you carefully review instructor's comments and make necessary adjustments to subsequent assignments. Expectations will rise as we move deeper into the semester. Grades are earned by what you produce in accord with the assigned topic(s), the improvement and refinement of your intellectual skills, how well you follow instructions, and so forth.

Although +/- grades are used for individual assignments, university policy mandates whole letters for final course grades. Course grades of B+, B, or B- will be reported to the registrar as a B and so forth. Course grades of D or lower will be reported to the registrar as an F. Failure of one or more of the three primary grading categories (online discussion, all written reviews, and the final paper) results in no credit for this advanced course. Incompletes are granted only in cases of verifiable personal emergency. The instructor reserves the right to reward improvement when all course requirements, including online discussion, have been satisfied.

→ **I TAKE DEADLINES VERY SERIOUSLY!** ← Because of the structured nature of this advanced graduate course, it is crucial that you attentively observe all deadlines. Each written assignment has a submission window of at least one week. Given the many demands on your time, whenever possible I encourage you to submit assignments ahead of the absolute final deadlines indicated in the schedule. Normally, extensions will be granted only for documented personal emergencies. Extensions are never automatic; always contact Dr Rapp before attempting to submit a late assignment. It is your responsibility to keep the instructor informed in a timely manner of circumstances adversely affecting your performance.

All work must be your own. ***Academic dishonesty, including but not limited to plagiarism, is forbidden and will be severely punished in accord with university statutes.*** If you are unsure what constitutes academic dishonesty or plagiarism, contact Dr Rapp immediately. Point your browser to [www.shsu.edu/students/guide/](http://www.shsu.edu/students/guide/) for more information about plagiarism in SHSU's Student Handbook and Code of Student Conduct.

Any student with a disability that affects her/his academic performance should immediately contact the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities in the Lee Drain Annex to request accommodations, telephone (936) 294-3512, TTD (936) 294-3786. For additional information on academic dishonesty, the Americans with Disabilities Act, absences for religious holy days, etc., see [www.shsu.edu/syllabus](http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus).

## ***REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS***

Regular access to the following books is required. You may purchase new, used, or—when available—electronic copies from the book dealer or internet outlet of your choice. *E-Books are acceptable only if they are the assigned editions AND if they have standard pagination matching the printed versions below.* If you cannot verify this, purchase a physical copy. It is *your* responsibility to access and read each assignment ahead of the deadline. Always keep your receipts and communicate any problems to Dr Rapp ASAP.

► Daryaei, Touraj and Khodadad Rezakhani. *From Oxus to Euphrates: The World of Late Antique Iran*. Ancient Iran Series, vol. 1. Irvine, CA: UCI Jordan Center for Persian Studies/Farhang Foundation, 2016. ISBN 978-1780835778.

► Foltz, Richard. *Religions of Iran: From Prehistory to the Present*. London: OneWorld, 2013. ISBN 978-1-78074-308-0.

► Khatchadourian, Lori. *Imperial Matter: Ancient Persia and the Archaeology of Empires*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2016. ISBN 978-0-520-29052-5.

► Payne, Richard E. *A State of Mixture: Christians, Zoroastrians, and Iranian Political Culture in Late Antiquity*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2015. ISBN 978-0-520-28619-1.

► Waters, Matt. *Ancient Persia: A Concise History of the Achaemenid Empire, 550-330 BC*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014. ISBN 978-0-521-25369-7.

In addition, select ONE of the following:

► Pourshariati, Parvaneh. *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: The Sasanian-Parthian Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran*. London—New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008. ISBN 978-1-84511-645-3. [NB: a somewhat controversial reevaluation of the collapse of the Sasanian Empire]. This book is available on Blackboard.

—OR—

► Crone, Patricia. *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012. ISBN 978-1-107-64238-6. [NB: a dense, erudite investigation of Iranian religions, especially the various strains of Zoroastrianism, in pre- and early Islamic times]

Other required readings in PDF format are available through the Blackboard portal.

Should you require basic historical background, I recommend the following optional textbook: Jerry H. Bentley and Herbert F. Ziegler, *Traditions & Encounters: A Global Perspective on the Past*, 2 vols., 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2015.

