

ARA 4930/ 039G – Islamic Material Culture
Spring 2017

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Monday, Wednesday and Friday 4th period
Room: 239 Little Hall

Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday 5th period (11: 45 – 12: 45)

If you are unable to come during my office hours, you may call my office or send an email to arrange for another meeting time. Email is the quickest and most reliable way to reach me.

Course Description

This course will present an overview of the material culture of the past and present Islamic communities. Material culture is everything people use for all aspects of their life, and ranges from jewelry, clothes and other small personal objects, to all household and work-setting related items, to buildings and architectural elements. These may be items of daily life use, or ones that people use in specific social, cultural and religious occasions and settings. Such items may come from purchase, local manufacturing, or inheritance. Material culture items reveal a lot about any society's well-being. Some items reflect social and class status. Others are related to the spiritual and religious beliefs and practices, while others are indicatives of power and gender relations and political systems. It is important to understand that while people create and possess material culture for whatever purpose, their life also becomes strongly affected and shaped by it.

The purpose of this course is to help students reach a well-founded understanding of Islamic material culture items that is far beyond their physical and artistic components. This requires exploring the political, cultural, economic and social conditions in the specific regions where and when these items were made or used. Furthermore, is also crucial to understand the impact these items might have had in shaping these conditions.

Course objectives

Upon course completion, the student should be able to:

- A. understand the terminologies, categorizations and historical periods relating to Islamic material culture items.
- B. explore and understand the relationship between Islamic material cultural items and their contexts.
- C. use scientific techniques in objects analysis.
- D. generate creative and thoughtful suggestions for exhibitions and objects display, and provide interpretation and care of cultural material items.

Textbook

Technology, Tradition and Survival: Aspect of Material Culture in the Middle East and Central Asia (History and Society in the Islamic World)

Author: Richard Tapper and Keith McLachlan

ISBN: 9780714644875

This textbook is recommended

Other readings will be posted on Canvas or place on hold in the library

Classroom policy

Canvas: All assignments, announcements, exercises, study guides, grades and other materials will be posted on the course page on Canvas. It is your responsibility to check the page regularly and keep up with all materials and announcements that will be posted.

Attendance: Student who misses 3 sessions or more without a documented excuse will receive a failing grade. For more details, please refer to the following website:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx#absences>

Late and Make-Up Work: No late work will be accepted or make-ups will be offered unless the student offers a legitimate documented excuse.

Cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off in the classroom.

Academic Integrity: Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. An academic honesty offense is defined as the act of lying, cheating, or stealing academic information so that one gains academic advantage. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the Honor Code is bound by honor to take corrective action. Violations of the honor code include, but are not limited to: plagiarism, cheating, bribery, misrepresentation, fabrication, and conspiracy. Such violations may result in the following: lowering of grades, mandatory 0 on assignments, redoing assignments, a final failing grade in the course, expulsion from the course, referral to the student-run Honor Court. The Honor Code states: “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.” On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: *On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.* For more information, refer to:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/conductcode.php>

Students with Special Needs: Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office (Disability Resources in Reid Hall). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

Course components

Attendance and class participation (10% of your total grade).

This class depends on your active participation. It is, therefore, highly crucial to be physically present and fully and efficiently engaged in conversations, discussions, presentations and all other listed projects. Class participation also includes being active in online discussions and turning in any assignments that you will be requested to do on time.

Personal object presentation (15% of your total grade)

Select one object that belongs to you or to one of your family members. These may include, but not limited to memorabilia, souvenirs, or any object that has social, religious or historical importance. Obtain as much details as possible about the provenance and history of this object and what does it mean to you or to your family? Collect or compose your own oral history narrative(s) of the importance of this object and what personal connection and emotional response it might have to you or to your family. Prepare a 10 minutes PowerPoint presentation on your object. You may bring your object to your presentation if possible. However, if you decided to bring it to class,

it is utterly your own responsibility to ensure the safety of your object while being transported to and back from class.

Here are the details you need to present about your object:

Description of the physical attributes: what is it made of? How tall, wide and heavy? What are the artistic details and features of this object that stand out?

How frequently can this object be found and where?

What are the socio-cultural attributes of this object? Where was it made, and how was it acquired?

Who uses it (male or female), and in what occasions if any?

How much did it cost when it was first acquired and how much it costs now?

Object presentations will take place in week 7 and 8

Exam (10% of your total grade)

We will have only one exam during this course and it will be in week 12. The focus of this exam is to test your knowledge of the Islamic material culture terminologies and historical periods.

Chapter review and critique (10% of your total grade). Due in week 8

Each student will be assigned a book chapter to review and critique. This will be due in week 8 (before you leave for the spring break). Your review and critique should be no less than 4 pages and must include the following:

1. Introduction and main idea: use your introduction part to summarize the topic of the chapter you are reviewing. Explain the author's main premises.
2. How does this chapter relate to this course?
3. List 4 or 5 main points in the chapter. Explain each point using your own words. Also, explain what evidence or argument does the author present to support his/ her points.
4. Give your personal evaluation of the argument the author is making. What did you learn about Islamic material culture from this chapter? Are you left with any questions that you think the chapter should have addressed?

