

Course Descriptions

Fall 2008

Art 154 (cross-listed as Asia 154) Introduction to Art and Architecture of the Islamic Lands

T, R 12:30-1:45 001 Hamilton Hall

This course introduces medieval Islamic civilization through its rich and diverse art and architectural traditions. We will begin with pre-Islamic artistic contexts and the seventh-century Dome of the Rock and end with the sixteenth-century “Gunpowder Empires” of present-day Turkey, Iran, and South Asia. By the end of the course students will be familiar with canonical works of Islamic art and architecture, and understand the general social and historical contexts within which this vibrant body of art and architecture developed. Course requirements include exams and three short papers. Basic art historical methods and writing will be emphasized throughout the term. The course fulfills the VP, BN, WB requirements in the General Education curriculum.

ART 450: The City as Monument: cities and society in the medieval Islamic lands

T,R 9:30-10:45 218 Hanes Art Center

This course explores the development, urban forms, and social structures of some of the major cities of the medieval Islamic lands. We will consider the transformation of antique cities such as Jerusalem, Damascus, and Cordoba and the foundation of new cities of the “classical” Islamic period such as Baghdad, Samarra, and Fez. Topics of reading and discussion include: ideas of “the” Islamic city, transition from antiquity to the medieval period, written and pictorial accounts of the medieval Islamic lands, kingship and city foundation, maps and urban views, women’s patronage, monuments and civic institutions such as schools and other charitable foundations, and urban rituals. Students will choose one medieval Islamic city (not limited to those discussed in class) on which to focus a semester-long research project culminating in a ten to fifteen-page research paper (which may incorporate a design project). Students will participate in class discussions and give group oral presentations. Beyond the special focus of the course itself, the class emphasizes research, critical reading, writing and visual analysis skills.

Spring 2009

Art 290-002 Islamic Art in the Age of the Caliphs

Tuesday, Thursday 9:30-10:45, Hanes Art Center 218

The course focuses on the outstanding artistic monuments of early and medieval Islamic art produced until the twelfth century by the Umayyad, Abbasid, and Fatimid dynasties. The course emphasizes the socio-historical contexts for this vibrant body of art and architecture, and explores major artistic issues of this period in more depth than is possible in the general survey of Islamic art. Course requirements include weekly

readings and discussion, a mid-term, final exam, and short writing assignments that emphasize humanities and art history critical reading, thinking, and writing skills. Visits to UNC's Ackland Museum and Wilson Rare Book Collection, and to the world-class Islamic art collection at the Freer Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. offer opportunities to examine and engage works of medieval Islamic art. The course fulfills the VP, BN and WB slots in the General Education curriculum. Prerequisite: any 100-level art history course or permission of instructor.

Art 956-001: Graduate Seminar in Islamic Art: Expanding the villa discourse, East and West

Tuesday, 2:00-4:50, Hanes Art Center 118

In this seminar we will examine art historical discourses on "the villa," tracing a historiographical construction initially based on the idea of its disappearance in the "Middle Ages." This conception of villa history, until recently, has been largely focused on the binary construction of Roman antiquity and the Italian Renaissance as the normative geographic and chronological parameters for the study of the topic. A parallel but separate discourse, on "palaces" and "gardens," has evolved in Islamic art history. Building on James Ackerman's foundational statement that the villa is above all "the intense, programmatic investment of ideological goals," and recent interdisciplinary studies on villas and villa cultures we will consider these narratives in tandem, and ask whether it is time to revisit the story of the villa and its medieval "disappearance," from a perspective that looks beyond the Italian Peninsula and European Christendom to the Islamic lands. Is it possible to speak of the palaces and aristocratic estates of Islamdom as "villas"? What are the problems with such an approach? What are the possibilities? The seminar will focus on creating a common intellectual framework for individual research, rooted in critical reading, discussion, reflection and writing.

Readings will include selections from the following texts, among others:

James S. Ackerman. *The villa: form and ideology of country houses* (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, c1990).

