

BURCH SEMINAR PROPOSAL

BFRS 367: Burch Seminar in Morocco

Morocco: Mosaic of Art and Architectural History
Summer 2014

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Submitted: August 2012

I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The goal of this Burch Field Seminar is to understand the complex artistic traditions that laid the foundations of modern Moroccan culture and can still be experienced in the hammams, the mosques, the city gates, the archaeological ruins and the art history museum collections.

Morocco has a long and complicated history that includes several ethnic groups and influences from Africa, Asia and Europe. As an art history course, the Burch seminar will study the material culture – ceramics, jewelry, rugs, tile work, architecture, etc...- of Morocco as primary “texts” of this rich and varied history. This seminar explores not only the art historical roots of ancient Morocco, but also how its complex art and architectural history continues to shape modern Morocco.

The Kingdom of Morocco was the first country to recognize the fledging United States of America in 1777, and it has maintained close ties ever since. King Mohammed VIth (born 21 August 1963) is currently instituting reforms to the political, economic and social life of Moroccans (i.e., the 2003 Moudawana, rights of women) and initiating public works projects to strengthen the economic base of the Kingdom of Morocco by encouraging tourism. One of the aspects of his initiatives is a greater appreciation of Morocco’s art historical traditions and archaeological remains. Although the period of the French Protectorate (1904-1956) introduced significant changes to the material culture of Morocco, post-colonial Moroccans are exploring their history to define a uniquely Moroccan vernacular in the arts and architecture.

Although Morocco’s geographic location placed it on the frontiers of the Roman Empire, its strategic position between Spain and the more easterly portions of North Africa ensured that it was a haven for an exchange of arts, crafts, and architectural styles. Morocco’s traditions of art and architecture are as layered and as intricate as its national dishes of couscous and *bestilla*.

The students in this Burch Field Seminar will explore the many layers of Moroccan cultures with its roots in Roman, Arab, and Berber artistic and architectural traditions. Much of this legacy can be experienced and seen in modern Morocco. This seminar will be located in the capital city Rabat, where art and archaeological remains of previous civilizations are plentiful, or within driving distance. Rabat also is the home of the Archaeological Museum which is the main repository of Moroccan material history. Volubilis (Walili), the city that was a Roman foundation and the base of political power for the first Islamic dynasty in Morocco, lies just north of Meknes on the road to the historic city of Fez.

Students from the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill will travel with Professor Dorothy Verkerk to Morocco for seven weeks during the summer of 2014. They will receive credit for six hours. Parts of these two courses will take place as formal classroom lectures, discussions and presentations, but much of our work will be exploring the civilizations that make up modern Morocco and studying the official language of Morocco: Arabic Darija.

My own research is focused on the “after lives” of works of art and architecture that explores how subsequent societies re-used, re-classified, and re-valued the material remains of Late Antique culture. Most recently, I have focused my research on Ornament, studying the methodological approaches of scholars of Islamic art who can offer new ways of understanding the role of ornament beyond the limited approaches of traditional western European scholarship that places the decorative arts in a subsidiary role to the structure of narrative, the human body, and architecture. My site specific focus is on the mosaics of Volubilis (Walili), which show a melding of floor mosaic traditions with indigenous ornament.

II. ACADEMICS

Students on this 7-week program will be enrolled in the following two academic courses (three credits each):

- *The Art and Architectural History of Morocco: From Roman Morocco to Idrissid Fez to Modern Maroc*
- *Moroccan Culture and Arabic Language*

The academic content of the program will cover both courses equally during the seven weeks. For the language and culture course, there will be an expectation that each student will spend 1 to 2 hours of preparation and study per class session. The Center for Cross Cultural Learning, Rabat, will provide instructions in Moroccan Arabic dialect (Darija). The CCCL is located in a stunningly beautiful nineteenth-century villa in the old city of Rabat (the Medina).

The art history course will meet three days a week for 2 hours, allowing time for individual research projects. In coordination with the Arabic course, excursions will be planned that take students to visit historic sites, the archaeological museum, the souk, and hammams, where students can practice their language skills, whether newly acquired or at a more advanced level.

