



ARTH 4825 – Survey of Islamic Art Spring 2026

**Fridays 11:00am-1:50pm
ART 280**

Rock Crystal Ewer with Gold and Enamel Mounts - Fatimid (980 - 1020 CE) with French embellishments (1854)

Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity

-Simone Weil (1909-1943)

letter to Joë Bousquet, 13 April 1942; Simone Pétrement *Simone Weil: A Life* (1976) tr. Raymond Rosenthal

Instructor: Dr. Tiffany Floyd

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:00-2:00pm in ART 244

Course Description

This course will explore the diversity of artistic production which is associated with the broad art historical category of Islamic Art. We begin in the seventh century (CE) and progress through different caliphates until we reach the modern period after the Ottomans. The final section of the class will then explore modern and contemporary art from within the WANA (West Asia, North Africa) region to ascertain the legacies of Islamic art. This survey will consider artworks from a variety of methodological and material perspectives.

Course Objectives

- *Identify and analyze* major works of Islamic Art from different caliphates and geographic regions
- *Learn and apply* relevant vocabulary related to Islam and Islamic art/architecture
- *Learn and apply* relevant contextual information about Islam and its practices to artistic production
- *Analyze* the form, context, subject matter, and materiality of major works of Islamic Art
- *Consider* the curation of Islamic Art in museums – themes, methods, challenges
- *Understand* the complexity and diversity of Islamic Art, along with the historiographic details of this art historical category
- *Understand* how modern and contemporary art relates to historical trajectories of Islamic Art

Course Readings

Please prepare the assigned readings **prior** to their listed class day. Readings in your syllabus that are not included in your required textbook will be provided as pdfs on canvas.

Required Textbooks

- Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Art and Architecture*, World of Art Series, 2nd edition, 2021
- John Tolan, *A New History from Muhammad to the Present*, Princeton University, 2025 (note this book is available [online](#) through the UNT Library)

Suggested Books (a brief selection of general and popular texts)

- Ettinghausen, Richard, Oleg Grabar, and Marilyn Jenkins-Madina. *Islamic Art and Architecture, 650-1250*. Yale University Press, 2003.
- Blair, Sheila, and Jonathan Bloom. *The Art and Architecture of Islam, 1250-1800*. Yale University Press, 1996.
- Grabar, Oleg. *The Formation of Islamic Art: Revised and Enlarged Edition*. Yale University Press, 1987.
- Ruggles, D. Fairchild. *Islamic Art and Visual Culture: An Anthology of Sources*. John Wiley & Sons, 2011.
- Blair, Sheila, and Jonathan Bloom, eds. *Islamic Art: Past Present and Future*. Qatar Foundation, 2019.

*Additional resources will be provided on canvas

Course Requirements and Grading

- Class Attendance: 10%
- (1) Group Project: 15%
- Formal and Material Analysis – 20%
- Subject Matter Analysis – 20%
- Context Analysis – 20%
- Final Recorded Presentation – 10%
- DMA Visit Object Evaluation Form – 5%

More detailed descriptions of each assignment will be posted to canvas

Course Policies

Late work

Please endeavor to turn your assignments in on time. This is important for keeping the class on track, especially considering how the assignments are structured. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, ***no late work will be accepted***. If these circumstances cause you to miss a deadline, then ***you will have one week (3 days) from the deadline*** to turn in your work for credit. Please communicate with me about missing assignments as soon as possible, do not wait until these 3 days have passed to let me know that you will be turning in your assignment. This extension *does not apply* to work due at the end of the semester or to your group presentation.

Attendance

Your attendance in class is required. I will take attendance in each class and will offer no excused absences for any reason. However, it is always good to communicate with me if you miss class. Your attendance grade will be 10% of your overall grade. ***If you miss a class, you can complete a make-up assignment = a one-full page summary of the optional reading listed for that day to be turned into canvas before the next class meeting.***

Academic Integrity

Most of your assignments will be submitted to canvas and run through TurnItIn, a plagiarism detection tool that also scans for AI-generated material. Your work MUST be 100% your own and written without the use of generative-AI software (be careful, even editing software – i.e. Grammarly – can change your work enough to be flagged by TurnItIn). If you are found to have plagiarized or to have used AI to generate your work, you will receive a **ZERO** on the assignment for the first infraction and you will **FAIL** the class for the second infraction.

Zoom Option

This is a face-to-face course and as such most of your participation must be in-class. However, you may take a Zoom option **ONCE** during the semester as needed. You **must** communicate with me at least one hour prior to class if you will be joining via Zoom and you **must** still submit your 'reading summary' assignment prior to the beginning of class. During your zoom session, you will also be required to post notes in the chat box to demonstrate that you are participating in class. You **cannot** use your zoom option to participate in your group presentation.

