This course is meant as an introduction to the rich material culture of the Islamic world, from the time of the Prophet to the present day. The course will concentrate on selected moments and monuments in the central historic regions—the Arab Middle East, North Africa, Spain, Iran, Central Asia, India, and Turkey—and consider the relationship of the visual arts to the history, geography, and traditions of each region. The Washington, DC area is particularly rich in museum collections of Islamic art, which this course will feature.

**OBJECTIVES:**
- Familiarity with the major periods, regions, monuments and media of the Islamic world;
- Familiarity with basic principles of Islam as they pertain to the visual arts;
- Understanding the relationship between the history and culture of each region and its art;
- Practice in describing, researching, analyzing and writing about art objects;
- Introduction to the Washington area’s major museums of art from the Islamic world.

**GENERAL EDUCATION:** This course fulfills the GMU University requirement in Global Understanding. It also fulfills the College of Humanities and Social Sciences additional requirement for Non-Western Culture. Please note, however, that you cannot use it to fulfill both. Sadly, it does not fulfill the University requirement for Fine Arts. (Why not? Long story.)

**TEXTBOOKS AND COURSE MATERIALS**
- Supplementary readings available on Blackboard or JSTOR, on-line.


**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**
- Class attendance, with occasional in-class exercises.
- All assigned readings and two required map exercises.
- One self-guided visit to Washington, DC museums.
- Two short 4-5 pp. papers, based on museum visits, on-line research, and required readings.
- Two tests and a final exam.

**TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS:**
- Ability to use GMU email and willingness to do so regularly for class announcements.
- Course Blackboard website: https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu/ select courses.
- Use of the University Libraries’ on-line research databases, especially JSTOR.

**HOW TO REACH ME:**
- Email: lbutler@gmu.edu. No more private office phone, sorry. Budget cuts.
- To leave a voicemail message: History and Art History Department office at (703) 993-1250.
- Office hours: Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 1:30 to 3:00, or by appointment.
- Office: Robinson B340, deep inside the History and Art History Department.
TENTATIVE LECTURE AND READING SCHEDULE

All classes will be held in Art and Design, Room 2026, Mondays and Wednesdays from 12:00 to 1:15. Assigned textbook readings are listed here as “Bloom & Blair” and “Ruggles, Anthology.” The other readings for each week will be found in Blackboard as .pdf files, or in JSTOR.

PART I: THE EARLY ISLAMIC WORLD

WEEK I: INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE
First class on Wednesday, January 20
Arabia in Antiquity
Reading:
- Bloom & Blair: “Introduction”

WEEK II: THE WORLD OF LATE ANTIQUITY
Roman, Byzantine and Sasanian Empires
Islam in the Seventh Century: Muhammad and the Qur’an
Reading:
- The Qur’an: Sura 1: The Opening (Al-Fatiha), and Sura 96: The Clot (Al-‘Alaq)

WEEK III: EARLY ISLAMIC ARTS IN THE UMAYYAD CALIPHATE
Arts of the Book
Mosques and their decoration
Reading:
- Bloom & Blair, 1: “Mosques, Mansions and Mosaics” and 2: “Pens and Parchment: The Koran and Early Writing.”
- Ruggles, *Anthology*: 1.4; 3.7 to 3.15 on calligraphy; 4.5 and 4.9 on mosque features.

WEEK IV: EARLY ISLAMIC PALACES AND CITIES
Palaces of the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs
Catch-up and review, Weds. February 10
Reading:
- Ruggles, *Anthology*: 5.2 to 5.6 on Umayyad buildings.
- Ruggles, *Anthology*: 2.1, 2.6, 3.8, 4.8, 4.11, 5.10 and 5.11 on Abbasid Iraq

WEEK V: Monday, Feb 15: First test, on early Islamic art and architecture and its background.
PART II: ISLAMIC REGIONS, 900-1500 AD.

For this part of the course, please read all Part II of your Blair & Bloom textbook, “Regional Centers and Local Powers, 900-1500 AD,” Chapters 3-8, as soon as you can. They divide the material up by medium, but my lectures will look at it geographically. You’ll figure it out. The second paper will be assigned in this part of the course, due date to be decided.

WEEK V: continued. MUSEUM LUXURY OBJECTS
Wednesday, February 17: Luxury objects
Museum paper assigned
Reading:
- Bloom and Blair, *Islamic Arts*, 4: “Pots, Pans and Pitchers”
- Ruggles, *Anthology*: 2.4, 3.1, 3.28 on luxury goods

WEEK VI: THE LUXURY TRADE IN THE ABBASID WORLD
The Silk Road and maritime trade routes with China
Textile production, use and trade
Reading:
- Bloom and Blair, *Islamic Arts*, Chapter 7: “Warp, Weft and Pile”
- Ruggles, *Anthology*: 3.20 to 3.25 on textiles

WEEK VII: BAGHDAD AND CAIRO
Illustrated manuscripts
Fatimid Egypt and the trade of the medieval Mediterranean
Reading:
- Ruggles, 5.24 to 5.31 on Cairo
- Selections from *Kalila wa Dimna*, the *Maqamat*, and *The Arabian Nights*.

