

ARTH 320: ART OF THE ISLAMIC WORLD, FROM THE ILKHANIDS TO THE OTTOMANS SPRING 2024

Mondays and Wednesdays, 12–1.15pm

Art & Design Building L008

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Office Hours: Mondays 2–4pm, or by appointment

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Course Description

This course is an examination of art and architecture of Iran, Central Asia and Turkey in the medieval and early Modern periods. After a short introduction to early Islamic art, we will begin the course in Baghdad of 1258, on the eve of the Mongol invasion. We will then trace the establishment of the Il-khanate in Iran and the ways in which these new rulers adapted and changed traditional and local visual culture to suit their needs. We will then look at the spectacular architecture of the Timurids in cities like Samarkand and the splendid manuscripts made under the Timurids in the bustling artistic center of Herat. Next we'll study the captivating, delicate manuscripts of the Safavid dynasty and the great era of Persian painting, and at the rebuilding of the city of Isfahan, an example of early modern urban renewal. We'll finish the course with the art and architecture of early modern Ottoman period. Throughout the course we will investigate themes of empire and conquest, cross-cultural exchange, tradition and innovation, and the role of painting and the arts in culture. The goal of this course is to build an understanding for the art and culture of the period and learn a chronology of its history.

Students will also learn basic terms and vocabulary of art history, and how to discuss and analyze works of art. 3 Credits.

This course fulfills the requirements for the Global Understanding category of Mason Core.

Learning Objectives

The goal of this course is to become conversant with art of the Islamic world in the medieval and early modern periods. 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

Learning Objectives for the Mason Core

Students who successfully complete this course for the Global Understanding category of the Mason Core must meet a minimum of three of the following learning outcomes:

- Identify and articulate one's own values and how those values influence their interactions and relationships with others, both locally and globally.
- Demonstrate understanding of how the patterns and processes of globalization make visible the interconnections and differences among and within contemporary global societies.
- Demonstrate the development of intercultural competencies.
- Explore individual and collective responsibilities within a global society through analytical, practical, or creative responses to problems or issues, using resources appropriate to the field.

Evaluation

Attendance and Participation	15%
Quiz 1	10%
Quiz 2	15%
In-class writing assignment	10%
Reading Response Journal (5 entries at 5% each)	25%
Final Project	25%

Attendance and Participation

In order to pass this course you will have to keep up with assigned readings. Attendance and participation in class discussion is also critical and will be a part of your grade. If you attend all classes but do nothing else, your attendance and participation grade will be a B-. Thoughtful participation will raise this grade. More than two unexcused absences or disruptive behavior (including repeated lateness), will lower it.

Readings

For this class, our main text will be 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 readings will be available on Blackboard. You will be expected to come to class ready to discuss the reading. A reading journal will help you reflect on the reading and prepare for discussion, and this journal (see below) will count towards your grade.

Reading Response Journal

In your syllabus are seven prompts, which ask you to reflect on a particular week's reading and lecture material. Please choose five to answer. You may submit your entries in the Reading Response Journal on Blackboard. Please paste your entry directly into the journal (use attachments only for images). You will receive one grade for your journal at the end of the semester (5 entries at 5% each = 25%)

Each entry should be between 250-400 words, and should demonstrate your understanding of the reading. Your answer should also connect the question and the reading to works that we have discussed in class, and draw similarities between the issue at hand and your own experience.

In-class writing assignment

There will be one in-class writing assignment for this course, which is designed to help you practice your skills in visual analysis. This will take place on: **April 3**.

Quizzes

You will have two quizzes over the course of the semester, on **Feb. 14** and **March 20** (see course schedule below). Each will ask you to identify and discuss works we have examined in class and will take 20 minutes. There will be no lectures on quiz days.

As mentioned above, there will be no makeup quizzes without formal documentation of illness or emergency.

Journal:

You will also be asked to keep a Journal which will ask you to connect an object from lecture to the larger themes of the course. Prompts for the journal entry are included on the syllabus, just below your assigned reading. Choose **five** entries to complete. Each entry will be worth 5%. You will receive one final grade for the journal at the end of the semester.

Final Project

Your final project will be a proposal for an exhibition of art from our course, roughly 8 pages, and including 6-8 objects. It will be due on Blackboard **Monday, May 6, 1.15 pm**.

Deadlines:

Deadlines are important. If you need an extension you must contact me 24 hours before the deadline to request more time. If you do not submit an assignment, your grade will be a zero. Likewise, if you do not attend class on the day of a quiz, your grade will be a zero.