### **ONLINE LIBRARY DATABASES**

This online course may require familiarity with and access to online academic databases (e.g., JSTOR, ProjectMuse, and EBSCO) available to registered students through SHSU's Newton Gresham Library.

### **PUBLISHED/INTERNET BOOK REVIEWS & WIKIPEDIA**

Unless specifically directed otherwise, you must completely avoid book reviews written by other scholars and individuals, including those available online. In no case should you use published or unpublished book reviews for the required written assignments. Similarly, students must *not* consult Wikipedia and similar internet sites for assignments related to this course. Should you have any questions about this provision, contact Dr Rapp.

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# Schedule

*While every effort will be made to adhere to this schedule, modifications may become necessary. Changes will be announced through the Blackboard interface and/or e-mail. Unless otherwise specified, assigned readings always include notes, appendices, epilogues, images, etc.*

*IMPORTANT: (1) Read the items in the order enumerated below; (2) final deadlines are strict and must be observed; and (3) for each unit, short review/analysis papers must be based only on materials prefixed **+**.*

## INTRODUCTIONS

***Wednesday, August 23—Sunday, August 27***

- Each student is required to make an online posting introducing herself/himself to the group between August 23 and 27. To access this inaugural discussion board, log into HIST 5098's Blackboard site and click on "Introductions" in the left-hand menu. Among other things, give us a sense of your academic interests. You'll find a brief biography of Dr Rapp on our Blackboard page.

## Unit 1: THE ACHAEMENID EMPIRE

***Final deadline for review paper: Wednesday, August 30***

- For all units, begin with the audio introduction on Blackboard. Then read the materials in the order enumerated this schedule.

- Download and review the online PDF map packet.

**+** Waters, *Ancient Persia*.

***Written review*** of Waters' *Ancient Persia* with an emphasis on the main attributes of the Achaemenid Empire must be submitted via Blackboard no later than 9am (Huntsville, TX time) on Wednesday, August 30. **ALL DEADLINES ARE FIRM!**

***Online discussion*** of Waters begins at 9am (Huntsville, TX time) on Wednesday, August 30 and concludes at 9am on Wednesday, September 6. *Initial discussion postings must be made within the first 24 hours. See "Online Discussion: Requirements & Expectations" below for additional information.*

## Unit 2: “PRIMARY” SOURCES FOR ACHAEMENID HISTORY

**NO WRITTEN REVIEW FOR THIS UNIT; discussion begins Wednesday, September 6**

➤ ONLINE PDF—Amélie Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire: A Corpus of Sources from the Achaemenid Period* (London—New York: Routledge, 2010), 70-74, 92-103, 171-177, 181-193, 469-501, and 541-575.

**NO WRITTEN REVIEW FOR THIS UNIT!**

**Online discussion** begins at 9am (Huntsville, TX time) on Wednesday, September 6 and concludes at 9am on Wednesday, September 13. Initial discussion postings must be made within the first 24 hours.

## Unit 3: MATERIAL CULTURE & THE ACHAEMENIDS

**Final deadline for review paper: Wednesday, September 27**

✚ Khatchadourian, *Imperial Matter*.

**Written review** of Khatchadourian must be submitted via Blackboard no later than 9am (Huntsville, TX time) on September 27. **ALL DEADLINES ARE FIRM!**

**Online discussion** of Khatchadourian begins at 9am (Huntsville, TX time) on Wednesday, September 27 and concludes at 9am on Wednesday, October 4. Initial discussion postings must be made within the first 24 hours.

## Unit 4: RELIGIONS OF IRAN

**Final deadline for review paper: Wednesday, October 11**

✚ Foltz, *Religions of Iran*.

➤ ONLINE PDF—Marco Frenschkowski, “Christianity,” in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism*, eds. Michael Stausberg and Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina (Chichester, West Sussex, 2015), 457-475. REMINDER: only items prefixed ✚ may be used for the review paper.

➤ ONLINE PDF—Frantz Grenet, “Zoroastrianism in Central Asia,” in *Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism*, 129-146.

