Islamic Art and Architecture, 650-1500

Lamia Balafrej
Wellesley College, Department of Art
Lbalafrej@wellesley.edu

Wellesley College
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Course Description

The course provides a thematic chronological survey of Islamic art and architecture from their inception around 650 C.E. to the dawn of the modern empires in 1500 C.E. While stylistic and technical studies have often dominated the field of Islamic art, this course, in contrast, explores the social agency of Islamic artifacts. It seeks to bridge Islamic art and social history, in order to uncover the dynamics between things and users or viewers in specific social settings. We will look at the use of early Islamic monuments as stages for religious, political and disciplinary spectacles, at the exchange of portable objects designed as gifts and commodities, at the female patronage of religious buildings, among other things.

Class Topics And Readings

1/ FROM LATE ANTIQUE TO ISLAMIC: THE DOME OF THE ROCK I

Readings:


2/ ISLAM, ICONOCLASM, IDOLATRY: THE DOME OF THE ROCK II

Readings:

- Grabar, The Shape of the Holy, 56-65 ("The Inscriptions").

Readings:


4/ THE GREAT MOSQUE OF DAMASCUS

Reading:


5/ THE AESTHETICS OF WONDER: ABBASID ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Readings:


6/ MONUMENT, ORNAMENT AND MEMORY: SAMARRA

Readings:

- Ettinghausen, Grabar and Jenkins-Madina, Islamic Art and Architecture., 54-59.
7/ THE BLUE QUR’AN

Reading:


8/ THE UMAYYAD GREAT MOSQUE AT CORDOBA

Readings:


9/ IVORY PORTABLE OBJECTS FROM CALIPHAL IBERIA

Reading:


10/ CEREMONIAL IN THE CITY: FATIMID CAIRO, 969-1060

Reading:


11/ GIFT EXCHANGE AND DIPLOMACY: FATIMID EGYPT AND BYZANTIUM

Readings:


12/ SAMANID CERAMICS AND LITERARY CULTURE

Reading:

13/ THE GREAT SELJUKS OF IRAN: THE GREAT MOSQUE AT ISFAHAN

Reading:


14/ NARRATIVE REPRESENTATIONS ON IRANIAN SELJUK CERAMICS, 12TH-13TH CENT

Reading:


15/ THE ARTS OF THE ARABIC BOOK: "THE ASSEMBLIES" (MAQAMAT)

Reading:

- Facsimile of the 1237 Maqamat by al-Wasiti, browse: http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8422965p.r=Arabe+5847.langEN

16/ MONUMENTAL QUR'ANS IN ILKHANID SHRINES

Readings:


17/ ILKHANID VISUAL CULTURE, BETWEEN CHINA AND IRAN

Reading:


18/ TIMUR: BETWEEN PORTABLE AND PERMANENT ARCHITECTURE

Readings:

• Thomas Lentz and Glenn D. Lowry, Timur and the Princely Vision (Los Angeles: LACMA, 1989) chap. 1.

19/ GENDER AND DEVOTION: THE FEMALE PATRONAGE OF RELIGIOUS ART AND ARCHITECTURE (1340-1500)

Readings:

• David James, Qur'ans of the Mamluks (London: Alexandria, Thames and Hudson, 1988), 162-164, cat. no. 69, fig. 115 and 116.
• Roya Marefat, "Timurid Women: Patronage and Power", Asian Art 6, no. 2 (spring 1993), 28-49.

20/ OTTOMAN CONSTANTINOPLE, BETWEEN HERAT AND VENICE: THE PORTRAITS OF MEHMET II

Reading: