

IPGS SYMPOSIUM ON THE STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN IRAN PARTICIPANTS, APRIL 2024

A Note from the Director

The 2023-2024 academic year was a wonderfully busy one at IPGS! Our initiatives included a groundbreaking two-day **Symposium on the State of the Environment in Iran** that brought international experts from a variety of disciplines to Stillwater to share their research on Iran’s environment. We also learned much from the ongoing IPGS Lecture Series, which featured lectures from art historian **Dr. Pamela Karimi** (U-Mass Dartmouth), food scientist **Dr. Adel Pezeshki** (Oklahoma State University), historian **Dr. Talinn Grigor** (Univ. of California, Davis), and film scholar and poet **Dr. Kaveh Bassiri** (Univ. of Tulsa).

IPGS was pleased to award the 2023-2024 IPGS faculty research grant to **Dr. Tonia Sharlach** (OSU History) for her project, “Water Crises in Iran and Iraq Then and Now: Historical Parallels and Contemporary Challenges in Water Supply.” I encourage you to read more about her project in the following pages, as well as to learn about our in-coming grantees, **Dr. Laleh Tahsini** (OSU Chemistry) and **Dr. Sara Alian** (OSU Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering).

Through Chai Chats, Yalda Night, and a Nowruz Eid Didani, IPGS brought together Iranian students and the OSU community at large, including through a Nowruz presentation for students at Stillwater Junior High School. We look forward to continuing this scholarly work and outreach this Fall, and hope to see you at our events!



Amy Malek

Dr. Amy Malek
Endowed Chair and Director, Iranian and Persian Gulf Studies
Associate Professor of Global Studies
Oklahoma State University

Updates in this Newsletter

Symposium on the State of the Environment in Iran

2023-2024 IPGS Faculty Grant Recipient Report

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Looking Forward: Fall 2024 IPGS Lecture Series

Symposium on the State of the Environment in Iran

From April 18-19, 2024 OSU IPGS hosted the Symposium on the State of the Environment in Iran, bringing twelve top scholars from a diverse array of disciplines to share their research on the question of environmental change in Iran as it pertains to four key areas: climate, water resources, agricultural management, and people in their environment.

This unique two-day symposium, led by OSU IPGS Professors **Ali Mirchi** and **Amy Malek**, presented cutting edge research to OSU faculty, students, and Stillwater community members, as well as from the University of Oklahoma and University of Tulsa.

After a series of high level presentations on day one, the symposium concluded with a closed session on day two in which participants collaborated to organize a joint peer-reviewed publication to be produced in the coming academic year that will offer a holistic view of the environment in Iran. Future IPGS initiatives will build on the success of the symposium as we continue to widen the interdisciplinary field of Iranian Studies.



