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Sept. 1, 2006
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NEWS RELEASE

**AZAR NAFISI, AUTHOR OF *READING LOLITA IN TEHRAN*,
 OPENS UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON DIVERSITY LECTURE SERIES ON SEPT. 14**

DAYTON, Ohio – Azar Nafisi, author of the international bestseller *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*, will kick off the University of Dayton's 2006-2007 Diversity Lecture Series with a free talk at 8 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 14, in the Kennedy Union Ballroom.

A book signing and reception will follow her talk.

Nafisi, visiting professor at Johns Hopkins University and director of The Dialogue Project: Culture and Democracy in the Muslim World and the West, will address "The Republic of the Imagination."

Nafisi was expelled from the University of Tehran in 1981 for refusing to wear the mandatory Islamic veil and did not resume teaching until 1987. *Reading Lolita* "explores the transformative powers of fiction in a world of tyranny" with its account of how Nafisi gathered young women in her home every Thursday morning to read and discuss forbidden works of Western literature.

"I have often asked myself: How is it that under the worst political and social conditions, during war and revolution, in jails and in concentration camps, most victims turn toward works of imagination?" Nafisi wrote in a piece published in the *The Washington Post* "Book World" in 2004.

Reading Lolita in Tehran has spent more than 117 weeks on *The New York Times* bestseller list to date. It has been translated in 32 languages, and has won diverse literary awards, including the 2004 Non-fiction Book of the Year Award from Booksense, the Frederic W. Ness Book Award, the 2004 Latifeh Yarsheter Book Award, an achievement award from the American Immigration Law Foundation, as well as being a finalist for the 2004 PEN/Martha Albrand Award for Memoir.

Nafisi has conducted workshops in Iran for women students on the relationship between culture and human rights and developed a new human rights education curriculum. She has

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lectured and written extensively in English and Persian on the political implications of literature and culture, as well as the human rights of the Iranian women and girls and the important role they play in the process of change for pluralism and an open society in Iran. She has been consulted on issues related to Iran and human rights both by the policy makers and various human rights organizations in the U.S. and elsewhere.

Previous Diversity Lecture Series speakers include Andrew Young, Coretta Scott King, Clarence Page and Nikki Giovanni. The Diversity Lecture Series – part of a larger strategic plan to foster inclusion and diversity on campus and prepare students, faculty, staff and the Dayton community for success in a global society – is co-sponsored by the offices of the president and provost with support from corporate partners, including the National Conference for Community and Justice, *Dayton Daily News*, WDAO-1210 AM and Markey's Audio Visual.

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For more information about the Diversity Lecture Series, contact **Lynnette Heard**, executive director of the office of the president, at 937-229-4122.