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**Civic
Architecture
in Islamic
History**



Throughout most of its 1500-year history, Islam impressed upon the multitude of cultures and states under its aegis certain characteristics that assimilated its religious principles with various legal, social, technological, and cultural borrowings from these same cultures and states. This adaptive process permeated most socio-cultural domains, including the urban and architectural ones, and produced recognizable diversity-in-unity expressions. Countless examples of palatial, commercial, military, industrial, residential, and landscape architecture, in addition to a number of little-understood structures that straddle the religious and the profane realms, subsume and reflect these “Islamic” multicultural qualities in their forms, functions, and meanings. Their totality is what we can term civic architecture.

This course will chronologically review select examples and types of architecture from the seventh to the twenty-first century that best embody these aspects, and analyze the visual, spatial, structural, and occupational techniques deployed to achieve them. It will also consider the urban, social, and political factors that lent

them their particular characters and assess how they coalesced into architectural traditions influenced by various cultural, historical, and interregional dynamics at different critical junctions. In our investigations, we will not only use modern studies on the buildings and their urban or territorial settings, but we will try to see them through the experiences of their original users by consulting a variety of primary sources from poetry to travel reports to biographical dictionaries.

The class is open to both graduates and undergraduates. Its format alternates between lectures and discussion sessions. Class

requirements are three short papers (7-8 pp) and a class presentation for undergraduates. Graduate students may substitute some or all papers by a research paper on a topic to be discussed with the instructor and to be presented in class.

Required Texts: George Michell, ed. *Architecture of the Islamic World: Its History and Social Meaning*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1978 [reprint 1984]; John D. Hoag *Islamic Architecture (History of World Architecture)* (Phaidon, 2004, Paperback)

SPRING 2010

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