

Unearthing Islam's Past: Art, Archaeology, and History

HIS 380 Topics in the Near and Middle East

Fall 2023

ARC, IGS

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30-4:45

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:00 PM -2:00 PM, by appointment

Description:

Islamic history, long considered a textual one, rich with a written tradition which has come down to us today preserved in many sources on the history, law, religion, science, and economy of the periods has been challenged. Historical assumptions, such as the 'destruction' of the classical Middle East in the 7th century Islamic conquests, have been radically revised through important contributions from archaeological and artistic evidence. This course will survey the monuments, material culture, and settlements left behind of the Islamic world from Morocco to the Middle East to Central and Southeast Asia. We will start our journey from the very inception of Islam in the 7th century in the wake of the former Roman Byzantine and Persian Sasanian Empires and continue through the Late Antique and Medieval periods, through to the Early Modern 16-18th century period of the Ottoman Empire. We will study Islamic lands through the modern intellectual pursuits of archaeology and art history. Beyond understanding Islamic history through its physical past, we will closely examine the relationship between archaeological and historical practice, observing how archaeological evidence complements or diverges from what we consider as 'history,' and how, as archaeologists and historians, we can broaden our perspectives and utilize other categories of evidence as tools to learning history.

Student Learning Outcomes:

General Education (GE):

1. Use a historical approach to analyze and contextualize primary and secondary sources representing divergent perspectives.
2. Use evidence to interpret the past coherently, orally, and/or in writing
3. Find, interpret, and evaluate information on diverse cultures
4. Describe interconnections among regions of the Middle East/North Africa
5. Use diverse cultural frames of reference and alternative perspectives to analyze issues

6. Write in genres appropriate to the historical and archaeological primary subject matter of the course.

History and Archaeology Programs (HAP):

1. Identify the major sites, historical monuments, diverse regions, and styles, as well as, historical duration, succession and change of Islamic culture through close examination of art and archaeology.
2. Explain the methodology and theories underpinning archaeological research.
3. Relate methods and theories to archaeological data.
4. Analyze the material culture primary source data using a comparative and historical approach to contextualize, represent, and challenge different points of view of the rise and spread of Islam.

Requirements:

There will be two 75 minute classes per week. Each class will consist of lecture and discussion of readings. Please read the assigned materials during the week assigned and come to classes prepared with questions and observations. Attendance is required, as lectures will frequently include material not covered in the assigned readings, for which you will also be responsible for on exams.

No prerequisite is required to take this course.

Readings:

Readings for each week are given on the attached syllabus. Readings listed under the lecture mean you will have read those *in advance* for that lecture day. Weekly assignments consist of readings from selected works drawn from your texts and additional articles on e-reserve. ***Please come prepared and able to comment on the readings in class.*** In addition to the assigned readings, supplemental readings have been placed on reserve and will be useful for those wishing to explore subjects (particularly for papers) in detail.

Required text: (used and new copies available from bookstore)

Milwright, Marcus. *An Introduction to Islamic Archaeology*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010

Walmsley, Alan. *Early Islamic Syria: An Archaeological Appraisal*. London: Duckworth Publishers, 2007.

**you can also search for these books used online, if you wish*

Highly Recommended text:

Cresswell, K.A.C. & J.W. Allan. *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture*. Cairo, American University Press, 1989.

Nicolle, David. *Historical Atlas of the Islamic World*. New York: Thalamus Publishing, 2003.

Study aids, though not a requirement for the course, might be useful in understanding historical backgrounds to the course, preparing for exams, researching the final paper, and providing useful basic reference information for Islamic history and civilization. They include:

The Encyclopaedia of Islam (First Edition (EI1), 1913-1942, New (Second) Edition (EI2), 1954 (1960)-2004, Third Edition, continuing). Jackson Library stacks Tower 8 DS37.E523, vols. 1-12.

