

ART 350: Traditional Islamic Arts

Credits: 3 credit hours

Program Location: Amman, Jordan

Term and Year:

Name of Instructor:

Course Hours: 3 Hours

Contact Information:

Email:

Aims and Objectives of the Course:

- Understand the status of geometry as a universal science in Traditional Islamic Art.
- Become aware of new terminologies/concepts and simple symbolism inherent in geometry.
- Develop a subtle understanding of the two symmetries of six and eight fold, plus primary grid systems (both regular and semi-regular).
- Develop good preparation of all working materials in order to achieve a high standard of working practice.
- Develop excellent geometrical drawing technique to achieve clean, presentable work.
- Develop keen color sense in painting through visualizing the musicality of geometry inherent in pattern.
- Develop sketchbook skills for both color and sample experimentation. Practice visual and textual research documentation in response to each topic given in lecture.
- Develop research skills from the use of sources such as the Internet and books.
- Requires each student to prepare and present work as portfolio and for discussion during project reviews.

Course Description:

This course introduces students to the study of traditional Islamic art in two dimensions. The first dimension focuses on the basic concepts of the sacred geometry that is the basis of traditional Islamic art. The second consists of a practical art project in two media: illumination & *zillij* (mosaic tile work). In the first dimension, students study the underlying principles of sacred geometry and practice the production of those geometric patterns that recur in traditional Islamic art forms. This is done, in part, through the repeated drawing of circles from which the traditional Islamic geometric patterns emerge. In the second module, more complex patterns will be used to create a work combining all three representations of Islamic art – geometry, calligraphy, and biomorphic motifs.

By the end of the course, students will understand the design principles in Islamic art by studying the sacred geometry. Students will also have experience with two different materials and the traditional methods of working with these materials to produce an art work. In addition to producing the art pieces, students will create a portfolio which documents their journey throughout the course.

Learning outcomes for the course

By the completion of this course, students will be able to:

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- Demonstrate contextual knowledge of traditional geometry: appreciation of origin, meaning and application, and teaching and learning.
- Demonstrate methods, tools, and a critical awareness of symmetries underlying pattern composition.
- Demonstrate drawing skills and analysis: knowledge and practical application of methods of geometric construction using appropriate materials and tools.
- Recognize and identify levels of grid structures in pattern-making using overlay drawings, by comparing specimen patterns of traditional architectural arts and crafts.
- Describe the technical and spiritual dimension of traditional crafts which are in danger of being lost in our modern day.

Knowledge

This course is designed to assist students to acquire and demonstrate knowledge about:

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- The fundamental elements of sacred geometry.
- Derivation of the semi-regular grid of equilateral triangles and dodecagons, and construction of twelve-pointed stars.
- The analytical process related to primary grids.
- The traditional and the contemporary application of geometry.
- Basic methods and materials of traditional illumination and zillij art .

Skills

This course is designed to assist students in acquiring or enhancing the following skills:

- Drawing skills and analysis
- Knowledge and practical application of methods of geometric construction
- Use of materials and tool

Attitudes

This course is designed to encourage development of the following attitudes:

- Open-minded universal attitude.
- Patience
- Positive thinking
- Color and shapes palates
- More appreciation of hand made good

Recommended Reading

- Critchlow K B, *Islamic Patterns, An Analytical and Cosmological Approach* (Thames and Hudson, 1999)
- Stierlin H, *Islamic Art and Architecture*, (Thames and Hudson, 2002)
- Critchlow K B, *Time Stands Still* (Gordon Fraser, 1979)
- El-Said I, *Geometric Concepts in Islamic Art* (World of Islam Festival Trust, 1976)
- Burckhardt T, *Art of Islam*, (World of Islam Festival Trust, 1976)
- Nasr S H, *Islamic Art and Spirituality* (Golgonooza Press, 1987)
- Hedgecoe J and Damluji S S, *Zillij –The Art of Moroccan Ceramics* (Garnet, 1992)
- Lawlor R, *Sacred Geometry* (Thames and Hudson, 1982)
- Pedoe D, *Geometry and The Liberal Arts* (Penguin, 1976)
- Huntley H E, *The Divine Proportion* (Dover, 1970)
- Ghyka M, *The Geometry of Art and Life* (Dover, 1977)
- Wade D, *Crystal and Dragon – The Cosmic Two Step* (Green Books, 1991)
- Bently W A and Humphreys W J, *Snow Crystals* (Dover, 1962)
- Volwahsen A, *Living Architecture – Islamic Indian* (Macdonald, 1970)
- Michaud A and S, *Colour and Symbolism in Islamic Architecture* (Thames and Hudson, 1996)
- Clevenot D and Degeorge G, *Ornament and Decoration in Islamic Architecture* (Thames and Hudson, 2000)
- Ardalan N and Bhaktiar L, *A Sense of Unity* (University of Chicago Press, 1973)
- Al-Meheid, Minwer, *The Reconstruction of the Minbar of Salah Al Din*, Doctoral Thesis, University of Wales (2004).

