This course explores the depiction of government, ethics, reform, resistance and rebellion in *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings* by Ferdowsi (d. 1020 CE), tr. Dick Davis. Students will analyze the legend’s portrayal of rulers, rebels, women, warriors, advisers and religious officials in the quest for good government. We will explore this work in the development of ancient Persian legend and Islamic-era literature, including Ferdowsi’s depiction of the Iranian creation story and legendary kings, the rise and fall of the Sasanian Empire (224-651 CE), Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Alexander the Great. We will examine the legend’s nuanced portrayal of interaction between the Persians and the Turks, Arabs, Armenians, Greeks, Slavs, Indians and Chinese peoples who lived among the Persians or in other states and empires of Eurasia and the Mediterranean region. Ferdowsi is a keen observer of the benefits and problems of empire in this early stage of globalization.

*Texts for purchase:*
Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings*, tr. Davis
Ferdowsi, *In the Dragon’s Claws: The Story of Rostam and Esfandiyar*, tr. Clinton
Ferdowsi, *The Tragedy of Sohrab and Rostam: a bilingual verse translation*, tr. Clinton