

Course Syllabus

AHST 6335

Special Topics in Asian Art History

The Mughals



Unknown artist, "Portrait of a Noblewoman," 1675-1700, opaque watercolor on paper, Dallas Museum of Art, 7.2007.20

Spring 2025

Wednesdays: 1 PM - 3:45 PM
ATC 2.705E

Instructor: Ali Asgar Alibhai
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Office Hours:

By Appointment Virtual and In-Person at ATC 2.706

Course Summary and Objective:

This course explores the art and architectural history of the Mughals, delving into the intricate relationship between artistic production and the social, cultural, and political fabric of the Mughal Empire. Through a critical examination of the Golden Age of Akbar, Jehangir, and Shah Jahan, students will investigate the role of art and architecture in the creation of empire, expressions of power and succession, and the messaging embedded in Mughal paintings and artifacts. The course will also consider the decline of the Mughal Empire under Aurangzeb and the subsequent impact of colonialism, tracing how Mughal art and architecture influenced both India and global colonial legacies. By studying advancements in painting, textiles, jewelry, manuscripts, and monumental architecture, students will gain a comprehensive understanding of Mughal contributions to the visual arts. Hands-on learning will be emphasized through direct object studies of Mughal-period artifacts in collaboration with the Dallas Museum of Art (DMA) and the Keir Collection of Islamic Art.

Course Objectives:

1. **Historical Context:** Understand the socio-political and cultural dynamics of the Mughal Empire and their influence on art and architectural production.
2. **Empire and Power:** Analyze how Mughal rulers utilized architecture and art to consolidate power, assert dynastic legitimacy, and communicate political messages.
3. **Golden Age of Mughal Art:** Investigate the artistic advancements during the reigns of Akbar, Jehangir, and Shah Jahan, focusing on their patronage of painting, textiles, jewelry, and monumental architecture.
4. **Material Culture:** Explore key artifacts, including manuscripts, metalwork, and textiles, to understand their role in the rituals and customs of Mughal society.
5. **Colonial Impact:** Examine the decline of the Mughal Empire, the transition to British colonial rule, and how Mughal artistic traditions were adapted, preserved, and reimagined during and after colonialism.
6. **Scholarship and Methodology:** Engage with historical and contemporary scholarship on Mughal art history, cultivating critical analysis and research skills.
7. **Object Study:** Conduct in-depth studies of Mughal-period artifacts in collaboration with local art collections (DMA or Keir Collection), applying material analysis and contextual interpretation.
8. **Global Legacies:** Reflect on the enduring influence of Mughal art and architecture in modern Indian culture and its global resonance.

By the end of the course, students will have a nuanced understanding of Mughal art and architecture and be equipped to critically analyze its cultural significance within both historical and contemporary frameworks.

Required Reading Material:

All course material will be made available to students through the class UTD BOX folder. Please let me know if you cannot find a source or something hasn't been uploaded.

<https://utdallas.box.com/s/6p4pc1xxecfgzbu8c735c4y4hyknb8ss>

Assignments Overview

1. Reading and Attendance:

This seminar emphasizes closely engaging with assigned weekly readings and actively participating in classroom discussions. The substantial reading load is designed to train students to critically evaluate scholarship in the field of Islamic art and architecture. Key points to note:

- **Prioritizing Readings:** Some readings will be emphasized more than others. Required readings are under each week in the syllabus, and the instructor will guide students on their selection.
- **Collaboration:** Students may read individually or collaborate with classmates to discuss and analyze readings.
- **Attendance Policy:** Seminars rely on in-class scholarly discussions and interaction with the instructor. Therefore, consistent and complete attendance is essential. If you cannot attend a class, notify the instructor in advance to work out an alternative solution.

2. Class Discussion Leader:

Each student will lead **three in-class discussions** over the semester, presenting on **one book** and **two articles** from the syllabus. Emphasis should be on **magenta** or **cyan blue** titles. Auditors should also choose to present at least one article.

Presentation requirements:

- **Articles:** Presentations should be 15–20 minutes (6–7 slides).
- **Books:** Presentations should be up to 30 minutes (10–12 slides).

