

Syracuse University
Department of Religion
Fall 2014

REL/MES/SAS 367 God and Beauty in Islamic Art



Professor: Tazim R. Kassam
Office Hrs: M/W 1:00-2:00 pm
Or by appointment
TA: Jonathan Jackson

Class Time: Tue/Thu 3.30 - 4.50 pm
Classroom: Hall of Languages 101
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Course Description:

The visual, musical and literary arts both shape and mirror a culture's values, spiritual yearnings and worldview. Inspired by Prophet Muhammad's saying, "God is Beauty and loves beauty," Muslims over the centuries have created a unique aesthetic that touches every aspect of their lives. Not separating the sacred from the profane, they have sought to capture the inherent beauty in God's creation and revelation through calligraphy, ceramics, architecture, poetry and music. These artistic expressions absorbed and extended existing artistic forms and norms of beauty that Muslims encountered in their journeys from Arabia to China, sub-Saharan Africa to Europe and beyond. This course will focus on the principles of Islamic arts including beauty, virtue, and learning that have fired the religious imagination of Muslims through the centuries, and the cultural efflorescence resulting from travel, trade and the exchange of goods and ideas.

Course Goals:

- To reflect critically upon the nature of religion, the arts and their relationship
- To understand the religious underpinning of Islamic Art & Architecture
- To identify basic features of Islamic Art and principles of beauty and aesthetics
- To study the formation of Islamic art in relation to pre-existing artistic traditions
- To analyze the critical role of trade, politics, patronage and learning in Islam

Learning Outcomes:

If you have done the required coursework, you should be able to:

- Describe the religious principles and sources of inspiration of Islamic Art
- Explain some of its intellectual, ethical, aesthetic, and material dimensions
- Identify universal and unifying principles and features of Islamic art and aesthetics
- Distinguish between different styles of calligraphy, mosques, and crafts
- Explain the social and political foundations of Islamic artistic traditions

Scholarship in Action:

In keeping with Syracuse University's emphasis on the constructive use of knowledge to benefit the individual and society, the purpose of the course is also to inspire students to:

- Develop their own perceptions of beauty in their environments and in other cultures
- Explore the cultural dimensions of different people through travel and further study
- Creatively imagine futures that draw upon the cultural heritage of humanity
- Build bridges between societies through music, art, literature and architecture

Required Texts:

- T.J.Winter and John A.Williams, Understanding Islam and the Muslims (Fons Vitae: 1999).
- Burckhardt, Titus, Art of Islam, Language and Meaning (World Wisdom: 2009).
- Roxburgh, David J. & Mary McWilliams, Traces of the Calligrapher: Islamic Calligraphy in Practice (Museum of Fine Arts Houston: 2008).
- Broge, Eric, Islamic Geometric Patterns (Thames and Hudson: 2008).
- Rabbi Dan Bridge, Rabbi Kalonymus and Umm Kulthum, Ikhwan al-Safa, 'The Animals' Lawsuit Against Humanity: An Illustrated 10th Century Iraqi Ecological Fable (Fons Vitae 2005).
- Emre, Yunus, The Drop that Became the Sea: Lyric Poems (Shambala 1999).
- Macaulay, David, Mosque (Houghton Mifflin: 2008).
- Hintzen-Bohlen, Brigitte, Art & Architecture Andalusia (Ullman: 2013).
- Lowney, Chris, A Vanished World: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Medieval Spain (Oxford University Press: 2006).
- Basu, Kumal, The Miniaturist. 416 pages. Historical fiction. (Phoenix: 2003).
- Additional readings will be available on Blackboard.

Field Trip:

We will try to make a trip to the local Islamic Center of CNY on Comstock Ave or the Bosnian mosque in Utica or the Corning Museum of Glass. Arrangements will be announced in class.

Course Evaluation:

Summary:

Attendance and Participation	15%
Reflection & Response Papers	60%
Group Project & Presentation	25%

Attendance and Participation is mandatory **15% (20 points)**

Except for medical or family emergencies verified by a note from your doctor or advisor, every class missed will incur a penalty of 5 points. This can make a big difference if your final grade is hovering between an A- and B+. Your class participation and co-operative learning is essential to the success of the class and will be evaluated based on its frequency, quality and contribution.

Weekly Outlines, Reflection & Response Papers **60% (140 points)**

This is a writing intensive course. Instead of assigning several short papers, you will write every week so that you can build your writing and thinking skills slowly and systematically. Class time will include peer review and editing of each other's work. Important: *You must bring a printout of your outlines and reflection papers to class.*

The following procedure is designed to assist you to keep up with the reading and writing assignments, and to be ready for and lead class discussions. Every class two students will pair up to lead discussion and ask questions based on their reflection and response papers. You must do this at least twice.

