EARLY ISLAMIC ART
AND ARCHITECTURE (650-1250)

An introductory survey of the architecture, ceramics, metalwork, textiles, and arts of the book from Spain to India and Central Asia, during the period between the rise of Islam in the seventh century and the Mongol conquests of the early thirteenth century. Focusing mainly on the patronage of ruling elites (a succession of dynasties that claimed the right to rule over the Muslim community) in principal urban centers, the architecture and material culture of the Islamic world is approached through a variety of contexts: aesthetic, cultural, religious, political, and socio-economic.

The lectures alternate between the treatment of single monuments or objects, and clusters of materials produced in single centers over a given period of time. This method of presentation permits a focused treatment of particular cultural artifacts as well as the examination of broader patterns of cultural patronage over time.

Three sections provide opportunities to explore thematic and methodological problems related to the study and definition of early Islamic art and architecture.

READINGS:

The required textbook used in the lecture course, listed below, is available for purchase at the Harvard Coop:


Additional readings, books and articles, have been placed on reserve at the Fine Arts Library. A short list of reference works, providing useful background, is provided at the end of the syllabus.

REQUIREMENTS:

There will be a mid-term (20%) and final examination (30%) based on the readings and lectures. The written assignments comprise: an analysis of two architectural plans (2 pp.: 10%, due October 2); and a short paper (10 pp. max.: 30%, due Jan. 11). Attendance and participation at three sections are also required (10%).
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READINGS FOR LECTURES AND SECTIONS

Items with a double asterisk (**) are in two binders at the Fine Arts Library circulation desk (closed reserve).

Sept. 16 W INTRODUCTION
Readings:
Ettinghausen and Grabar, ch. 1,
Oleg Grabar, The Formation of Islamic Art, ch. 1.

Sept. 21 M ABD AL-MALIK’S “DOME OF THE ROCK” IN JERUSALEM: SYMBOL OF DOMINATION?
Readings:
Ettinghausen and Grabar, ch. 2., pp. 26-45.

Sept. 23 W SPACES FOR WORSHIP: MOSQUES OF THE UMAYYAD PERIOD
Readings:
Oleg Grabar, The Formation of Islamic Art, ch. 5.
Optional:
** Nuha N. N. Khoury, “The Mihrab from Text to Form.”

Sept. 28 M UMAYYAD SECULAR ARCHITECTURE: THE QUSUR
Readings:
Ettinghausen and Grabar, ch. 2, pp. 45-74.
** Robert Hillenbrand, "La Dolce Vita in Early Islamic Syria: the Evidence of Later Umayyad Palaces.”

Sept. 30 W CITIES FOR THE CALIPH: ABBASID BAGHDAD AND SAMARRA
Readings:
Ettinghausen and Grabar, chap. 3, pp. 75-105.
Oleg Grabar, The Formation of Islamic Art, ch. 6.
Optional:
**J. M. Rogers, "Samarra: A Study in Medieval Town-Planning.”

Oct. 2 F SECTION I: ANICONISM AND ORNAMENT
Readings:
Terry Allen, Five Essays on Islamic Art, ch. 2.
Oleg Grabar, The Mediation of Ornament, ch. 3.

Oct. 5 M MOSQUES OF THE ABBASIDS
Readings:
Terry Allen, Five Essays on Islamic Art, ch. 4.
** L. Golombek, "Abbasid Mosque at Balkh.”

Oct. 7 W ARTS OF THE ABBASID COURT
Readings:
Ettinghausen and Grabar, ch. 3, pp. 105-125.
** Franz Rosenthal, “Note on the Mandil.”
**Tha’alibi, The Book of Curious and Entertaining Information**, The Lata’if al-ma’arif of Tha’alibi, intro., ch. 1 and 4.
**Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi, “Abu Hayyan at-Tawhidi on Penmanship.”**

**Optional:**
**Yasser Tabbaa, “The Transformation of Arabic Writing: Part 1, Qur’anic Calligraphy.”**

Oct. 14 W **ISLAMIC SPAIN UNDER THE UMAYYADS**  
Readings:  
Ettinghausen and Grabar, ch. 4.  
**Renata Holod, “Luxury Arts of the Caliphal Period.”**  
**Nuha N.N. Khoury, ”The Meaning of the Great Mosque of Cordoba in the Tenth Century.”**

Readings:  
**Manuel Casamar Perez, ”The Almoravids and Almohads. An Introduction.”**

Oct. 19 M **ARCHITECTURE AND URBANISM UNDER THE FATIMIDS: NORTH AFRICA AND CAIRO 969-1171**  
Readings:  
Ettinghausen and Grabar, ch. 5, pp. 167-186.  