1. A week-long excursion takes the students to **Volubilis and Fez**.
2. Excursions to **Oudaïa, Chellah, Archaeological Museum**. Local guides, many of them are themselves students, are available at Oudaya and Chellah. My experience has been that their expertise is of varying quality so I will be in contact with CCCL to find a reliable guide. I am also contacting the curators at the Archaeological Museum to meet with the students and give them short lectures on objects in the museum. Also, I would like the curators to discuss the museum itself – when it was established and how it functions in the larger cultural history preservation of the country.

Outline of academic coursework:

1. HNRS 356, 01S: The Art and Architecture of Morocco: Roman Morocco to Idrissid Fez, 3 credits

Approaches: Visual and Performing Arts (VPA)

Major credit: ART 490-001

Description:

The site of Volubilis has been occupied since Neolithic times; however, it became an important Roman town situated near the westernmost border of Roman conquest. Volubilis was the administrative center of the province in Roman Africa called *Mauretania Tingitana*. The fertile lands of the province produced many commodities such as grain and olive oil, which were exported to Rome, contributing to the province's wealth and prosperity. Abandoned by the Romans in the third century CE, the city continued to be occupied until the fourth century, when it was damaged by earthquake. Latin inscriptions from this period, indicate that there remained a population that looked to Rome as its center, though it became a center of Berber political power. In 788 CE, Moulay Idriss I made Volubilis (renamed Walili) the center of his power. From Walili, he founded the ancient city of Fez. Only after the majority of his son, Moulay Idriss II, was the court moved from Walili to Fez.

Extensive excavations by the French in the early twentieth century and a second excavation project begun in 2000 have revealed that Volubilis is one of the best preserved ruins in North Africa, boasting an impressive array of architecture and *in situ* mosaics. The remains include the basilica, a thermae, a triumphal arch, the Temple to Jupiter, oil presses, granaries, and domestic structures, many of which have mosaics such as The House of the Charioteer. Sculpture, both in bronze and stone, and metalwork from Volubilis are now housed in the Archeological Museum in Rabat.

This course explores the history of Volubilis from its Roman foundation through the early medieval period when it becomes an Islamic city under Moulay Idriss I and Moulay Idriss II. The history of the city, from its Roman foundation to its transformation into an Islamic city, will begin with the architectural and material remains; however, the focus of the course will be to place the archaeological remains within the larger context of Roman and Islamic North Africa. Special emphasis will be on the shaping of a unique Moroccan culture, its roots in Berber, Roman, and Islamic cultures. <http://www.sitedevolubilis.org/>

The goals of the course are for students to learn the specialized vocabulary of Roman and Islamic art and architecture (i.e., corbelling, mihrab, muqarnas, qiblah, riad, tessera, etc...) that will allow them to articulate their understanding of the country's art and architecture as it moved from Roman influence to a unique style that is Moroccan. For example, the adaption of the mosque from the basilica plan, or the domestic floor mosaics that led to the geometric tiles that are ubiquitous all over the country, or the development of textiles from indigenous traditions. They will also learn how to work with primary materials by organizing them into a coherent exhibition. Acting as "curators" they will learn how to choose works of art, discuss them individually and as a group that addresses a theme that they have defined. Additionally, they will develop their oral presentation skills and their writing skills.

GOALS: 1) define a feasible, original topic 2) work with actual objects/architecture as primary sources 3) master art historical vocabulary 4) oral and written skills 5) place topic/art in larger cultural context.

Structure:

The course will begin with lectures by Professor Verkerk on the history of art and architecture of Morocco. As the course unfolds, the students will present their ideas for their exhibitions, receiving feedback from the lecturer and their peers. At least three of the afternoon lectures will take place outside the classroom in the Archaeological Museum or in places such as Chellah (necropolis in Rabat) and Oudaya.

Selected Readings:

Historical Background:

Djerbi, Ali and Abdelwahab Safi, "Teaching the History of Architecture in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco: Colonialism, Independence, and Globalization," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 62 (2003), 102-109.

