Introduction to Islamic Archaeology

HIS 380                        Spring 2013

Topics in the Near and Middle East

Mondays and Wednesdays 3:30-4:45 PM, MHRA 2207

Instructor: A. Asa Eger

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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 11:00 AM -12:00 PM, by appointment

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Description:
The late 19th and 20th centuries sparked great interest in the civilizations of the Islamic Middle East, heretofore shrouded in orientalist mysteries of harems and sultans. Scientific, geographical, and archaeological exploration of the region up to and following World War I in many ways coincided with the imperialist and colonialist political and economic interests of European powers during this period. These kernels forming the field of Islamic Archaeology like the study of Islamic history, parallel the increasing interest of the West in the Islamic civilization of the Middle East. However in the last thirty years, the field of Islamic archaeology has grown significantly, incorporating material culture to examine social processes ranging from artistic traditions and technological innovations to urban and rural economies and trade. Additionally, interest in ethnographic applications to archaeology and the study of environmental changes in the landscape have expanded the field in new directions. 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 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 pursuit of archaeology. 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 Objectives:
Students will develop a broad understanding of the major periods, historical monuments, diverse regions, and styles of Islamic culture through close examination of art and archaeology. They will also express understanding and be able to critically challenge historical assumptions of key concepts and theories that contributed to the formation of Islam with detailed archaeological viewpoints such as historical, geographic, aesthetic, and religious contexts for the rise of Islam (i.e. the Byzantine and Sasanian Empires) and explain various motivations for the conquests and spread of Islam. From learning interdisciplinary approaches to historical problems, students will broaden their methodological basis for learning history and global studies and implement it in writing.

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)


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

Highly Recommended text:

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:


A glossary can be found at: [http://www.islamic-art.org/Home/Home.asp](http://www.islamic-art.org/Home/Home.asp)

For images of Islamic buildings and sites: [www.archnet.org](http://www.archnet.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.

*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).

*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.*
Long Paper Assignment: You will write a slightly longer paper (8-10 pages) about an archaeological site or region of your choice. More details will come later in the semester. You will select a topic by Week 9 and submit it to me. The purpose of the assignment is for you to: 1) read excavation or survey reports, 2) implement research skills and access resources, and 3) to develop your ability to communicate in written forms. The paper must contain at least three non-Internet references (including excavation or survey reports).

Grading will be as follows: Attendance and class participation (5%), summaries (10%), 2 exams (25% each), short paper (15%), and long paper 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 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
Jan. 14. Class Organization, Intro to the Geography

Jan. 16. 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

QUESTION 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
Jan. 21. NO CLASS

Jan. 23. The World Before Islam and the Islamic Conquests
  [summary due]
  Milwright, Ch. 2: 30-34; Walmsley: Ch. 2: 31-47
  Cameron, A. *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity*, 152-96

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

Week 3: Arabia and Syria - Foundations
Jan. 28. The Navel of the Earth: Mecca and Madina in the Jazirat al’Arab (Arabian Peninsula)
  Milwright, Ch. 2: 24-29

QUESTION 3: Did Islam as a religion start perfectly formed?
Jan 30. Pleasure retreats or Pioneering towns? The “Desert Castles”

[s]ummary due[/s]
Milwright, Ch. 2: 34-43; Ch. 5: 75-80


**QUESTION 4:** Was the Umayyad Caliphate marked by decadence and excess?

**Week 4: Umayyad Syria - Transformations**
Feb 4. The “Desert Castles”, Part II and New Islamic Foundations: Ramla and Ayla

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


**QUESTION 5:** Can we say that the first century of Islam was marked by an improvised or planned approach to urbanism?

Feb 6. Urban Spiritual Centers: Jerusalem and Damascus

[s]ummary due[/s]


A Virtual Walking Tour: Haram al-Sharif, guided by Oleg Grabar

**QUESTION 6:** How did the Umayyads physically and ideologically reconcile with the pre-existing Byzantine and Christian presence?
Week 5: Umayyad Syria and ‘Abbasid ‘Iraq – A Grand New Urbanism
Feb 11. Pre-existing Umayyad Settlements: Qinnasrin, Tabariyya, Baysan, Istakhr, and ‘Amman

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

**QUESTION 7:** What was the nature of contact and adaptation between new Islamic communities in pre-existing formerly Byzantine (and Christian) cities?

Feb 13. The Flowering of Baghdad and Early ‘Abbasid Urbanism

[summary due]

Walmsley, Ch. 4: 99-104

**QUESTION 8:** Was the ‘Abbasid Caliphate marked by a period of decline? How did it reposition itself from the former Umayyad Caliphate?

Week 6: ‘Abbasid Urbanism and the Umayyad West

Milwright, Ch. 5: 80-83

**QUESTION 9:** By the late 9th/early 10th century, did the ‘Abbasids weaken significantly?

[summary due] READ BLOOM and select ONE from KHOURY or HILLENNBRAND


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

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

Feb 25. The Bread Basket of al-’Iraq: the Jazira and its settlement system

[summary due]

Walmsley, Ch. 4: 96-99


QUESTION 11: Was Islamic civilization confined only to its cities as a urban based religion?

