

Islamic Art and Architecture

Religion, History, and Symbols

RELI 53/ART 53

Lecturer Steven H. Werlin
werlin@email.unc.edu
Saunders Hall 122

NOTE: THIS SYLLABUS WAS WRITTEN AS PART OF A GATEWAY COURSE. IT HAS NOT BEEN PUT INTO PRACTICE (YET).

Class Time: MW 10:00-10:50, F Recitation (time may vary)

Office Hours: TR 4:00-5:00 and by appointment

Course Description

This course will survey the art and architecture of Islam and Islamic cultures from its beginning to the present day. Although there are numerous ways to approach this subject, our concentration will be in three areas: aspects of religion in art and architecture, the influence of historical and political developments, and the use of symbols as means of communication. In addition, this course will encourage students to view Islam as a constant among various cultures over a long period of time and a broad geographical region.

As this is an introductory course, no prior knowledge of Islam, art history, or religion is required. The class meets for two lectures per week, plus a Friday recitation. The lectures are not designed as discussions; however I encourage students to speak up during class when the information is not clear. The recitations are meant to (a) reinforce the main ideas of the lectures by tackling them head on, and (b) allow the students to engage both their classmates and the teacher in a more comfortable and manageable environment.

Course Objectives

- (1) To provide students with an overview of Islamic art and architecture.
- (2) To give students a basic understanding of Islamic history.
- (3) To introduce students to the fundamentals of art historical method.
- (4) To allow students to make connections and understand the interplay among religion, politics, culture, and visual representation.

Textbooks and Readings

Textbooks: There are three textbooks for this class. All are available in the student store (however I suggest you look online because you'll likely find them cheaper—try www.bigwords.com). They will also be available on reserve in the library. The books are:

- (1) R. Ettinghausen, O. Grabar, and M. Jenkins-Madina, *Islamic Art and Architecture 650-1250* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).
- (2) S.S. Blair and J.M. Bloom, *The Art and Architecture of Islam 1250-1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994).
- (3) J.P. Berkey, *The Formation of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

In addition to these three texts, there will be readings throughout the semester which are not from your textbooks. These will be accessible online via Blackboard, appropriately under “Course Assignments.”

Readings: I expect that all reading will be done before class and recitation. The assigned reading for each lecture (Mondays and Fridays) is listed below in the Course Schedule. The readings are abbreviated *IAA* (for the first text listed above under Textbooks), *AAI* (for the second text), and *FI* (for the third). *BB* refers to articles that are on Blackboard.

Blackboard

“Useful Tools”: The following are located on Blackboard, under “Useful Tools.”

Glossary: A glossary of helpful terms for studying Islamic Art and Architecture.

Maps 1, 2, 3: Maps used for Recitation II. (Please print out to bring to class.)

Timeline: A timeline of relevant events from 550-1800.

Study Questions 1, 2, 3: A list of study questions for the exam. The essay question(s) for each exam will be taken from these lists.

Syllabus: Just in case you lose this document or are anti-paper.

“Slides”: The slides will be posted on Blackboard, under “Slides,” prior to each lecture. Students who like to print out the slides and write their notes directly on print-outs are encouraged to do so (if it works for you). Images for the exams are taken directly from those in the slides. NOTE: The slides do not have notes on them—they are just pictures, with an occasional title or caption. Looking at the pretty pictures is not a substitute for coming to lecture!

Course Requirements

Attendance: I expect everyone to be in lecture and recitation. If you miss either, it is your responsibility to get the notes from a classmate and/or come to office hours to

discuss what you missed. I don't take attendance in lecture. (Since at least 50% of the exam material covers the information given in lecture, I suspect that habitual absenteeism will be reflected in grades anyway.) However, I *do* take attendance in recitation. Since recitations focus on discussions of major issues, rather than strictly information, participation is important.

Recitations: Recitation will meet once a week. Most recitations will have 15-20 students in it. These smaller groups are designed to facilitate discussion and give you a chance to engage your teacher and fellow classmates in open forum. Each week, you will have an assignment which will include a 1-2 page response paper. Please see the recitation list at the end of the syllabus. As stated above, attendance is required for recitation, and class participation will be graded. (If there are any issues regarding class participation, please come see me so that I am aware and will take it into consideration.)

Object Analysis Paper: For this assignment, each student will be required to write a 4-6 page paper on an object in the Local Museum of Art. Objects will be assigned to the student in Recitation VIII, and must be completed and handed in immediately following lecture on Class 25. Papers received later than that will be automatically lowered one full letter grade, and then an additional letter grade for each day it is late. Excuses will only be accepted if accompanied by a note from your dean. Do not ask for your assignment prior to Recitation VIII—the project requires explanation, so you will not be able to begin before then. Students who would like to exceed the 6-page limit may only do so if you come speak to me at least a week before it is due. Further explanation of this assignment will follow later in the semester.