Outlines: You will partner with a different student each week to decide the sections of the assigned readings that each of you will be responsible for *outlining*. Your outline should be detailed enough to help your partner skim through the rest of the reading. Outlines will be exchanged on Blackboard. Your outline must be posted by *Saturday at noon*.

Reflection Paper: Then write a short paper (350-400 words) on the assigned readings. Use the following structure: (a) A brief synopsis: "I recommend this reading because it..." (~150 words); (b) Identify a key sentence or paragraph and discuss a concept, object, image, problem that you that you consider to be important to understand. Specify the page number. (~250 words); (c) End with a question for discussion. Your Reflection Paper must be posted by *Monday at noon*.

Response Paper: After Tuesday class discussions, read another student's Reflection paper and write a brief constructive response (150-200 words). Build upon or offer another interpretation of a concept or point raised in the other student's reflection. You must *respond to a different student each week*. Response Papers must be posted by *Thursday at noon*.

Note: It is critical that you *observe the deadlines*. Each week's papers count for 10 points for a total of 130 points. (You can miss 1 week out of 14). 1 point is deducted for each day delayed. Late papers will generally not be accepted without prior permission.

Final Project & Presentation

25% (40 points)

The final project will involve creativity, research, co-operation and enjoyment. The overall goal is to produce a travel guide that provides resources, information and necessary background for a study abroad program on Muslim Cultures. The program includes visits to four or five different countries that are rich in Islamic art, architecture and culture including Islamic Spain (Andalusia and al-Hambra); India (Mughal Empire and Taj Mahal); Turkey (Istanbul and Rumi); Morocco (Marakesh and suqs); Egypt (Cairo and al-Azhar). The class will be divided into groups who will decide which country to prepare for. Further details and instructions will be given in class.

The steps are as follows:

1. You will first be divided into groups of 3 or 4
2. Each group must chose the country and assign each member a specific role (see below for suggestions).
3. The group will then submit a proposal explaining the choice of the country and what information you will be including. **Due on Friday Sept 26th**
4. Each member should be assigned a specific place, object, etc. that will be her/his section of the guide.
5. The travel guide should be in the form of a powerpoint and written hand-out providing background and sources.
6. Each group will give an oral presentation on the final week of class as well as submit their section of the travel packet. **Dec 2nd & 4th**

Typical Roles:

1. Project Manager: Keeps group members on task and monitors progress. Schedules at least 4 meetings. Reports any problems.
2. Secretary: Takes minutes of group meetings. Collects materials from members and circulates them for feedback.
3. Editor / Reviewer: Collects and compiles the materials from each student and organizes them. Prepares the final draft & circulates for checking.
4. Presenter: Plans how the oral presentation will be done and what aids like Powerpoint etc. will be used.

Note: Regardless of the role a student plays, each group member must research and write on the object, place etc. that is chosen in the outline. The grade for the project will be divided into two: a) the overall presentation (oral and travel guide (10%) and the individual sections written by each student (15%).

Bonus Points Up to 10 points.

If there are any cultural events or lectures on campus relevant to the course, they will be posted in the announcements. You may also suggest some events. Students will submit a 500 word report for up to two events for extra credit. Each event will count for 5 points.

Classroom Etiquette:

You are encouraged to bring your laptops, iPads, and Tablets to class. However, you may only use them when instructed by the professor for doing group-work and other exercises. Cell phones must be turned off. If you are caught whispering, texting, twittering, e-mailing and surfing you will be asked to stand up for two minutes. :)

Academic Integrity:

Syracuse University believes that promoting academic honesty is the responsibility of everyone in the Syracuse University community. We expect all students enrolled in Syracuse University programs to adhere to standards of academic integrity. All cases of academic dishonesty will be reported to the relevant Dean in the home College or School for that given course. Penalties will be dependent upon the seriousness of the infraction, and can be appealed to the relevant College/School Academic Integrity Committee. To learn more: <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>.

My version: Essentially, plagiarism is a combination of stealing and lying. Don't do it. The penalty for plagiarism is an F grade. It's simple: *don't copy and paste, don't quote or paraphrase without giving full credit*. Familiarize yourself with what it means practically speaking. Visit the Writing Center: <http://wc.syr.edu/>.

Disability:

Syracuse University is committed to full compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Our community values diversity and seeks to promote meaningful access to educational opportunities for all students. Students seeking disability-related services must contact the Office of Disability Services at Syracuse University, Room 309, 804 University Avenue, Syracuse, New York 13244-2330 for an authorization letter.