There will be **no makeup quizzes without formal documentation of illness or emergency**.

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

Evaluation:

Your work will be evaluated as follows:

A+ (98-100)	A (93-97)	A- (90-92)	Outstanding and exceptional level of work
B+ (87-89)	B (83-86)	B- (80-82)	Good to very good level of work
C+ (77-79)	C (73-76)	C- (70-72)	Satisfactory to average level of work
D (60-69)			Below average work -- marginally acceptable
F (below 60)			Unacceptable work -- very poor quality or quantity

Important University Deadlines:

Last Day to Add	Tues. Jan. 23
Last Day to Drop (with 100% tuition refund)	Tues. Jan. 30
Last Day to Drop (with 50% tuition refund)	Tues. Feb. 6
Unrestricted Withdrawal (100% tuition liability)	Wed. Feb. 7–Tues. Feb. 20
Selective Withdrawal (Undergrad only; 100% tuition liability)	Wed. Feb. 21–Mon. March 25

GMU Calendar:

For further information regarding these dates and other University deadlines, please consult the University calendar: https://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/spring_2024/

Proper Etiquette for our Course:

Rules of respect and etiquette are important in this course. Some of the material we will deal with in this class may be controversial, and in some cases, politically loaded or difficult. Each student is expected to treat their fellow students and Instructor with utmost respect, and treat all persons fairly and kindly.

Our 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!

Just a note – when you send an email, please remind me of your full name and which class you are in. Also, please let me know how best to address you. I use she/her for myself and you may address me as Dr. Gearhart in email and verbally.

Technological Requirements:

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.

Technical Devices:

Cell phone use is **not permitted** in class. Please be sure your phone is put away and silenced. I strongly discourage the use of laptops in class, as they add extra distraction and hinder participation and connection with your fellow students. Please be advised that if you engage in activities unrelated to class during class time (e.g. messaging, games, browsing, videos) your participation grade will suffer.

Technological Requirements:

A GMU email address is required for this course. All communication will be through Blackboard and email.

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. 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, 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.

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 2023–2024 Honor Code. Select it to download:
<https://oai.gmu.edu/full-honor-code-document/>

GMU Policy on AI Text Generation and Academic Integrity

This class will require you to write. Because the act of composing a response in your own words actually increases your learning, it is important that you complete the task yourself, rather than rely on an artificial intelligence (AI) tool. Completing all writing assignments yourself will help strengthen your performance in this class, as well as help you develop professionally and succeed in your career goals. You should also be aware that AI text generation tools may present incorrect information, biased responses, and incomplete analyses; thus they are not yet prepared to produce text that meets the standards of this course. If you do choose to experiment with AI text generation, you are expected to indicate your usage of it and give credit for text that has been generated by AI. Use of AI-generated text without proper attribution is a violation of academic integrity.

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:

Student privacy is governed by Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Students must use their MasonLive email account to receive important University information, including communications related to this class. I will not respond to messages sent from or send messages to a non-Mason email address. For Mason's policy on student privacy, please see <https://registrar.gmu.edu/ferpa/>

Disability Guidelines

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit <https://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474.

Sexual Harassment, Sexual Misconduct, and Interpersonal Violence

George Mason University is committed to providing a learning, living and working environment that is free from discrimination and a campus that is free of sexual misconduct and other acts of interpersonal violence in order to promote community well-being and student success. We encourage students and employees who believe that they have been sexually harassed, sexually assaulted or subjected to sexual

or interpersonal misconduct to seek assistance and support. University Policy 1202: Sexual Harassment and Misconduct speaks to the specifics of Mason's process, the resources, and the options available to students and employees.

Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual or interpersonal misconduct: *As a faculty member, I am designated as a "Non-Confidential Employee," and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, complicity, and retaliation to Mason's Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason's confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance or support measures from Mason's Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.*

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 TOPICS AND READINGS

INTRODUCTION AND ART BEFORE ISLAM

WEEK 1:

Wed. Jan 17

Introduction to the Course

BACKGROUND READING:

Introduction to Islam (Khan Academy):

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/introduction-cultures-religions-apah/islam-apah/a/introduction-to-islam-2>

Five Pillars of Islam (Khan Academy):

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/introduction-cultures-religions-apah/islam-apah/a/the-five-pillars-of-islam>

The Hajj (Khan Academy):

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/introduction-cultures-religions-apah/islam-apah/a/hajj>

The Kaaba (Khan Academy):

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/introduction-cultures-religions-apah/islam-apah/a/the-kaaba>

WEEK 2:

Mon. Jan. 22

What is Islamic Art? Problems of Definition and a Colonialist Legacy Art of the Arabian Peninsula

READING:

Blair, Sheila S. and Jonathan M. Bloom. "The Mirage of Islamic Art: Reflections on the Study of an Unwieldy Field." *The Art Bulletin* 85 / 1 (Mar., 2003) 152-184.

