

ARTH 320: ART OF THE ISLAMIC WORLD

FALL 2020

Asynchronous, online only, via GMU Blackboard

Instructor: Dr. Heidi Gearhart
Email: hgearhar@gmu.edu
Phone: 978.304.2024 (calls only please)
Live Chat: Tuesdays, 2–4 pm, or by appointment

Course Description

This course is an examination of art and architecture of the Islamic world from the beginnings of Islam in the seventh century to our own day. The course focuses on art from the Mediterranean basin and the Middle East, from the Iberian peninsula (modern day Spain) to central Asia (modern-day Afghanistan). We will look at art from Mughal India and the Ottoman Empire, for example, as well as contemporary art loosely characterized as stemming from the Islamic world, and we will discuss monuments like the Dome of the Rock, the Taj Mahal, and the captivating, delicate manuscripts of Safavid Iran, with a special focus on the magnificent works in the Freer-Sackler Museum of DC. Throughout, we will discuss issues such as patronage, cross-cultural exchange, the inheritance of classical culture, gender, and globalism.

The goal of this course is to build a basic understanding for the art and culture of the Islamic world and learn a chronology of its history. You will also learn basic terms and vocabulary of art history, and how to discuss and analyze works of art.

Learning Objectives

The goal of this course is to become conversant with the development of art in the Islamic world from the beginnings of Islam to the contemporary era. If you work hard, you will be able to:

- Use terms of art history to discuss and analyze works of art
- Describe the characteristics of a work of art and articulate its formal and/or spatial logic
- Assess the production, function, and reception of art within a given cultural context
- Through sustained study, gain an understanding of the meanings and significance of a work of art in its own time and in art history
- Identify works of art within a chronology of the history of art in the Islamic world and situate a work within its cultural context
- Critically assess art historical literature about Islamic art
- Write short analyses of works, assessing the evidence in light of existing literature and situating it in relation to its own context
- Organize and present works according to scholarly themes in a virtual exhibition
- Write a guide explaining the organization of works in virtual exhibition

Evaluation

Image Journal	20%
Quizzes (2)	10% each = 20%
Posts & Discussions (2)	10% each = 20%
Short Paper	15%
Final Project	25%

In order to pass this course you will have to keep up with lectures and assigned readings. Participation in online discussion is also critical and online quizzes will be a part of your grade. You will also be asked to keep an "Image Journal." Each week you will add two or more images to your journal, and write an entry about its art historical significance. These objects may, if you wish, form the basis for your short paper, and you may also use the images from your journal for your final project.

Readings

For this class, our main text will be Richard Ettinghausen, Oleg Grabar, and Marilyn Jenkins, *Islamic Art and Architecture 650-1250*, 2nd ed. (Yale, 2001) and Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom, *The Art and Architecture of Islam, 1250–1800* (Yale, 1996). This book is available in the bookstore.

We will also be reading articles dealing with specific works and ideas about how we think about culture and cultural relations. These additional readings will be available on Blackboard.

Course Structure:

The work for each week will consist of two lecture videos, and readings on that material. Every week you will have a quiz, a discussion, or an entry in your journal to complete.

Technological Requirements:

This class will be taught asynchronously, so that you don't need to join lectures at a specific time, and can watch course videos at a time and in a place that is convenient for you. Please make sure that you have appropriate bandwidth to download and play video lectures for each week, and can log in to the course regularly.

A GMU email address is required for this course. All communication will be through Blackboard and email, and you will be expected to log in regularly.

Hardware:

You will need access to a Windows or Macintosh computer with at least 2 GB of RAM and access to a fast and reliable broadband internet connection (e.g., cable, DSL). A larger screen is recommended for better visibility of course material. You will need speakers or headphones to hear recorded content and a headset with a microphone is

recommended for the best experience. For the amount of Hard Disk Space required taking a distance education course, consider and allow for:

1. the storage amount needed to install any additional software and
2. space to store work that you will do for the course.

If you consider the purchase of a new computer, please go to [Patriot Tech](#) to see recommendations.

Software:

This course uses Blackboard as the learning management system. You will need a browser and operating system that are listed compatible or certified with the Blackboard version available on the [myMason Portal](#). See [supported browsers and operating systems](#). Log in to [myMason](#) to access your registered courses. Some courses may use other learning management systems. Check the syllabus or contact the instructor for details. Online courses typically use [Acrobat Reader](#), [Flash](#), [Java](#), and [Windows Media Player](#), [QuickTime](#) and/or [Real Media Player](#). Your computer should be capable of running current versions of those applications. Also, make sure your computer is protected from viruses by downloading the latest version of Symantec Endpoint Protection/Anti-Virus software for free [here](#).