Ilevbare, J.A., *Carthage, Rome, and the Berbers: A Study of Social Evolution in Ancient North Africa*, Ibadan University Press, 1980.

McKay, A.G., *Houses, Villas, and Palaces in the Roman World*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.

Miller, S.G., "Finding Order in the Moroccan City: The Hubus of the Great Mosque of Tangier as an Agent of Urban Change," *Muqarnas*, 22, (2005), pp. 265-283.

Pennell, C.R., *Morocco: From Empire to Independence*, Oneworld Publications, 2003.

Sigman, M. C. "The Romans and the Indigenous Tribes of Mauritania Tingitana," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 26 (1977), pp. 415-439.

'Abd al-Wāḥid Dhannūn Ṭāhā, *The Muslim Conquest and Settlement of North Africa and Spain*, New York, 1989.

Wilson, A., "Urban Production in the Roman World: The View from North Africa," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 70, (2002), pp. 231-273.

Ornament:

Baer, Eva, "Jeweled Ceramics from Medieval Islam: A Note on the Ambiguity of Islamic Ornament," *Muqarnas*, Vol. 6 (1989), pp. 83-97.

Coomaraswamy, Ananda, "Ornament," *The Art Bulletin* 21 (1939), pp. 375-382. (although written decades ago, it remains a classic discussion of ornament)

Grabar, Oleg, *The Mediation of Ornament*, Princeton, 1992.

Moroccan Culture

Becker, C., "Amazigh Textiles and Dress in Morocco Metaphors of Motherhood," *African Arts* 39, (2006), pp. 42-55, 96.

Djerbi, A. and A. Safi, "Teaching the History of Architecture in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco: Colonialism, Independence, and Globalization," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 62 (2003), pp. 102-109

Liu, R.K. and L. Wataghani, "Moroccan Folk Jewelry," *African Arts* 8, (1975), pp. 28-35+80.

Miller, S.G., "Finding Order in the Moroccan City: The Ḥubus of the Great Mosque of Tangier as an Agent of Urban Change," *Muqarnas* 22, (2005), pp. 265-283

Oweis, F. S., "Islamic Art as an Educational Tool about the Teaching of Islam," *Art Education*, 55, One World (2002), pp. 18-24

Spencer, A.M., "Berber, Moor, and Bedouin: The Cultures of North Africa," *African Arts* 12, (1978), pp. 93-94.

Additional articles to be determined.

Requirements:

By the end of the first week, students will have defined a research project that they will present during the last week of the course. The topics will be general in the first week as a starting point for research. The aim is to refine the topic as the student progresses in their research; for example, Moroccan ceramics in the first week will be narrowed to the pottery of the Berbers from the Southern Atlas mountains by the end of the seminar. Over

the period of the course, students will act as “curators” for a virtual exhibition. The exhibition can be either thematic (i.e., The Souk) or object based (i.e., Berber Rugs). There will also be the opportunity for students to arrange their exhibition around their own photographic project. The student curator will choose the works of art or architecture for the exhibition, they will write individual catalog entries for each work, and write a thematic essay. Throughout the course, a short period of time each week will be dedicated to oral reports about the progress of the project. The essay will place the objects or architecture into the larger art historical and cultural context of Morocco. If feasible, the exhibitions will be published on the web for presentation to a larger public. Target dates are noted in the Class Schedule.

Class schedule:

Week 1: Geography of Morocco; Mauritania Tingitana: The Land Within the *Limes*; Roman city planning and architecture **Exhibition topics chosen.**

- The lectures will move from the topography of Morocco and how it shapes the population distribution and city planning of the country: Carthaginian and Roman ports along the Atlantic and the Mediterranean to the agricultural areas that made it desirable to the mountains of the Atlas Mountains.

Week 2: Mosaics, sculpture, metalwork and ceramics of North Africa and Volubilis **Exhibition objects chosen** (field trip to Archaeological Museum on Friday)
The lectures will set the Moroccan works of art within the larger context of those artworks surviving in North Africa (Tunisia).

