



College of Visual Arts and Design, UNT  
Spring 2026  
ARTH 4824: Topics in Asian Art

## Mughal Art of India

MW 12:30-1:50pm ART 288

Dr. Lisa N. Owen  
Preferred Contact: Canvas Message  
Office: ART 230  
Office Hours: Thursdays, 9:30-10:30am

**Course description:** This course will explore select expressions of art and architecture produced during the reigns of the first five Mughal emperors of India (1526-1666). During this period, India's Mughal rulers established their imperial presence across the subcontinent through the building of residential palaces, forts, gardens, tombs, and mosques. India's Mughal emperors also established court-appointed schools of painting that contributed to the development of royal portraiture and the circulation of illustrated albums. We will examine these expressions in their broader socio-cultural contexts. Special attention will be paid to the relationships between art, the royal courts, and constructions of imperial power.

**Course content:** This course is designed to familiarize students with the arts of Early Mughal India. By the end of this course the student will be able to identify selected works of art and be able to accurately describe the function and/or meanings of these artworks given the time and place of their creation. In addition, through lecture and student presentations, the lives of selected monuments post creation will be explored. By engaging in the visual cultures of India, students can cultivate a thorough knowledge of this important specialization within the discipline of art history, and, at the same time, foster the essential skills of critical looking, analyzing, and thinking about art.

### Goals of the course include:

- (1) to recognize Mughal contributions as part of global art history
- (2) to learn a variety of approaches and paradigms employed in the study of Indian art
- (3) to demonstrate the relevancy of Mughal art for contemporary times

**Course structure:** This is a lecture course that meets two times a week for one hour and twenty minutes. Reading assignments for the course are listed below and in the lecture schedule.

### Required readings (available on Canvas and/or online):

#### Textbook

Selected chapters from Catherine Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992. Available as an ebook through UNT online resources. Accessible pdfs are also available on Canvas.

## Essays

Arathi Menon, "The Qutb complex and early Sultanate architecture," *Smarthistory*, March 11, 2022, <https://smarthistory.org/the-qutb-complex-and-early-sultanate-architecture/>

Audrey Truschke, "Rama's Ayodhya: Creating and Contesting Hindu Identity," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 68 (2025): 783-822

Yael Rice, "Introduction," in *The Brush of Insight: Artists and Agency at the Mughal Court*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2023, 1-17.

Kavita Singh, "As Jahangir contemplates a portrait of his father, a reversal of our ideas about dreams and reality," *Scroll.in*, September 4, 2022, <https://scroll.in/article/1000463/as-jahagir-contemplates-a-portrait-of-his-father-a-reversal-of-our-ideas-about-dreams-and-reality>

Susan Stronge, "The Reign of Shah Jahan: The Garden of Paradise," in *The Great Mughals: Art, Architecture and Opulence*, Victoria & Albert, 2024, 193-231.

## **Course requirements and grading criteria:**

Exams (3 in-class essay exams @ 25% each)..... 75%

Group Presentation..... 15%

Attendance..... 10%

**In-class exams:** There will be a total of 3 in-class essay exams. Dates for these exams are highlighted in bold in the lecture schedule. At least one week prior to each in-class exam, 20-25 images will be available on Canvas for review. For the in-class exam, I will select 6-8 images. On the exam, I will provide the relevant information of each artwork (artist, title, location, date), but you will need to answer specific questions relating to the images (either as a pair or individually). You will have approximately 10 minutes to write a response to each of the questions with a 10-minute follow-up period at the end to complete the exam. It is imperative that you arrive to class on time, as I will not re-show the images once the exam is in progress.

**Grading criteria and grading scale for the exams:** Exams will be graded based on content. Grades are determined in terms of how well the student answered all parts of the question(s) and the accuracy of that information. Each essay on the exam is graded separately and then those scores are added together for the overall exam score. The mechanics of writing/spelling do not factor into the grade; however, student essays must be written in complete sentences (i.e., no bullet points or listing of facts/elements/materials). Below is the point distribution used for each essay (4 essays with a max of 25 points each):

23-24-25 points = A-|A|A+; 20-21-22 points = B-|B|B+; 17-18-19 points = C-|C|C+;

14-15-16 points = D-|D|D+; 13 points or below = F

*Never leave an essay question blank.* Even if you cannot answer the specific exam question(s), write what you know about the artwork and/or monument so that you do not receive a zero on that essay. Students can receive points for accurate information.

*There are no make-ups for the in-class exams.* If you miss an exam, you will receive a zero on that test unless you provide proper documentation for a University-sanctioned absence (e.g., documented illness, team event, family emergency, etc.). You must contact me through Canvas within 24 hours of the missed exam. If, after reviewing your documentation, I agree to schedule a make-up exam with you, it must be taken within one week of the missed test.