Students owning Macs or Linux should be aware that some courses may use software that only runs on Windows. You can set up a Mac computer with Boot Camp or virtualization software so Windows will also run on it. Watch [this video](#) about using Windows on a Mac. Computers running Linux can also be configured with virtualization software or configured to dual boot with Windows.

Nota Bene: If you are using an employer-provided computer or corporate office for class attendance, please verify with your systems administrators that you will be able to install the necessary applications and that system or corporate firewalls do not block access to any sites or media types.

Deadlines:

Because this is an asynchronous course, all assignments and quizzes will be due on Sundays by 11.59 pm. If you need an extension you must contact me 24 hours before the deadline to request more time. If you do not submit a quiz or assignment your grade will be a zero.

If you wish an exemption for religious holidays you must contact me within the first two weeks of the semester with the appropriate dates.

Academic Integrity:

At George Mason University, Academic Integrity is demonstrated in our work, community, the classroom and research. We maintain this commitment to high academic standards through Mason's Honor Code. It is an agreement made by all members of our community to not "cheat, steal, plagiarize, or lie in matters related to your academic work." Students sign an agreement to adhere to the Honor Code on their application for admission to Mason and are responsible for being aware of the most current version of the code.

The Honor Code Pledge reads as follows:

To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University Community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set for this Honor Code: Student Members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.

The Honor Committee is selected to promote academic integrity as a core value for our university community. Members of the committee serve on hearing panels established to investigate and resolve alleged violations of the Honor Code. Undergraduate and graduate students at Mason are subject to the university Honor Code. Mason's law school, the Scalia School of Law, has an Honor Committee that is independent from the rest of the University's Honor Committee. Questions about cases brought by the Scalia School of Law should be referred to that committee.

In addition, Mason has an office that deals with issues around research misconduct. Those incidents are investigated through the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance. As it states in policy 4007, "Allegations of academic misconduct against graduate students are governed solely by the university's honor code, except for 1) research activities as defined above regardless of sponsorship; and 2) master's theses and doctoral dissertations, both of which are governed by this policy. Allegations of academic misconduct against undergraduate students are governed solely by the university honor code, except for sponsored research activities which are governed by this policy." For more information, visit the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance website at <https://rdia.gmu.edu/topics-of-interest/research-misconduct/>.

This link provides the full read of the 2019–2020 Honor Code. Select it to download: [George Mason University Honor Code 2019-2020 final](#)

Proper Etiquette for Our Online Course:

Our class is a virtual one, but rules of respect and etiquette still apply, and in fact, are even more important in an online course. Each student is expected to treat their fellow

students and Instructor with utmost respect, and treat all persons fairly and kindly. For further guidelines see <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html>

Our virtual classroom is a safe, open space for the exchange and debate of ideas. Please respect your fellow students and listen to everyone's comments. We want our class to be a supportive, amicable and also challenging place for learning. We are all in this together!

Diversity:

George Mason University values the diversity of its students. So do I. The University's Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Multicultural Education (ODIME) seeks to create and sustain inclusive learning environments where all are welcomed, valued, and supported. Harmful or hateful behavior will not be tolerated.

Religious Holidays:

Please consult the George Mason religious holiday calendar here:

<https://ulife.gmu.edu/religious-holiday-calendar/>

If religious observances will require an adjustment to your course schedule, please let me know within the first two weeks of class.

Student Privacy:

For Mason's policy on student privacy, please see <https://registrar.gmu.edu/ferpa/>

Disability Guidelines

If you have been diagnosed with a disability and require accommodation, I am happy to work with you to help you succeed in this course. However, you will first need to be in touch with the Office of Disability Services. Please see the office website at

<https://ds.gmu.edu> for further information.

Other Student Services:

Mason provides many services to help you learn. Take advantage of them! Here are a few:

- Keep Learning, Learning Services: learningservices.gmu.edu/keeplearning/
- Online Education Services, University Libraries: library.gmu.edu/for/online
- University Libraries: library.gmu.edu
- The Writing Center: writingcenter.gmu.edu
- Counseling and Psychological Services: caps.gmu.edu

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS (15 Weeks)

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION

Aug. 24–30:

What is Islamic Art?

Problems of Definition and Introduction to the themes of the course

READ: “A Global Guide to Islamic Art,” by Jonathan M. Bloom and Sheila S. Blair. Reprinted from *Saudi Aramco World*, Jan/Feb, 2009, 32-43.