A glossary can be found at the new amazing Khamseen: <https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/khamseen/>

And here: <http://www.islamic-art.org/Home/Home.asp>

For images of Islamic buildings and sites: www.archnet.org

For ceramics: Islamic ceramics: <http://islamicceramics.ashmolean.org/>

Requirements:

Class Participation: The course will be structured around specific questions that present divergences or correlations between Islamic history and archaeology and in many cases are debates in the field. These questions will frame each lecture. We will introduce them at the start and look at the parameters of the debated topics and revisit them at the end of the lecture, reassessing these questions in light of the lecture and reading material. The classes then are not only lectures but also discussions and will only work well, naturally, with your class participation which will be graded.

Summaries: For almost every week, you will write a one sided, single spaced, summary of *each* reading for that day. Be sure to include the author and title of the work, what the author is arguing, a *brief* synopsis of the evidence used, and your own opinion of how the work relates to what we have learned in class or whether you agree/disagree with the author. (GE 1, GE 4, GE 5, HAP 2)

Examinations: There will be two examinations for the course. These will consist of a number of brief slide identifications, short answer, and essay questions. Images will be places in a power point file on Blackboard at several points throughout the semester. Note that not all images seen in class and not all the same images viewed in class may appear on Blackboard due to copyright issues. Also note that the glossary of Milwright's *An Introduction to Islamic Archaeology* (your textbook) will be important to understand basic terms (pp. 223-226) as well as Walmsley's *Early Islamic Syria* (your other textbook, pp. 154-155). (GE 1, GE 4, HAP 1, HAP 2)

Short Paper Assignment: You will write a short summary/reaction paper (4-6 pages) about a section from Timothy Insoll's book *The Archaeology of Islam*, chapters of which will be on e-reserve. (Due to copyright restrictions only Chapters 2-4 are on e-reserve, the rest can be viewed from the book directly which is on library reserve). Possible topics will be on mosques and religious space, domestic space, daily life, art and trade, death and burial, and the "community environment" in the Islamic world. Papers will summarize the selected chapter and draw on your own ideas in reviewing the role of religious analysis in Islamic archaeology. You should consider information from lectures and Milwright's book (especially Chapter 6) and you may incorporate outside sources. ***Please come prepared to present this in class on the day the paper is due.*** (GE 1, GE 2, GE 3, GE 6, HAP 2, HAP 3, HAP 4)

Final Project Assignment: The final project takes the place of a final research paper and final exam. You will design a virtual exhibition of Islamic art on any topic of your choice within the periods covered by this course, per my approval. More details will come later in the semester. You will propose a topic by Week 11 and submit it to me and present it to the class. The topic should have the title, theme, outline, and at least 4 works of art/architecture. The purpose of the assignment is for you to: 1) work with material culture as primary sources and incorporate secondary scholarship, 2) implement research skills and access resources, and 3) to develop your ability to communicate in written forms. The exhibit will include three written components and must contain at least three non-Internet references. (GE 1, GE 2, GE 3, GE 5, HAP 2, HAP 3, HAP 4)

Grading will be as follows: Attendance and class participation (10%), summaries (10%), 2 exams (20% each), short paper (15%), and final project assignment (25%).

Attendance is mandatory and I will take attendance at the beginning of each class. You may miss three classes during the semester, after which your class participation grade will be docked 3 points for each absence. If you miss more than six classes, **whether excused or unexcused**, I will drop your final grade by three points and /or reserve the right to drop you from the course. All assignments must be turned in on time; those turned in late will not receive credit. If you must miss an exam you must let me know in writing *before* the date and there will be a make-up exam, otherwise you will receive a zero.

Class Rules:

Please do not come late to class as it disrupts the class for both your fellow classmates and for me. Cellular phones *must* be silenced or turned off in the classroom. If you disrupt class by talking on the phone or text messaging, you will be asked to leave. Laptops may *not* be used in the classroom. Please note that plagiarism (this includes copying internet text for papers), cheating, and other violations of academic integrity are serious offences and will not be tolerated in the class or anywhere else in the University.