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

Reading Journal Question 1: As you do your readings this week, think about the following questions: What defines "Islamic Art"? What do Blair and Bloom and Said 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?

Wed. Jan. 24

Empire: Rome, Byzantium

READING:

The Nature of Islamic Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art
http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/orna/hd_orna.htm

Sarah Brooks, "Byzantium", Metropolitan Museum of Art
http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/byza/hd_byza.htm

****Sat., Jan. 27 4pm****

Special Program at Arts Mason: Hamid Rahmanian's Song of the North

An adaptation of the love story of Manijeh and Bijan, from the Shahnameh
Center for the Arts, Concert Hall

WEEK 3:

Mon. Jan. 29

NO CLASS – Theater performance

Wed. Jan. 31

Displaying Kingship: Sasanid Persia

READING:

Blair Fowlkes-Childs, "Sasanian Art", Metropolitan Museum of Art
http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/sass/hd_sass.htm

Canepa, Matthew P. "Sapur I, King of Kings of Iran and Non-Iran" *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran*.
University of California Press, 2010. 53–78.

Reading Journal Question 2: Using the Canepa reading, discuss how rulers construct and visually represent power vis-à-vis their rivals? How might they use visual references or forms of rival cultures to show dominance? Compare an example from class to something you have experienced or observed.

EARLY ISLAMIC ART

WEEK 4:

Mon. Feb. 5

Establishing an Empire: The Umayyads

READING:

Al-Yaqubi: On the Dome of the Rock as a Pilgrimage Site, 101-102

Al-Baladhuri: How the Muslim Community Obtained the Site for the Mosque of Damascus, 102-104

Straughn, Ian. "A Tale of Two Façades: Archaeology and the Secularization of an Islamic Past." *Material religion* 15.2 (2019): 184–203

Reading Journal Question 3: Using the Straughn reading, discuss what is at stake in narratives told about art of the past? Why are these stories relevant? Compare an example from class to one of your own experience.

Wed. Feb. 7

Learning as Power: Abbasid Baghdad

READING:

Shen, Hsueh-man. "The China–Abbasid Ceramics Trade during the Ninth and Tenth Centuries: Chinese Ceramics Circulating in the Middle East." *A Companion to Islamic Art and Architecture*, Finbarr Barry Flood and Gülru Necipoğlu, eds. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2017. 197-217.

Al-Mas'udi: On the Founding of Samarra, 107-109

Reading Journal Question 4: Using the Shen reading, discuss how we can account for local histories and larger networks in the subjects that we study? Consider the examples brought up by Shen, those discussed in class. Compare an example from your own experience.

WEEK 5:

Mon. Feb. 12

The Seljuqs

READING:

Tabbaa, Yasser. "The Muqarnas Dome: Its Origin and Meaning." *Muqarnas* 3 (1985): 61–74. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1523084>.

Wed. Feb. 14

Quiz #1

TRANSCULTURATION AND POWER

WEEK 6:

Mon. Feb. 19

Transculturation and Ilkhanid Architecture

READING:

Olearius: A Description of Uljaytu's Tomb in Sultaniyya, 161

Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom, *The Art and Architecture of Islam, 1250–1800*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996. 5-35.

Wed. Feb. 21

Mysticism and Politics: The Ilkhanids and Sufis

READING:

Chida-Razvi, Mehreen. "Power and Politics of Representation: Picturing Elite Women in Ilkhanid Painting." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 32.4 (2022): 762–791.

WEEK 7:

Mon. Feb. 26

Ilkhanid Kingship and the Shahnameh

Great Mongol Shahnameh

READING:

Hillenbrand, Robert. "Colour in the Great Mongol Shahnama." *Manuscripts in the Making, Art and Science I*. S. Panayotova and P. Ricciardi, eds. Brepols, 2017. 215-226.

Melville, Charles. "Rashīd Al-Dīn and the Shāhnāmeḥ." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 26.1–2 (2016): 201–214.

Wed. Feb. 28

Ilkhanid Chronicles

World History of Rashid al-Din

READING:

Carboni, Stefano. "Al-Qazvini's Illustrated Text between Scientific and Narrative Literature." *The Wonders of Creation and the Singularities of Painting: A Study of the Ilkhanid London Qazvīnī*. Edinburgh University Press, 2015. 13–22.

