

Ancient Iran and the Premodern Persianate World, Graduate Specialization

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The graduate specialization in Ancient Iran and the Premodern Persianate World is University of California, Irvine's interdisciplinary platform for graduate study in premodern Iranian studies. It is designed to provide Ph.D. students with the interdisciplinary training they need to conduct advanced research in the art, archaeology, architecture, history, literatures, and religions of Iran, as well as those peoples, regions, and empires whose destinies were intertwined with Iran, or impacted by its cultures (e.g. ancient Greece and Rome, Armenia, or Islamic Western or South Asia).

UCI boasts unparalleled faculty and programmatic resources for the study of ancient Iran and the wider premodern Persianate world, including the highest concentration of endowed chairs in ancient Iranian studies of any North American institution. With especial faculty strengths in ancient Iran, the specialization's broader historical scope encompasses the Bronze Age cultures of the Iranian Plateau, Mesopotamia, and Central Asia up to the early modern empires of the Mughals, Safavids, and Ottomans (ca. 3500 BCE – ca. 1740 CE). The specialization's broad conception of premodern Iranian Studies is paralleled in, and supported by, the extensive programming of UCI's Samuel Jordan Center for Persian Studies and Culture (<https://www.humanities.uci.edu/persianstudies/>), which provides the primary focus of the specialization's graduate workshop.

Prospective students who wish to pursue Iranian Studies at UCI must first apply (https://www.humanities.uci.edu/persianstudies/program/grad_admit.php) and be admitted to the doctoral program through which their potential advisor accepts students, for example, the Ph.D. program in History (http://catalogue.uci.edu/schoolofhumanities/departmentofhistory/history_phd/), or the Ph.D. program in Visual Studies (http://catalogue.uci.edu/schoolofhumanities/graduateprograminvisualstudies/visualstudies_phd/). Students are encouraged to contact their potential advisors and the Director of the specialization before they apply. Once they have accepted UCI's offer of admission and are enrolled, students join the interdisciplinary graduate specialization by submitting a summary of degrees earned and prior undergraduate and graduate coursework taken related to Iranian Studies, together with a brief statement of purpose that details their degree program, interest in the field, current or potential advisor, and potential dissertation research. This should be submitted via email to the Director of the specialization at the start of their first quarter at UCI.

In addition to Ph.D. students whose doctoral work focuses on premodern Iran, the specialization is open to any student currently enrolled in a Ph.D. or M.A. program at UCI whose career goals would benefit from a deeper historical perspective and whose program provides sufficient flexibility to fulfill the requirements of the specialization. Students should follow the same procedure detailed above. Lack of previous degrees or coursework does not preclude admission. Applications to the specialization are reviewed on a rolling basis, although students are encouraged to apply as soon as they decide they wish to pursue it. All students accepted into the specialization are eligible to be affiliates of the Samuel Jordan Center for Persian Studies and Culture.

The program structure of the specialization consists of four required components: coursework and workshop; languages and specialized training; examinations; and the dissertation or thesis.

Coursework and Workshop

Students must take four courses (seminar, lecture, or independent study) that deal with the art and archaeology, history, or religions of ancient Iran and the premodern Persianate world, its legacy, or methodological or theoretical issues related to its study (e.g. field methods, historical linguistics, critical theory, art law, ethics, museology). These can also include language courses that provide the training necessary to conduct advanced research in the study of premodern Iran (e.g. Avestan, Old Persian, Bactrian, Pahlavi, Aramaic, ancient Greek, Arabic, New Persian, etc.). Topics vary courses are provided through their normal departmental designators and are approved by the program director. A selection of courses for the specialization is listed below.

IRAN 290	Special Topics in Premodern Iranian Studies
IRAN 292	Seminar in Premodern Iranian Studies
IRAN 280	Studies in Old Iranian
IRAN 281	Studies in Middle Iranian
IRAN 282	Studies in Classical Persian
IRAN 294	Curatorial Methods
IRAN 295	Special Methods
IRAN 293	Directed Readings in Premodern Iranian Studies
IRAN 231A	History of Zoroastrianism

IRAN 231B	Ancient Persia
IRAN 231C	Medieval Persia

When a student counts a theoretically focused seminar toward the specialization, the topic of the seminar paper is expected to involve some aspect of the premodern Iranian or Persianate world. In order to encourage interdisciplinarity, students are expected to take at least one course from a program other than their own offered under or cross-listed with the specialization's course designator. In addition, students are expected to participate in the Premodern Iranian Studies workshop, conference, and speaker series. This is a collaborative faculty-student initiative whose content and discussions are focused, in part, on the lectures, conferences, and symposia (https://www.humanities.uci.edu/persianstudies/calendar/events_more.php) organized by the Jordan Center that year. Faculty and students may also present papers or works in progress. All graduate students in the specialization are expected to participate when in residency.