Week 3: Field trip to Volubilis and Fez (student will explore the extensive archaeological remains at Volubilis where many of the mosaics are *in situ*. The Bou Inania Madrasa in Fez boasts one of the best preserved examples of *muqarnas* work and is open to foreign visitors. Local guides are available to provide a local perspective.

Week 4: The Berbers: Ornamental rugs and ceramics traditions (field trip to Oudaya on Friday)

- Trace the unique history of the Berbers (who still do not consider themselves Arabic and speak separate languages). Their religious traditions in Judaism and Christianity and their conversion to Islam. Their traditional crafts, such as rug making and ceramics, which have their own indigenous patterns and have contributed Moroccan culture.

Week 5: Christians and Jews of Morocco **First draft submitted for critique**

- These lectures will focus on the contributions of Jewish and Christian art, but will also focus on the iconoclastic theological debates that provided challenges to artmaking and the role of art in worship. The lectures will also cover, in detail, the influence of Jewish communities seeking refuge from western European anti-Semitism.

Week 6: Islam and the Idrissid dynasty

- A short introduction to Islam will be given (the instructor also assumes students will have some background, or prior reading, to Islam). The history of the Idrissid dynasty and the move from Volubilis to the city of Fez, where a thriving city of art and learning was established.
- (field trip with local guide to Chellah on Friday)

Week 7: Ancient Morocco Revisited

- These lectures will focus on the continuing presence of ancient artistic traditions in modern Morocco. Some ancient traditions such as henna tattooing, ceramics and rug making have continued unabated, while in the field of architecture modern architects are revisiting Morocco's pre-colonial styles.

Final exhibition submitted in a short oral presentation to peers and hard copy of research paper to instructor.

Meeting Times – Mechanics

Students and instructor will meet in the classroom three days of the week: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursdays, for two-hour sessions. The lengthier meetings times will allow for lectures, student oral presentations and feedback from the instructor and the classroom peers. Over the course of 6 weeks, students will spend 36 hours in the classroom; the field trips to Chellah, the Archaeological Museum, Volubilis and Fez will account for the remaining credit hours: Rabat trips (2 hours each: 6 field hours); further afield (20 field hours).

Student Research Projects – some general potential topics that will be narrowed down to specific works of art and/or architecture. In the first few weeks, students will be guided on how curators make decisions on which works of art to include in an exhibition and how they work to create a larger thematic presentation.

Research papers:

- Berber rug making traditions
- Tile designs – trace the origins of patterns and tradition of the craft, linking the geometry to artistic theory and mathematics
- The Late Antique origins of Moroccan domestic architecture
- The Hammam and the Roman bath
- City planning and Asilah
- Moroccan ceramics (students would have to limit themselves to a specific chronological and/or region since this is a large topic).

2. ***Moroccan Culture and Arabic Language***

HNRS 350, ARAB 123, 3 credits

Instructor: Faculty at the Center for Cross Cultural Learning in Rabat

Classes meet four days a week for 2 hours

Course description:

Students will be enrolled in a course on Moroccan Arabic Language and Culture with a focus on oral communication. Studying the Moroccan Arabic dialect (Darija) will provide students access to the daily life of the host country. The course will be taught by multilingual, highly qualified teachers at the Center for Cross Cultural learning who have a wide range of experience in cross cultural education and in teaching Arabic to non-native speakers.

Students will receive three credits for Arabic 123, a study abroad course in conversational Arabic in which students are introduced to one of the major dialects of spoken Arabic. The course has no prerequisites and is only offered within the context of faculty-led study abroad courses in the Arab World. The course will be proficiency based with emphasis placed on speaking and listening skills and active use of the language. By the end of the semester, students can expect to know the basic grammatical structures of the dialect they are studying and to have acquired a vocabulary of approximately 1000 words. Students will be able to conduct conversations with classmates, instructors, and sympathetic native speakers about their personal lives and topics within the realm of the vocabulary they learn, as well as carry out basic functions (greeting, shopping, asking and giving directions, renting an apartment, etc.) in the dialect they study. In addition to studying the Moroccan Arabic Dialect, the course will also introduce students to Moroccan culture.