Mirka Benes and Diane Harris, eds. *Villas and Gardens in Early Modern Italy and France* (Cambridge/NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Reinhard Bentmann and Michael Müller, *The villa as hegemonic architecture* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J. : Humanities Press, 1992 transl. and ed.)

Michel Conan, ed., *Middle East garden traditions: unity and diversity: questions, methods and resources in a multicultural perspective* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection , 2007).

Denis Cosgrove, *The Palladian Landscape: Geographical Change and Its Cultural Representations In Sixteenth-Century Italy* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993).

Garth Fowden, *Qusayr 'Amra: Art and the Umayyad Elite in Late Antique Syria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

Grazia Gobbi, *The Florentine Villa: architecture, history, society* (London, New York: Routledge, 2007 transl. and ed.).

Andrew G. McKay, *Houses, Villas and Palaces in the Roman World* (London, 1975; 1988 ed.).

D.F. Ruggles, *Islamic Gardens and Landscapes* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

Past Courses

Art 450: Cordoba and Islamic urbanism in the medieval Mediterranean

What is the medieval Mediterranean? How do we define the city? Can we speak about “the” Islamic city? Taking these questions as central issues in the course, we will consider the medieval Mediterranean city as cultural artifact in light of recent debates about the interconnectedness of its European and Islamic shores. Emphasis will be given to using theoretical frameworks along with visual, material, and textual evidence to understand medieval cities. We will begin by examining conceptions of the Mediterranean and of urbanism, then use a thematic structure to explore some of the major medieval metropolises of the medieval Islamicate/ Mediterranean world: Cordoba (present-day Spain), Baghdad and Samarra (present-day Iraq), Cairo (Egypt), and Constantinople/Istanbul (present-day Turkey), among others, will be the focus of our readings and discussions.

Art 561: Art and society in medieval Islamic Spain and North Africa

The course focuses on the art and architecture of the medieval Islamic West, or the Maghrib. Course content will be divided between medieval al-Andalus (present-day Spain and Portugal) and North Africa. Between 711 and 1492 C.E. the political and social histories of the Iberian Peninsula and North Africa were intimately linked to one another, as well as to the broader Islamic empire. Therefore, our focus will move between the two as we examine major monuments on both sides of the Straits of Gibraltar. Throughout the term we will also inquire into the multiple connections - artistic, social, and political – between Iberia, North Africa, and the rest of the Islamic empire, emphasizing the social contexts of medieval Maghribi art within the broader picture of medieval Islamic history and civilization. We will begin with the 8th c. conquest of the Maghrib, when it formed the western extreme of an Islamic empire stretching from the western Mediterranean to present-day South Asia. Our exploration will end with the Nasrid dynasty of Granada and their Moroccan contemporaries. Assigned readings are drawn from a variety of texts and disciplinary perspectives and will be the basis for class discussion. The course incorporates films and a visit to UNC's special collections in Wilson Library to view facsimiles of relevant medieval illuminated manuscripts. Course requirements include participation in class discussion, a midterm, final, and research paper. Course requirements encourage critical reading, writing and research skills, in addition to basic visual skills associated with art history.

Art 956: Graduate Seminar in Islamic Art: Orientalism and Art

This seminar focuses on the conventions and historiography of Orientalism, and the means by which ideology shapes representation. Adopting a flexible thematic framework, our discussions will begin with the critical and theoretical foundations and explore the contours of Orientalism as it has developed as an art historical discourse informed by post-colonial studies and cultural criticism.

We will consider constructs of Otherness as revealed by moments of encounter between Europe and the "Orient" from Antiquity to the present: for example, in pre-modern travel literature about the Islamic lands; European and American Orientalist painting and literature; recreations of Islamic architecture in the 19th West; as well as contemporary issues, such as the clash of civilizations, identity, multiculturalism, and hybridity in literature, film, and contemporary art, that shape the ways we see and interpret the world around us today. Guest seminars with visiting artist Ghada Amer and art historian Elizabeth Lipsmeyer and visits to the Ackland Museum (to view relevant paintings, works on paper, and photography) and the Wilson Rare Book collection (to view a first edition of the Napoleonic Description de l'Egypte) are planned for this semester.