The best way to contact me is by email. Please note that I will only check and respond to emails Monday through Friday during the work day; i.e. don't expect me to respond to an email at 2 am on a Saturday.

Academic Integrity Policy:

Enrollment in this course and submission of each written assignment constitute students' acceptance of UNCG's Academic Integrity Policy. Make sure you read and understand the policy, which is available at: <http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu/complete/>

If you have any questions about any aspect of this policy, including what constitutes plagiarism, please consult the professor.

UNCG's Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as "representing the words of another, as one's own in any academic exercise" (<http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu/complete/>). Plagiarism includes both 1) failure to cite sources for ideas and words you use; and 2) submitting all of parts of someone else's work as your own. Be sure to cite fully all material you use, whether you are paraphrasing or using a direct quote.

Lecture and Reading Schedule:

Part 1: The Early Islamic Period (7-10th Centuries)

Week 1: Introductions and Frameworks

Aug 15. Class Organization, Intro to the Geography

Aug 17. The Field of Islamic Archaeology, Art History and History, and a Brief History

Milwright: Ch. 1: 1-23; Walmsley: Ch. 1: 15-30; Ch. 4: 71-76; 149-153

Peterson, A. "What is 'Islamic' Archaeology," 100-106.

Q. 1: How did Islamic archaeology become tied in with Western interest in the "Orient"?

Week 2: The Near East in Transition - The Sixth and Seventh Centuries and Arabia

Aug 22. The World Before Islam and the Islamic Conquests

Milwright, Ch. 2: 30-34; Walmsley: Ch. 2: 31-47

Cameron, A. *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity*, 152-96

Q. 2: Did the Islamic Conquests cause the Decline of the Middle East?

Aug 24. The Navel of the Earth: Mecca and Madina in the Jazirat al'Arab (Arabian Peninsula)

Milwright, Ch. 2: 24-29

Wheatley, P. *The Places Where Men Pray Together*, 3-32.

"Haram," by Harry Munt: <https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/khamseen/glossary/2021/haram/>

Q. 3: Did Islam as a religion start perfectly formed?

Week 3: Syria – Foundations and New Urbanism

Aug 29. Pleasure retreats or Pioneering towns? The "Desert Castles"

Milwright, Ch. 2: 34-43; Ch. 5: 75-80

CHOOSE ONE AND COME PREPARED TO DEBATE ITS POSITION:

Bacharach, J. "Marwanid Umayyad Building Activities," 27-44.

Genequand, D. "Umayyad Castles: the shift from Late Antique Military Architecture to early Islamic Palatial Building," 3-25.

Grabar, O. "Umayyad 'Palace' and the 'Abbasid 'Revolution'," 5-18.

Q. 4: Was the Umayyad Caliphate marked by decadence and excess?

Aug 31. The "Desert Castles", Part II and New Islamic Foundations: Ramla and Ayla

Walmsley, Ch. 4: 90-96; 104-107

Whitcomb, D. "An Urban Structure for the Early Islamic City," 15-26.

Q. 5: Was the first century marked by an improvised or planned approach to urbanism?

Week 4: Umayyad Syria – Transformations and the Preexisting Cities

Sept 5. Urban Spiritual Centers: Jerusalem and Damascus

Khoury, N. (1993). "The Dome of the Rock, the Ka'ba, and Ghumdan: Arab Myths and Umayyad Monuments," 57-65.

Rabbat, Nasser. "The Meaning of the Umayyad Dome of the Rock," 12-21.

Recommended:

<https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/khamseen/glossary/2021/masjid/>

<https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/khamseen/glossary/2021/mihrab/>

<https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/khamseen/glossary/2021/minaret/>

<https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/khamseen/glossary/2021/qibla/>

Q. 6: How did the Umayyads reconcile with the pre-existing Christian presence?

Sept 7. Pre-existing Umayyad Settlements: Qinnasrin, Tabariyya, Baysan, Istakhr, and 'Amman

Walmsley Ch. 4: 76-90, Ch. 5: 126-132

Avni, G. 'From Polis to Madina' Revisited, 301-329

Q. 7: How did new Islamic communities adapt to formerly Byzantine cities?

Week 5: 'Abbasid 'Iraq – A Grand New Urbanism

Sept 12. The Flowering of Baghdad and Early 'Abbasid Urbanism

Walmsley, Ch. 4: 99-104

Northedge, A. "Archaeology and New Urban Settlement in Early Islamic Syria and Iraq" *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East: Land Use and Settlement Patterns* (1992), 231-265.