**Written review** of Foltz (ONLY!) must be submitted via Blackboard no later than 9am (Huntsville, TX time) on Wednesday, October 11. **ALL DEADLINES ARE FIRM!**

**Online discussion** of ALL ASSIGNED READINGS begins at 9am (Huntsville, TX time) on Wednesday, October 11 and concludes at 9am on Wednesday, October 18. Initial discussion postings must be made within the first 24 hours.

## Unit 5: IRAN IN LATE ANTIQUITY: ARSACID PARTHIA & SASANIAN IRAN

**Final deadline for review paper: Monday, October 23**

➤ ONLINE PDF—Evangelos Venetis, “Iran at the Time of Alexander the Great and the Seleucids,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Iranian History*, ed. Touraj Daryaee (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012), [skim](#) 142-163.

✚ ONLINE PDF—Edward Dabrowa, “The Arsacid Empire,” in *Oxford Handbook of Iranian History*, 164-186.

✚ ONLINE PDF—Touraj Daryaee, “The Sasanian Empire (224-651 CE),” in *Oxford Handbook of Iranian History*, 187-207.

✚ Daryaee and Rezakhani, *From Oxus to Euphrates: The World of Late Antique Iran*.

**Written review** of Dabrowa, Daryaee, and Daryaee/Rezakhani (ONLY!), focusing on the principal historical attributes of Arsacid Parthia and Sasanian Iran, must be submitted via Blackboard no later than 9am (Huntsville, TX time) on Monday, October 23. **ALL DEADLINES ARE FIRM!**

**Online discussion** of ALL ASSIGNED MATERIALS begins at 9am (Huntsville, TX time) on Monday, October 23 and concludes at 9am on Monday, October 30. Initial discussion postings must be made within the first 24 hours.

## Unit 6: “PRIMARY” SOURCES FOR SASANIAN HISTORY

**NO WRITTEN REVIEW FOR THIS UNIT; discussion begins Monday, October 30**

➤ ONLINE PDF—“The Inscription of Shapur I at Naqsh-e Rostam in Fars” (ca. 262), trans. Richard N. Frye in his *The History of Ancient Iran* (München: C.H. Beck, 1984), 371-373.

➤ ONLINE PDF—*The Book of the Acts of Ardašir son of Pāpag: Kārnāmag ī ardašir ī pābagān* (Vincennes: Ermān, 1999).

➤ ONLINE PDF—Agathias, II.23-28 = Agathias, *The Histories*, trans. Joseph D. Frendo (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1975), 56-63. Note: Agathias was a sixth-century (Christian) Roman/Byzantine historian.

➤ ONLINE PDF—Abolqasem Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings*, trans. Dick Davis (New York: Penguin, 2006), 104-173.

**NO WRITTEN REVIEW FOR THIS UNIT!**  
**NOTE SHORTENED DISCUSSION PERIOD!**

**Online discussion** begins at 9am (Huntsville, TX time) on Monday, October 30 and concludes at 9am on Saturday, November 4. Initial discussion postings must be made within the first 24 hours.

## Unit 7: CROSS-CULTURAL FABRIC OF SASANIAN IRAN

**Final deadline for review paper: Monday, November 6**

+ Payne, *State of Mixture*

**Written review** of Payne must be submitted via Blackboard no later than 9am (Huntsville, TX time) on Monday, November 6. **ALL DEADLINES ARE FIRM!**

**Online discussion** of Payne begins at 9am (Huntsville, TX time) on Monday, November 6 and concludes at 9am on Monday, November 13. Initial discussion postings must be made within the first 24 hours.

## Unit 8: CROSS-IMPERIAL INTERACTIONS IN LATE ANTIQUITY

**NO WRITTEN REVIEW FOR THIS UNIT; discussion begins Wednesday, November 15**

+ ONLINE PDF—Canepa, *Two Eyes of the Earth*

**NO WRITTEN REVIEW FOR THIS IMPORTANT UNIT!**  
**NOTE SHORTENED DISCUSSION PERIOD!**

**Online discussion** begins at 9am (Huntsville, TX time) on Wednesday, November 15 and concludes at 9am on Monday, November 20. Initial discussion postings must be made within the first 24 hours.