**Posting of exam grades:** Grades will be posted on Canvas approximately one day after exams are handed back. It is your responsibility to verify that the posted grade corresponds with the grade recorded on the exam. If you are not satisfied with the grade you earned, you can come and see me for a re-grading after 48 hours have passed since their return. However, you must realize that a re-grading can either raise or lower your original score. Once the exam is passed back, you have a window of two weeks to talk to me about your grade. In other words, at the end of the semester, I will not look over past material for you. I would also suggest that you hold onto all your graded work until you receive the final grade for the class.

**Group presentation:** At the beginning of the semester, students will form a group with 3-4 classmates. This group will be randomly assigned a Mughal monument that will serve as their topic for a class presentation. The aim of the group presentation is to explore how the select monument operates outside its specific Mughal historical moment. Think of the presentation as a way to highlight the many lives of the monument after its creation. Ways to do this include—but are not limited to—exploring its life through colonial/modern/contemporary visual representations and/or uses, examining conservation/preservation efforts, addressing ways it functions today as a tourist/heritage site, and describing how popular perceptions of the monument create new narratives and understandings. The group presentation must be *twenty minutes in length total* with individual group members each contributing their part. The visuals need to be shown through a *singular presentation-based program/software* (i.e., a singular PowerPoint, pdf, Google Slides, etc.). *Collaborative work on this is required. Each student is graded individually and receives a grade as a group. The two grades are averaged for a final score for the presentation.*

**Grading criteria for the presentation:** The individual and group grades for the presentation are based on the following: meets required time length, demonstrates collaborative work, each member is an active presenter, accurate text in the visuals, clear design/use of visuals to support narrative, and quality of examination outside the monument's initial historical context.

**Attendance policy:** Attendance will be taken via a sign-up sheet that is passed around during each class. It is up to you to make sure that you have signed the roster. You are allowed two absences without penalty. After that, your attendance grade (which is initially recorded as 100% A) will be lowered by half a letter grade (5 points) for each absence over the allotted two. It is also important for you to attend class as the exams are based on lectures and the visual material presented. In some cases, I do not completely agree with the information provided in the readings and so I will offer alternative interpretations of selected artworks and include supplemental visual comparisons during lecture. Since you will be responsible for this material when preparing for and taking exams, it is imperative that you come to class and participate fully if you wish to do well. Should you miss a class lecture, it is up to you to get notes from a classmate. I do not respond to emails asking “what did I miss” nor do I repeat entire lectures during my office hours.

If you have a military deployment or emergency/health situation that requires hospitalization or treatment that does not allow you to attend class for an extended period (5+ days), contact the Dean of Students (DOS) office ([deanofstudents@unt.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@unt.edu)). Once you provide documentation to the DOS demonstrating your inability to attend class and/or perform work (not just for a deadline date), that office will contact me to request extension(s). Your documentation (and the letter from DOS) must include *the specific dates you were unable to attend*. Unspecific requests for “flexibility” without specific dates will not receive extensions on class work/assignments.

**Academic integrity policy, AI, and violation penalties:** This course follows the UNT policy on Academic Integrity. According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, sabotage, and unauthorized use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions from admonition to expulsion from the University. First violations of academic integrity policies in this course result in a zero on the assignment. Second violations in the same course result in failing the class. All academic integrity violations are reported to the university and further penalties may incur.

*All work submitted or presented for a grade in this class must be written in your own words and original to this term. You may not reuse work previously submitted to any other class. You may not copy or transcribe anyone else's material, including but not limited to websites, museum publications, books, or articles. You may not use AI to assist in the content of your group presentations.* Presentations that appear to rely on content generated by AI will receive a failing grade and/or other sanctions in alignment with the university's academic integrity policy.

**ADA accommodation statement:** UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid delay in implementation. Note that students must communicate with faculty throughout this process.

**Student Support Services:** UNT provides resources to students to help ensure there are numerous outlets to turn to that wholeheartedly care for and are there for students in need, regardless of the nature of an issue or its severity. Listed below are several resources on campus that can support your academic success and mental well-being:

- Dean of Students: <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/dean-of-students/>
- Student Health and Wellness Center: <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/index.html>
- Counseling and Testing Services: <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services/>
- UNT Care Team: <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/dean-of-students/programs-and-services/care-team/>
- Eagle Engagement Center: <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/eagle-engagement-center/index.html>

**Survivor Advocacy:** UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. Federal laws (Title IX and the Violence Against Women Act) and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex and therefore prohibit sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking, and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. UNT's Survivor Advocates can assist a student who has been impacted by violence by filing protective orders, completing crime victim's compensation applications, contacting professors for absences related to an assault, working with housing to facilitate a room change where appropriate, and connecting students to other resources available both on and off campus. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at [SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu](mailto:SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu) or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565-2648. Additionally, alleged sexual misconduct can be non-confidentially reported to Equal Opportunity & Title IX at [oeotix@unt.edu](mailto:oeotix@unt.edu), <https://titleixeo.unt.edu/index.html>, or 940-565-2759.

