Shi’ism and Popular Leadership in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911: The Case of Muhammad Kazim Khurasani

A book talk (in English) by Mateo M. Farzaneh, Department of History, Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago

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3:00 PM
10383 Bunche Hall

Mateo Mohammad Farzaneh has taught world and Middle Eastern history at Santa Barbara City College and California State University, Fullerton before joining the Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago Department of History in 2010.

The Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1906–1911) was the twentieth century’s first such political movement in the Middle East. It represented a landmark in Iranian history because of the unlikely support it received from Shi’ite clerics who historically viewed Western concepts with contempt; some claiming constitutionalism to be anti-Islamic. As a leading advocate of constitutionalism, Muhammad Kazim Khurasani, the renowned Shi’ite jurist, scholar, and spiritual leader, conceived of a supportive role for the clergy in a modern Iranian political system.

Drawing on extensive analysis of religious texts, fatwas, and articles written by Khurasani and other pro- and anti-constitutionalists, Farzaneh provides a comprehensive and illuminating interpretation of Khurasani’s religious pragmatism. Despite some opposition from his peers, Khurasani used a form of jurisprudential reasoning that considered human intellect just as important as the Quran in the process of making shari’a (ijtihad). That intellectual freedom in turn enabled him to justify his backing of not only parliament but also limiting the political powers of the clerics. Khurasani’s push for progressive reforms helped to inaugurate a new era of clerical involvement in constitutionalism in Iran.

Campus map is available HERE. | Parking map is available HERE.