

Persian Language & Literature at UCSB

Newsletter for the Academic Year 2016-2017

"This year was a revolutionary year for the Persian language program at UCSB. In my current position as a lecturer of Persian Language and Literature, my primary focus is developing the Persian language program, promoting the quality of classes, and increasing the visibility of the program as a whole. Previously, the Persian language classes were only offered for two years and were taught by temporary instructors. Heritage and non-heritage students were unfortunately placed in the same class, even though they had varying proficiency levels, goals, and needs. Heritage students can understand and speak the language to some extent while those with no background start from scratch." -Dr. Aazam Feiz

In order to improve the quality of the Persian language classes, Dr. Aazam Feiz created and designed two-year intensive Persian language courses for students with a background in Persian; for example, heritage students. As a result, now we offer two series of classes: an intensive two-year program for those with some background in Persian and a three-year program for those with no background. Courses are now taught four days a week. Furthermore, instead of only two years of regular classes, now we offer three-years of intimate and comprehensive Persian Language here at the University of California, Santa Barbara. This was a huge step towards developing the program and improving the quality of Persian language classes.

Below, is the final list of Persian language courses that will be offered at UCSB next year:

Regular Persian Language Courses

Three years Persian language classes for students with no background in Persian.

1st year (RGST 57A, RGST 57B, RGST 57C)

2nd year (RGST 57D, RGST 57E, RGST 57F)

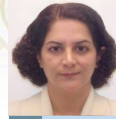
3rd year (RGST 157A, RGST 157B, RGST 157C)

Intensive Persian Language Courses

Two years intensive Persian language classes for students with some background in Persian.

1st year (RGST 58A, RGST 58B, RGST 58C)

2nd year (RGST 58D, RGST 157E, RGST 157F)



Aazam Feiz, Ph.D

Lecturer, Persian Language & Literature

Key Changes

-Increase in class time from 2 days to 4 days a week

-Division of heritage and non-heritage language classes

-Expansion of the program from two year general language classes to 2 year heritage + 3 year non-heritage

-Addition of Persian literature courses



More Academic Changes...

In consideration of the needs and interests of Persian language learners, Dr. Aazam Feiz also created two courses of Contemporary Persian Literature (RG ST 157CP) & Classic Persian Literature (RGST 157PP) in the Winter and Spring of 2017. There has been tremendous support and interest shown for the class, with over 22 enrolled students the first time they were offered.

Persian Literature Courses

Contemporary Persian Literature (RGST 157CP)
Classic Persian Literature (RGST 157PP)

Lack of Visibility: Yet Another Obstacle

Although the program seemed promising, its growth was stunted by the lack of advertising and social media presence. Hardly any students were aware that such a program existed at UCSB. To increase visibility, Dr. Aazam Feiz created an informative website:

www.religion.ucsb.edu/Persian/

For the same purpose, a facebook page and a twitter profile for Persian Language & Literature at UCSB was created. They are maintained and updated by Dr. Feiz with program announcements and event reminders bi-weekly.

Student Opinions on the Initiative

"The amount and variety of classes definitely adds to my overall experience with the Persian language department and cover a range of topics I don't think I could study at any university or in any comprehensive way if not here at UCSB."

– Tara Habibi

"The Persian Cinema class is a great addition to the program as an opportunity to learn more about Iran from the lens of filmmakers who examine the details within its culture."

– Panthea Farhoomand

"The classes are intimate and informative as Aazam [Feiz] goes into great depth when explaining every aspect of the material. She checks in with her students to make sure each and every person comprehends the content discussed."

– Michael Soleimani

Gaining Visibility...



Open Persian Language Classes: In an effort to promote our program, we invited students who were interested in Persian Language courses to join an **open class** session and meet our currently enrolled students.

Persian Language & Culture Presentations: Dr. Feiz held various presentations and forums about Persian Language and Culture promoting our courses. Each presentation encouraged at least a few students to join our classrooms.



Persian Outreach 2016-2017

Persian Language & Literature at UCSB organized and hosted the following events in an effort to immerse students in Persian Language and culture, enabling them to learn aspects of Persian traditions. Such events were vital in creating visibility and raising awareness of the program. Each event informed attendees about our growing program and ultimately encouraged more students to register for Persian courses.

Persian Cooking Classes

Each quarter, Professor Feiz hosted a Persian cooking class in the Multicultural Center's kitchen. Students helped cook an authentic Persian meal. The cooking class taught students about the world famous cuisine of Iran as well as teaching them how to cook an easy and delicious dinner.

