



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

# *Persian Language and Iranian Studies at the University of British Columbia*

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Opportunities for Transformative Giving, November 2017

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At the University of British Columbia, we share your conviction that *education is powerful*. Strong educational institutions underpin society, empowering individuals and communities to seize opportunities and change the world for the better. Recognizing the importance of Persian culture and history, UBC has taken the lead in Western Canada to anchor teaching and research in Persian language and Iranian studies.



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“As a girl from a religious minority and who is not welcome to visit Iran (her motherland), your classes have enabled me to learn about the history of my family, where I come from, and what I have to be proud about through my heritage. This is a gift no one else has been able to give me up until this point in my life.”

– **Camelia Alikashan**

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## Status of Persian Language and Iranian Studies at UBC

Since 2011, the Department of Asian Studies in the Faculty of Arts has offered Persian language courses for non-heritage and heritage learners, introduced students to the depth and the breadth of Persian language and culture, and expanded course offerings by successfully piloting courses on Persian literature, Iranian history and civilization, and Iranian cinema.

The Department of Asian Studies has made a significant commitment in administrative and financial support to pilot programs, attract lecturers, and stabilize this academic initiative. This investment has been supplemented by donations from many generous and visionary stakeholders in the Iranian Canadian community.

As a result of these investments, UBC has witnessed increased enrolments and interest from an ethnically diverse student body, and built a mature program that is ready for permanent establishment. This requires significant leadership and philanthropic support to endow two named academic positions, support program activities, and leverage future faculty support. Ongoing annual funding through individual major gifts, online giving and events coordinated with the Iranian Canadian community will ensure the stability of the program until endowed funding is secured.

### Connecting Past and Present

Persian culture, religion and literature have had an extraordinary impact in Asia and beyond. The enduring influences of Persian civilization are evident in many disciplines and UBC is committed to solidifying a program that explores the cultural and historical legacies within history, literature, art, music, architecture, politics and philosophy.

To improve intercultural understanding and awareness among UBC's diverse student body and the global community it serves, UBC seeks to take a leadership role in teaching and building research excellence in Persian language and Iranian studies. This will enrich the experiences of UBC students and prepare them to be innovative leaders, global citizens and agents for positive change at a time when understanding the complex background and rich history of Iran is especially important in North America. There has never been a better time to champion Persian language and Iranian studies at UBC.

## STUDENTS

"As a Canadian with an Iranian heritage, I learned so much about my heritage, my history and my ancestors. Thank you for offering this course and I hope that they bring back the Iranian studies curriculum."

– Robin Asgari

"I came to this class barely with any knowledge of Iran, its history, its surrounding regions, and the impact Iranians had on its bordering neighbors. Now, I understand, the term Iranian is not just represented by a homogeneous group of people. Instead it is associated with a plural idea of Iranian language-speaking peoples who share traces of history, culture, and languages."

– Christina Chen

## Funding Options

What we have been able to accomplish these last six years bodes well for the future of Persian language, literature and Iranian studies at UBC. To make these aspirations a reality, UBC seeks to secure long term funding for two academic positions as well as public lectures and events. Our goal is to endow each of these areas and generate long-term support for generations of students to come. Naming opportunities are available.

The Department of Asian Studies has been approved for a new tenure-track professorial position in South Asian Persianate Civilization and it is currently conducting an international search.

### 1. Assistant Professor of Persian Literature and Iranian Studies

**Endowed gift range: \$4,000,000 – \$5,000,000 capital investment**

**Annual allocation: \$160,000 – \$200,000 (approximately 4% interest)<sup>1</sup>**

**Outright annual gift: \$306,000 (\$102,000 annually for three years)**

A fully funded assistant professor position will focus on teaching four courses per year on the history of Persian literature, the history of Iranian civilization, and Iranian cinema and Iranian culture. This position will allow us to build on the current work of the Teaching Postdoctoral Fellow in Persian Literature and Iranian Studies. Over the past three years, the postdoctoral fellow has garnered significant interest from students, as demonstrated through the following well-enrolled courses: Classical Persian Literature in Translation; the History of Iranian Civilization; and Post-Revolutionary Iranian Cinema. A tenure track position in Persian literature and Iranian studies will secure a rising scholar to build a recognized program and deepen scholarship in these areas.

