

Graduate Course Syllabus

5000 Level

**CENTER
FOR MIDDLE
EASTERN
ARCHITECTURE
AND CULTURE**

PERSIAN ARCHITECTURE

FROM ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA TO THE END OF SASSANID ERA

This is a new course and will be offered every spring semester by:
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Director Center for Middle Eastern Architecture and Culture
College of Architecture, The University of Oklahoma

**College
of Architecture
The University of
Oklahoma**

DESCRIPTION

The Center for Middle Eastern Architecture and Culture at the University of Oklahoma, College of Architecture is proposing a new course on Iranian Architecture. The goal of the course is to guide students into an understanding of the important contributions that Persian has made to the art of building and landscape architecture. The rich legacy and tradition of Iranian architecture has accrued over at least the last thousand years and this course provides a comprehensive history of ancient Iranian architecture and urbanism, from the first societies to the present. Included in this course will be a consideration of the universal sense and unity of the diverse components of Persian architecture and their impact on the perennial dictates of man and nature.

In this course students will analyze buildings and the built environment as the products of culture and in relation to the special problems of architectural design and the history of architecture. The course will have an urbanist perspective that stresses the cultural and political context from which building arises. The intent of the course is to help students develop critical tools for the analysis and appreciation of architecture and its role in the intellectual environment in which we conduct our lives. Therefore, instruction in the course will include strong emphasis on the components of reading, critical thinking, and practice in oral and written communication.

Students will be introduced to the architectural tradition of Iran which reflects a rich inheritance of eternally valid responses to the perennial dictates of man and nature. These environmentally adaptive and culturally relevant principles and forms are treasures of correct, wholesome and balanced building design. Thus students will receive instruction in the principles of Iranian architecture as based upon human scale and the body's golden mean proportions with one purpose being to elicit in the student a profound sense of archetypal meanings of spiritual transcendence, sustainability, and cosmic unity.

In this course students will be introduced to the great buildings and engineering marvels of ancient Iranian architecture and landscape. The focus of the course is the pre-Islamic styles that are drawn on three to four thousand years of architectural development from various civilizations of the Iranian plateau. Each of the historical periods of the Elamites, Achaemenids, Parthians, and Sassanids show that these cultures were creators of great architecture that over the ages

has spread wide and far and were adopted by other cultures. Although Iran has suffered its share of destruction in its history, one of the hallmark destructions was when Alexander the Great made the decision to burn Persepolis, one of the greatest cities of antiquity. Fortunately sufficient remains of this and other ancient cities survive to form a picture of Iran's classical architecture.

Thus, as one of its objectives, this course will include an examination of the origin of Persian architecture as it developed and evolved through the several civilizations of ancient Mesopotamia over a period that spanned almost ten millennia. Students therefore will be introduced to the progression of ancient architecture as traced through its development in the several distinct cultures of Mesopotamia ("the Land between the Rivers") in the area that encompasses the Tigris-Euphrates river system.

The history of the area now known as Iran is still often referred to as Persia. It is an area critically important to the study of Middle Eastern architecture because of the contributions that Mesopotamian cultures made to the complex, artistic and broad cultural legacy of ancient Iran and Islamic civilization. Because the area of Iran has been populated since prehistoric times, it is thus one of the most animated and lively areas of Islamic civilization. By the sixth century BC this region was home to the first powerful empire that was led by Cyrus the Great during the Achaemenes dynasty. For over a thirty year period of rule his administration of ancient Persia influenced the aesthetic grammar of a large portion of central Asia, including Armenia, Georgia, and India. Consequently, beginning with ancient Iranian civilizations in 500 BC, through the Islamic period, and on to modern-day Iran, this course will explore the common characteristics and thematic threads of Persian art and architecture that run through Persian civilization. One of the methods to carry out this exploration will be to consider one of the most important cities that Cyrus the Great built, the "garden city" of Pasargadae. Although other cities will be evaluated, study of this one city alone illustrates the significant contributions that Cyrus the Great made to urban development.

An important objective of the course is to first point out to students that the most ancient Persian architecture that has been found was in the cities of Susa and Elam dating from 1600-1000 BC. Following this period of time the course will elaborate on the subsequent emergence of the Parthian and Sassanid cultures and the concomitant appearance of new forms in architecture. During this period Parthian innovations fully flowered as expressed during the Sassanid period with massive barrel-vaulted chambers, solid masonry domes, and tall columns. This influence was to remain for years to come and supply multiple precedents to subsequent eras. By example, the course will include consideration of the city of Baghdad that was founded in the Abbasid era (c. AD 750-1517) which was uniquely constructed in a circular form. This development points to its Persian precedents such as the city of Firozabad in Fars that was founded in the early third century BC with a design that also resembled a wheel and included concentric huge fortifications. When this city was constructed, its designers planned it so that the date of the foundation of the city would be astrologically auspicious.