(Spring Break, March 6-13. No classes.)

WEEK VIII, WESTERN ISLAM: AL-ANDALUS
Art and architecture of Al-Andalus (Spain)
*Convivencia*: Jews, Christians and Muslims in Medieval Spain
Palaces and royal ritual
Reading:
- Bloom and Blair, *Islamic Arts*, Chapter 5, “Madrasas and Muqarnas”
- Ruggles, *Anthology*: 2.6; 4.1 & 4.2 on royal building; 5.12 to 5.16 on Cordoba. 5.17 on the Alhambra

First papers due in class on Wednesday, March 16.
WEEK IX: MOROCCO AND WORLD HERITAGE
The great Moroccan cities: Fez and Marrakesh
The North African and East African trade routes
UNESCO’s World Heritage program (http://whc.unesco.org)
Second paper assigned, on World Heritage sites in the Islamic world

Reading:
- Ruggles, Anthology: 5.21 to 5.23 on Morocco & Timbuktu.
- Ibn Battuta, excerpts from his Risla or Travels
- “Fez: Preserving a City,” from Saudi Aramco World
- The Venice Charter, on historic preservation.
Film: “Caravans of Gold” from Basil Davidson’s Africa series

WEEK X:
Monday, March 28: Test 2

PART III: THE ARTS OF THE LATER ISLAMIC EMPIRES

In this part of the course, please read all of Part III: “The Great Empires 1500-1800 AD” in your Bloom & Blair book. Again, they divide the material by medium; I will divide it by geography.

Week XI: SALJUQ TURKS AND MONGOLS IN CENTRAL ASIA
Saljuq Turks: ceramics and commercial architecture
Timur and Samarqand
Reading:
- Ruggles, Anthology: 3.2 to 3.4 on trade with China; 3.16-3.17 on painting; 4.8, 4.11 to 4.14 on urban structures; 5.42-5.48 and 5.51 on Iranian buildings.

WEEK XII: THE GOLDEN AGE OF IRANIAN ART
Safavid architecture: Isfahan
Safavid royal manuscripts
Reading:
- Bloom and Blair, Islamic Arts, chapters 9-12, esp. on Isfahan, Persian painting and textiles.
- Ruggles, Anthology: 3.16 on manuscript painting; 5.49 to 5.50 on Isfahan.
- Textiles 5000 Years, ed. Carroll, on Safavid textiles.
Film: “Shah Abbas: The Remaking of Iran”
WEEK XIII: THE MUGHALS OF NORTH INDIA
Mughal Empire and its manuscript albums
Mughal architecture: The Taj Mahal and all that

Reading:
- Bloom and Blair, *Islamic Arts*, chapters 9-12, especially on the architecture and art of Shah Jahan’s time. Taj Mahal and all that.
- Ruggles, *Anthology*: 3.6 on craftsmen; 5.55 to 5.62, on Mughal rulers & buildings.

WEEK XIV: THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE IN TURKEY
Topkapi Palace and Ottoman luxury arts
Architecture of Sinan

Reading:
- Bloom and Blair, *Islamic Arts*, Chapters 9-12, especially on the architecture of Istanbul and Ottoman luxury arts.
- Ruggles, *Anthology*, 5.32 to 5.41 on Ottoman architecture.

Film: “The Age of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent”

WEEK 15: SUMMARY AND REVIEW

Monday, May 2: Islamic arts today. Readings to be announced.

Tuesday, May 3: Reading Day. Optional review session, usual time and place.

Final Exam: Monday, May 9, 10:30 to 1:15.

SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT DATES

Last day to add classes: Tuesday, January 26.
First map due: in class, when assigned.
TEST I: Monday, February 15.
Last day to drop classes: Friday, February 19.
Selective withdrawal period: February 22 to March 25.
Elective withdrawal period for undergrads: Mon. February 24 to Friday, March 28.
First museum paper due: Wednesday, March 16.
TEST 2: Monday, March 28.
Second museum paper due: Date to be decided in class.
Reading day/optional review day: Tuesday, May 3, usual time and place.
FINAL EXAM: Monday, May 9, 10:30 to 1:15.
CLASS POLICIES

**Attendance** is necessary; much of the material will only be covered in our slide lectures. You are responsible for getting notes, and for all consequences of missed classes. **Class participation will affect your grade, if it is conspicuously good, conspicuously lacking, or continually disruptive.** I will be making spot checks of attendance—they’re not perfect, but they help us both recognize a pattern.

**Classroom atmosphere.** Courtesy and common sense, please. Talking to friends during lectures, wandering in and out, cell phones, and eating food are all badly distracting to everyone else.