"I've always heard about how great Persian food tastes but I never thought I could recreate dishes at home, all by myself. I hope there are more classes. I can't wait to learn more dishes!"
– Anahita Asadollahpour



Persian Movie Night

The Persian Language and Literature program presented three movies this year: Baran (2001), The White Balloon (1995), and The Salesman (2017). These films are fundamentally important in revealing aspects of Persian culture and life in Iran that students cannot learn in classes. They explore aspects of love, gender relations, family relations, traditions, social classes, politics, and much more. In addition, the movies help expose students to colloquial Farsi. Films illustrate colloquial Persian. This is especially helpful for non-heritage students to be exposed to the daily use of the language.



Tea & Culture

We hosted one "Tea and Culture" night each quarter. UCSB students were invited to Persian tea and pastries while listening to a presentation on Persian culture by Professor Feiz. In one presentation, Professor Feiz offered a deeper understanding of the history of the Persian language, highlighting the three different eras and the change in script from Middle Persian to the Perso-Arabic System that we have today.

Another presentation explained the difference between Persian and Farsi as well as the difference between Persia and Iran. This topic was extremely interesting for the students.

Finally, students were informed about the Persian Language classes offered on campus and the various benefits of learning Persian: Persian is a relatively easy language to learn, it can be very useful in states such as California where there is a large Persian-speaking population, and it can lead to many job opportunities in the American government, the United Nations, and various international firms. All in all, the event allowed for students to become better informed about Persian culture and the country of Iran while also socializing with other students sharing similar interests.

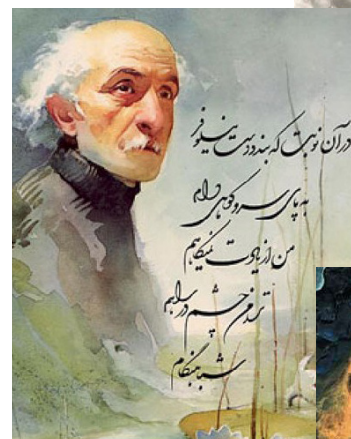


Persian Poetry Night

Persian poetry is one of the reasons for learning Persian language and can motivate students to register for and complete our courses. Persian language students and the other members of the UCSB community got together to read Persian poems along with their English translations.

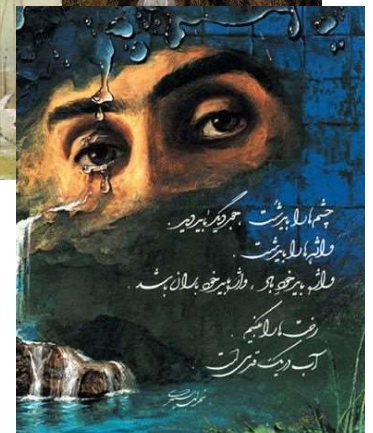
"Events like these help to bridge the gap between us and our heritage. And that's just priceless. So grateful to have gotten the chance to experience this night." –Nazanine

*"Poetry Night was eye-opening. We explored common Persian motifs and symbols. It was thoughtful, inspiring and at times, chilling.
-Romteen Borhani*



"It does not matter
where I am.
The sky is always
mine"

Sohrab Sefahri



The Persian New Year

The Persian Language and Literature Program celebrated Nowruz at UCSB with one celebratory show and two haft-sin exhibitions. The Persian New Year, Nowruz, has been celebrated for over 3000 years. Nowruz serves as a Spring Festival (northward equinox) of Persian origins and it is also the beginning of the Persian New Year. Three hundred million people celebrate worldwide, including people from Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Iraq, India, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kurdistan, Syria, and Turkey.



Traditional Nowruz Table Exhibition

One of the longest standing Nowruz traditions is the haft-sin table. This year, we exhibited the table outside on the lagoon side of HSSB on March 7. Information regarding the history of the table and its symbols were included in a pamphlet and made available to passerbys. The Persian Student Group joined the program in engaging with students, distributing pamphlets, and answering their questions about not only the holiday, but the program in whole. This event was incredibly successful in attaining our goal of visibility.



Nowruz Celebration

The Persian Language and Literature Program closely collaborated with the Persian Student Group in celebrating the Persian New Year with a Nowruz show on campus. It was hugely successful, with over 170 attendees. The show included a cultural presentation about Nowruz, a Persian poetry reading along with its translation, and traditional music and dance. The presentation, along with the poetry reading was provided by the Persian Language and Literature Program. The entire event was a joint effort in which the entire Persian community at UCSB became a part of. The show was followed by a dinner reception where the audience could visit the haft-sin exhibition once more.



In the Coming Years...

In the upcoming years Dr. Aazam Feiz has plans to further extend the program by creating two more courses, hosting new events to further increase visibility, and by constantly updating and creating more materials to aid students' Persian education.