Course description: Art History Senior Seminar explores research methodologies and practices of scholarship relevant to art historical study. The course is organized and delivered as a seminar consisting of assigned readings, class discussion, and substantial oral and written work. It is taught on a rotating basis by art history faculty.

Course content & objectives: This seminar explores the myths and the making of the Taj Mahal. The Taj, India's most famous monument, is often characterized as a symbol of love, a model of architectural perfection, a material replica of Islamic paradise, a national icon, and the measure of all that is cliché in a tourist site. In order to better understand these various responses to the Taj, we will first examine the monument in its historical context, focusing on selected primary sources available to us. These include translations of contemporary written accounts and the art historical evidence of the buildings and gardens that constitute this vast tomb complex. With this background, we will then start to deconstruct the myths, legends, and scholarly theories that attempt to explain the prominent place of the Taj in global imaginations.

In addition to the course content outlined above, we will also spend considerable time further developing the skills required in art historical research. These skills include the compilation and writing of an annotated bibliography and a conference-length research paper.

Goals of the course include:
(1) to foster critical thinking
(2) to further develop research skills
(3) to refine writing skills
(4) to enhance presentation skills and the articulation of ideas in the classroom

There is no assigned textbook for this course. Weekly readings are available: (1) on 2-hour reserve in Willis library; and/or (2) on Blackboard Learn (learn.unt.edu). For the list of reserve books see the pdf titled Resources on Blackboard.

Course structure: This seminar meets once a week for two hours and fifty minutes. The course is structured on the reading and discussion of publications that feature aspects related to the study of the Taj Mahal. Each week, the class readings focus on a specific theme. These readings, some of which are translations from primary sources from the period, will introduce students to the dynastic history of the Mughals and the artistic tradition of tomb building in northern India. With this foundation, we will then examine various reactions, preconceptions, and representations of the monument that have shaped its...
"life" throughout history. Though we address a different theme each week, the readings build off of each other so that we can better understand how the monument has come to express these varying identities. Students will be assigned readings in common throughout the course but will also have the opportunity to pursue individual research.

Designed and organized as a seminar, students are expected to have thoroughly read, and digested, the assigned readings. Moreover, it is the student-based presentations and discussions of these readings that make up the course. I encourage students to come and see me during office hours if they are having difficulty with the material or if they feel they are not expressing themselves adequately in class.

**Attendance policy:** As this course meets only once a week, students are expected to attend every class. Attendance will be taken each week and students are allotted only 1 absence without penalty. Any absences thereafter will result in a lowering of the student's participation/attendance grade by 10 points for each additional absence. If a student is absent on a day that an assignment is due, it is the student's responsibility to email me the assignment during the designated class period. Otherwise, the assignment will be considered and graded as late. Late assignments will be marked down one full grade (i.e. 10 points) for each day it is late. Late assignments are not accepted after the Friday following Monday's class.

**Course requirements and grading criteria:**
- **Object ID:** 5%
- **Group Presentations, Participation and Attendance:** 10%
- **Written Summaries (200-250 words each; 4 at 5%)** 20%
- **Annotated Bibliography** 15%
- **Initial Draft of Paper** 20%
- **Final Paper** 30%

**Object ID:** Early in the semester, students will submit a one-page document that identifies the artwork that will serve as their main object of focus for the research paper. This document should include the following details: the title, date, place of origin, dimensions, media, artist (if applicable), and institution where the artwork is housed. Please also provide an image and a brief description of the artwork. Identify specific questions that will serve as a framework for your research. Guidelines for this assignment will be distributed and discussed on the first day of class.

**Description of weekly readings, written summaries, and group presentations:** Every week there are readings uploaded onto Blackboard. ALL students are to carefully read ALL materials prior to the assigned class date. If your Group is directed to present one of the readings (indicated on the syllabus as G presents...), then your group is required to create a single powerpoint (or some other form of visual presentation) to aid you in leading the class in a discussion of that specific reading. Each group member is required to present/contribute to this class presentation. If your group is NOT presenting, then you are responsible for submitting a written summary of each reading. Each summary should be between 200-250 words and you should clearly identify the main arguments made by the authors and assess their use of evidence to support their assertions. These summaries will be used to facilitate discussion and will be turned in at the end of class. They will be graded on both content and the mechanics of writing. See the Grading Criteria on the last page of this syllabus.

**Annotated bibliography:** Mid semester, students will turn in an annotated bibliography for their independent research paper. The bibliography should have a minimum of 10 scholarly sources (books and articles) that relate to the research topic. Online sources, such as webpages, must be approved by me
in advance and will not be counted as part of the 10 sources. Examples of an annotated bibliography will be distributed and discussed in class at the appropriate time.

**Initial draft and final paper:** Students will engage in independent research and writing on their selected artwork. Any methodological or theoretical approach is welcome. The first draft of the paper (minimum 5 full pages) is due on Monday, Nov 12th. Students will receive substantial feedback on both the content and the mechanics of writing during individual meetings the following week(s). Make sure to hold on to your marked-up draft as it must be turned in along with the final version of the paper. The final paper (8-10 pages) must incorporate my editorial suggestions and demonstrate substantial development from the initial draft. Guidelines for the initial draft and final research paper will be discussed in class at the appropriate time in the semester. Final papers are due during our scheduled final for this class: BLB 035, Monday Dec 10, 1:30-3:30.

**Student behavior in the classroom:** Student behavior that interferes with a professor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct

**Academic integrity standards and consequences:** According to UNT Policy 18.1.16, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism necessitates that I file an incident report to the appropriate authorities and this may result in your failing the assignment, failing the course, and/or being expelled from the University. Please ask me if you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism and how you should give proper acknowledgement to your sources in your written work.

**Sexual discrimination, harassment, and assault:** UNT is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any of these acts of aggression, please know that you are not alone. The federal Title IX law makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses. UNT has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

**ADA accommodation statement:** UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (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 any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and
must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA website at disability.unt.edu

Course risk factor: According to University Policy, this course is classified as a category 1 course. Students enrolled in this course will not be exposed to any significant hazards and are not likely to suffer any bodily injury. Students in this class will be informed of any potential health hazards or potential bodily injury connected with the use of any materials and/or processes and will be instructed how to proceed without danger to themselves or others.

Emergency 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). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Blackboard for contingency plans for covering course materials.

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

Aug 27: Introduction to the seminar, What is the Taj and Whose Taj is it?
Group assignments; discussion of Object ID assignment

Sept 03: No class—Labor Day
Work on Object ID

Sept 10: Monument to Love—Primary Sources


G3 and G4: Written Summaries Due

Sept 17: Monument to Love—Popular Perceptions
Object ID assignment due

G3 presents: Catherine B. Asher, "Fantasizing the Mughals and Popular Perceptions of the Taj Mahal." Tasveer Ghar: A Digital Archive of South Asian Popular Visual Culture


G1 and G2: Written Summaries Due
Sept 24: The Complex—Architectural Features

**G1 presents**: Ebba Koch, *The Complete Taj Mahal*, 152-194 (mausoleum, mosque, and assembly hall)
**G3 and G4: Written Summaries Due**

Oct 01: The Complex—Urban and Garden Setting

**discussion of annotated bibliography**

**G1 and G2: Written Summaries Due**

Oct 08: Models and Symbolism

**G3 and G4: Written Summaries Due**

Oct 15: Debates over Symbolism

**G1 and G2: Written Summaries Due**

Oct 22: Politicizing the Taj

**annotated bibliography due**

**G3 and G4: Written Summaries Due**
Oct 29: Exhibiting the Taj
guidelines for initial draft and final paper


**G3 presents:** Pratapaditya Pal, ed., *Romance of the Taj Mahal*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1989 on reserve in Willis Library; and Reviews of the Exhibition uploaded on Blackboard

**G1 and G2: Written Summaries Due**

Nov 05: Tourist Taj


**G2 presents:** Tim Edensor, "Walking, Gazing, Photographing and Remembering at the Taj," 119-128 (Gazing).

**G3 presents:** Tim Edensor, "Walking, Gazing, Photographing and Remembering at the Taj," 128-135 (Photographing).

**G4 presents:** Tim Edensor, "Walking, Gazing, Photographing and Remembering at the Taj," 135-148 (Remembering).

Nov 12: Future Taj

Initial drafts due; sign up for individual meetings

Nov 19: Individual meetings

Nov 26: Individual meetings

Dec 03: Last Class—Research presentations

Dec 10: Final research paper due in the classroom (BLB 035) between 1:30-3:30

**Grading Criteria for Written Summaries:**

A = An ‘A’ paper means that there were little to no errors in grammar/spelling and that each summary demonstrates that the student not only carefully read each assignment, but thoroughly analyzed the author's use of evidence. An ‘A’ grade also indicates that the student recognized the larger issues raised in the readings.
B = Such a grade indicates that the student was able to execute the assignment with diligence and forethought, though some main issues in the reading(s) were not fully addressed. A grade of ‘B’ also usually indicates that there were limited structural, spelling, or grammatical problems.

C = This is similar to the ‘B’ description, but the number of problems is more extensive. These may include significant grammatical or structural problems, too many generalities, and/or not addressing the main issue(s) and evidence used in the assigned readings.

D = A grade of ‘D’ indicates that the student did a poor job in demonstrating that s/he read the assignments. Further, grammatical/structural problems make a ‘D’ summary quite difficult to follow. There are usually far too many generalities and a lack of analysis.

F = This either indicates that the assignment was not done or what was done was simply unacceptable for any number of reasons. This includes any indication of plagiarism, which may entail further academic penalty. See the description of plagiarism in this syllabus.

Grading Criteria for Initial Draft and Final Research Paper:

A = Such a grade indicates that the student's paper was thoroughly researched and written with clarity of thought. An ‘A’ paper means that there were little to no errors in grammar/spelling and that the introduction and conclusion were clear as was the development of the body of the paper. An ‘A’ paper presents a thesis supported or addressed through rigorous analyses, solid use of evidence, and employment of exceptional sources. An ‘A’ paper advances the state of scholarship on the chosen topic.

B = Such a grade indicates that the student was able to execute research and writing with diligence and forethought. A ‘B’ paper presents a clear thesis, good use of evidence, and utilizes significant academic sources. It differs from an ‘A’ paper in that it could have been more rigorous in its employment of sources, evidence, and/or analysis. A grade of ‘B’ also usually indicates that there were limited structural, spelling, or grammatical problems.

C = This is similar to the ‘B’ description, but the number of problems is more extensive. These may include significant grammatical or structural problems, adding irrelevant material or new material inappropriately, too many generalities, and/or relying on limited or non-specialized sources. ‘C’ papers often contain too many quoted passages and/or the thesis statement is not articulated clearly nor supported through analysis.

D = A grade of ‘D’ indicates that the student did a poor job in articulating a thesis and in conducting the necessary research to support the line of inquiry. A ‘D’ paper also usually contains numerous grammatical/structural problems that make it difficult to read and/or follow the argument. There are usually far too many generalities, a lack of analysis, and/or poor use of sources.

F = This either indicates that the assignment was not done or what was done was simply unacceptable for any number of reasons (including not turning in the initial draft and/or not fulfilling the page-length requirement). A grade of ‘F’ may also indicate plagiarized material, which may entail further academic penalty. See the description of plagiarism in this syllabus.