Oct. 21 W **FATIMID ART AND CULTURES OF THE MEDITERRANEAN**  
Readings:  
Ettinghausen and Grabar, ch. 5, pp. 186-208.  
**Jonathan Bloom, ”The Origins of Fatimid Art.”**  

Oct. 26 M **IRAN AND CENTRAL ASIA 9TH-11TH CENTURIES: ARCHAEOLOGY OF NISHAPUR**  
Readings:  
Ettinghausen and Grabar, ch. 6, pp. 209-252.  

Oct. 28 W **MID-TERM EXAMINATION**

Nov. 2 M **IRAN AND CENTRAL ASIA 9TH-11TH CENTURIES: THE GREAT MOSQUE AT ISFAHAN**  
Readings:  
Oleg Grabar, *The Great Mosque at Isfahan.*
Nov. 4 W  SELJUQS AND ATABEGS I  
Readings:  

Nov. 9 M  SELJUQS AND ATABEGS II  
Readings:  
Robert Hillenbrand ed. *Art of the Saljuqs in Iran and Anotolia*, essays by Basil Gray (pp. 1-4), and Barbara Finster (pp. 17-28).

Nov. 16 M  ARTS OF THE CRUSADER PERIOD  
Readings:  

Nov. 18 W  THE AYYUBIDS IN SYRIA: ALEPPO  
Readings:  
Ettinghausen and Grabar, ch. 7, pp. 303-313.  
Optional:  
** Yasser Tabbaa, “Survivals and Archaisms in the Architecture of Northern Syria, ca. 1080–ca. 1150.”

Nov. 20 F  SECTION II: CALLIGRAPHY AND EPIGRAPHY  
Readings:  
** Richard Ettinghausen, “Arabic Epigraphy: Communication or Symbolic Affirmation.”  
(Study of objects from Sackler Museum).

Nov. 23 M  THE AYYUBIDS IN EGYPT: CAIRO  
Readings:  
Behrens-Abouseif, *Islamic Architecture in Cairo*, ch. 6, pp. 78-93.

Nov. 25 W  INDIA FROM THE GHAZNAVIDS TO THE DELHI SULTANS  
Readings:  
Ettinghausen and Grabar, ch. 7, pp. 291-293.

Nov. 30 M  CERAMICS OF THE 11TH-13TH CENTURIES: MINA'I AND LUSTER  
Readings:  
Ettinghausen and Grabar, ch. 8.  
** Marianna Shreve Simpson, “Narrative Allusion and Metaphor in the Decoration of Medieval Islamic Objects.”  
Optional:  
** J. W. Allan, “Abu’l-Qasim’s Treatise on Ceramics.”
Dec. 2 W  METALWORK OF THE 11TH-13TH CENTURIES
Readings:
Rachel Ward, Islamic Metalwork, ch. 4 and 5.

Dec. 7 M  ART OF THE ARABIC BOOK: HERBALS AND MORALIA
Readings:
Richard Ettinghausen, Arab Painting, ch. 2 [browse]
** Eva R. Hoffman, "The Author Portrait in Thirteenth-Century Arabic Manuscripts: A New Islamic Context for a Late-Antique Tradition."

Dec. 9 W  ART OF THE ARABIC BOOK: HARIRI'S MAQAMAT, "ASSEMBLIES"
Readings:
** Oleg Grabar, “The Illustrated Maqamat of the Thirteenth Century: The Bourgeoisie and the Arts.”

Dec. 11 F  SECTION III: PROBLEMS IN PATRONAGE AND PRODUCTION
Readings:
** Boaz Shoshan, “High Culture and Popular Culture in Medieval Islam.”

Dec. 14 M  ARCHITECTURE IN ANATOLIA UNTIL THE MID 13TH CENTURY
Readings:
Ettinghausen and Grabar, ch. 7. pp. 313-327.

Dec. 16 W  CONCLUSION: THE MONGOL INVASIONS

Jan. 4-15  READING PERIOD. Final papers due on Jan. 11

Jan. 15 F  REVIEW SESSION

FINAL EXAMINATION [date to be announced]
SUGGESTED READINGS/ SOURCES FOR BACKGROUND AND REFERENCE


ADDITIONAL RESERVE BOOKS


Creswell, K. A. C. Early Muslim Architecture, 2 vols.

Deroche, François, The Abbasid Tradition.

Hamilton, R. W. Walid and His Friends: An Umayyad Tragedy.

________. Khirbat al-Maffjar.

Hillenbrand, Robert. Islamic architecture: form, function, and meaning.