Strict deadline for the final paper  
**Monday, December 4 at 9:00am sharp**  
HUNTSVILLE, TX TIME

## ONLINE DISCUSSION: REQUIREMENTS & EXPECTATIONS

Discussion is an essential component of graduate coursework. Students are required to participate regularly in our online text-based discussion for all units. *Failure to contribute REGULARLY is akin to skipping class, a particularly egregious act at the graduate level.* Regular participation entails:

- ❖ making *at least three scholarly and nuanced postings per unit*; these may take the form of original threads, responses to existing postings, detailed questions, relevant observations, etc.; *your initial posting must be transmitted within the first 24 hours of the opening of each discussion board.* Occasionally posting a few sentences or impressions is not sufficient.
- ❖ carefully reading all postings by students and the instructor *at least once every 24 hours* when a discussion board is active
- ❖ introducing *at least one original thread (i.e., subject/idea for discussion) in each discussion unit*; begin each thread with a thoughtful and coherent paragraph of medium length

In addition:

- ❖ while you are welcome to disagree with the author(s), Dr Rapp, and other students, always treat others with courtesy and respect
- ❖ some tangents and detours are expected, and these can be quite interesting, but in general please remain focused on course materials
- ❖ bald impressions and opinions are rarely sufficient in an advanced history course, whether in discussion or a critical review/analysis paper; accordingly, your position/argument must be bolstered by evidence and proof (thus, avoid “I believe” and “I feel”)
- ❖ avoid single postings exceeding two long paragraphs—do your best to maintain focus!
- ❖ if your posting refers to a specific passage or incorporates a direct quote please indicate the relevant page number(s)
- ❖ you are encouraged to refer to earlier assigned readings from this course

*It is forbidden to read and/or to participate in discussion  
until your written review/analysis for that unit has been submitted!*



## REQUIRED GUIDELINES FOR WRITTEN REVIEWS

Book reviews require you to actively engage, assess, contextualize, and critique assigned readings in an original manner. Although all scholarly writing has a descriptive dimension, your review should *minimize description, including direct quotations*. Instead, it should feature your *original assessment, analysis, and contextualization*. The key is your *deep engagement* with the publication(s) being reviewed. Start with an appropriate introductory paragraph articulating the contours and central arguments of the publication(s) and its/their principal thesis/purpose. When you refer to the author and title of the book for the first time, provide the full name and title in the body of your review.

**Short reviews/analysis papers must be at least five (5) full pages in length and must not exceed seven (7) pages.** As a rule, refer only to the work(s) being reviewed. When absolutely necessary, references to other sources must be limited to previously assigned readings unless you have Dr Rapp's explicit permission.

Submit your paper as a standard .doc or .docx file through the appropriate Blackboard link. Use a standard academic font such as Times New Roman set at 12-point. Pages must be numbered and margins set to 1" on all sides. Set line spacing to double or space-and-a-half. Careful proofreading before submission is essential. Organization and presentation count!

A left-justified, single-spaced information block in the following format must appear at the top of the first page:

[Insert your name]  
History 5098  
Dr. Rapp  
[Insert date submitted]

In lieu of a title, supply a single-spaced and centered full reference to the work(s) being reviewed. For example:

Matt Waters, *Ancient Persia: A Concise History of the Achaemenid Empire, 550-330 BC*.  
Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014.

If multiple works are being reviewed/analyzed, arrange each full bibliographical reference alphabetically, separate entries with a single carriage return, and single-space all entries.

Do NOT attach a separate cover sheet or bibliography/works cited page.

**ALWAYS CITE YOUR SOURCES!** For these short critical book reviews/analyses, references must appear parenthetically—e.g. (Waters, 114-115)—and never as footnotes or endnotes. Keep direct quotations to a minimum; in most cases it is better to paraphrase and then to discuss the historical significance. Citations must be used whenever you refer to specific information extracted from a source, even when you are not directly quoting it.