<https://archive.aramcoworld.com/issue/200901/a.global.guide.to.islamic.art.htm>

READ: Edward Said, *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979. Introduction, 1-28.

While you read, think about the following questions: What defines “Islamic Art”? What do the authors identify as some of the problems or benefits of the term? What do you think? Write down some of the questions the authors suggest as means to look at Islamic art. Write down some questions of your own. What interests you?

POST: Go outside and take a picture of the world around you. It can be anything you like. What did you choose to photograph and why? Was it something small? Or a view of something? Was it abstract? Was it colorful or in black and white? Post your picture to the discussion board and write 2-3 sentences about what you chose, and what you noticed about what you chose. Does it say anything about you?

WEEK 2: THE PERSISTENCE OF ANTIQUITY? THE WORLD BEFORE ISLAM

Aug. 30–Sept. 6:

The Roman Middle East and the Sasanians

READ: Ettinghausen, Grabar, and Jenkins, *Islamic Art and Architecture, 650-1250*, pp. 3-8

The Nature of Islamic Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art

http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/orna/hd_orna.htm

Sarah Brooks, “Byzantium”

http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/byza/hd_byza.htm

Blair Fowlkes-Childs, “Sasanian Art”

http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/sass/hd_sass.htm

Start your Image Journal: Choose two or three images from your reading or from lectures that interest you. For each object, write 5-6 sentences about the art historical significance of the work. Make sure you discuss its visual characteristics, as well its cultural context. Finally, add a sentence or two stating what interests you about the work and why you chose it.

WEEK 3: THE FOUNDATIONS OF ISLAM

Sept. 7–13: Architecture as Political Statement and Religious Ritual: Dome of the Rock and the Great Mosque of Damascus

READ: The Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem, Damascus, and the Great Mosque: Ettinghausen, Grabar, and Jenkins, 9-27; Browse through 26-36

READ: Lassner, Jacob. "The "Meaning" of the Dome of the Rock." *Medieval Jerusalem: Forging an Islamic City in Spaces Sacred to Christians and Jews*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017. 151-79. (pdf)

For a video of the interior of the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa mosque nearby, watch: <https://youtu.be/ktNn6jkJtLk>

For a video describing the Great Mosque of Damascus as it looks today, watch: <https://youtu.be/WvRrgHNkCGM>
(Note there are some typos and odd grammatical structures in this video, which is disappointing. Always proofread!)

Add at least two images to your Journal and write entries for each.

WEEK 4: THE UMAYYADS

Sept. 14–20: Desert Palaces: Constructing Kingship

READ: Ettinghausen, Grabar, and Jenkins, 36-51

Umayyad Spain: Frontier in the West

READ: Anderson, Glair. "A Mother's Gift? Astrology and the Pyxis of Al-Mughira." *Journal of Medieval History*. Special Issue: 'Me Fecit.' *Making Medieval Art (History)* 42 / 1 (Jan. 2016) 107- 130.

QUIZ #1 (Covers Weeks 2, 3, & 4)

WEEK 5: THE ARTS OF THE BOOK

Sept. 21–27 **Calligraphy and the Arts of the Book**

READ: Ettinghausen, Grabar, and Jenkins, 73-79
Metropolitan Museum of Art, “Arabic Script and the Art of Calligraphy” (pdf)

The Abbasids: Baghdad, the Light of the World

READ: Introduction, *Paper before Print: The History and Impact of Paper in the Islamic World*
Ettinghausen, Grabar, and Jenkins, 51-73

Add at least two images to your Journal and write entries for each.

Week 6: THE FATIMIDS AND THE SELJUKS

Sept. 28–Oct. 4 **The Fatimids in Cairo and Norman Sicily**

READ: Ettinghausen, Grabar, and Jenkins, 190-213 and 291-302

The Seljuks: The Old and The New

READ: Ettinghausen, Grabar, and Jenkins, 139-143 and 165-183

Add at least two images to your Journal and write entries for each.

Week 7: THE CRUSADES

Oct. 5–11: **Conquest, War, and Fusion in the age of the Crusades**

READ: Hoffman, Eva, Christian-Islamic Encounters on Thirteenth-Century Ayyubid Metalwork: Local Culture, Authenticity and Memory,” *Gesta* 43 / 2 (2004) 129-42.

ONLINE DISCUSSION #1:

Conflict and Co-existence: Consider about Hoffman’s argument for local visual contexts. Can you think of parallels in your own experiences, where cultures come together, or clash, or when local communities share an aesthetic that is all their own? Do you agree with Hoffman’s analysis? If so, why? What are the drawbacks or weaknesses of her proposition?

