

Digging Deeper XVI: Iran

Since July 2004, **United for Peace of Pierce County** has been conducting “Digging Deeper,” a Monday-night book discussion group, often in the form of a study circle. Topics have included peak oil, climate change, the corporation, and the history of the Middle East, as well as abiding themes of war, peace, politics, and social change. On May 8, 2006, *Digging Deeper XVI* will begin a four-week exploration of a number of books on Iran, examining the history of U.S.-Iran relations in the 20th century, including the August 1953 coup d'état in which U.S. and British secret services ousted Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh, the Iranian Revolution of 1978-1979 that created the current regime, and the background to the crisis over Iran's nuclear program.

- **Nikki R. Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (Yale University Press, 2003; paperback).** Basic history by a professor of history at UCLA. “For three decades, Nikki Keddie has been one of the most perceptive, sensitive, and insightful analysts of Iran. Providing information about a region where instant experts are the norm, Keddie's work has always been profoundly important and has had a major impact on the way Iranians think about themselves.” —Ahmed Rashid, author of *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia*.
- **Afshin Molavi, *The Soul of Iran: A Nation's Journey to Freedom* (W.W. Norton, 2005; paperback).** By the well-known and well-connected journalist who wrote *Persian Pilgrimages*, this exploration of Iranian culture and history has been enthusiastically received by the Iranian diaspora. “Afshin Molavi combines journalistic flair with principled thinking and cultural and historical depth.” —*Camille Pecastaing, SAIS*.
- **Stephen Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men : An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror* (John Wiley, 2003; paperback).** Stephen Kinzer is a veteran *New York Times* foreign correspondent. “With breezy storytelling and diligent research, Kinzer has reconstructed the CIA's 1953 overthrow of the elected leader of Iran, Mohammad Mossadegh, who was wildly popular at home for having nationalized his country's oil industry. . . . At its best this work reads like a spy novel, with code names and informants, midnight meetings with the monarch and a last-minute plot twist when the CIA's plan, called Operation Ajax, nearly goes awry.” —*Publishers Weekly*.
- **David Harris, *The Crisis: The President, the Prophet, and the Shah—1979 and the Coming of Radical Islam* (Little Brown, 2004).** A well-reviewed day-by-day account of the Iranian Revolution as viewed from the perspectives of leaders on both sides, written by an independent researcher who “aspires to documentary journalism, offering a detailed narrative of a truly fascinating cascade of events. Harris sews together familiar narratives with recently released documents and personal interviews; the result is engaging and fast paced, and its tone is authoritative. Particularly captivating are the character studies of high-profile participants on all sides, which help to crystallize a comprehensive narrative around key interpersonal antagonisms and miscommunications.” —*Booklist*.
- **Charles Kurzman, *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran* (Harvard University Press, 2004; paperback 2005).** An examination of the Iranian Revolution from the point of view, especially, of the ordinary Iranians whose participation brought it about. “A thought-provoking combination of journalism and analysis that offers an atypical juxtaposition of voices: shopkeepers, lawyers, and high school students share their views on what happened, as do academics and policymakers.” —*Publishers Weekly*.
- **Christopher de Ballaigue, *In the Rose Garden of the Martyrs: A Memoir of Iran* (HarperCollins, 2004; paperback 2006).** An *Economist* journalist offers a portrait of “the Islamist revolution's heartland,” one that is “far from the ‘axis of evil’ caricature so often associated with the regime that held Americans hostage in 1979-1980. . . . [A] textured view of a complex society, struggling with an ancient culture, a radical ideology and a Westernized elite. . . . The book is peppered with interviews with and vignettes of the many Iranians the author has met during his years in Iran; the title refers to a cemetery in Tehran where the martyrs of the Iran-Iraq war are interred—‘rose garden’ being an ironic rendition of rows of headstones.” —*Publishers Weekly*.
- **Nasrin Alavi, *We Are Iran: The Persian Blogs* (Soft Skull Press, 2005; paperback).** This account of Iranian blogs offers insights into the thinking of ordinary Iranians and has been highly praised by readers. “There are now 64,000 blogs in Farsi, and Nasrin Alavi has painstakingly reviewed them all, weaving the most powerful and provocative into a striking picture of the flowering of dissent in Iran.” —*Book description*.

MEETING SCHEDULE — Mondays from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on May 8, 15, 22, and 29 at the Mandolin Café, 3923 South 12th St., Tacoma, WA.

Books available for borrowing or purchase; no charge for participation. Contact Mark Jensen (jensenmk@plu.edu; 253-756-7519).