[Note: If there is no local museum which can support such an assignment, images will be posted on BB and the students will write on those.]

Honor Code: All students are required to uphold the University Honor Code. Students in violation of the Honor Code will be dealt with mercilessly.

Grading

Final Grade is determined by:

Response papers	10 %
Recitation	15 %
Map Quiz	5 %
Mid-term Exam I and II	30 %
Object Analysis Paper	15 %
Final Exam	25 %

Grading Scale: Letter grades for all assignments and the course are translated as follows:

- A Congratulations! You deserve a pat on the back for truly going out of your way to get the most out of this class. Your work was impressive and you showed a deep understanding of the course material.
- B Good job. You completed all the assignments satisfactorily, and in some cases exceeded the minimum. In addition, you showed a solid interest for the material, however there was probably more you could have done to show independent thinking.
- C You completed all the assignments, but you did not go beyond the bare minimum. You did not show any real interest in the material, however made a reasonable attempt to pass the class.
- D You pass the course, but your performance was unsatisfactory. Little effort was demonstrated in the assignments, and you showed no interest in learning anything useful here.
- F Congratulations! You deserve a pat on the back for truly going out of your way to get the least out of this class. Your work was virtually non-existent and you showed no interest in the course whatsoever.

NOTE: Each of these grades is earned; no one is entitled to any particular grade. There are no “A students,” “B students,” or “C students” in this class. The work you do in fulfillment of the assignments for *this* course only will be reflected in your grade.

Course Reserves

The following have been put on reserve in the library. These may be helpful in supplementing your assigned reading and for the Object Analysis Paper.

- Akurgal, E. ed., *The Art and Architecture of Turkey*.
- Atil, E., *The Age of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent*.
- Baer, Eva., *Metalwork in Medieval Islamic Art*.
- , *Islamic Ornament*.
- Baker, P.L., *Islamic Textiles*.
- Blair, S.S. and J.M. Bloom, *Islamic Arts*.
- Blair, S.S., *Islamic Calligraphy*.
- Brand, M. and G.D. Lowry., *Akbar’s India: Art from the Mughal City of Victory*.
- Brent, B., *Islamic Art*.
- Denny, W.B., *The Sotherby’s Guide to Oriental Carpets*.
- Diba, L.S. ed., *Royal Persian Paintings: The Qajar Epoch 1785-1925*.
- Dodds, J.D. ed., *Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain*.
- Grabar, O., *The Shape of the Holy*.
- , *Mostly Miniatures: An Introduction to Persian Painting*.
- Hillenbrand R., *Islamic Architecture: Form , Function, and Meaning*.
- , *Islamic Art and Architecture*.
- Hoag, J.D., *Islamic Architecture*.
- Irwin, R., *Islamic Art in Context: Art, Architecture, and the Literary World*.

- Komaroff, L. and S. Carboni eds., *The Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256-1353*.
- Lane, Arthur. *Early Islamic Pottery*, and *Later Islamic Pottery*.
- Lentz, T.W. and G.D. Lowry., *Timur and the Princely Vision*.
- Martin, F.R., *The Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia, India, and Turkey from the 8th to the 18th Century*.
- Pourjavady, N., *The Splendour of Iran*.
- Rogers, J.M. *Empire of the Sultans: Ottoman Art from the Khalili Collection*.

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

- Class 1 **Introduction – What is Islamic Art?**
No reading assignment.
- Class 2 **Conceptions of Art in the Ancient World and the Fundamentals of Architecture**
IAA pp. 3-8
FI pp. 1-38
BB: E.J. Grube, “What is Islamic Architecture?” in *Architecture of the Islamic World*, pp. 10-14

Recitation I *Introduction – History and Art*

- Class 3 **Pre-Islamic Mecca and Ka’ba**
FI pp. 55-69
- Class 4 **Early Conquests: Old Art, New Faith**
FI pp. 70-110
IAA pp. 36-51

Recitation II *Geography and Maps*

- Class 5 **The Dome of the Rock: First Monument of Islam (?)**
BB: O. Grabar, “The Dome of the Rock” in *The Shape of the Hold*, pp. 52-116
- Class 6 **Umayyads and Mosques: Islamization and Arabization**
BB: I. Sergeldin, “Regionalism” in *The Mosque*, pp. 72-75
BB: R. Hillenbrand, “The Mosque” in *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function and Meaning*, pp. 44-64

