

NORTHWESTERN

ART HISTORY

2026 WINTER COURSES

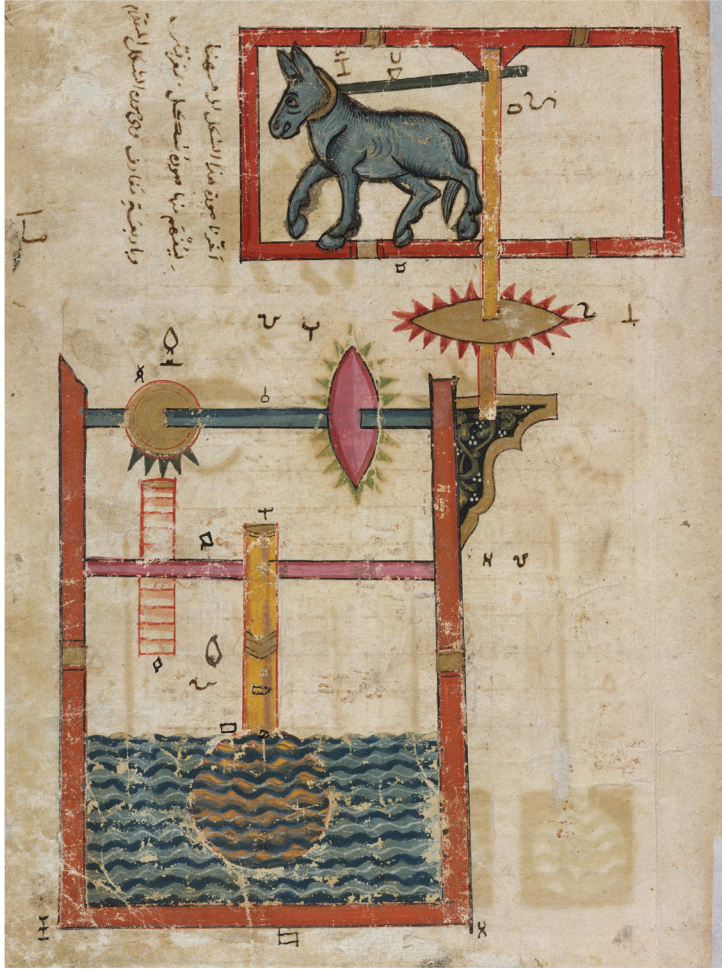


Image: Al-Jazari's design on each side for waterwheel worked by donkey power, folio from a 14th-century manuscript of the Book of the Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices. New York, The MET, 55.121.11. Rogers Fund, 1955.

ART HIST 226-0 MENA 290-6-2

Art and Visual Culture of the Islamic World

Professor: Bihter Esener

Day & Time: TTh 11am-12:20pm

This course surveys the diverse arts and visual cultures of the Islamic world from the seventh century to the present day. Following the rise of Islam as a new faith in the Judeo-Christian line, the Middle East developed a dynamic cultural order that integrated earlier traditions, including those of Byzantium and Iran. Our course traces the emergence and development of art, architecture, and archaeology in Islamic regions, beginning in the Arabian Peninsula and extending to the Mediterranean, North and Sub-Saharan Africa, the Iberian Peninsula, Iran, Turkey, Central Asia, China, and the Indian subcontinent. We will start with the Ka'ba in Mecca, the revelation of the Qur'an, and the significance of calligraphy in Islam, analyzing how Islamic art and visual cultures have engaged and connected with local, regional, and global traditions for over a millennium. We will investigate monuments, urban planning, architectural styles, portable objects, calligraphic designs, paintings, and prints that have circulated among dynasties, kingdoms, and empires across time and space. Contemporary artistic and visual expressions in Muslim-majority regions continue to thrive today by drawing on historical practices and adapting traditional forms. Through calligraphy, figural representation, or geometric patterns, the arts and visual traditions of Islam offer significant insights into human creativity, artistic exchange, and cultural heritage.

FOUNDATIONAL DISCIPLINES & OVERLAYS: FD-HS, FD-LA, Global Perspectives on Power, Justice, and Equity

WEINBERG DISTRO AREA: Historical Studies, Literature and Fine Arts