IPGS SYMPOSIUM ON THE STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN IRAN PARTICIPANTS, APRIL 2024

Symposium on the State of the Environment in Iran

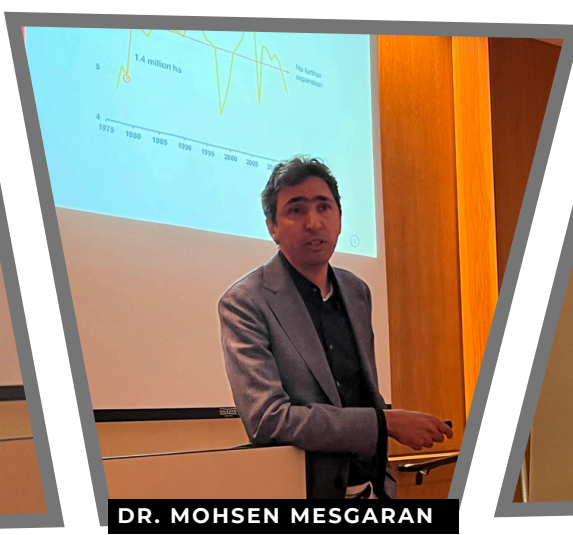
April 18, 2024



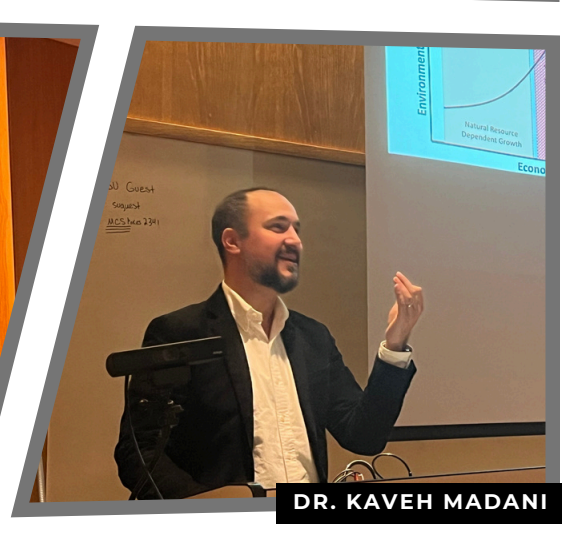
DRS. DEZFULI, SOROOSHIAN, SHARIFI, & MIRCHI



DR. MARIAM ABEZARI



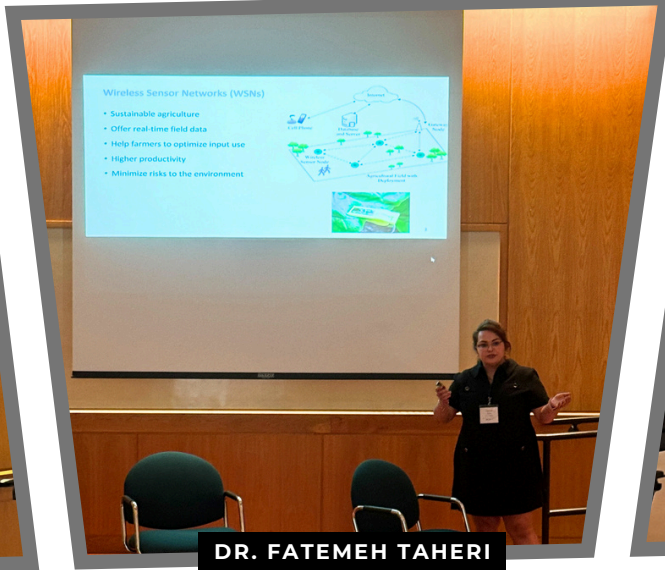
DR. MOHSEN MESGARAN



DR. KAVEH MADANI



DR. ARMIN SOROOSHIAN



DR. FATEMEH TAHERI



DR. AMIR AGHAKOUCHAK



Water Crises in Iraq and Iran Then and Now: Historical Parallels and Contemporary Challenges in Water Supply

Dr. Tonia Sharlach Nash, OSU Dept. of History

Today, Iran and Iraq face significant water crises, in which salinization, “water bankruptcy,” diversion of water upstream and climate change all play major roles. What is less commonly known is that the region faced similar water crises about 4000 years ago, that is, about 2000 B.C.

These ancient water crises led to crop failure, economic decline, movements of people and eventual collapse of the once-mighty kingdoms in what is now Iraq and Iran. Previous scholarship has of course thoroughly documented how progressive salinization led to the failure of the barley crop in southern Iraq. But almost nothing has been written about salinity's effect on sesame, the second most important crop, which was a mainstay of trade between Iran and Iraq. Almost nothing has been written about the effects on salinity on the marshes, which today lie mainly in south Iraq but also into Iran. Almost nothing has been written about what happened earlier, in the decades just before the final collapse, when salinity was high enough to create numerous ill effects but not yet total crop failure. Almost nothing has been written about the deleterious effects on cattle, fish and indeed humans when drinking salty water.

Therefore, I started to investigate the fish and cattle angle. My approach was first to read in modern agricultural journals about the negative effects of salinity on animals today. Sheep and goats are pretty salt-tolerant, but cattle will be ill and drop dead suddenly if they drink salty water. I then looked at the historical records and did in fact find evidence for massive cattle die-offs at this time.

Fish were more complicated. While one might expect rising salinity would just kill all the fish, a number of fish in the region are in fact salt-tolerant. Today, what scientists have observed is a die-off of certain sensitive breeds of freshwater fish, and then species replacement as salt-tolerant fish move in. Cuneiform tablets from Iraq do in fact record fish catches year by year for these dates, and we can, as expected, see die-offs of certain fish types but still robust fish catches as salinity reached a crisis level.

The results of this work (titled, “The Brink of the Collapse: Economic Decision Making about Common Pool Resources”)



were presented at the major international conference in my field, the *Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale*. I anticipate a version of the talk will be published by the University of Helsinki in the conference volume, *Politics, People, Politics of the Ancient Near East*.

This project is far from finished, and I look forward to coming back to the problem of the marshes using the new technologies. While much work remains to be done, I am very grateful to the IPGS for the grant received.

Dr. Tonia Sharlach Nash

2024-2025 IPGS Faculty Grant Recipients



Dr. Laleh Tahsini
Chemistry
IPGS Faculty Research Grant

Tackling air pollution and global warming through CO₂ reduction and transformation using synthetic molecular catalysts

Climate change due to irresponsible carbon dioxide emission is a globally outstanding challenge. However, this issue is more prominent in certain parts of the world including the Middle East and Central Asia. We aim to design molecules that can absorb atmospheric CO₂ and develop methods to convert CO₂ into fuels and other value-added commodities.



Dr. Sara Alian
Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering
IPGS Course Development Grant

Geospatial Technologies for Agriculture

To tackle agricultural management problems and associated environmental issues, Geospatial Technologies for Agriculture will offer training to agricultural technologists in the application of geospatial tools and resources to improve agricultural management and document soil, water, and crop problems for better communication with decision makers and agricultural resource managers.



DR. LALEH TAHSINI'S LAB AT OSU

IPGS Professorship Spotlights



Prof. Pouya Jahanshahi
Art, Graphic Design & Art History

Conference presentation:

“Renovating Tradition: Nasta’liq Script in the Digital Age”

ATyPI Conference; Brisbane, Australia;
April 2024.

ATyPI, the annual conference of the Association Typographique Internationale, a nonprofit global forum for type and typography, was held this year in Brisbane, Australia. It is perhaps the most admired international conference in the realm of typography and typographic design. This year (2024), Prof. Jahanshahi was invited to present his research about the uniqueness of the Nasta’liq Script and its importance in Iranian culture, as well ongoing challenges facing it in the realm of digital media and design.

The presentation examines how this ancient script, developed in 14th century Iran, has adapted and embraced the digital realm, contributing to preserving and promoting Persian and Urdu languages and cultures. The research was very well received, and drew the attention of essential players in the realm of digital technology and design, such as Adobe, who interviewed Dr. Jahanshahi about future objectives and addressed the possibilities he had proposed.



Prof. Hamed Gholizadeh
Geography

New Publication:

“PaRaVis: An automatic Python graphical package for ensemble analysis of plant beta diversity using remote sensing proxies” in [Ecological Informatics](#) vol. 82, Sept. 2024.

In this new research article, **Dr. Gholizadeh** and co-authors (Mohammad Reza Fathi, Hooman Latifi, Siddhartha Khare) developed an open-source Python Graphical package for approximating functional diversity from remote sensing datasets. The ongoing impacts of climatic changes, coupled with intensified human activities, are leading to a significant loss of plant diversity, prompting urgent calls for comprehensive monitoring of forest ecosystems. This is particularly concerning in regions with the encroachment of human activities into forest zones, and inadequate regulations that primarily view forests as a source of timber without fully accounting for their critical roles in biodiversity. These issues highlight the need for effective geospatial approaches to support conservation strategies and sustained monitoring of plant diversity. Comprising parallelized computation, visualization, and analysis of Rao's Q from single or multiple multispectral indices, the authors exemplified its functionalities in two case studies across temperate forest sites in Iran and Germany.

2023-2024 IPGS Event Highlights



**IPGS LECTURE:
DR. ADEL PEZESHKI, OSU**



**IPGS LECTURE:
DR. TALINN GRIGOR, UC DAVIS**



SHAB-E YALDA WITH IRSA & IPGS



NOWRUZ OUTREACH AT STILLWATER JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL



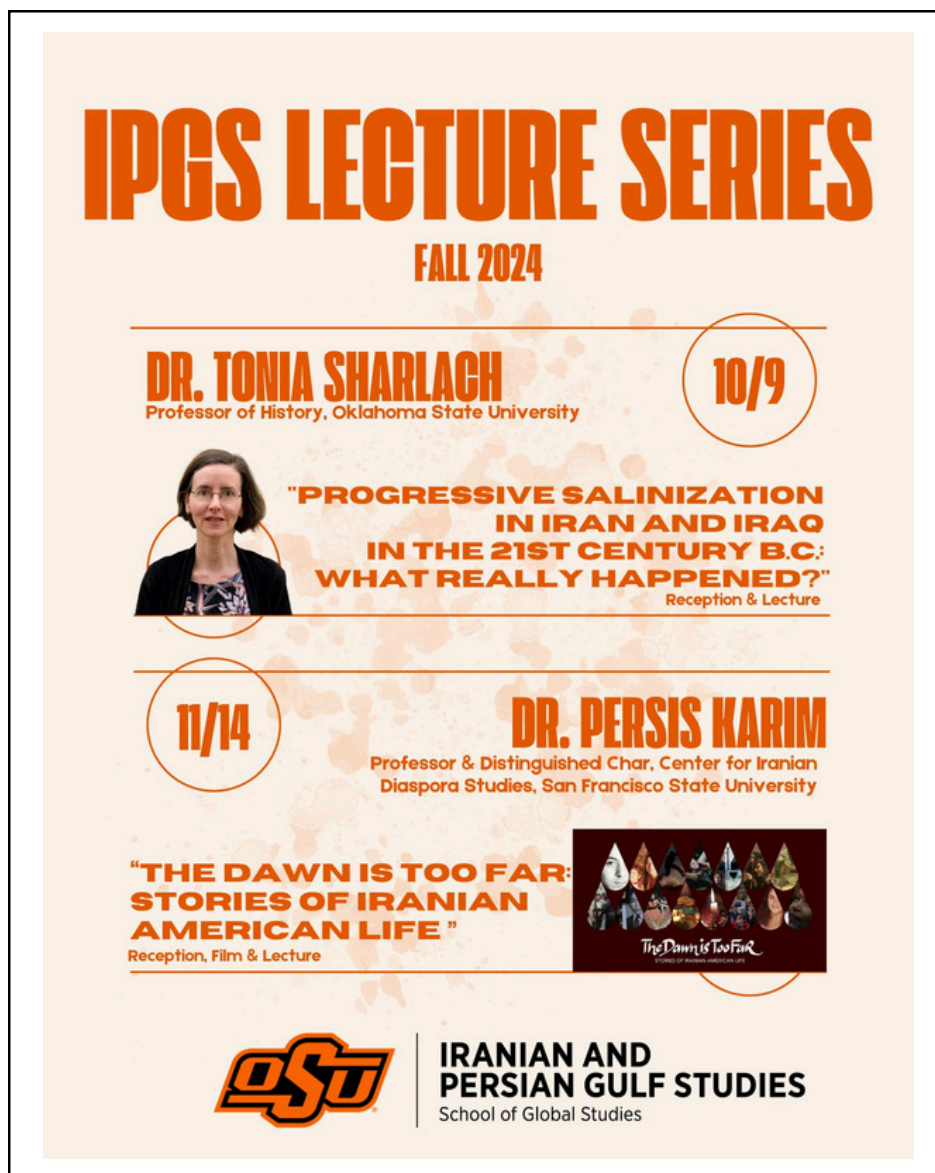
NOWRUZ HAFT SEEN & EID DIDANI



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Looking Forward: Join us this Fall!


We have an exciting calendar of events coming up, whether in our IPGS Lecture Series, cultural celebrations of Yalda and Nowruz, or networking gatherings, known as Chai Chats. Stay up to date on all our events by following us on Instagram or Facebook, and by joining our mailing list. We hope to see you at an event soon!



IPGS LECTURE SERIES
FALL 2024

DR. TONIA SHARLACH
Professor of History, Oklahoma State University

10/9





**"PROGRESSIVE SALINIZATION
IN IRAN AND IRAQ
IN THE 21ST CENTURY B.C.:
WHAT REALLY HAPPENED?"**
Reception & Lecture

11/14

DR. PERSIS KARIM
Professor & Distinguished Char., Center for Iranian
Diaspora Studies, San Francisco State University

**"THE DAWN IS TOO FAR:
STORIES OF IRANIAN
AMERICAN LIFE "**
Reception, Film & Lecture



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