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THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY PRESENTS:  
A STICE MEMORIAL LECTURE

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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY



PROFESSING SELVES

TRANSSEXUALITY  
AND SAME-SEX DESIRE  
IN CONTEMPORARY IRAN Afsaneh Najmabadi

## PROFESSING SELVES: TRANSSEXUALITY AND SAME-SEX DESIRE IN CONTEMPORARY IRAN

Wednesday, January 15  
7:00pm  
Smith 205

Since the mid-1980s, the Islamic Republic of Iran has permitted, and partially subsidized, sex reassignment surgery. In *Professing Selves*, Afsaneh Najmabadi explores the meaning of transsexuality in contemporary Iran. Combining historical and ethnographic research, she describes how, in the postrevolutionary era, the domains of law, psychology and psychiatry, Islamic jurisprudence, and biomedicine became invested in distinguishing between the acceptable “true” transsexual and other categories of identification, notably the “true” homosexual, an unacceptable category of existence in Iran. Paradoxically, state regulation has produced new spaces for non-normative living in Iran, since determining who is genuinely “trans” depends largely on the stories that people choose to tell, on the selves that they profess.

Afsaneh Najmabadi is the Francis Lee Higginson Professor of History and of Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality at Harvard University. Her last book, *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), received the 2005 Joan Kelly Memorial Prize from the American Historical Association. She has recently completed *Professing Selves: Transsexuality and Same-Sex Desire in Contemporary Iran* (Duke University Press, 2013).

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