Harn Museum Islamic art Objects analysis (15% of your total grade)

We will be working with the Harn Museum Asian art curator to examine and analyze some objects in their Islamic art collection. We will make several visits and spend considerable time at the

museum to conduct the objects analysis. Object analysis simply means offering an understanding of the object within its original historical and geographical contexts. Your analysis should focus on the three main categories of function: “the socio-function”, “the techno-function” and “the ideo-function”. The final draft of your analysis is due in week 14.

We will adapt the Michael C. Carlos Museum of Emory University and Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester object analysis rubric. A copy of the rubric will be posted on canvas.

Exhibition (15 % of your total grade)

Campus leftover material culture project

For this exhibition, we will be collecting and displaying as much as possible of material items that campus population leaves behind every day laying on the street. This exhibition depends totally on your effort and active participation. While you are doing your daily errands around campus, look carefully, and if you see anything of material value (regardless of how low or high their value might be, or how good or bad their physical condition might be), pick it up, mark the place and time where and when you picked it up on your notebook, label it, and keep it safe for the exhibition. Items may include pens and pencils, cigarette empty boxes, books and notebooks, coins, hair accessories and other cosmetic items, cloths, shoes, glasses, umbrellas, hats and car and bike accessories. Don't pick or bring trash items such disposables, food items and boxes, commercial ads and campus newspapers. The items you will collect will be typologically or functionally categorized, labelled and displayed.

The idea behind this exhibition is to understand the connection between material culture items and context. Would it be possible to identify the context with these items? Would this exhibition help a person who doesn't know the context to reach any conclusions such as age, gender, race, religion and sex orientation of the people who used these items?

Your grade in this part of the course depends on your active contribution in all the steps of the exhibition project. We will put the exhibition together and display it during the last 2 weeks of class. Location will be determined later.

Final paper: (25% of your final grade)

Search for a reputable museum Islamic art collection in Europe or North America and write a paper about it. Your paper should be no less than 10 pages, double-spaced. Use 12 point Times New Roman font. You should address the following in your paper:

The history of building up your chosen Islamic art collection (did it come from donations, and if yes who donated it, was it purchased? Did it come from archaeological excavations, and if yes where and when?)

What categories of Islamic art objects are represented in this collection? What pieces in this collection stand out to be historically, culturally and artistically unique?

Name all the geographical regions and historical periods that are represented in this collection.

Any other observations that you may have noted about this collection.

Below is a list of museums and art galleries with Islamic art collections. Please pick one of them and let me know by the end of week 6. If I don't hear from you by the end of week 6, I will randomly assign you a collection/ museum to be the topic of your paper. If you are interested in working on an Islamic art collection/ museum other than the ones listed below, please let me know.

No two students will be allowed to work on the same collection.

1. The Los Angeles County Museum of Art
2. The Metropolitan Museum of Art
3. The Benaki Museum (Athens, Greece)
4. The Louvre (Paris)
5. The Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (National Museums in Berlin)
6. The Aga Khan Museum in Toronto, Canada
7. The British Museum
8. Shangri La, Honolulu
9. Freer/ Sackler Gallery at the Smithsonian Museum of Asian Arts
10. San Antonio Museum of Art
11. The Art Institute of Chicago
12. Worcester Art Museum, Massachusetts
13. Dallas Museum of Art
14. Ashmolean Museum, UK
15. The Detroit Institute of Arts
16. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
17. The Khalili Collections (private collection, not a museum)
18. The Saint Louis Art Museum

Weekly schedule

Week 1 Jan 4th-6th	Introduction What is material culture and what is nonmaterial culture?
Week 2 Jan 9th-13th	Theory of material culture categories of Islamic material culture
Week 3 Jan 16th-20th	Household Islamic material culture Food-related Islamic material culture
Week 4 Jan 23th-27th	Islamic Material culture as a simple of power Islamic architecture
Week 5 Jan 30th- Feb 3rd	Islamic Material culture as a simple of power Islamic coins
Week 6 Feb 6th-10th	Islamic art at the Harn Museum A week at the Harn
Week 7 Feb 13th-17th	Islamic material culture: gender issues
Week 8 Feb 20st-24th	Personal Objects presentations Chapter Review due
Week 9 Feb 27th- March 3rd	Personal Objects presentations
Week 10 March 6th-10th	Spring break
Week 11 March 13th-17th	Regional Islamic material culture: The case of Turkey Regional Islamic material culture: The case of Spain http://islamic-arts.org/2011/the-alhambra-a-virtual-walking-tour/
Week 12 March 20st- 24th	Islamic material culture of the dead: Islamic graves and tombstones Exam
Week 13 March 27th-31st	Islamic material culture as evidence of cultural diversity African Islamic material culture Material culture of minority groups in Islamic societies
Week 14 April 3th-7th	Islamic material culture as a source of history The Harn Object analysis due
Week 15 April 10th-14th	Islamic material culture as a source of history Exhibition set up and display Final Papers due (on Friday)
Week 16 April 17th-18th	Exhibition talk and discussion

Holidays (No classes)

January 16: Martin Luther King Jr. Day

March 4-11 Spring Break