**Emergency notification and procedures:** UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). Please make sure your information is current with this system.

**Course disclaimer:** Content in the arts can sometimes include works, situations, actions, and language that can be personally challenging or offensive to some students on the grounds, for example, of sexual explicitness, violence, or blasphemy. As the College of Visual Arts and Design is devoted to the principle of freedom of expression, artistic and otherwise, it is not the college's practice to censor these works or ideas on any of these grounds. Students who might feel unduly distressed or made uncomfortable by such expressions should withdraw at the start of the term and seek another course.

**Please note:** The professor reserves the right to alter this syllabus and schedule if necessary.

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### **Schedule**

Jan 12 (M): Introduction to the course; why study Mughal art?

Jan 14 (W): *Sources of Mughal Inspiration: Delhi Sultanate Architecture*  
Readings: Asher Chp. 1, 1-9; and Menon essay

#### **Jan 19 (M): Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (Holiday)**

Jan 21 (W): *Sources of Mughal Inspiration*  
Reading: Asher, Chp.1, 9-18

Jan 26 (M): *The Early Mughals: Babur (r. 1526-30)*  
Reading: Asher Chp. 2, 19-30

Jan 28 (W): *The Early Mughals: Babur*  
**Group 1 presentation** (Babur's tomb)

Feb 02 (M): *The Early Mughals: Babur*  
Reading: Truschke essay

Feb 04 (W): *The Early Mughals: Humayun (r. 1530-40; 1555-56)*  
Reading: Asher Chp. 2, 30-36

#### **Feb 09 (M): Exam 1**

Feb 11 (W): *Art during the reign of Akbar (r. 1556-1605)*  
Movie Day!

Feb 16 (M): *Art during the reign of Akbar*  
Reading: Asher Chp. 3, 39-51; **Group 2 presentation** (Humayun's Tomb)

Feb 18 (W): *Art during the reign of Akbar*  
Reading: Asher Chp. 3, 51-67; **Group 3 presentation** (Fatehpur Sikri)

Feb 23 (M): *Art during the reign of Akbar*  
Reading: Rice essay

Feb 25 (W): *Art during the reign of Akbar*

Mar 02 (M): *Art during the reign of Akbar*

**Mar 04 (W): Exam 2**

**Spring Break—Mar 09 to Mar 13**

Mar 16 (M): *Art during the reign of Jahangir (r. 1605-1627)*

Mar 18 (W): *Art during the reign of Jahangir*  
Reading: Asher Chp. 4, 99-116; **Group 4 and 5 presentations** (Akbar's tomb and Lahore Fort)

Mar 23 (M): *Art during the reign of Jahangir*  
Reading: Singh essay

Mar 25 (W): *Art during the reign of Jahangir*

March 30 (M): *Patronage of Nur Jahan*  
Reading: Asher Chp. 4, 127-33; **Group 6 presentation** (Tomb of Itimad al-Daula)

Apr 01 (W): *Art during the reign of Shah Jahan (r. 1628-1658)*  
Reading: Asher Chp. 5, 209-215

Apr 06 (M): *Art during the reign of Shah Jahan*  
Reading: Asher Chp. 5, 169-74; **Group 7 presentation** (Jahangir's Tomb)

Apr 08 (W): *Art during the reign of Shah Jahan*  
Reading: Asher Chp. 5, 178-89; **Group 8 presentation** (Agra Fort)

Apr 13 (M): *Art during the reign of Shah Jahan*  
Reading: Stronge essay

Apr 15 (W): *Art during the reign of Shah Jahan*

Apr 20 (M): *Art during the reign of Shah Jahan*  
Reading: Asher Chp. 5, 189-202; **Group 9 presentation** (Red Fort, New Delhi [Shahjahanabad])

Apr 22 (W): *Art during the reign of Shah Jahan*  
Reading: Asher Chp. 5, 202-04; **Group 10 presentation** (Jami Masjid, New Delhi)

Apr 27 (M): *Art during the reign of Shah Jahan*

**Apr 29 (W): Exam 3; Last class day**