My version: I would like to support you in your learning and provide a positive learning environment. If you have a disability, it is important for you to register with the Office of Disability Services (315-443-4498). Please submit an ODS letter so that you can be provided with appropriate accommodations,.

Religious Observances:

Students who cannot submit assignments, meet deadlines or take tests due to religious holidays are required to notify the professor *within two weeks* of the beginning of the semester. Please provide this request to be excused in writing so that any necessary arrangements can be made. Requests made after the two-week deadline will not be accommodated.

Blackboard & SU's Library:

Students are expected to know how to use Blackboard. Please take a tutorial to familiarize yourself with its features. Visit Syracuse University's Library home page and explore its collection, electronic databases, periodicals etc. Check the subject guides for [Religion and Middle Eastern Studies](#). To learn more, go to: <http://researchguides.library.syr.edu/>

Tentative Schedule:

**Please take note:* This schedule is *subject to change*. Always pay attention to announcements in class and Blackboard for the most up-to-date schedule of readings, assignments and events.

Wk 1	Aug 26/28	Introduction: On God, Beauty and Culture Chittick, Beauty BB p. 1 Kassam, Ethics & Aesthetics, BB pp. 5-7 Brown, Understanding Cultures BB pp. 1-7 T.J.Winter and John A.Williams, <i>Understanding Islam and the Muslims</i> (Fons Vitae: 1999).
Wk 2	Sept 2/4	Islamic Civilization: Diversity in Unity Said, Why the many Islams cannot be simplified BB pp. 1-2 Fuller, A World without Islam BB pp. 46-53 Esposito, Who Speaks for Islam, BB pp. 47-55 Burkhardt, <i>Art of Islam</i> , pp. 199-225.
Wk 3	Sept 9/11	Faith, Founder and Empire Shepard, Expansion and Flowering BB pp. 38-51 Wickens, What the West borrowed from the ME BB Azim Nanji, "Islam" in <i>The Religious World: Communities of Faith</i> (MacMillan) 311-329. BB
Wk 4	Sept 16/18	Divine Word: Qur'an - Message & Recitation Graham, Quran & Recitation BB Sells, Approaching the Qur'an BB Robinson, Quran Experienced by Muslims BB
Wk 5	Sept 23/25	Divine Pen: Qur'an - Calligraphy & the Book <u>Proposal Due</u> Roxburgh, <i>Writing the Word of God</i> Cragg, Islamic Art & Architecture BB Nasr, Islamic Calligraphy BB
Wk 6	Sept 30 /Oct 2	On Beauty: Geometries of the Spirit Burkhardt, <i>Art of Islam</i> , pp. 43-86 Nasr, Principles of Unity BB Broge, Eric, <u>Islamic Geometric Patterns</u> (selections)
Wk 7	Oct 7/9	Marking the Sacred: Place and Prayer Macaulay, Mosque BB Burkhardt, <i>Art of Islam</i> , pp. 1-6 Hillenbrand, Mosque BB Grube, What is Islamic Architecture BB
Wk 8	Oct 14/16	Mosques, Mihrabs and Minarets Burkhardt, <i>Art of Islam</i> , pp. 7-28, 87-105 Dickie, Mosque, Madrasa, & Tomb BB Grabar, Mosque Today, BB (skim)

Wk 9	Oct 21/23	Imagination: Ethics and Flight of the Spirit Ikhwan al-Safa, <i>The Animals' Lawsuit Against Humanity</i> Articles posted on Blackboard
Wk 10	Oct 28/30	Convivencia Lowney, Chris, <i>A Vanished World</i>
Wk 11	Nov 4/6	Al Hambra: Heavenly Beauty, Earthly Paradise Brigitte, <i>Art & Architecture Andalusia</i> Clark, Garden Symbolism BB
Wk 12	Nov 11/13	Patronage: The Aesthetics of Empire Brendt, Emperors in Hindustan, 200-223 BB Golombek, Tamerlane to Taj Mahal, 43-49 BB Schimmel, Court, BB pp. 65-80
Wk 13	Nov 18/20	Taj Mahal: The Shape of Love Schimmel, Women at Court, BB pp.143-166 Basu, Kumal, <i>The Miniaturist</i>
Wk 14	Nov 23/30	Thanksgiving Divine Union: Poetry of the Soul Emre, Yunus, <i>The Drop that Became the Sea</i>
Wk 15	Dec 2/4	Class Presentations & Projects Due

Important Dates:

Weekly assignments due on Blackboard:

Outlines for the <i>following week's</i> readings:	Saturdays at noon
Reflection papers:	Mondays at noon
Response papers:	Thursdays at noon

Project Proposal and Outline due on BB: Friday Sept 26th

Class Presentations & Projects due: Tuesday Dec 2 &
Thursday Dec 4