Recitation III *The Mosque*

Class 7 **Abbasids in Mesopotamia**
 FI pp. 111-76
 IAA pp. 51-56, 59-79

Class 8 **Expansion I: North Africa and Spain Asia**
 IAA pp. 83-101

Recitation IV *Concepts of Religion (and Map Quiz)*

Class 9 **Expansion II: Iran and Central Asia**
 IAA pp. 105-30

Class 10 **Fatmids in Egypt**
 IAA pp. 187-213

Recitation V *Mid-term Exam I*

Class 11 **Seljuks and Ayyubids in the Medieval World**
 IAA pp. 215-65
 FI pp. 177-88

Class 12 **Sunni Revival: the Madrasa and the Khanqah**
 FI pp. 189-230
 BB: R. Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function and Meaning*, pp. 165-215, 219-225

Recitation VI *Concepts of Visual Art*

Class 13 **Crusaders and the Influence of the West**
 BB: R. Irwin, "Islam and the Crusades," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Crusades*, pp. 217-259

Class 14 **Mamluks in Egypt**
 AAI pp. 70-113

Recitation VII *Art and Historical Narrative*

Class 15 **Mongol Invasion and the Ilkhanids**

AAI pp.5-36

Class 16 **Timurids and the East**

AAI pp. 37-69

Recitation VIII *Museum Visit*

Class 17 **Safavids and Uzbeks**

AAI pp. 169-212

Class 18 **Other Forms of Islamic Art**

BB: R. Irwin, "Artists, Guilds, and Craft Technology," in *Islamic Art in Context*, pp. 133-166

Recitation IX *Mid-term Exam II*

Class 19 **From the Sultanates of Delhi to the Empire of the Mughals**

AAI pp. 149-63, 267-302

Class 20 **From Agra to Granada**

AAI pp. 114-31

BB: V. Gonzalez, "Abstraction, Kinetics, and Metaphor: the 'Geometries' of the Alhambra," in *Beauty and Islam: Aesthetics in Islamic Art and Architecture*, pp. 69-93.

Recitation X *Monumental Art and Politics*

Class 21 **Calligraphy and Manuscripts: The Art of the Written Word**

BB: R. Irwin, "A Literary Art," in *Islamic Art in Context*, pp. 167-92

BB: C. Ernst, "The Spirit of Calligraphy," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 112, pp. 279-86

Class 22 **Rum Seljuks and the Ottomans**

AAI pp. 213-249

FI pp. 231-69

Recitation XI *Using Your Skills*

Class 23 **Everyone Else: Non-Monumental Islamic Architecture**

BB: G.T. Petherbridge, "Vernacular Architecture: The House and Society," in *Architecture of the Islamic World*, pp. 176-208

Class 24 **Carpets and Colonialism**
AAI pp. 303-14

Recitation XII *What Has Islam to Do with Art?*

Class 25 **Orientalism and the West**
OBJECT ANALYSIS PAPERS DUE!!
BB: R. Irwin, "Through a Glass Darkly: Western Visions of
Islamic Art," in *Islamic Art in Context*, pp. 241-57
BB: E. Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 1-72 (as much as you have time to
do)

Class 26 **Building Religious in the Modern World**
BB: Hasan-Uddin Khan, "An Overview of Contemporary
Mosques," in *The Mosque*, pp. 242-67

Recitation XIII *Reconstructing Views*

FINAL EXAM – Dec. 14, 2:00-5:00

Recitations

Response Papers: All response paper for recitation should be typed, double-spaced, and in 12-pt. font. They should be no less than one page and no more than two.

Response assignments are to be turned in at the end of each recitation. No email attachments will be considered—paper only. The purpose of the response papers is to compel you to consider the issues raised by the assigned reading and prepare you for the discussions in recitation. Therefore the papers you turn in do not need to be “finished and polished.” Having said that, I expect the papers will be reasonably well-written and thoughtful. These will not be graded heavily, but marked with “S” (= Satisfactory) if you have completed the assignment adequately, or “U” (= Unsatisfactory) if you have not. Any assignment turned in late will automatically be marked “U.” Assignments not turned in at all will receive a zero. If you cannot come to class, you need to get your paper in beforehand, or give it to someone else to turn in for you.

We will make every effort to return your response papers promptly (usually the following week). Please keep a copy on your computer, just in case.

Reading assignments for recitations are generally found on Blackboard, under “Course Documents.”

Recitation I *Introduction – History and Art*

An easy response paper’s a good way to start the semester—there is no background reading for this week. For the paper, there are two parts. First, write two questions you have about the religion of Islam. (It can be anything, so don’t feel silly if you know so little that you don’t even know what to ask.) For the second part, I want you to write a definition of “History” and a definition of “Art.” Do not just look them up in the dictionary—this is not a graded assignment. It’s meant to be a useful exercise for you.

