ART 350: Traditional Islamic Arts
Syllabus

Credit Hours: 3 credit hours
Program Location: Amman, Jordan
Term and Year:
Name of Instructor:
Course Hours:

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 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 *biamorphic* 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 biamorphic and the traditional methods of working with this design 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:

- 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 patternmaking 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:

- 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 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
- Recognizing and identifying levels of grid structures in patternmaking using overlay drawings, by comparing specimen patterns of traditional architectural arts and crafts.

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

Required Reading

- Critchlow K B, Islamic Patterns, *An Analytical and Cosmological Approach* (Thames and Hudson, 1999)

Recommended Reading

- 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 • Geometrical Drawings • Color presentation • Visual Research/Sample Experimentation	45% Mark Breakdown (out of 45) • 20 marks • 10 marks • 15 marks	Geometry drawing and painting Submission: For the first tutorial and review Final Assessment:
<u>Application Module</u> Mark Breakdown • Methodology • Final Piece	45% Mark Breakdown (out of 50) • 25 marks • 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. Failure to attend mandatory program activities therefore reflects negatively on students' attendance and engagement grade.

Please see the terms of the attendance policy as noted in the LMS for further details.

Sacred Geometry

- 20 marks - Geometrical Drawings
- 10 marks - Color presentation
- 15 marks - Visual Research/Sample Experimentation and inspiration

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
- discussion of geometry, calligraphy, and *islimi* in relation to crystalline and flowing forms of nature
- pattern application in architectural art & craft
- cosmological significance
- line thickness, color and tone

This part counts towards 45% of the overall course grade

Application Module

- 25 marks - Methodology
- 20 marks - 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 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.

Biomorphic design

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.

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

Course Schedule

Week	Topic(s) to be covered	Learning Outcome(s) Addressed	Preparation/ Readings	Assignments / Work Due
1	**Introductory Lecture What is Geometry?**	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 c) Combination of the two grids 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
2		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 *Mamluk* manuscripts 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.		COLOR GRID Visual research

3	**Construction of the four and the 8 pointed stars**	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 4 fold to provide variations which include A) Square orthogonal b) Square Dynamic c) octagon grid d) kahatam cross pattern		Square grid PAINTINGS Visual research
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 *Mamluk* manuscripts		8 fold painting Visual research
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
6	**Excursion (no class)**			
7	**Midterm evaluation**	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		

8	**Spring Break(no class)**			
9	**Pattern Analysis**	A more complex pattern based on the decagon to provide a central 10 pointed star surrounded by five pointed stars		10 fold painting Visual research
10		Introduction to Biomorphic design Motives practice and IZNIK design observation. • Illumination project introduction • Free hand motive practice • Choosing the project and start the analysis		Wild flowers photographing
11		Iznic plate making Design development Color study		
12		Guest speaker Professor Minwer Al meheid (The need for traditional arts) Finalizing the plate project		
13		Biomorphic painting Design analysis and color study		
14		Working on the biomorphic painting		
15		Finalize the portfolio and the artwork of the application module Course outcomes (portfolio, final projects of the clay craft) presentation and discussion		
16				
17				
18	**REFLECTION**			