Responsibilities for discussion leaders include:

- Framing the main argument of the selected work.
- Highlighting key pieces of information and insights.
- Leading the classroom discussion with thoughtful questions and scholarly observations.
- Using visual materials (slides and/or handouts) to enhance presentations.

3. Discovering the Keir Collection:

Students will explore the **Asian Art Collection** and the **Keir Collection of Islamic Art** at the Dallas Museum of Art (DMA). The objective is to identify Mughal-period objects, analyze them, and contextualize their significance through past and current research in Islamic art history.

4. Midterm Project:

For the midterm, students will select one object from the DMA (approved by the instructor) that dates to the Mughal period and was created under the Mughal dynasty. The project consists of:

- **Class Presentation:** On **March 5th**, students will present their detailed study of the selected object to classmates and guests. Class that day will take place at the Dallas Museum of Art.
- **Research Paper:** A **four-page paper** on the chosen object will accompany the presentation. The paper must include citations and a bibliography.

Preparation Tips:

Begin researching your selected object early, as additional references beyond UTD's library may be required.

The Class's Public Exhibition:

If feasible, the class will culminate in a **public art exhibition** aimed at introducing the art, architecture, history, and culture of the Mughals to the UT Dallas community in the month of April (tbd). This exhibition will provide an opportunity for students to share their research and creativity with a broader audience, fostering a deeper appreciation for Mughal contributions to the arts. Students will have the chance to participate in various aspects of the exhibition, including **planning, curating, execution, writing labels, creating artistic or digital works, or showcasing a project for display**. The exhibition is designed to be a collaborative effort that highlights the diverse skills and interests of the class while creating an engaging, educational experience for the university community.

Final Paper/Creative Project

Class Presentation May 7th
Due MAY 12th

The culmination of what you learn this semester will be comprised in a final project. This project can consist but is not limited to the following formats:

- **Final Paper** (Approximately 15 - 20 pages for graduate students and 10 - 15 pages for undergraduates).
- **A Performative or Visual Work** (i.e. artwork, video documentary, or other creative project).
- **Digital Online Museum Exhibition**
- **Culinary Demonstration**
- **NOTE:** All alternative choices **must be accompanied by a 7 page scholarly explanatory paper (cited with bibliography)** of the connection of your final project with the art and architectural history of the Mughal period. The paper should resemble a research paper which explains the art historical methods and knowledge you have learned in relation to your project.

All final projects must be discussed with and approved by the instructor **by March 26th or earlier**.

Grading:

Attendance and Participation (including Class Discussion Leading)	20%	
Midterm	20%	
Final Paper/Creative Project	30%	
Final Paper/Project Class Presentation	15%	
Class Public Exhibition	15%	

Useful Online Resources For This Course:

- Archnet: www.archnet.org
- Museums With No Frontiers: museumsnwf.org
- Dallas Museum of Art Keir Collection: collections.dma.org/topic/departments/keir
- The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History www.metmuseum.org/toah/
- https://travelsamwise.substack.com/?r=2zhvm3&utm_campaign=subscribe-page-share-screen&utm_medium=web
- @sikkawala INSTAGRAM
- @travelsamwise INSTAGRAM
- @Indialostandfound INSTAGRAM

For University of Texas at Dallas Official Policies Regarding this syllabus and course please refer to <https://coursebook.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>.

Weekly Readings

January 22nd

Introduction to the Class

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE
DISCUSSION OF SYLLABUS
ANNOUNCING DMA PROJECT*

WEEK 1: January 29th

Heirs to the Timurid Throne: Establishing the Mughal Empire (Part 1)

Francis Robinson, *The Mughal Emperors and the Islamic Dynasties of India, Iran, and Central Asia* (Thames & Hudson, 2020) (SKIM)

Catherine B. Asher, “Precedents for Mughal Architecture,” *The New Cambridge History of India: The Architecture of the Mughal Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), pgs. 1 - 18.

Finbarr Barry Flood, “Before the Mughals: Architecture, Aesthetics and the Dynamics of Argument,” *Muqarnas*, vol. 36 (2019), pp. 1–24.