Q. 8: How did the 'Abbasids reposition themselves from the former Umayyad Caliphate?

Sept 14. "He Who Sees It Shall Be Delighted": Samarra and Later 'Abbasid Urbanism

Milwright, Ch. 5: 80-83

Northedge, A. "Remarks on Samarra and the archaeology of large cities." *Antiquity* 79 (2005): 119-129.

Q. 9: By the late 9th/early 10th century, did the 'Abbasids weaken significantly?

Week 6: The Islamic West – al-Andalus

Sept 19. “The Ornament of the World”: An Umayyad City and Palace in al-Andalus

Bloom, J. “The Revival of Early Islamic Architecture by the Umayyads of Spain,” 35-41.
CHOOSE ONE:

Khoury, N. “The Meaning of the Great Mosque of Cordoba in the Tenth Century,” 80-98.

Hillenbrand, R. “‘The Ornament of the World’: Medieval Cordoba as a Cultural Centre,” 112–135.

Q. 10: How did the Umayyads of Spain establish and legitimate themselves as caliphs?

Sept 21. Film: *Islamic Art: Mirror of the Invisible World*

Week 7: ‘Abbasid Expansionism – The Northern Provinces (Jazira and Thughūr)

Sept 26. The Bread Basket of al-‘Iraq: the Jazira and its rural settlement system

Walmsley, Ch. 4: 96-99

Bartl, K. “Balih Valley Survey: Settlements of the Late Roman/Early Byzantine Period and Islamic Period,” 333–48.

Heidemann, S. “The Agricultural Hinterland of Baghdad, al-Raqqā, and Samarra,” 43-57.

Q. 11: Was Islamic civilization only an urban based religion?

Sept 28. The Spaces Between the Teeth: The Islamic-Byzantine Frontier (*al-thughūr*)

Eger, A. *The Islamic-Byzantine Frontier*, “Introduction,” 1-21, and “Chapter 7,” 198-245.

Q. 12: Was the frontier a war-torn no-man’s land?

Week 8: ‘Abbasid Expansionism – the Eastern Provinces (al-‘Ajam)

Oct 3: Gateway to the East: The Persian Gulf, Khuzistan, and Fars

Whitehouse, D. et al. *Si raf: History, Topography and Environment*. Ch. 1 and 6.

Q. 13: How and with whom did the ‘Abbasids develop maritime trade?

Oct 5. The Silk Route and the Turks: Al-Jibal, al-Daylam, and al-Mashriq

Milwright: Ch. 5: 85-90

CHOOSE ONE AND COME PREPARED TO DEBATE ITS POSITION:

Bulliet, R. W. “Pottery Styles and Social Status in Medieval Khurasan,” 75-82.

Whitcomb, D. “Toward a *Common Denominator*: An Archaeological Response to M. Morony on Pottery and Urban Identities,” 47-68.

Q. 14: Can ceramics show how new Arabs assimilated with preexisting Persians?

Week 9: MID-TERM EXAM

Oct 10. NO CLASS – FALL BREAK

Oct 12. **MID-TERM EXAM**

Part II: The Middle and Late Islamic Periods (10th-16th centuries)

Week 10: Topics in Islamic Archaeology – Rural Settlement and Economy

Oct 17. Craft, Trade and Industry

Milwright, Ch. 7 and 8; Walmsley, Ch. 5: 117-120

<http://www.museumsecrets.tv/dossier.php?o=53&pmo=84>

CHOOSE ONE:

Henderson, J. and e. al. (2005). "Experiment and innovation: early Islamic industry at al-Raqa, Syria," 103-45.