Recitation II *Geography and Maps (or “Istanbul was Constantinople”)*

Geography determines where we are—maps tell us how we got there. For this recitation please print out Maps 1, 2, and 3 from Blackboard, under “Useful Tools.” For your response paper, tell me a little about why you think geography matters. Don’t give me the cliché response that “geography determines history.” Explain why; think of an example or two. Let me know your brain works.

Recitation III *The Mosque*

This week's assignment will explore the question of what makes architecture religious. In preparation, please watch the short film *Mosque*, available in the media center under RELI 53/ART 53. Then, read James Dickie's "Allah and Eternity: Mosques, Madrasas, and Tombs" (pp. 65-79), available on BB. Finally, write a response paper in which you discuss how the physical setting relates to rituals of worship.

Recitation IV *Concepts of Religion and Architecture (and Map Quiz)*

First off, be ready for the map quiz. It will be administered in the first ten minutes of the recitation, and any of the places we discussed in Recitation II is fair game.

As for this week's subject, the recurring theme of religion and politics in architecture is entrenched all throughout history. Art historians, often describe the drastic impact of Islam on the nature of architecture. Examine this view by reading the following (on BB): J. Bloom, *Minaret—Symbol of Islam*, pp. 125-91, and O. Grabar, "Islamic Attitudes toward the Arts," in *The Formation of Islamic Art*, pp. 72-98.

Now consider this: how would you define religion? Write a paper in which you explain this (as concisely as possible), and then let me know what you think of these two articles.

Recitation V *Mid-term Exam I*

The midterm will cover everything up through Recitation VIII and Class 16. If you like, you may email answers to your practice essay questions (available on BB) to your me up until 48 hours before the exam. I will look at them and respond as quickly as possible. Good luck!

Recitation VI *Concepts of Visual Art*

This week's recitation will explore some theories on the perception of visual art. Please read the following articles (on BB): R. Irwin, "Optical Theory and Visual Effects," pp. 193-200, and D. Jones, "The Elements of Decoration: Surface, Pattern and Light," in *Architecture of the Islamic World*, pp. 144-75. For your response paper, choose a period, place, and dynasty we have discussed in class, and tell me about how visual devices were used to create the desired effect.

Recitation VII *Art and Historical Narrative*

For this recitation, please read P.P. Soucek's "The Life of the Prophet: Illustrated Version." After you have read the article, write a response paper in which you discuss

the ways in which art can tell history. How and why do people use art in historical narrative and ideology?

Recitation VIII *Museum Visit*

Please meet outside the front door of the museum promptly. Anyone who shows up late *will* be left behind. Recitation is short and there's no time to lose!

There will be no response paper this week. Use the extra time to begin preparing for next week's exam.

Recitation IX *Mid-term Exam II*

The midterm will cover everything from Class 9 up through Class 16. If you like, you may email answers to your practice essay questions (available on BB) to your me up until 48 hours before the exam. I will look at them and respond as quickly as possible. Good luck!

Recitation X *Monumental Art and Politics*

We have talked about several different dynasties and regions so far in class. Choose three and compare the ways in which the various politics effected the monumental art or architecture of the period and region. I suggest choosing one monument from each dynasty, though you are free to tackle this however you'd like. The only stipulation is that you may not write on the Dome of the Rock, the Taj Mahal, or the Alhambra. Since there are no outside readings this week, I encourage you to use the books on reserve to help you with this assignment.

Recitation XI *Using Your Skills*

The assignment for this week is to watch (or re-watch) Disney's *Aladdin*. (It is on reserve in the media-center.) Various tales and traditions of Aladdin go back as far as the ninth century. As you watch the movie, I want you to analyze the visual imagery—everything from architecture, art, to clothes and the minors. How accurate is this film? What is anachronistic or just way off? To when and where would you date the various elements (if you had to)?

Recitation XII *What Has Islam to Do with Art?*

For our final recitation, I'd like you to read M. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, pp. [on *Islamicate*]. Tell me about "Islamicate." What does it mean compared to "Islam"? After you have done this, read the *BB* excerpt from Blair and Bloom's article, "The

Mirage of Islamic Art: Reflections on the Study of an Unwieldy Field,” *Art Bulletin* 85/1 (2003): 152-180. Now give your answer to the title of this recitation.

Recitation XIII *Reconstructing Views*

This semester’s class viewed “Islamic Art and Architecture” through the scope of histories, religions, and cultures. We narrowed our focus to the “Islamic World” as best as we could define it. In our last recitation, it would be appropriate to rethink the views we had coming into the course. *Before* you do the reading assignment, I’d like to write a page or so on how your conceptions of Islam have changed over the semester. After doing so, please read S. Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations,” from *Foreign Affairs* 72/3, pp. 22-49, and respond to it.