Islam and Europe Part I: Points of contact, conflict and confluence  
Mondays 1:30 to 4:50  
Appletree  
Spring 2015

Course Description
This class offers an overview of Islamic art and architecture as it influenced and was influenced by European cultural contacts. An often overlooked aspect of the cultural heritage of Western Europe is the fact that from the seventh century until the present Islamic art and architectural practice has been part of European cultural consciousness so we will also be looking at the ways in which European art was influenced by Islamic ideas. Our examination will be both historical and historiographic seeking to develop new ways of understanding the material culture of the Ancient and Medieval Mediterranean world take a case-study approach beginning with the building of the Great mosque in Damascus begun in 706, to Cordoban caliphate in Spain, to the period of the Crusades and the urban design of the Mamluks in Egypt and Syria, synchronous with the rise of urban design in the city-states of Italy.

Text Books


Course Schedule with Reading Assignments
Week 1. 1/26. Introduction
General discussion
What we know, how we know it, what we want to know and how we learn it.

Week 2. 2/2. Setting the Parameters – Islam & Christianity – Culture and Analysis

Week 3. 2/12. **Please Note this class is happening on Thursday** Greece and the Persians – the historiography of difference. 

Week 4. 2/16. The Roman Empire – Byzantium’s inheritance – Constantine to the arrival of Islam – Constantinople and Rome. 
The map of the Mediterranean world – outlining the geography that we are talking about here. 
Read: Kennedy, Hugh, “From Polis to Madina: Urban Change in Late Antique and Early Islamic Syria,” *Past & Present*, No. 106 (Feb., 1985), pp. 3-27 and Ettinghausen et al chapter 2

Week 5. 2/23. Byzantine to Umayyad – Dome of the Rock, Great Mosque of Damascus 
Watch: Episode 25 of the Omar series

Week 6. 3/2. Spain 
Read: Ettinghausen et. al, chapter 3.

Week 7. 3/9. The Fatimids in Egypt; Al-Hakim and the beginning of the Crusades 
Read: Maalouf, Part 1 and Part 2

Spring Break

Week 8. 3/30. The Medieval Mediterranean during the Crusading era – trade, education and politics 
Read: TBD
Week 9. 4/6 Key Trading cities of the Mediterranean

Week 10. 4/13. Teaching & Learning I – the university and the madrasa

Week 11. 4/20. Politics I – government buildings and city planning

Week 12. 4/27. Politics II – patronage of other types of buildings

Week 13. 5/4 Review and Assess

Assignments

Attendance at the weekly class is mandatory. If you don’t show up, you miss stuff and since the experience is cumulative, your learning at the end of the semester will be incomplete. Doing the reading before class and thinking about it is mandatory – although we bring a great deal of knowledge and experience to the table we do not have a common base from which to initiate daily investigations of class material. The readings provide that common base, as well as giving us different perspectives, key information and strategies of explaining things that will be helpful as we talk about ideas. Class attendance and participation will be 20% of your final grade.

Reading Responses

Because it is essential that you complete the reading for this class with enough time to reflect upon it, you will be asked to participate in an online forum (weekly) to engage with particular issues. Each week one student will lead the discussion by posting a critical summary of that week’s reading. **This post is due by Wednesday night at 9pm the rest of the class’s responses to the reading are due by Sunday night at 9pm.**

The critical summary should analyze the piece being discussed in four stages. The first stage is “describe” summarize the article's main thesis. Stage 2 is “analyze” – explain the way the argument is made, list the evidence and how it functions. Stage 3 is “interpret” - position the article within the historiographic context so that you can explain the value of the piece with regards to general arguments in the field (this will give you an opportunity for continued reflection back on what you have read for the class). Stage 4 “judge” – this is where you get to state your own view of the quality of the article based upon the three components that you have already written about, did the article convince you of the validity of the author’s point, why or why not.

Finally, based upon your summary, pose a question for the class.

On the day that the reading is discussed you will be responsible for leading the discussion. Participating in this online discussion is required and will constitute 20% of your final grade. If you fail to submit more than three responses you will receive no credit for this section of the requirements. You also need to submit your response in the week they are due in order to have them counted for credit.
First Writing Assignment – Due February 16. (15%) 
Choose a website from the list below, or a book (you can choose any book you like but please share your choice with me before you begin your essay), or a museum exhibition (again the choice is yours but please discuss it with me before you begin). Write a five to seven page essay describing how the content, tone and view expressed in the website, book or exhibit fit in with the historiography of Islamic art as we have discussed it in the first four weeks of class. Your essay should have three parts, in part one you should summarize the content and methodological approach of the document that you are working with. Part two should focus on one particular aspect of the document that you think is most illustrative of the relationship between the document and the historiography of Islamic art as you understand it. Part three should critique this aspect explaining why it is an important and successful (or not successful) contribution to the on-going issue. Your introduction and conclusion should be separate from these three parts. In your introduction explain what you are going to do. In your conclusion explain what you have done and leave the reader with an interesting question or next step. 
Websites:
Travelers in the Middle East Archive - http://timea.rice.edu/index.html
Archnet - http://archnet.org/
Aga Khan Historic Cities program - http://www.akdn.org/hcp/

Second Writing Assignment – Due March 9. (15%) 
Choose a work of Islamic art or architecture that we have looked at in class, or that has been mentioned in the book that you would like to know more about. Do some basic research on the piece, the history of its making and its current location and how it got there (if it is a building and still exists explain what it is being used for today). Then write a visual analysis of the piece describing the work in such a way that you can recreate it for someone who cannot see it. You should start by giving an overall description of the form, shape and size of the piece then give a rough outline of the composition. After you have given the reader a general idea of the image or building describe the most salient visual details that draw the eye around the image/thing. These details can be the light, color, careful design, striking features or forms, windows, doors, vegetal decoration, etc.

Third Writing Assignment – Due April 6 (20%) 
Choose a work of European art or architecture to compare with the work that you wrote about for assignment 2. This work should relate in some way, either visually or historically. Describe the work in the same way that you did for the second assignment. Finally, compare the two works, you will need to explain upon what basis you are making the comparison, be very conscious of hierarchies, if your argument is that one of the things you are describing is “better” than the other you are going to have to justify this judgment using reputable documented evidence either of the greater capacity or utility of whatever you are describing. Try if you can to do your comparison without resorting to hierarchies.
Presentation – Due in class week of April 13, 20, or 27 (10%)
These presentations will be timed so please prepare accordingly. You will need to practice to make sure that you adhere to the time allotted. When time is up, you’ll have to stop talking.
Present the comparison that you wrote about. Because you will only have three minutes to present you will need to choose one aspect of the comparison to discuss. You should have images to go along with your presentation. You should have no more that nine images.