Situated within the Department of Asian Studies, the candidate for this position will possess a strong research interest in the broad cosmopolitan dimensions of Persian literary culture and the ability to articulate the connections and influences of Persian language and literature. Ideally, the candidate's research focus will inspire students to pursue research in advanced studies in Persian language and literature, and collaborate with other faculty in other disciplines.

*NOTE: The Department of Asian Studies continues to seek internal funding for a new Persianist tenure-track position. If internal funding is secured the proposed endowment will elevate this position, increasing the prestige and caliber of candidates we would be able to attract.<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Spending allocation is 4% of the capital which is the 3-year average market value at December 31 (adjusted for any new donations received from January to March) of the current year. The UBC Board of Governors determines the spending allocation based on long-term expectations of market returns, not historical performance.

<sup>2</sup> A professorship recognizes existing faculty who are "rising stars" and whose research makes considerable contributions to their field of expertise by providing additional funding to support salary and research activity.

## 2. Persian Language Lectureship

**Endowed gift range:** \$2,200,000 – \$2,500,000 capital investment  
**Annual allocation:** \$60,000 – \$80,000 (approximately 4% interest)

**Outright annual gift: \$250,000 (\$85,000 for three years)**

Language is often a key to appreciating a culture. As one of the earliest documented languages dating back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, Persian has been a cosmopolitan medium for literary and scientific contributions in Western Asia for more than two millennia. To help students deepen their knowledge of Persian culture, UBC seeks permanent funding to support a lecturer in Persian language. The current contract-based lecturer in Persian language teaches basic and intermediate Persian courses, Persian reading and writing for Persian-speaking students, and Persian short fiction for native and heritage speakers.

## 3. Public Lectures and Events Endowment Fund

**Endowed gift range:** \$600,000 – \$800,000 capital investment  
**Annual allocation:** \$24,000 – \$32,000 (approximately 4% interest)

**Outright annual gift: \$150,000 (\$30,000 for five years)**

The Department endeavors to create an annual public lecture and event series to showcase UBC's focus on Persian language and Iranian studies, and to collaborate with the wider UBC academic and Iranian Canadian communities. The series will involve assembling a diversity of scholars from units such as Asian Studies, History, and Classical, Near Eastern and Religious Studies, as well as the Asian Library, to promote study and dialogue in this area. Funds will also support co-sponsored cultural events with community groups such as the UBC Persia Club. This modest lecture and events series in Persian and Iranian Studies will complement similar public programs in Punjabi, Chinese and Japanese studies, established in similar fashion through the generosity of community donors.

## STUDENTS

“As an International Relations major, I have always been interested in learning new languages. So far at UBC, I have taken up to four foreign languages (German, Urdu, Hindi, and Persian). I truly feel as though I've acquired the most knowledge and skills in Persian thanks to Ms. Mozghan Zolfi.  
– **Faria Bhuiyan**

“It's fascinating that throughout this course I learned a lot about the history of my country and I also realized that history repeats itself. If we know the history, we know a lot about the future.”  
– **Faranak Ghorbani Moheb Seraj**

## Recognition

Thank you for considering support of Persian language and Iranian studies at the UBC. There are many ways to structure your giving to ensure your donation achieves maximum impact. We would also be pleased to work with you to develop a meaningful and appropriate donor recognition plan.

For more information, please contact:

**Ross King** (on leave)  
Professor and Head  
Department of Asian Studies  
[ross.king@ubc.ca](mailto:ross.king@ubc.ca)

**Leslie Fields**, CFRE  
Assistant Dean, Development & Alumni Engagement  
Faculty of Arts  
[leslie.fields@ubc.ca](mailto:leslie.fields@ubc.ca)  
Office: 604.822.4790 | Cell: 604.209.1617

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