Feb 27. The Spaces Between the Teeth: The Islamic-Byzantine Frontier (al-thughūr) and Northern Syria


QUESTION 12: Was the frontier a war-torn no-man’s land?
Week 8: EXAM

March 4: Film: *Islamic Art: Mirror of the Invisible World*

March 6. **MID-TERM EXAM**

Week 9: NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

Week 10: ‘Abbasid Expansionism – the Eastern Provinces (al-‘Ajam)

March 18. Gateway to the East: The Persian Gulf, Khuzistan, and Fars


**QUESTION 13:** How and with whom did the ‘Abbasids develop maritime trade?

March 20. The Silk Route and the Turks: Al-Jibal, al-Daylam, and al-Mashriq

[short reaction papers due]

Milwright: Ch. 5: 85-90


DEBATE:


**QUESTION 14:** How did the new Arabs assimilate with preexisting Persian communities during the Umayyad Caliphate? How did the eastern Turkic frontiers change during the ‘Abbasid Caliphate?
Part II: The Middle and Late Islamic Periods (10th-16th centuries)

Week 11: Problems in Islamic Archaeology - Religious Practice and Rural Settlement
March 25. The Islam in Islamic Archaeology: Archaeology of Religious Practice

[Long Paper Topics Due]

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


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

March 27. Beyond the City: Rural Settlement, Land Use, and Irrigation in the Islamic World

[summary due]

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


QUESTION 16: Was there a Green Revolution? How did rural life and settlement in the country differ from that the city, specifically in terms of rates of continuity or change?

Week 12: The Transition from Early to Middle Islam – al-Misr
April 1. The Emergence of Cairo: The Urban System of Misr and the Maghreb

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


QUESTION 17: What was the nature of Egypt’s role in the Islamic Empire during the Early Islamic period?
April 3. The New Medieval World City: Fatimid al-Qahira and the Red Sea Ports

(summary due)


QUESTION 18: How did al-Qahira grow and supplant Baghdad in the 10th century?

Week 13: Settlements and Fortifications at the Periphery
April 8. Muslims and Christians over Land: Byzantine, Armenian, and Arab Settlements on the Syro-Anatolian Frontier and the Andalusian Frontier


QUESTION 19: How did the concept of incastellemento alter settlement in the Middle East?

April 10. The New Islamic City: Mamluk Secular and Religious Architecture and Material Culture [summary due]


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

Week 14: Crusader and Islamic Military Architecture
April 15. Crusader Archaeology and Islamic Castles?: Castles, Towns, Farms, and Rural Settlements


Michaudel, B. “The Development of Islamic Military Architecture during the Ayyubid And Mamluk Reconquests of Frankish Syria,” in Muslim Military Architecture in Greater Syria, 106-121

Tabbaa, Y. “Defending Ayyubid Aleppo” in Muslim Military Architecture in Greater Syria, 176-183.

QUESTION 21: How did the Crusaders adapt to life in the Near East? How was Islamic military architecture similar (or influenced by) Crusader architecture
April 17. Muslims and Christians over Sea: The Ribat System of North Africa and Palestine

[summary due]


*QUESTION 22: Were the ribats a system of religious frontier forts for Holy War?*

Week 15: **Material Culture in the Medieval Islamic World and Late Islamic Horizons**

April 22. Craft, Trade, and Industry [summary due]

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


*QUESTION 23: What can analysis of material culture tell us about economy that texts cannot?*

April 24. Ottoman Archaeology

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


*QUESTION 24: How has the field of Islamic archaeology impacted the Middle East?*


**Week 16: Late Islamic Horizons II – Colonial Archaeology**

April 29. Colonial Archaeology and The Politics of Islamic Archaeology, Conclusions


May 1. NO CLASS – READING DAY

   **LONG PAPERS** due.

May 8. 3:30 PM. **FINAL EXAM**
Brief Timeline of Islamic History (all dates in A.D. or C.E.)

570  Birth of Muhammad in Mecca

622  Hijra of Muhammad to Medina

632-661  Patriarchal or Rightly-Guided (Rashidun) Caliphs

661-750  Umayyads
       Mu’awiya (661-680)
       ‘Abd al-Malik (685-705)

750-861  ‘Abbasids
       al-Mansur (754-775)
       Harun al-Rashid (786-809)
       al-Mu’tasim (833-842)
       al-Mutawakkil (847-861)

868-905  Tulunids (first Egyptian dynasty)
       -Ahmad b. Tulun (868-884)

(909)-1171  Fatimids (third Egyptian dynasty, North African)

1077-1307  Saljuqs (N. Syrian/Turkish rule)

1099  Crusaders (first concept of jihad, first instance of religious war)
       -inhabited Levantine coasts, Palestine

1127-1222  Zangids (N. Syrian/Turkish rule, from Aleppo)
       -Nur ad-Din Zangi (1118-1174)

1171-1250  Ayyubids (fourth Egyptian dynasty, N. Syrian/Turkish)
       -Salah ad-Din (1174-1193), Battle of Hattin 1187

1250-(1517)  Mamluks (fifth Egyptian dynasty, N. Syrian/Turkish)

1206-1405  Mongols (Central Asian/Turkic)
       -1258 destruction of Baghdad by Ilkhanid Mongols, ‘Ayn Jului

1363-1506  Timurids (Central Asian/Turkic)

1299-1922  Ottomans (Anatolia and Levant)
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“Dead Cities”
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Aleppo
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Al-Mina
Palmyra (Tadmur)
Qal’at Jabar
Qasr al-Hayr Gharbi
Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi
Raqqa
Rusafa
Tuneinir
Iraq
Diyala Plain Survey
Baghdad
Basra
Ctesiphon
Hira
Kufa
Mosul
Samarra
Maghreb
Ajdabiyah (Corniclanum)
Medinah Sultan (Surt)
Ptolemais (Tolmaytha)

Ukhaidir
Iran
Hajjabad
Isfahan
Istakhr
Nishapur
Qasr-i Abu Nasr (Old Shiraz)
Shiraz
Siraf
Arabia and the Gulf States
Bahrain
Julfar (Ras al-Khaima)
Oman
Darb Zubayda Survey
Madina
Rabadha
Aden
San’a
Spain
Alhambra
Cordoba
Seville
Madinat al-Zahra
Qsar es-Seghir
Sijilmasa
Carthage