Papers will be evaluated for clarity, organization, grammar and syntax, logic, persuasiveness, depth of engagement of the source(s), and original analysis and critique. Written work must be focused on the

assigned source(s). *Evidence and detail are essential and must be balanced with broader ideas and contexts.* Avoid unsubstantiated impressions. ***Submissions lacking formal references will earn no credit.***

Your grade will also be determined by how fully you follow the required instructions.

As usual, all work must be your own—*plagiarism and academic dishonesty of any kind is absolutely forbidden.*

## GUIDELINES FOR THE FINAL PAPER

Your final paper will explore ONE of the following topics:

- (1) What are the most important continuities and changes across Iranian history from the Achaemenids through the Sasanians?
- (2) Iran is insignificant in Eurasian and world history prior to the rise of Islam. Oh? Do you agree or disagree with this assessment? Why?
- (3) Design your own topic. One-page proposals must be submitted to Dr Rapp by e-mail no later than November 1. Custom topics must have the instructor's written approval. Note: all final papers are expected to engage the full range of assigned readings.

### ***STRICT DEADLINE***

Final papers are strictly due no later than Monday, December 4 at 9:00am sharp Huntsville, TX time. Papers must be submitted through the requisite Blackboard link. Because this assignment is based chiefly upon assigned readings, extensions will be granted only in extraordinary cases of officially documented personal emergency. Extensions are never automatic; never submit a late paper without first contacting the instructor. Get started early and give yourself plenty of time for revisions and proofreading. Dr Rapp is pleased to answer questions at all stages of the course.

### ***LENGTH***

At least seventeen (17) and no more than twenty-four (24) pages, including footnotes and separate bibliography. Begin with an appropriate scholarly title and introductory paragraph, including a clear statement of purpose (thesis). Do *not* attach a separate cover page. Do *not* add spaces between paragraphs.

### ***FORMAT***

Papers must be prepared in Microsoft Word and submitted electronically via Blackboard in .doc or .docx format. Use Times New Roman or equivalent font set at 12-point. Pages must be numbered and margins set to 1" on all sides. Set line spacing to one-and-a-half or double. Use the same information block required for book reviews.

Your paper must be logically organized, persuasive, articulate, and grammatically and syntactically correct. Don't forget to provide an appropriate title and introductory paragraph, including a clear statement of purpose/thesis.

All work must be your own and sources must be properly cited. ***Final papers lacking sources and/or scholarly references or that have been plagiarized will earn no credit.***

It is essential that you deeply engage the readings, keeping description and "plot summary" to a minimum; discuss the readings collectively and in relation to one another; analyze, critique, and contextualize the assigned sources; and balance broad ideas and observations with specific details and examples. Organize your paper thematically; do *not* discuss the readings sequentially and/or in isolation from one another. Make sure you have followed all required instructions.

## **SOURCES**

Final papers must take into account ALL assigned readings, including monographs, PDFs, and those items not specifically investigated in the short papers. In addition, you *must* employ EITHER Crone's *Nativist Prophets* OR Pourshariati's *Decline and Fall*.

Optionally, you may use up to two additional monographs or their equivalent. *Dr Rapp's written approval is required for all unassigned materials*. However, no penalty will be incurred if you do not employ extra readings.

You are welcome to consult the online discussion board for inspiration, but postings by others should not be directly used or cited for the final paper. Never use unassigned internet resources without Dr Rapp's express written consent.

## **REFERENCES & DIRECT QUOTATIONS**

***Footnotes and a master bibliography prepared according to the Chicago system are required for the final paper; parenthetical citations must NOT be used for this assignment.*** The automatic footnote feature in Word must be employed. If you have any questions about these provisions, contact the instructor ASAP.

All direct quotations must be cited; ideas from sources put into your own words must also be referenced. Limit direct quotations and especially block quotations (i.e. direct quotations exceeding three typed lines). In most cases, it is more effective to paraphrase (rephrase in your own words) the idea and then state the significance/relevance to your argument. Don't forget to include a citation for paraphrased material. Note: academic papers tend to *average* three or four footnotes per full page of text.

Single-space the master bibliography and arrange works alphabetically by authors' last names.



