

ARTH 430/599: TEXTILES AND TRADE
(ADVANCED STUDIES IN MEDIEVAL AND ISLAMIC ART)

LAWRENCE BUTLER, FALL 2013

COURSE SYLLABUS—Preliminary short form

The full syllabus will be made available to class members via Blackboard and email.

Textiles and agriculture were the two major commercial products of the premodern world, tremendously important to human history. Textiles are fascinating to art historians, since they may well have been the visual art most in view and most often traded in the ancient and medieval worlds. Since they are transitory, their history is particularly hard to reconstruct and easy to overlook. In this senior seminar, we will explore the art, history, anthropology and archeology of premodern textiles through case studies. We will make use of Washington DC's unique museum collections such as the Textile Museum and Dumbarton Oaks. Since this is a seminar, students will take an active part in discussing the readings, and will present the results of their own research to the class using Powerpoint. Graduate students will have extra reading assignments appropriate to their level, and greater research expectations.

Students pursuing the interdisciplinary minor in Ancient Mediterranean Art and Archeology may use this class to fulfill the seminar requirement, with an appropriate research topic. The course may also count towards the Islamic Studies minor as an appropriate "special topics" course; check with the Islamic Studies program advisor.

General education notes: This course counts as a *synthesis course* for graduation. Due to our bizarre system, it does *not* count as "fine arts" for graduation. It also fulfills the **writing intensive** course requirement for the Art History major. This requirement will be met through the two formal writing assignments, adding up to at least 3500 words.

COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES. In this course, students will:

- Learn about the basic structures, materials and techniques of textile worldwide, with a particular emphasis on the premodern Mediterranean, West Asia, and the Islamic world.
- Read and discuss academic approaches to the history, art, and anthropology of textiles.
- Apply reading and research to the study of actual textiles from a private collection.
- Learn about local collections such as the Textile Museum and Dumbarton Oaks.
- Research, prepare and present original research to the class using Powerpoint.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- Assigned readings and class discussion of them with assigned leaders.
- Short (2 pp.) reading reports every two weeks.
- Formal research with term paper and short Powerpoint presentation.
- Two tests: A term quiz, and a take-home essay test based on the readings.
- Two self-propelled visits to local museums in Washington, DC.
- For graduate students: extra appropriate readings and research expectations.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS:

- The usual: word-processing, GMU email, Blackboard, and web-based research tools.
- **Powerpoint** presentation. Ability to use, or willingness to learn, simple Powerpoint.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:

- Jennifer Harris, ed., *5000 Years of Textiles*, Smithsonian Reprints, paperback, 2011.
- All other readings will be on Blackboard or on Library Reserve at the Johnson Center.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS. We'll be reading excerpts from these, some of them out of print but available on-line. Interested students may track them down for purchase. These include:

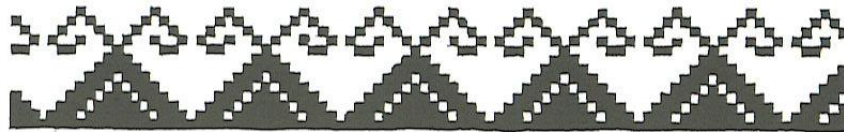
- Ann Hecht, *The Art of the Loom*. Univ. of Washington, 2001. Out of print.
- Janet Harvey, *Traditional Textiles of Central Asia*. Thames & Hudson, 1996.
- Elizabeth Wayland Barber, *Women's Work: The First 20,000 Years*. Norton, 1995.
- *Arts of Asia*, vol. 26 no. 1 (Jan-Feb 1996). Special issue on the Textile Museum; worth tracking down; it's the best thing in print on the Textile Museum's history & collection.
- Mary Schoeser, *World Textiles: A Concise History*. Thames & Hudson, 2003.

HOW TO REACH ME:

- Email: lbutler@gmu.edu. No more private office phone, sorry. Budget cuts.
- To leave a voicemail: History and Art History Department office at **(703) 993-1250**.
- Office hours: **Mon, Tues, and Thurs., 1:45 to 2:45**. Other times by appointment.
- Office: **Robinson B340**, deep inside the History and Art History Department.

SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT DATES:

- **Last day to add classes:** Tuesday, Sept. 3.
- **Quiz on terms/ Textile Museum reports:** Monday, Sept. 23
- **Last day to drop classes:** Friday, Sept. 27.
- **No class on Monday, October 14.** Class rescheduled for Columbus Day
- **Tuesday, October 15.** Special class date rescheduled for Columbus Day.
- **Take-home reading test due in class:** Monday, November 11
- **FINAL EXAM DATE: Monday, December 16, 4:30 to 7:00 PM.** **No final exam is planned for this course, but I reserve the day if needed for final student presentations.**



Please note that class policies, grading policies and other apparatus will be in the full syllabus available to class members

TENTATIVE CLASS AND READING SCHEDULE.
Full reading schedules will be made available to class members.

All classes will be held in Robinson B Room 333 on Monday evenings from 4:30 to 7:10 PM, with a short break halfway through. Please note that this schedule is *very* tentative and likely to change when I get a better sense of student interests and guest opportunities.