Structure:

The course will meet four days a week (Monday to Thursday) for from 9:00 – 11:00am over a period of six weeks (except 3 days for Fez excursion). Total: 44 hours.

Academic goals and expected outcomes:

- Lectures to place the early art and architecture of Morocco within the larger historical, geographical and political context of North Africa. Students should have a broad, general knowledge of the sequence of historical time-line.
- Introduction to Arabic in an intensive setting of native Arabic speakers for students beginning their Arabic studies.
- Developing vocabulary and communication skills for students with some Arabic language training by intensive interaction with native Arabic speakers.
- Experiential research with the material culture of Morocco, using primary and secondary sources, both visual and textual. Through one object, or well-defined theme, the student will achieve an in-depth knowledge of one part of Moroccan culture.
- The final result will be for the student to put all the information together – historical background, language, individual research, field trips – in a cohesive oral presentation and written paper.

III. PROGRAM LOGISTICS

a. Program affiliation

The program will be affiliated with the Center for Cross-Cultural Learning in Rabat. The Center for Cross-Cultural Learning (CCCL) is a private cultural institution founded and directed by Moroccan academics with many years of experience in cross-cultural education. Courses in Fus'ha (Standard Arabic) and Darija (Moroccan Arabic) are taught by professionals trained specifically to teach Arabic as a second language. The list of lecturers includes outstanding scholars in the areas of social science, humanities, literature, religion, and architecture as well as artists, journalists, NGO activists, artisans, and craftsmen.

The CCCL organizes a variety of cultural and educational activities which include language courses, seminars and lecture series on Moroccan society and Arab and Islamic cultures. The CCCL also sponsors art exhibits and musical performances and organizes educational excursions to various parts of Morocco. The aim of these activities is to provide participants with opportunities to learn from the rich cultural diversity of Morocco and to better understand and appreciate the country's cultural heritage.

Among the CCCL partners in its cross cultural programs are: The School for International Training (SIT), the City College of New York (CCNY), Wellesley College, Williams College, Humboldt State University, the University of Illinois Chicago, and Rollins University.

The CCCL is located in a nineteenth century building in the old city of Rabat (the Medina). All classes will be held at CCCL and students will have access to resources, such as internet and library access, as well as cultural events.

b. Student housing

Students on this program will live with Moroccan families selected by the homestay coordinator at the Center for Cross-Cultural Learning who knows each family personally and strives to match students with families whose members have similar interests. Two students are placed in each family and will share a room. This allows students the opportunity to become a member of a new family and to share in the most exciting as well as the routine details of your host family's daily life. Students will stay in small guesthouses or hotels on excursions.

c. Program travel

During the semester, the group will participate in a number of excursions in Rabat as well as other parts of Morocco. This includes a week-long excursion to the city of Fez and other cultural and historic places in Morocco. Most travel will be done by bus or train depending on the location.

d. Communication and transportation

Students will be required to bring their laptops. Wireless internet access is available at the Center for Cross-Cultural learning. Internet access with homestay families may vary, but internet cafes are available throughout the city. All students will carry an international cell phone while in Morocco. Students will use public transportation in Rabat and travel by bus on excursions outside of Rabat. Roads in Morocco are generally considered safe.

e. Safety and security

Morocco is considered relatively safe for foreign visitors. The US State Department warns US citizens of the continuing risks of terrorist attacks against American interests as well as crime in major cities. Students will receive a safety orientation by local staff at the Center for Cross Cultural Learning and will be advised to travel in small groups, which is especially important for female students.

f. Medical care

Adequate medical care is available in Rabat and most of Morocco's larger cities. However, not all facilities meet high-quality standards and specialized care or treatment may not be available. Students will be provided with contact information for the nearest hospital and a list of English-speaking doctors. All students will be enrolled through in the HTH International Health Insurance plan and will be asked to bring all prescription medicine for the length of the program.

g. Eligibility and enrollment

The program aims to enroll 12-16 undergraduate students from a variety of disciplines who have at least sophomore status and a GPA of 3.0 or higher. No courses are required as prerequisites.

h. Graduate assistant

The program will employ one graduate student assistant who has travel experience in the region and speaks Arabic.