Assessment Overview

Description	Weight	Due Date
Engagement	10%	Continuous
<u>Sacred Geometry</u> Mark Breakdown <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geometrical Drawings • Color, Texture, and inspiration • Research/Sample Experimentation 	45% Mark Breakdown (out of 100) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 marks • 20 marks 	Geometry drawing and painting Submission: For the first tutorial and review Final Assessment:
<u>Application Module</u> Mark Breakdown <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methodology • Final Piece 	45% Mark Breakdown (out of 50) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25marks • 20 marks 	Final Assessment:

Attendance and Engagement

Students are expected to attend all regularly scheduled classes and come prepared to participate fully in class activities. Students are further expected to be on time for all classes. Arriving late for class is disrespectful of both the instructor and fellow students.

Beyond being in class on time, expectations of student engagement that are accounted for in this portion of the grade include both quality and quantity: full involvement in in-class exercises, class discussions, active listening and asking questions, and proactively seeking additional help during office hours if needed. Throughout the semester, there are a number and variety of program activities that are mandatory for all students. They are announced in advance and reminders are sent. They have an Arabic language component and are tied to activities in Arabic classes. Failure to attend mandatory program activities therefore reflects negatively on students' attendance and engagement grade.

Overview of Attendance Policy

Each meeting of the integrated Arabic class occurs in two parts, divided by a short break. Attendance at both parts of each class meeting is critical for student success, and therefore expected and required. Please note: while the two halves of class are considered one course meeting, each half will be treated separately in terms of considering both tardiness and attendance. **In other words, missing one half of class will count as one absence; missing both halves of class will count as two absences. A student who misses an entire day of Arabic thus accrues two absences.**

In AMIDEAST courses that meet once a week, students are permitted one unexcused absence; in courses that meet twice a week students are permitted two unexcused absences; in courses that meet three or more times a week students are permitted three unexcused absences. **As the integrated Arabic class meets 4 times per week, students are permitted four unexcused absences.** If a student has more than the permitted number of unexcused absences, their grade for the course will be lowered by one “mark” for each additional unexcused absence. In other words, after four unexcused absences from the integrated Arabic course, an A becomes an A-; after five an A becomes a B+; after six an A becomes a B, etc.

An unexcused absence is one not caused by illness or otherwise not approved in advance by AMIDEAST staff. An excused absence means written approval from the Program Manager (and sometimes a doctor) justifying the absence. Arriving late to class may also count towards an absence.

Summary of Attendance Policy

1. Four occurrences of tardiness are equivalent to one unexcused absence; each subsequent instance of tardiness is considered an additional unexcused absence.
2. Students are expected to do the required reading and/or exercises before class, volunteer for presentations, and participate actively in class discussions.
3. Excused absences are determined by the lead AMIDEAST staff member; in some instances a doctor’s note or some other certification may be required.
4. Deadlines for assignments and scheduled or unscheduled assessments must be respected, even in cases of excused absences. Instructors are under no obligation to accept any work missed due to unexpected absences. AMIDEAST Education Abroad is under no obligation to reschedule any assessments missed due to unexpected absences. Attendance at office hours is not a substitute for class attendance. Students are expected to review course materials and identify their problems and questions in preparation for office hours.
5. Students are responsible for getting homework assignments they miss and submitting them in a timely manner. Assignments turned in after the due date result in a penalty to be determined by the instructor.

6. Any assignments not submitted will result in that assignment being given a grade of 0 (zero).
7. The Attendance Policy is in effect until the last day of the program.