Course Schedule

1. January 16th – Introduction to the Course – Some basics on Islam and Islamic Art

Optional Reading: Bloom and Blair, "The Mirage of Islamic Art: Reflections on the Study of an Unwieldy Field," *The Art Bulletin*, 2003; John Tolan, "The Quran and the Birth of a Community of Believers"

2. January 23rd – The Umayyads

Required Reading: Hillenbrand, "Chapter 1: The Birth of Islamic Art: The Umayyads;" Tolan, "Chapter 2: The Umayyad Dynasty and the Birth of an Imperial Religion"

Optional Reading: Flood, Finbarr Barry. "Damascus and the Making of an Umayyad Visual Culture," in *The Great Mosque of Damascus: Studies on the Makings of an Umayyad Visual Culture* (2001); Nassar Rabbat, "The Meaning of the Umayyad Dome of the Rock," *Muqarnas* (1989).

3. January 30th – The Abbasids

Required Reading: Hillenbrand, "Chapter 2: The 'Abbasids;" Tolan, "Abbasid Baghdad: Crucible of a Multiconfessional Civilization"

Optional Reading: Hoffman, Eva R. "Between East and West: Wall Paintings of Samarra and the Construction of Abbasid Princely Culture", *Muqarnas* 25 (2008), 107-132; Michael Cooperson, "Baghdad in Rhetoric and Narrative," *Muqarnas* 13 (1996), 99-113.

4. February 6th – Al Andalus (The Muslim West)

Required Reading: Hillenbrand, "Chapter 7: The Muslim West;" Tolan, "The Three Caliphates of the Year 1000"

Optional Reading: Khoury, Nuha N.N., "The Meaning of the Great Mosque of Cordoba in the Tenth Century", *Muqarnas* 13 (1996), 80-98; Bush, Olga. "The Writing on the Wall: Reading the Decoration of the Alhambra", *Muqarnas* 26 (2009), 119-147.

5. February 13th – The Fatimids and the Ayyubids

Formal and Material Analysis Paper Due to Canvas by 11:59pm

Required Reading: Hillenbrand, "Chapter 3: The Fatimids;" Selection from Bloom, *Arts of the City Victorious*

Optional Reading: Bloom, "Painting in the Fatimid Period: A Reconsideration" JRAS (2022); Selections from Bloom, *Arts of the City Victorious*

6. February 20th – The Mamluks

Required Reading: Hillenbrand, "Chapter 6: The Mamluks;" Tolan, "Invasions and Reconfigurations of the Muslim World, Eleventh-Thirteenth Centuries"

Optional Reading: Kenney, Ellen. "Mixed Metaphors: Iconography and Medium in Mamluk Glass Mosaic Decoration", *Artibus Asiae* 66,2 (2006), 175-200; Jenkins, Marilyn. "Mamluk Jewelry: Influences and Echoes", *Muqarnas* 5 (1988), 29-42; Hillenbrand, "Mamluk and Ilkhanid Bestiaries: Convention and Experiment", *Ars Orientalis* 20 (1990), 149-187.

7. February 27th – Visit to the DMA's Keir Collection

Deadline to sign up for Groups

8. March 6th – The Seljuqs, The Ilkhanids, and the Timurids (with the Mongols)

DMA Visit Object Evaluation Form Due to Canvas by 11:59pm

Required Reading: Hillenbrand, "Chapter 4: The Seljuqs;" Hillenbrand, "Chapter 5: The Age of the Atabegs: Syria, Iraq and Anatolia 1100-1300;" Hillenbrand, "Chapter 8: The Ilkhanids and the Timurids"

Optional Reading: Redford, Scott. "Thirteenth-Century Rum Seljuq Palaces and Palace Imagery", *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993), 219-236; Blair, Sheila. "The Development of the Illustrated Book in Iran", *Muqarnas* 10 (1993) 266-274; Sims, Eleanor. "The Illustrated Manuscripts of Firdausi's *Shahnama* Commissioned by Princes of the House of Timur", *Ars Orientalis* 22 (1992), 43-68.

9. March 13th – Spring Break – No Class

10. March 20th – The Safavids

Subject Matter Analysis Paper Due to Canvas by 11:59pm

Required Reading: Hillenbrand, "Chapter 9: The Safavids;" Tolan, "Muslim Empires (Fourteenth-Seventeenth Centuries)"

Optional Reading: Galina Lassikova, "Hushang the Dragon-Slayer: Fire and Firearms in Safavid Art and Diplomacy," *Iranian Studies* (2010), 29-51; Farshid Emami, "Coffeehouses, Urban Spaces, and the Formation of a Public Sphere in Safavid Isfahan," *Muqarnas* (2016); Sahar Hosseini, "The Invisible Lake of Sa'adat-abad and the Safavid Architecture of Affect," *JSAH* (2023).