Readings are to be done and discussed on the dates listed. Please note:

- **5000 Years** = 5,000 Years of Textiles, ed. Jennifer Harris. Smithsonian Reprints, 2011.
- **Hecht** = Ann Hecht, *The Art of the Loom*. Univ. of Washington, paperback, 2001.
- *Arts of Asia* = *Arts of Asia* 26 no.1 (1996), special issue on the Textile Museum.

Graduate students will be assigned exhibition catalogues to critique each week, in addition to the other assigned readings. These will be announced in class and placed on library reserve.

August 26: Introduction to the study of textiles.

Film: "Tana Bana: Wisdom of the Loom"

September 2: No class, Labor Day holiday.

Introductory readings to fill those long lonely hours:

- *5000 Years*: Introduction, by Jennifer Harris, to give you a foretaste.
- Lawrence Butler, "Putting Silk into Silk Route Studies." Blackboard.
- Other readings to be announced.

September 9: Materials and dyes

Readings: to be announced.

September 16: Weaving on a loom

Readings: to be announced.

September 23: Indonesian textiles, an intro to the Textile Museum exhibit

Readings:

- *5000 Years*: South-East Asia, pp. 153-164.
- Other readings to be announced.

September 30: Term quiz and Textile Museum reports

PART 2: REGIONAL CASE-STUDIES OF TEXTILE AND TRADE HISTORY

October 7: Textiles in the Ancient World: Egypt, Greece, Rome and Persia

Reading:

- *5000 Years*: "The Ancient World," pp. 54-70, variously by MacDowell & Wild.
- Other readings to be announced.

October 14: no class, postponed for Columbus Day holiday.

October 15, special Tuesday class: Silk Trade and the Early Medieval Empires

Readings:

- *5000 Years*, on early Islamic and Byzantine silks, pp. 71-79.
- David Jacoby, "Silk Economics and Cross-Cultural Artistic Interactions," JStor.
- Other readings to be announced.

October 21: Silk and wool in medieval Europe

Readings:

- *5000 Years*, on Sicilian and medieval Italian silks, pp. 165-171.
- Other readings to be announced.

October 28: Nomadic and urban textiles in Central Asia

Readings:

- *5000 Years*: Margaret Hall, "Tribal Textiles," pp. 114-117.
- Other readings to be announced.
- Take-home essay test on the readings will be assigned.

November 4: The carpet trade

Readings:

- *5000 Years*, McDowell on Safavid and Ottoman textiles, pp. 80-90.
- *5000 Years*, Baker, "Carpets of the Middle and Far East," pp. 118-132.
- Other readings to be announced.

November 11: Class choice. Topics and readings to be announced.

Take-home test on readings and discussion due.

PART 3: STUDENT RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

November 18

November 25

December 2

There will be no final exam, but please reserve the **December 16** slot in case we need an extra session for the final student presentations.



GRADING POLICIES

GRADES, including pluses and minuses, will be awarded according to the GMU catalogue, with the usual numerical equivalents used in calculating the final grade.

WRITTEN WORK may be graded by points, or by the following criteria, as appropriate:

A = Startlingly good, exceeding our expectations, and well-written. Must be a bit of a stretch; A's are NOT given for simply following directions and using the most obvious examples.

B = Good effort with a good result.

C = Perfunctory; or, missed the point; or, did something well but it wasn't the assignment; or careless.

D = Warning: accepted under protest.

F = Unacceptable as college-level work.

Paper grades will be lowered for lateness, sloppiness, lack of proofreading, bad English, lack of necessary documentation, faulty logic, or failure to follow directions for the assignment. Please study the directions for writing assignments, elsewhere in this syllabus.

Late written work: Papers are **due in class in hard copy** on the day specified. After that, late papers will be lowered five points a day, or half a grade, during the work week (Mon-Fri) and lowered ten points over a weekend. Note that this makes even the best work "F" work after about ten days. **If you need an extension, you must ask for it before the due date, not on or after**, if you want to avoid a penalty.

Ungraded work: Graduate students will do weekly reading summaries, which will receive a check, plus or minus. A cumulative grade will be rewarded at the end, and count 10% of the final grade. Missing ungraded work will result in a lowered final grade.

Class participation grade: Normal class participation—showing up on time, keeping up with classwork, participating in group activities, not causing problems--will be figured as "B" level. Great class participation will be graded "A". Problematic will be graded "C" or lower, heaven forbid.

FINAL GRADES will be calculated according to the GMU grading system, weighted thus:

Reading summaries	10 %	Research presentation	20%
Quiz on terms:	10%	Research paper	20%
Take-home reading test:	20%	Class participation (including attendance):	10%
Museum report	10%		

Final grades may be raised or lowered from strict average in the following circumstances:

- A pattern of pluses or minuses on ungraded assignments;
- I may raise or lower your grade in recognition of significant change over the course of the semester. **TWO MAJOR (20%-worth) PIECES OF GRADED WORK MISSING AT THE END OF THE COURSE WILL BE GROUNDS FOR FAILING THE COURSE REGARDLESS OF YOUR PRECISE AVERAGE.**