**Written work** is a major part of the course, and will count heavily towards your final grade. **Papers must be written in good formal English, with full documentation** in MLA or Chicago style. **All students are expected to use word-processors with spell-checkers. Spelling and grammar count.** Please submit papers typed, double-spaced, and PROOFREAD. **Badly written work will be downgraded or returned.**

No email submissions of papers, except in special cases with my prior permission. **Written work is due in hard copy in class on the due date.** Papers will not be considered “on time” unless and until I receive them in hard copy. Papers submitted by email without my permission will be graded down as a penalty.

**Computers and tablets** are fine for taking notes in class. Texting and Facebook: no. **No computers or telephones may be used during tests,** however. Phones will be turned off at all times, of course.

**Late work will be graded down five points per day and ten points over a weekend.** Plan ahead--last-minute hard-disk and printer failures are your problem, and do not constitute legitimate excuses. **By the final exam, all missing work becomes F work.** Make-up tests and elaborate medical excuses will require verification with a physician’s or associate dean’s excuse. There will be no make-up final exams.

**English as a Second Language:** If English is not your first language, I will be happy to help you do your best in the writing assignments—by previewing papers, offering extra help, that sort of thing. But the final result must be written in good standard English. Please work with The Writing Center in Robinson I, Room A116. Call them at (703) 993-1200, or see their web page for English language help, at: [http://writingcenter.gmu.edu](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu).

**Learning disabilities.** If you are a student with disabilities, and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disabilities Services at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office. Visit their website: [ods.gmu.edu](http://ods.gmu.edu).

**Religious holidays.** I have planned this course according to the George Mason University calendar. If you observe a religious holiday that the University does not, please let me know and I will make necessary accommodations for you (but not for the whole class).

**No gifts, please.** I appreciate the thought, but cannot accept any gifts. They complicate things.

**Auditors** are welcome to sit and listen, if there is room. If you would like to participate more actively, that’s fine with me if you are keeping up with the assigned class reading. Otherwise, please be quiet.

**Academic honesty** is expected in all tests and writing. Please respect the Honor Code, our classroom standards, your fellow students, and yourself. Please report violations to the Honor Committee. See the explanation of plagiarism in the guidelines for writing. Honor Code note on out-of-class assignments: You are free to visit museums and discuss your ideas with other students, but **the writing must be your own.**

**Life crises and counseling.** Problems come up. Let me know, but please make use of the Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). Phone: 703-993-2380, email caps.gmu.edu. For acute situations, call the University Police at 703-993-2810, or dial 911 for emergencies. Their website is [www.gmu.edu/police](http://www.gmu.edu/police).
GRADING POLICIES

TESTS must be taken on the scheduled date. If there has been an emergency, it must be documented by a note from the dean’s office or your doctor. In those cases, there will be one make-up test given, probably during the subsequent class. Tests will be graded by percentage. Grades will be calculated as follows:

- A = 100% to 93%, or 4.00
- B- = 82% to 80%, or 2.67
- D = 60% to 66%, or 1.0
- A- = 92% to 90%, or 3.67
- C+ = 79% to 77%, or 2.33
- B+ = 89% to 87%, or 3.33
- B = 86% to 83%, or 3.00
- C = 76% to 73%, or 2.00
- F = below 60% and receives no credit
- C+ = 79% to 77%, or 2.33
- C- = 72% to 70%, or 1.67

I may award a final A+ in rare instances: 4.0 average plus unusually good writing and class participation.

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 imaginative; NOT given for simply following directions.
- B = Good effort with a good result.
- C = Perfunctory; or, tried but missed the point; or, did something well but it wasn’t the assignment; or, good idea but careless or sloppy.
- 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. Papers submitted via email without my permission will only be accepted with a ten point grade penalty. Yes, really.

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: Maps and other ungraded exercises will be given checks, pluses or minuses only; when figuring up your final grade, these will help us determine borderline grades. Missing maps will result in a lowering of your final grade by 5 points per item.

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 based on the average of your paper, test and class grades. Each assignment will be weighted thus:
- Test 1: 10 %
- Test 2: 20 %
- Final exam: 25 %
- First museum paper 15%
- Second museum paper 20%
- Participation (map, attendance) 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.
- THE WRITTEN WORK MUST BE TURNED IN TO PASS THE CLASS. If no museum paper is received by the final exam, then don’t even bother to show up at the final exam. Course failed.
- TWO PIECES OF GRADED WORK MISSING AT THE END OF THE COURSE WILL BE GROUNDS FOR FAILING THE COURSE REGARDLESS OF YOUR PRECISE AVERAGE.
- IF YOU FLUNK THE FINAL EXAM, WITH AN F ON ANOTHER MAJOR PIECE OF WORK, YOU WILL RECEIVE A FAILING GRADE FOR THE WHOLE COURSE. To pass this course you must demonstrate some mastery of the material from all parts of the course.