WEEK 2: February 5th

Heirs to the Timurid Throne: Establishing the Mughal Empire (Part 2)

Catherine B. Asher, “The Beginnings of Mughal Architecture,” *The New Cambridge History of India: The Architecture of the Mughal Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), pgs. 19 - 37.

John Burton-Page, “Mughal Architecture,” *Indian Islamic Architecture: Forms and Typologies, Sites and Monuments* (Brill, 2008), pgs. 27 - 33.

Ebba Koch, *Mughal Architecture: An Outline of Its History and Development (1526–1858)* (Prestel Publishing, 1991), pgs 70 - 131.

Stephen F. Dale, "Empires and Emporia: Palace, Mosque, Market, and Tomb in Istanbul, Isfahan, Agra, and Delhi," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 53, no. 1/2 (2010), pp. 212–229.

Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (Columbia University Press, 2012).

WEEK 3: February 12th

Creating Paradise: Tombs, Gardens, Mosques, and Shrines (Part 1)

Ebba Koch, "Mughal Palace Gardens from Babur to Shah Jahan (1526–1648)," *Muqarnas*, vol. 14 (1997), pp. 143–165.

James L. Wescoat Jr., "The Changing Cultural Space of Mughal Gardens," in *A Companion to Islamic Art and Architecture*, edited by Gülru Necipoğlu and Finbarr Barry Flood, Vol. 2 (Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), pp. 958–980.

Ebba Koch, "The Garden of Babur in Kabul: A Dynastic Project of the Mughal Dynasty and Its Survival," *International Journal of Islamic Architecture*, vol. 12, no. 1 (2023), pp. 33–70.

James L. Wescoat Jr., "Water and Work in Mughal Gardens and Landscapes," *Journal of Material Cultures in the Muslim World*, vol. 3 (2022), pp. 112–137.

Shaha Parpia, "Mughal Hunting Grounds: Landscape Manipulation and 'Garden' Association," *Garden History*, vol. 44, no. 2 (Winter 2016), pp. 171–190.

WEEK 4: February 19th

Creating Paradise: Tombs, Gardens, Mosques, and Shrines (Part 2)

Pratyay Nath, "Pilgrimage, Performance, and Peripatetic Kingship: Akbar's Journeys to Ajmer and the Formation of the Mughal Empire,"

Michael Brand, "Orthodoxy, Innovation, and Revival: Considerations of the Past in Imperial Mughal Tomb Architecture," *Muqarnas*, vol. 10 (1993), pp. 323–334.

Glenn D. Lowry, "Humayun's Tomb: Form, Function, and Meaning in Early Mughal Architecture," *Muqarnas*, vol. 4 (1987), pp. 133–148.

D. Fairchild Ruggles, "Humayun's Tomb and Garden: Typologies and Visual Order," *Muqarnas*, vol. 10 (1993), pp. 128–137.

Ebba Koch, "The Taj Mahal: Architecture, Symbolism, and Urban Significance," *Muqarnas*, vol. 22 (2005), pp. 128–149.

Ebba Koch and J. P. Losty, "The Riverside Mansions and Tombs of Agra: New Evidence from a Panoramic Scroll Recently Acquired by The British Library," *Walters Art Museum Journal*, vol. 63 (2005), pp. 141–173.

WEEK 5: Feb 26th

Outward Presentations 1: Outward Presentations: Dressing the Empire with Prestige and Pomp in the Mughal Court

Gülru Necipoğlu, "Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces," *Ars Orientalis*, vol. 23 (1993), pp. 303–342.

Anna Kollatz, "Where is 'the audience'? Who is 'the audience'? Approaching Mughal Spaces of Social Interaction," in *The Ceremonial of Audience: Transcultural Approaches*, edited by Eva Orthmann and Anna Kollatz, pp. 185–212. Harrassowitz Verlag, 2019.

Ebba Koch, "The Mughal Audience Hall: A Solomonic Revival of Persepolis in the Form of a Mosque," in *The Ceremonial of Audience: Transcultural Approaches*, edited by Eva Orthmann and Anna Kollatz, pp. 123–152. Harrassowitz Verlag, 2019.