Assessment Tasks

Sacred Geometry

- GEOMETRICAL DRAWINGS 25%
- COLOR, TEXTURE, AND INSPIRATION RESEARCH/SAMPLE EXPERIMENTATION 20%

Students join a group critique exercise to share the results both of drawing exercises during class and work from independent study, (they then continue working on their projects keeping in mind the feedback from their peers). This is carried out in a friendly and mutually supportive atmosphere designed to draw out the highest potential of each student. Some topics for discussion include:

- pin-up of drawings for comparative study
- analysis of construction methods
- pattern application in architectural art & craft
- cosmological significance
- observations about pattern compositions in terms of correct use of subtleties of proportion
- line thickness, color and tone

This part counts towards 45% of the overall course grade

Application Module

- 25 marks – methodology
- 20 marks the final art piece

Each student has to choose one of the following prescribed arts and then develop their personal art project in which students will need to produce A3 Visual portfolio sheets reflecting upon the both visual and textual research of source materials, color work, and geometric analysis. Documentation of all work and methodology procedures is expected and necessary for evaluation.

Illumination

These classes are fundamentally exercises in color and ornamentation mainly in the Islamic tradition.. They draw and paint straight from chosen objects in the library with constant supervision from the tutor who shows them how the biomorphic forms (*islimi* or *arabesque*) are all based on geometric principles. Thus, through careful observation, students learn from the masters of the past about the profound value of freehand drawing. Together, with instruction on technique and as much practice as time allows, students are able to produce a finished piece of beautiful illumination work.

Zillij

Students will learn about the preparation of clay and all materials needed to carry out their work. During the course, the students will absorb the symbolic interpretation of the *zillij* craft and a comprehension of the alchemical journey, which is traditionally perfected through patient discipline, love, and knowledge. This effort also amounts to the beauty that can be revealed in

one's soul. The students are also shown the possibilities within primary grid structure and how they can be used to express more complex geometric patterns.

This part counts towards 45% of the overall course grade and is obligatory for all students.

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Class Work	Homework	Exams, Trips and Holidays
Week				
Week 1		Visual Slide Show Terminological descriptions Primary circle Division into six-fold flower/star/hexagon Simple primary patterns to provide a) Equilateral triangle lattice Grid b) Hexagonal lattice Grid Simple symbolic understanding. What is the microcosm of shape? The Vesica and Circle-microcosmic relationship Microcosm of square Microcosm of Hexagon/six pointed star COLOR GRIDS	Visual research	

MODULE 1 (WEEKS 2-5): Sacred Geometry

<p>Week 2</p>		<p>Simple six fold symmetries of hexagons and six pointed stars plus a simple pattern of hexagons surrounded by smaller hexagons as featured in the illuminated <i>Mamluk</i> manuscripts</p> <p>Introduction to twelve-fold Symmetry. Distinguish the three star variations plus dodecagon. Simple symbolism. Introduction into the semi-regular grid and geometrical construction of repeated semi regular pattern.</p>		<p>COLOR GRID Visual research</p>
<p>Week 3</p>		<p>Construction of the four and the 8 pointed stars</p> <p>Primary Division of Circle into four-fold/eight-fold. Develop perpendicular Axis Eight pointed star/eight-fold flower Marriage of two squares Repeated drawings in Four fold to provide variations which include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A) Square orthogonal b) Square Dynamic c) octagon grid d) kahatam cross pattern 		<p>Square grid PAINTINGS Visual research</p>

Week 4		Eight-fold Symmetry exercises Simple pattern designs of Khatam/cross mother pattern in orthogonal and dynamic station and internal shapes stars plus a simple pattern of 8 fold surrounded by smaller octagons as featured in the illuminated <i>Mamluk</i> manuscripts		8 fold painting Visual research
Week 5		Construction of the five and the 10 pointed stars Single and repeated Semi-regular construction in providing five pointed star pattern repeated five times in mirror symmetry		5 fold painting Visual research
MODULE 2: Clay Craft				
Week 6		First tutorial meetings with professor Sketchbook Research and Portfolio first review		
Week 7		Break		

Week 8		Clay craft <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clay craft application introduction Tiles pressing OR cutting based on patterns learnt in the geometry sessions Glazez samples Transfer the design to the plates 		Saltos workshop
Week 9		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize the plate Tutorial meetings with professor process documentation and portfolio review 		Saltos workshop
Week 10		Final decision for the tiles project colors Glazing the tiles		Saltos workshop

MODULE 3: Biomorphic design

Week 11		Motives practice and IZNIK design observation . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free hand motive practice Choosing the project and start the analysis 		
Week 12		Excursion		
Week 13		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize Iznik project Mamluke Illumination project introduction Mamluke Illumination project painting 		

Week 14		Finalize Mamluke Illumination project painting		
Week 15		Reflection Session		