Burke, Katherine Strange. "A Note on the Archaeological Evidence for Sugar Production in the Middle Islamic Periods in Bilad al-Sham," 109-118

Whitcomb, D. "Egypt and the Spice Trade," *Archaeology* 34 (1981): 16-23.

Journal of Islamic Archaeology 3.2 (2017) on Grenades. CHOOSE ONE.

Q. 17: What can analysis of material culture tell us about economy that texts cannot?

Oct 19. Beyond the City: Rural Settlement, Land Use, and Irrigation in the Islamic World

[short reaction papers due]

Milwright, Ch. 4; Walmsley, Ch. 4: 107-112, 113-116, 132-136, 146-148

Butzer, K., et al. "Irrigation Agrosystems in Eastern Spain: Roman or Islamic Origins?" 479-509.

Samuel, D. "Archaeobotanical Evidence and Analysis," 347-372, 418-424, 437-438.

Q. 16: Was there a Green Revolution? How did rural life affect cities?

Week 11: Fortifications and Military Architecture

Oct 24. Muslims and Christians over Land: Fortifications on the Frontiers and *Incastellemento*

Glick, Thomas. *From Muslim Fortress to Christian Castle*, 92-124.

Q. 18: How did the concept of incastellemento alter settlement in the Middle East?

Oct 26. Muslims and Christians over Sea: The Ribat System of North Africa and Palestine

[Final Project Topics Due]

El'Ad, A. "The Coastal Cities of Palestine During the Early Middle Ages," 146-67.

Khalilieh, Hassan S. "The *Ribāt* System and its Role in Coastal Navigation," 212-225

Q. 19: Were the ribats a system of religious frontier forts for Holy War?

Week 12: Topics in Islamic Archaeology: Religious Space; Arts of the Book

Oct 31. Arts of the Book and Manuscript Painting

Nov 2. The Islam in Islamic Archaeology: Archaeology of Religious Practice

Milwright, Ch. 6; Walmsley, Ch. 5: 120-126

Grabar, O, "The Architecture of the Middle Eastern City from Past to Present: The Case of the Mosque," 103-120.

Q. 15: Can we interpret Islamic monuments and material culture as Muslim?

Week 13: The New Medieval Islamic Cities and the Countryside

Nov 7. Fatimid, Ayyubid, Mamluk Cairo and Aleppo and Institutions

Milwright, Ch. 5: 83-85, 90-96

Tabbaa, Y. (1997). *Constructions of Power and Piety in Medieval Aleppo*, Introduction and Ch. 1, Pp. 1-26.

Williams, J.A. "Urbanization and Monument Construction in Mamluk Cairo." *Muqarnas* 2 (1984): 33-45

Q. 20: What institutions are reflected in Middle Islamic urban secular & religious life?

Nov 9. The Mongol and Timurid Cities of the East

TBD

Q. 21: What impact did nomadic tribes have on urbanism in the Silk Road?

Week 14: Late Islamic Horizons

Nov 14. Ottoman Archaeology

Milwright, Ch. 9 & 10; Walmsley, Ch. 6: 137-148

Baram and Carroll, "The Future of the Ottoman Past," 3-38.

"Külliye" by Ayşe Uğurlu, <https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/khamseen/glossary/2023/kulliye/>
CHOOSE ONE:

Peterson, A. "Ottoman Hajj Forts," 685-691

Ziadeh-Seely, G. "The Archaeology of Ottoman Ti'innik." 79-91.

Q. 22: How has the field of Islamic archaeology impacted the Middle East?

Nov 16. NO CLASS

Week 15: THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS

Nov 21 and 23. NO CLASS

Week 16: FINAL EXAM

Nov 28: Presentations of Final Projects

Nov 30 Reading Day, NO CLASS

Dec 3. **FINAL EXAM due**

[FINAL PROJECTS due]