11. March 27th – The Mughals

Required Reading: Selections from Ebba Koch, *The Mughal Empire from Jahangir to Shah Jahan: Art, Architecture, Politics, Law and Literature*.

Optional Reading: Koch, Ebba. "The Taj Mahal: Architecture, Symbolism, and Urban Significance", *Muqarnas* 22 (2005), 128-129; Selections from Sylvia Houghteling, *The Art of Cloth in Mughal India*

12. April 3rd – The Ottomans and Colonialism

Required Reading: Hillenbrand, "Chapter 10: The Ottomans;" Hillenbrand, "Chapter 11: Towards Modernity;" Tolan; "Colonization and Its Discontents, 1798-1918;"

Optional Reading: Necipoglu, Gulru. "Creation of a National Genius: Sinan and the Historiography of 'Classical' Ottoman Architecture", *Muqarnas* 24 (2007), 141-183;

13. April 10th – Group Presentations

Group Project Due to Canvas by 11:59pm

14. April 17th – Colonialism and Orientalism

Required Reading: Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient," in *The Politics of Vision*; Edward Said, "Introduction," *Orientalism*

Optional Reading: Ali Behad, "Chapter 1: The Orientalist Photograph," in *Camera Orientalis*; Mary Roberts, "Introduction," in *Intimate Outsiders: The Harem in Ottoman and Orientalist Art and Travel Literature*

15. April 24th – Modernity

Required Reading: Tolan; "Decolonization, Nationalism, and the Emergence of Political Islami in the Twentieth Century;" Nada Shabout, '[Are Images Global?](#)', in *Tate Papers* no.12, 2009; Silvia Naef, "Reexploring Islamic Art" *Res* Spring 2003.

Optional Reading: Selections from *Postwar Revisited: A Global Art History*

16. May 1st – Contemporary Islamic Art

Context Analysis Paper Due to Canvas by 11:59pm

Required Reading: Tolan, "Between Reform and Radicalism: Being Muslim in the Twenty-First Century;" Sussan Babaie, "Voice of Authority: Locating the 'Modern' in 'Islamic' Art," *Getty Research Journal* (2011); Linda Komaroff, "Islamic Art Now and Then."

Optional Reading: Wijdan Ali, "Contemporary or Modern Islamic Art?;" Venetia Porter, "Art and the Image"

17. May 8th – Finals Week – No Class

Final Recorded Presentation Due to Canvas by 11:59pm

Group Topics

Group One: Calligraphy and the Arabesque

Group Two: Geometry

Group Three: Trade

Group Four: Science and Medicine

Group Five: Palaces

Summary of Deadlines (everything will be turned in via canvas)

Formal and Material Analysis Paper - February 13th (Due to Canvas by 11:59pm)

DMA Visit Object Evaluation Form - March 6th (Due to Canvas by 11:59pm)

Subject Matter Analysis Paper - March 20th (Due to Canvas by 11:59pm)

Group Presentations - April 10th in class

Group Project Due - April 10th (Due to Canvas by 11:59pm)

Context Analysis Paper - May 1st (Due to Canvas by 11:59pm)

Final Recorded Presentation – May 8th (Due to Canvas by 11:59pm)

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. The College of Visual Arts and Design is devoted to the principle of freedom of expression, artistic and otherwise, and 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.

Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences

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, 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.

The "unauthorized" use of any person or technology that assists in a student's assignment, project, or paper is considered cheating under the UNT Student Academic Integrity Policy (UNT Policy 6.003). Unless a professor or instructor gives explicit "authorization," AI cannot be used to complete assignments, projects, or papers. Doing so will result in a "cheating" violation. AI should not be used to assist in writing papers, searching for sources, or creating citations. Citations provided by AI are fabricated by mimicking existing bodies of work. In most cases, AI will pull direct quotes from existing sources to answer queries and make-up information about the source. AI can be used ethically to help you develop an outline for a paper, generate ideas, and learn a citation style.

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

Emergency Notification & 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 Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Acceptable Student Behavior

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor'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.

The Use of Artificial Intelligence

In this course, I want you to engage deeply with the materials and develop your own critical thinking and writing skills. For this reason, the use of Generative AI (GenAI) tools like [Claude, ChatGPT, and Gemini, even Grammarly to a certain extent] is not permitted. While these tools can be helpful in some contexts, they do not align with our goal of fostering the development of your independent thinking. Using GenAI to complete any part of an assignment, exam, or coursework will be considered a violation of academic integrity, as it prevents the development of your own skills, and will be addressed according to the Student Academic Integrity policy.