Ebba Koch, "The Wooden Audience Halls of Shah Jahan: Sources and Reconstruction," *Muqarnas*, vol. 19 (2002), pp. 166–193.

WEEK 6: March 5th

Outward Presentations 2: Ornamenting the Self: Objects, Textiles, Jewelry, and Weapons of the Mughal Court

Maryam Ekhtiar and Rachel Parikh, "Power and Piety: Islamic Talismans on the Battlefield," in *Islamicate Occult Sciences in Theory and Practice*, edited by Liana Saif, Francesca Leoni, Matthew Melvin-Koushki, and Farouk Yahya, pp. 495–520. Leiden: Brill, 2020.

Amrita Sen, "Jahangir's China and Other Toys: Mughal Collecting and the Early East India Company," *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 37, no. 5 (2023), pp. 719–735.

Sylvia Houghteling, "Sentiments in Silks: Safavid and Mughal Textiles," in *Affect, Emotion, and Subjectivity in Early Modern Muslim Empires: New Studies in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Art and Culture*, edited by Kishwar Rizvi, pp. 151–176. Leiden: Brill, 2017.

Christiane Hille, "Gems of Sacred Kingship: Faceting Anglo-Mughal Relations around 1600," in *The Nomadic Object: The Challenge of World for Early Modern Religious Art*, edited by Christine Göttler and Mia Mochizuki, pp. 239–268. Brill, 2017.

BOOK: Sylvia Houghteling, *The Art of Cloth in Mughal India* (Princeton University Press, 2022).

WEEK 7: March 19th

Gendered Taxonomies of Mughal Art

Emma Kalb, "Framing Gender in Mughal South Asia," *History Compass*, vol. 19, no. 12 (2021).

Ruby Lal, "Historicizing the Harem: The Challenge of a Princess's Memoir," *Feminist Studies*, vol. 30, no. 3 (Fall 2004), pp. 590–616.

Sunil Sharma, "Fā'iz Dihlavī's Female-Centered Poems and the Representation of Public Life in Late Mughal Society," in *Affect, Emotion, and Subjectivity in Early Modern Muslim Empires: New Studies in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Art and Culture*, edited by Kishwar Rizvi, pp. 175–192. Leiden: Brill, 2017.

Sunil Sharma, "Representation of Social Groups in Mughal Art and Literature: Ethnography or Trope?" in *Indo-Muslim Cultures in Transition*, edited by Alka Patel and Karen Leonard, pp. 61–74. Leiden: Brill, 2012.

Najma Khan Majlis, "Representation of Professional and Working Women in Mughal Miniature Painting (16th–18th Century)," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 67 (2006–2007), pp. 307–311.

BOOK: Ellison Banks, *Nur Jahan: Empress of Mughal India*

WEEK 8: March 26th

Sociography: Mapping The Others of the Mughal Court

Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Catholics and Muslims in the Court of Jahangir (1608–1611)," in *Writing the Mughal World: Studies on Culture and Politics* (Columbia University Press, 2011), pp. 249–278.

Antje Flüchter, "Diplomatic Ceremonial and Greeting Practice at the Mughal Court," in *Transkulturelle Verflechtungsprozesse in der Vormoderne: Asien, Afrika und Europa*, edited by Michael Jansen, Antje Flüchter, and Susann Jagodzinski, pp. 215–236. De Gruyter, 2016.

Ebba Koch, "The Symbolic Possession of the World: European Cartography in Mughal Allegory and History Painting," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 55, no. 2/3 (2012), pp. 547–580.

Najaf Haider, "Precious Metal Flows and Currency Circulation in the Mughal Empire," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 39, no. 3 (1996), pp. 298–364.

Gianni Dubbini, "Between Mughal Art, Ethnography and Realism: On Nicolò Manucci's Artistic Patronage in India (1680–1720)," *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, vol. 55, no. 1 (2019), pp. 265–316.

Jorge Flores, "The Sea and the World of the Mutasaddi: A Profile of Port Officials from Mughal Gujarat (c. 1600–1650)," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Third Series, vol. 21, no. 1 (January 2011), pp. 55–71.

