

Book examines Foucault's work on Iran

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Two professors at a Purdue University in Indiana say that the reporting of a French philosopher helps understand the appeal of radical Islam.

Janet Afary and Kevin B. Anderson of Purdue have published "Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism." Michel Foucault wrote articles on the 1979 Iranian revolution for the Italian newspaper Corriere della sera and for French publications.

Afary and Anderson say that Foucault had come to see many technological advances in the West as means of controlling people, not freeing them.

"Foucault understood early on that Iran's revolution was going to be different from previous ones and that it would contribute to an Islamist movement that would change the role Middle East countries play in global politics in a substantial way," Afary said.

The two authors argue that Foucault's own prejudices blinded him to the way the Islamist government in Iran treated women, homosexuals and members of religious minorities. Afary said that if he had been "more attuned to women's issues" he would have been more critical.

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