EARLY MODERNITY

WEEK 8: THE MAGHREB AND THE NASRID

Oct. 12–18: Granada: Light and Dreams

READ: Introduction to Blair and Bloom, *The Art and Architecture of Islam, 1250-1800*, 1-4
Blair and Bloom, 114-131

READ: Robinson, Cynthia. “Arthur in the Alhambra? Narrative and Nasrid Courtly Self-Fashioning in The Hall Of Justice Ceiling Paintings.” *Medieval Encounters* 14 / 2-3 (2008): 164–98. (pdf)

Add at least two images to your Journal and write entries for each.

WEEK 9: THE ILKHANIDS

Oct. 19–25: Sufi Shrines and The Great Mongol Shahnameh

READ: Blair and Bloom, 5-19; browse through 21-35

READ: Grabar, Oleg. "Why Was the Shahnama Illustrated?" *Iranian Studies* 43, no. 1 (2010): 91-96.

Add at least two images to your Journal and write entries for each.

WEEK 10: THE TIMURIDS

Oct. 26–Nov. 1: The Timurids

READ: Blair and Bloom, 55-69; browse through 37-54

READ: Balafrej, Lamia. "Potential World." *The Making of the Artist in Late Timurid Painting*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019. 109–142. (pdf)

QUIZ #2 (Covers Weeks 8, 9, & 10)

WEEK 11: THE SAFAVIDS

Nov. 2–8: **Architecture in Isfahan**

READ: Blair and Bloom, 183-198

Savafid Manuscripts

READ: Blair and Bloom, 165-181

READ: Porter, Yves. "From the "Theory of the Two Qalams" to the "Seven Principles of Painting": Theory, Terminology, and Practice in Persian Classical Painting." *Muqarnas* 17 (2000): 109-18.

Add at least two images to your Journal and write entries for each.

WEEK 12: THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT

Nov. 9–15: **The Mughals**

READ: Blair and Bloom, 287-302
Browse through 267-286

READ: Koch, Ebba. "The Taj Mahal: Architecture, Symbolism, and Urban Significance." *Muqarnas* 22 (2005): 128-49.

Add at least two images to your Journal and write entries for each.

WEEK 13: THE OTTOMANS

Nov. 16–22:

READ: Blair and Bloom, 231-250; Browse through 213-230

SHORT PAPER DUE: What are some themes that you have found as you have gathered your images in your Image Journal? Choose

6 images from lectures or from your journal, and look for themes that unite them. In roughly 3 pages, discuss the images you have brought together, considering possible groupings: if you were an exhibition curator, what are some themes that your images might demonstrate? This assignment is a warm-up for your final project, in which you will be asked to create an online exhibition. It should help you think through the images you have gathered, and review the themes of the course. *Nota bene*: This paper is short, it should be carefully thought out and well-written, with good organization, proper spelling, and grammar.

THE MODERN WORLD

Week 14: THE QAJARS AND COLONIALISM

Nov. 23–29: Iran under the Qajars

Orientalism and Colonialism

REVISIT: Edward Said, *Orientalism*

READ: Behdad, Ali. "The Power-Ful Art of Qajar Photography: Orientalism and (Self)-Orientalizing in Nineteenth-Century Iran." *Iranian Studies* 34, no. 1/4 (2001): 141-51.

READ: Mohammadi Nameghi, Khadijeh, and Carmen Pérez González. "From Sitters to Photographers: Women in Photography from the Qajar Era to the 1930s." *History of Photography: The First Hundred Years of Iranian Photography* 37, no. 1 (February 1, 2013): 48–73.

Add at least two images to your Journal and write entries for each.

THANKSGIVING RECESS (Nov. 25–29)

Week 15: CONTEMPORARY ART

Nov. 30–Dec. 5: Contemporary Art & Wrap up

READ: Zarur, Kathy. "Lahib Jaddo: Every Woman Knows Her Own Tree." Exhibition Publication, CAAMFest, 2019.

[http://www.kathyzarur.com/uploads/1/2/4/5/124502006/jaddol
and_brochure_spreads.pdf](http://www.kathyzarur.com/uploads/1/2/4/5/124502006/jaddol_and_brochure_spreads.pdf)

WATCH: Interview with Saudi artist Manal Al Dowayan on the
photograph series "I AM"

<https://youtu.be/ZXKSk0GVrgM>

For her photographs see:

<http://www.manaldowayan.com/art.html>

WATCH: Shirin Neshat on Shirin Neshat

<https://youtu.be/VXZkn0nL34Y>

FINAL PROJECT DUE DATE TBD