BOOK: Audrey Truschke, *Culture of Encounters: Sanskrit at the Mughal Court* (South Asia Across the Disciplines). Columbia University Press, 2018

BOOK: Mika Natif, *Mughal Occidentalism: Artistic Encounters between Europe and Asia at the Courts of India, 1580–1630*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018.

WEEK 9: April 2nd

Between Brush and Pen: Mughal Works on Paper: Albums, Miniatures, Calligraphy, and Manuscripts (Part 1)

Kishwar Rizvi, "Introduction: Affect, Emotion, and Subjectivity in the Early Modern Period," in *Affect, Emotion, and Subjectivity in Early Modern Muslim Empires: New Studies in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Art and Culture*, edited by Kishwar Rizvi, pp. 1–14. Leiden: Brill, 2017.

Marie L. Swietochowski, "Decorative Borders in Mughal Albums," in *The Emperors' Album: Images of Mughal India*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987.

Annemarie Schimmel, "The Calligraphy and Poetry of the Kevorkian Album," in *The Emperors' Album: Images of Mughal India*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987.

Yael Rice, "The Mughal Imperial Image Between Manuscript and Print," in *The Routledge Companion to Global Renaissance Art*, edited by Jill Burke, pp. 366–382. London: Routledge, 2023.

Book: Yael Rice, *The Brush of Insight: Artists and Agency at the Mughal Court* (University of Washington Press, 2023).

WEEK 10: April 9th

Between Brush and Pen: Mughal Works on Paper: Albums, Miniatures, Calligraphy, and Manuscripts (Part 2)

Yael Rice, "Between the Brush and the Pen: Artistic Practice and Literary Culture in Mughal Manuscripts," in *Seeing the Past—Envisioning Islamic Art and Architecture: Essays in Honor of Renata Holod*, edited by David J. Roxburgh, pp. 151–178. Leiden: Brill, 2014.
Transporting India: The Gentil Album and Mughal Manuscript Culture

Chanchal Dadlani, "Transporting India: The Gentil Album and Mughal Manuscript Culture."

BOOK: Milo Cleveland Beach, *Mughal and Rajput Painting*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

WEEK 11: April 16th

Flora, Fauna, and Food: The Mughal Arts of Nature and Gastronomy

Vishu Antani & Santosh Mahapatra, "Evolution of Indian cuisine: a socio-historical review" *Journal of Ethnic Foods*, Volume 9, Article Number 15, 2022.

Neha Vermani, "The Perfumed Palate: Olfactory Practices of Food Consumption at the Mughal Court," *Global Food History*, vol. 9, no. 2 (2023), pp. 107–129.

Anku Bharadwaj. Feasts and Food Symbolism in the Court Culture of the Early Mughals (1504-1605 CE). *Research J. Humanities and Social Sciences*. 6(4): October- December, 2015, 255-268 doi: 10.5958/2321-

James L. Wescoat Jr., "Water, Climate, and the Limits of Human Wisdom: Historical-Geographic Analogies Between Early Mughal and Modern South Asia," *The Professional Geographer*, vol. 66, no. 3 (2014), pp. 382–389.

William Dalrymple, *Forgotten Masters: Indian Painting for the East India Company* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019).

WEEK 12: April 23rd

Delights and Delicacies: Splendors of the Mughal Court

Rachel Parikh, "Yoga under the Mughals: From Practice to Paintings," *South Asian Studies*, vol. 31, no. 2 (2015), pp. 131–146.

M.N. Pearson, "Recreation in Mughal India," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 1, no. 3 (1984), pp. 335–350.

WEEK 13: April 30th

Chanchal B. Dadlani, *From Stone to Paper: Architecture as History in the Late Mughal Empire* (Yale University Press, 2019).

William Dalrymple, *The Anarchy: The Relentless Rise of the East India Company* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019).

WEEK 14: May 7th

Conclusions and Student Presentations

***END OF CLASS CELEBRATORY MUGHAL DINNER - Saturday May
10th***