

## Lifetime Learners at Norwalk Community College

### Iran: A History

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#### **Week 1: In the Beginning. . .**

Traces Persian history, beginning with the Elamites in the third millennium B.C., to the Aryans, the Medes, Persian-Achaemenid Empire, which gave way to the empire of Cyrus the Great, 580-529 B.C.; Greco-Persian Wars; the Parthians; Sassanids.

#### **Week 2: Islamic Persia**

Origins of the Islamic religion; the resulting Sunni-Shia split; the Umayyad Dynasty; Abbasid Caliphate and, how Islam—in particular the Shia variety, became permanently ensconced in Persia. Rise of the Safavids.

#### **Week 3: Century of Conflict to Modernity**

Begins with the more than 100 years of conflict between the Safavids and the Ottomans, partly for control of Mesopotamia, resulting in the Ottoman victory in 1638. The end of the Safavids and the rise of the Zand Dynasty; giving way to the Qajars. Britain and Czarist Russia and the Great Game. Upheaval and the Constitutional Revolution, early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

#### **Week 4: From Qajar to Pahlavi**

The demise of the Qajars and the rise of the Pahlavis. Britain and oil. Consequences of World War I. Shah Reza Pahlavi abolishes Sharia Law and strives for modernization. 1935, renamed Iran (Aryan roots) and, affinity towards Nazi Germany. Joint Anglo-Soviet occupation, August-September 1941. Shah Reza Pahlavi deposed by the British; replaced by son Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, popularly known as the Shah of Iran.

#### **Week 5: To Revolution**

The Mossadegh Affair; importance of oil. The White Revolution; clerical opposition. 1970s, Iran as the Middle East policeman for the West. Revolution, first stage: Freedom Movement; second stage: Islamic Revolution.

#### **Week 6: Shia Revival**

1979 was a decisive year for Sunnis: The infidel Soviet Union invaded a Muslim nation known as Afghanistan; while the Shah of Iran was deposed by the Shia Fundamentalist, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini; thus accentuating the Sunni-Shia divide: The Iran-Iraq War; Persian Gulf War; Plan for the New American century; Bush blunders into Iraq; Iran and Saudi Arabia compete for primacy.

**Week 7: The Nuclear Deal**

Politics surrounding the misunderstood and controversial nuclear deal to prevent an Iranian A-Bomb. Overview of the history of the Iranian nuclear program, beginning with President Eisenhower's 1953 Atoms for Peace speech; following the Shah's nuclear program, supported by the United States. Effects of such developments as the 1979 Revolution and the 1994 Budapest Memorandum.

**Week 8: Shia Islam**

A primer on the Shia variety of Islam.

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