MONUMENTS OF ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE

The lectures in this course are simplified versions of lectures delivered by Professors Gülru Necipoğlu and David Roxburgh at Harvard University. They have been specially prepared for the AKTC Education Programme, in collaboration with the Aga Khan Programme for Islamic Architecture at Harvard University.

The AKTC Education Programme aims to promote broader and deeper awareness among young people of the philosophy and values that underpin the efforts of the Trust. To this end, the Programme is supporting the elaboration of teaching materials and processes that enable the wealth of knowledge and learnings accumulated by two of the Trust’s key programmes – the Aga Khan Award for Architecture (AKAA) and the Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme (AKHCP), as well as by the Aga Khan Programme for Islamic Architecture itself – to be shared with students at all levels.

In this spirit, the lectures offered here provide an introductory overview of eleven iconic monuments and sites of the Islamic world from the formative era of Islam up to the early modern period. They cover various types of buildings – e.g. mosques, palaces, shrines, multifunctional complexes – and city types as well as the factors that shaped them, whether artistic, patronal, socio-political, religio-cultural, or economic.

Each topic of study is divided into two lectures. The first lecture presents the monument or site that is being examined by “walking” through it. The second lecture is devoted to particular themes elicited from the case study, developed in light of comparative monuments and sites and/or written sources, and to problems of patronage, production, audience, and meaning as they pertain to Islamic architectural history in broad terms.

WEEKLY LECTURES, READINGS, AND SECTION TOPICS

Lecture 1: Introduction—Overview of Monuments and Sites
Lecture 2: Introduction—Historical Contexts

Lecture 3: The Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem
Lecture 4: Umayyad and Late Antique Architecture

Readings:

Lecture 5: The Umayyad Great Mosque at Cordoba
Lecture 6: Architecture of Exile: The Umayyads of Spain

Readings:


Section: Reading Architectural Drawings

Lecture 7: New Abbasid Cities: Baghdad and Samarra
Lecture 8: Architecture of Empire

Readings:


Section: The “Formation” of Islamic Architecture

Lecture 9: Fatimid Cairo
Lecture 10: Ceremonial in the City

Readings:

**SECTION: The Mosque**

Lecture 11: The Mosque and Hospital Complex, Divrigi  
Lecture 12: The Seljuks and New Frontiers in Anatolia and India

**READINGS:**


**SECTION: The Islamic City**

Lecture 13: Mongol-Timurid Cities in Iran and Central Asia  
Lecture 14: Between Portable and Permanent Architecture

**READINGS:**


**SECTION: The Multi-Functional Complex**

Lecture 15: The Alhambra, Granada  
Lecture 16: A Cross-Cultural Aesthetic

**READINGS:**


**SECTION: Cross-Cultural Architecture**

**Lecture 17: The Madrasa-Mosque Complex of Sultan Hasan, Cairo**  
**Lecture 18: The Mamluk System of Charitable Endowments**

**Readings:**  


**SECTION: Semiotics of Architecture**

**Lecture 19: The Mosque Complex of Sultan Suleyman, Istanbul**  
**Lecture 20: Chief Court Architect Sinan and His Autobiography**

**Readings:**  


**SECTION: Charitable Endowments and the Urban Context**

**Lecture 21: Isfahan under Shah Abbas**  
**Lecture 22: International Trade and the King’s Silk Monopoly**

**Readings:**  


**SECTION: Architecture, Identity, and Decorum**

**Lecture 23: Taj Mahal in Agra: The Mausoleum as Eternal Garden**

**READINGS:**


**SECTION: The Palace and Landscape: Materiality, and Architectural Ornament**

**Lecture 24: Legacies of Islamic Architecture in the Modern and Contemporary Era (18th to 21st Centuries)**

**READINGS:**