Other ancient cities will be included for discussion and evaluation in this course as relates to the early influences on urban development and architecture, which

will include the ancient urban ruins of Persepolis, Ctesiphon, Jiro, Sialk, Pasargadae, Firozabad, and Arg-é Bam. Importantly, these cities cooperate in offering us a valuable glimpse of the contributions that Persians have made to the art of building and landscape architecture.

OBJECTIVES

- To provide a substantial history and knowledge of Persian Architecture.
- Studying a broad range of architecture, and landscape architecture
- Expand students' abilities in the methodology of architectural research
- Studying non-western architecture and civilization
- Develops students' ability to integrate information from multiple disciplines and to think critically.

PREREQUISITES

There are no prerequisites for this course

TEXTBOOKS

- Stierlin, Henri. *Persian art and architecture*. Thames & Hudson, London, 2012.
- Boardman, John. *Persia and the West*. Thames & Hudson, 2000
- Porter, Yves. *Palaces and gardens of Persia*. Palais et jardins de Perse, 2003.

Class will be provided with the key reading materials on the following topics:

- Architecture of Cyrus II the Great, Xerxes and Darius I
- Mesopotamian landscape architecture
- Academic Era and the concept of paradise Garden
- Persian Garden/Paradise Garden
- Ancient Iranian Citadel
- Tracing city and urbanism in Persia before the advent of Islam
- Palace of Ardeshir, innovative structural in ancient Persia
- Persepolis, manifestation of a unique architectural character
- Parthian and the palace of Hara
- Sassanid Fortress

REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES

- Attendance
- Semester homework
- Class presentation
- Research project
- Research project/design application
- 3 Exams

SEMESTER SCHEDULE

Lecture Themes

ELAMITES

- Meeting 01. Old Elamite
- Meeting 02. Middle Elamite
- Meeting 03. Anshan and Susa
- Meeting 04. Chogha Zambil

ACHAEMENIDS

- Meeting 05. Pasargadae
- Meeting 06. Persepolis
- Meeting 07. Susa
- Meeting 08. Ecbatana

PARTHIANS

- Meeting 09. Ctesiphon (Tâgh-i Kasrâ)
- Meeting 10. Anahita Temple
- Meeting 11. Sarvestan
- Meeting 12. Takht-e Soleymân

SASSANIDS

- Meeting 13. Palace of Ardeshir
- Meeting 14. Dej-e Shaapour-Khaast, Khoramabad
- Meeting 15. Darband, Russia
- Meeting 16. Great Mosque of Samara

GRADUATE RESEARCH Project

All graduate students in this course are required to produce a final research project that meet the higher standard of an academic work. A graduate research project is also for higher standards of education and understanding of research methodology by focusing on Persian architecture, planning, and landscape architecture.

GRADING

Six components will determine the semester grading

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| • Attendance..... | 170 |
| • Semester homework..... | 130 |
| • Class presentation..... | 150 |
| • Research project..... | 150 |
| • Research project/design application..... | 100 |
| • Three Exams..... | 300 |
| Total..... | 1000 |

This a letter graded course

A=920-1000
B=820-919
C=720-819
D=620-719
F=000-619

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Americans with Disabilities Act

Faculty members will provide "reasonable accommodation" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. It is primarily the student's responsibility to inform their faculty at the beginning of the semester and in providing authorized documentation through designated administrative channels. Any student in this course with a disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities, are requested to speak with the professor as early in the semester as possible. The University of Oklahoma is committed to

providing reasonable accommodation for all students with disabilities.

Students with disabilities must be registered with the Office of Disability Services prior to receiving accommodations in this course. The Office of Disability Services is located in Goddard Health Center, Suite 166, phone 405/325-3852 or TDD only 405/325-4173.

Student Handbooks

All students should familiarize themselves with the University's Student Code and the Division of Architecture's Undergraduate or Graduate Student Handbooks. The University's Student Code is available at:

http://studentconduct.ou.edu/images/stories/student_codebook.pdf.

The Division of Architecture's Undergraduate Student Handbook is available at <http://arch.ou.edu/handumain.htm>. The Division of Architecture's Graduate Student Handbook is available at <http://arch.ou.edu/handgmain.htm>.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form. All persons involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Discipline may include suspension or expulsion from the University. Students must familiarize themselves with the University's policy on plagiarism. The policy is available at <http://www.ou.edu/provost/integrity/>. Plagiarism is severely punished at OU and all Universities. This problem has become exacerbated by the extensive outreach of the internet. It is possible to obtain voluminous information on any subject, and a temptation for many students to "lift" entire paragraphs or entire essays from the web PARTICULARLY WHEN PRESSED FOR TIME. Please make it a practice to cite all references using Chicago Style, and never present anyone else's work as your own.

Religious Holidays

"It is the policy of the University to excuse absences of students that result from religious observances and to provide without penalty for the rescheduling of examinations and additional required class work that may fall on religious holidays." (Norman Campus Faculty Handbook. Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost, University of Oklahoma. Norman, OK, 2008. Section 3.13.2)

Final Review Week

A period of seven class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week unless specified in the class syllabi. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. This policy does not include laboratory/studio.

PERSEPOLIS IRAN

