4.619

Historiography of Islamic Architecture

DAY:	Wednesday
TIME:	2:00-5:00
ROOM:	5-216
INSTRUCTOR:	Nasser Rabbat
E MAIL:	nasser@mit.edu
UNITS:	3-0-9, H-Level Grad Credit
PREREQUISITE:	Consent of instructor
	Required for AKPIA SMarchS

This seminar offers a critical review of scholarship on Islamic architecture in the last two centuries through close reading of texts, museum exhibitions, and architectural projects. It also raises methodological and historiographical questions about the field's formation, development, and its historical and theoretical contours. First is how can we study a culturally defined architectural tradition like Islamic architecture without reducing it to essential and timeless categories? Second, how can we critique the dominant Western architectural paradigm without discarding the idea of paradigm or turning away from its comparative examples? Third, how can we rethink periodization in Islamic architectural history in a more internally representative way without cutting it off from a global historical framework? And fourth how can we reclaim the assumed temporal boundaries of Islamic architecture —Late Antiquity as a predecessor and Modernism as a successor— as constitutive forces in its evolution?

The course includes weekly reading and writing assignments and requires preparation of and participation in discussions. A research paper is to be first presented in class and then submitted at the end of the term. Topics are limited to in-depth studies of texts, representations, and scholarly traditions within the field. A short abstract and preliminary bibliography should be submitted by the fourth week. No text is required for the seminar. All assigned readings will be available on the Stellar Site.