Hillenbrand, Carole, and Robert Hillenbrand. "Ancient Iranian Kings in the World History of Rashid Al-Din." *Iran: journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies* 56.1 (2018): 34–46.

Reading Journal Question 5: Using the Hillenbrand and Hillenbrand reading, discuss the purposes that ancient stories and legends might serve. How do they create community? How do they support, or critique, power or social structures? Bring in one example from class as well as a comparison from your own experience.

WEEK 8:

Mon. Mar 4

Wed. Mar 6

SPRING BREAK

SPRING BREAK

WEEK 9:

Mon. Mar 11

Legacy and Dynasty: Timurid Architecture and Decorative Arts

READING:

Blair and Bloom, *The Art and Architecture of Islam, 1250–1800*. 37-69.

Wed. Mar 13

Art as Empire: Timurid Painting

Shahnameh and the status of painting

READING:

Sadiqi Beg: A Treatise on Painting 50-53 (Tabriz, c. 1500)

Ahmad Ib Arabshah: On Timur's Seizure and Relocation of Artisans, 25-26

Porter, "The Artist," 146–150

Porter, "The Workshop, its operation and division of work," 151–168

Porter, "Subjects of the Paintings," 104–116

WEEK 10:

Mon. Mar 18

Literature and Poetry: Timurid Manuscripts

Nizami, Khamsa: Haft Paykar

Nizami, Khamsa

Sa'adi Bustan

READING:

Kia, Chad. "Fixed-Figure Prototypes and the Symbolic Order." *Art, Allegory and the Rise of Shi'ism in Iran, 1487-1565*. Edinburgh University Press, 2019. 103–34. (on Nizami Khamsa)

Wed. Mar 20

Quiz #2

WEEK 11:

Mon. Mar 25

Painting workshop

READING:

Porter, "Layout and composition," 57–69

Porter, Painting, 70-103

Wed. Mar 27

Urban Development: Safavid Isfahan

READING:

Junabadi: A Description of Isfahan 158–160

Iskandar Beg Munshi, A Description of the Masjid I Shah in Isfahan, 160-161

Blair and Bloom, *The Art and Architecture of Islam, 1250–1800*. 183-198.

WEEK 12:
Mon. Apr 1

Charismatic Kingship: Savafid decorative arts and interiors

READING:

Babaie, S. "Introduction: Conviviality, Charismatic Absolutism, and the Persianization of Shi'ism," *Isfahan and its palaces: statecraft, Shi'ism and the architecture of conviviality in early modern Iran*. Edinburgh University Press, 2018. 1-29.

Wed. Apr 3

The Human and Divine: Safavid Manuscripts
Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp

Blair and Bloom, *The Art and Architecture of Islam, 1250–1800*. 165-181

In-class writing assignment

WEEK 13:
Mon. Apr. 8

Artists: Sultan Muhammad and Reza Abbasi
Jami, Haft Awrang

READING:

Simpson, Marianna Shreve. "The Making of Manuscripts and the Workings of the Kitab-Khana in Safavid Iran." *Studies in the history of art* 38 (1993): 104–121.

Wed. Apr. 10

Collecting: Safavid Albums

READING:

Roxburgh, David. "Three Safavid Albums of the Mid-1500s." *The Persian Album, from Dispersal to Collection*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005. 181–244.

Reading Journal Question 6: What is the purpose of collecting art? What does it tell us about the collector and the values of the culture at hand? Bring in examples from the reading and from class. What do you collect and why? How does it compare? Are there similarities or differences?

WEEK 14:

Mon. Apr. 15

National Museum of Asian Art visit

Wed. Apr. 17

Choreography of Space: Ottoman Architecture

READING:

Blair and Bloom, *The Art and Architecture of Islam, 1250–1800*. 231-250

Browse through Blair and Bloom, 213-230

WEEK 15:

Mon. Apr. 22

Cosmopolitan Grandeur: Ottoman Decorative Arts

Artan, Tülay. "Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Princesses as Collectors: Chinese and European Porcelains in the Topkapı Palace Museum." *Ars orientalis* 39 (2010): 113–147.

Reading Journal Question 7: What does the trade of objects tell us about cultural values? How does the acquisition of objects reflect political or social power and ambition? Do you own objects made elsewhere? What do they mean to you and is their provenance a part of that meaning?

Wed. Apr. 24

Life as Art: Ottoman Painting

WEEK 16:

Mon. Apr. 29

Wrap Up

FINAL PROJECT DUE MAY 6, 1.15pm ON BLACKBOARD