A lecture in English by Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, Professor of History and Near & Middle Eastern Civilizations, University of Toronto

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2:00 PM
10383 Bunche Hall

The equivalence of jinns with germs enabled early 20th-century Iranian physicians to offer detailed microbiological explanations for questions of “purity and filth” (taharah va nijasat), questions which had been conventionally elucidated by Shi’i mujtahids in their responsa (tawzih al-masa’il or risalah ‘amaliyyah). The refiguration of jinns as microbes consolidated the transformation of the notion of “purity” (taharat) into “hygiene” (nizafat) and that of “impurity” (nijasat) to “dirty”/unhygienic (kisafat). It also contributed to the Pasteurization of Islam and the medicalization of Iran’s modern political imagination.

Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi is Professor of History and Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations at the University of Toronto. He has served as President of the International Society for Iranian Studies (2008-10), was the founding Chair of the Department of Historical Studies at the University of Toronto-Mississauga (2004-07), and was the Editor-in-Chief of Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East (2001-12), a Duke University Press journal. Since 2010 he has served as the Editor-in-Chief of Iran Nameh and is coeditor with Homa Katouzian of the Iranian Studies book series, published by Routledge. In addition to numerous articles, he is the author of two books: Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism and Historiography (Palgrave, 2001) and Tajaddud-i Bumi [Vernacular Modernity] (Nashr-i Tarih, 2003). He is currently completing a manuscript that explores the discursive transformation of modern Persian political language from biopolitics to spatial governance. It traces the shift from a restorative rhetoric of medical sciences to the constructional language of engineering.