

# 4.627-28

SPECIAL PROBLEMS IN ISLAMIC & NONWESTERN ARCHITECTURE:

## C A I R O

THE HISTORY OF A METROPOLIS

SPRING 2011



Cairo is a born metropolis. Founded in 634 at the strategic head of the Nile Delta, the city evolved from the first Islamic settlement in Africa to the seat of the ambitious Fatimid caliphate, which flourished between the 10th and 12th century. Its most spectacular age, however, was the Mamluk period (1250-1517), when it became the uncontested center of a resurgent Islam and acquired an architectural character that symbolized the image of Islam for centuries to come. Between the sixteenth and the end of the eighteenth century, Cairo became the premier Ottoman provincial capital, second only to Istanbul. Then, it witnessed a short yet ebullient renaissance under the reformist Muhammad 'Ali Pasha (1805-48) followed by British colonial rule, which forcibly linked the rising metropolis to its world system and introduced it to a host of new architectural and urban experiments. Independence and an ambitious socializing revolution in 1952 resulted in a different kind of modernization marred by erratic national and cold war politics. A peculiar neo-liberalism followed with grand schemes that are still unfolding today. The urban and architectural chaos they caused has been exacerbated by acute problems of rapid expansion, population explosion, and economic inequality. The metropolis, however, still shines as a cultural and political center in its three spheres of influence: the Arab world, Africa, and the Islamic world.

In this course we will review the history of Cairo and interpret it in light of both urban and social theory and cultural and political history. We will survey Cairo's outstanding architecture, encompassing the gamut of Islamic styles in addition to practically every 19th and 20th century Western style. A number of discussions are scheduled throughout the course to further address critical architectural and urban issues. Students will present their papers' research in these sessions as part of their requirements.

### Required Texts

Andre Raymond, Cairo. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000. Doris Behrens-Abouseif, Islamic Architecture of Cairo, An Introduction. Leiden: Brill, 1989.

### Suggested Texts

Alaa Al Aswany, The Yacoubian Building: A Novel. Harper Perennial, 2006. Caroline Williams, Islamic monuments in Cairo: a practical guide. Revised Edition. Cairo, 2008. Doris Behrens-Abouseif, Cairo of the Mamluks: A History of Architecture and its Culture. London, 2008. Galila El Kadi, Architecture for the Dead: Cairo's Medieval Necropolis. Cairo, 2007. Janet Abu-Lughod, Cairo: 1001 Years of the City Victorious. Princeton, 1971. Jonathan Bloom, Arts of the City Victorious: Islamic Art and Architecture in Fatimid North Africa and Egypt. New Haven, 2008. K.A.C. Creswell, Muslim Architecture of Egypt. Oxford, 1959. 2 vols (Limited Access). Martin Briggs, Muhammadan Architecture in Egypt and Palestine. New York, reprint 1974. Max Rodenbeck, Cairo: The City Victorious. New York: Knopf, 1999. Nasser Rabbat, Mamluk History Through Architecture: Building, Culture, and Politics in Mamluk Egypt and Syria. London, 2010. Nicholas Warner, The Monuments of Historic Cairo: A Map and Descriptive Catalogue. Cairo, 2005. Samir W. Raafat, Cairo, the glory years. Who built what, when, why and for whom. Alexandria, Egypt, 2003. Timothy Mitchell, Colonizing Egypt, Berkeley, Calif., 1988.

### Class Requirements:

3 papers (8-10 pp., 30% of the final grade each), which will be presented in class discussions. No final exam, and 20% of the final grade for attendance and participation in discussion. Graduate students may substitute a research paper for one or more of the essays.

**On the Web:** <http://web.mit.edu/4.615/www/>. Also available on the Open Course Ware website

<b>DAY:</b>	Mon & Wed
<b>TIME:</b>	2:00 - 3:30
<b>ROOM:</b>	3-133
<b>INSTRUCTOR:</b>	Nasser Rabbat
<b>UNITS:</b>	9-12, HASS

PERMISSION OF INSTRUCTOR