Languages and Specialized Training

In addition to the modern languages required by students' home program, all students must prove competence in at least one premodern language relevant for conducting research in the Iranian world. Doctoral students will be expected to gain competency in at least two premodern research languages. This can take the form of a reading exam administered by the Director of the specialization or the completion of coursework at UCI or another institution equivalent to that needed to gain intermediate competency, including summer intensives. Depending on a student's objectives and needs, languages may include any Old or Middle Iranian language (e.g. Avestan, Old Persian, Middle Persian, Bactrian, Sogdian, etc.), relevant Mesopotamian, Mediterranean or Caucasian languages (e.g. Akkadian, Aramaic, Syriac, Old Armenian, ancient Greek and Latin, etc.), and any language with a substantial corpus of texts relevant to the study of the medieval or early modern Persianate world (e.g. Classical New Persian, Arabic, Urdu, Ottoman Turkish, etc.). According to their focus, students may be advised to pursue a course or practicum in numismatics, curatorial studies, archaeological fieldwork, or related digital methods in lieu of or in addition to language study.

Examinations

For doctoral students, the director must approve that at least one area of the qualifying examination incorporates premodern Iran or the Persianate world as a central concern. One member of the candidate's qualifying examination committee is normally core or affiliated faculty of the specialization.

Plan II M.A. students must have significant premodern Iranian Studies content in their examination. There are no requirements concerning qualifying examinations for Plan I M.A. students.

Dissertation or Thesis

Doctoral students must complete a dissertation that engages the study of the premodern Iranian world as part of their broader project. This can either be the sole focus of the project, the most common scenario, or an important subcomponent informing earlier, later, or coeval developments (e.g. a study of ancient or medieval Iranian art and architecture informing the study of modern or contemporary visual arts or literature).

After advising and before advancement to candidacy, the program director will confirm their approval of the proposed topic through email. Ph.D. students writing an in-process M.A. thesis en route to the Ph.D. and Plan I M.A. students will similarly gain approval of their M.A. thesis topic. Alternatively, a research or seminar paper written under the guidance of one or more of the specialization faculty will be submitted to the director. There are no requirements concerning theses for Plan II M.A. students (see examinations).

Courses

IRAN 231A. History of Zoroastrianism. 4 Units.

Reviews major trends in the history of Zoroastrianism.

Restriction: Graduate students only.

Concurrent with HIST 131A.

IRAN 231B. Ancient Persia. 4 Units.

Survey of the history of Persia in antiquity.

Restriction: Graduate students only.

Concurrent with HIST 131B.

IRAN 231C. Medieval Persia. 4 Units.

A survey of Persian history in the context of Late Antique and Medieval Islamic history.

Restriction: Graduate students only.

Concurrent with HIST 131C.

IRAN 255A. Ancient India. 4 Units.

Examines the visual and religious history of the region defined as "India" today, but necessarily encompassing modern Bangladesh and Pakistan. Culminates with the supposed Golden Age of the Gupta empire and its far-reaching legacies.

Same as AHIS 255A.

Restriction: Graduate students only.

Concurrent with AHIS 155A.

IRAN 255B. Medieval India. 4 Units.

Begins with the Gupta period's aesthetic legacies in South Asia's architecture, sculpture, and painting. Explores the dispersal of Islam throughout South Asia, including the Muslim communities of southern India.

Same as AHIS 255B.

Restriction: Graduate students only.

Concurrent with AHIS 155B.

IRAN 280. Studies in Old Iranian. 4 Units.

Studies in grammars and texts of Old Persian and Avestan.

Repeatability: May be repeated for credit unlimited times.

Restriction: Graduate students only.

IRAN 281. Studies in Middle Iranian. 4 Units.

Studies in grammars and texts of Middle Iranian languages (e.g., Middle Persian, Parthian, Sogdian, Bactrian).

Repeatability: May be repeated for credit unlimited times.

Restriction: Graduate students only.

IRAN 282. Studies in Classical Persian. 4 Units.

Studies in the premodern literatures and historical texts of medieval and early modern Persian.

Repeatability: May be repeated for credit unlimited times.

Restriction: Graduate students only.

IRAN 290. Special Topics in Premodern Iranian Studies. 4 Units.

Studies in selected areas of premodern Iranian Studies. Topics addressed vary each quarter.

Repeatability: Unlimited as topics vary.

Restriction: Graduate students only.

IRAN 292. Seminar in Premodern Iranian Studies. 4 Units.

Seminar in selected areas of premodern Iranian Studies. Topics addressed vary each quarter.

Repeatability: Unlimited as topics vary.

Restriction: Graduate students only.

IRAN 293. Directed Readings in Premodern Iranian Studies. 4 Units.

Directed reading on a specific topic agreed upon by student and instructor.

Repeatability: May be repeated for credit unlimited times.

Restriction: Graduate students only.

IRAN 294. Curatorial Methods. 4 Units.

Development of curatorial methodologies with an instructor in conjunction with curatorial internship or practicum.

Repeatability: May be repeated for credit unlimited times.

Restriction: Graduate students only.

IRAN 295. Special Methods. 4 Units.

Reading course focused on the development of particular research skills (e.g. archaeological field methods, numismatics, digital humanities) often in conjunction with a practicum.

Repeatability: May be repeated for credit unlimited times.

Restriction: Graduate students only.

IRAN 297. Directed Readings in Persian/Iranian Studies. 4 Units.

Directed reading on a specific topic agreed upon by student and instructor.

Repeatability: May be repeated for credit unlimited times.

Restriction: Graduate students only.

IRAN 298. Special Topics in Persian/Iranian Studies. 4 Units.

Studies in selected areas of Persian/Iranian Studies. Topics addressed vary each quarter.

Repeatability: May be repeated for credit unlimited times.

Restriction: Graduate students only.