

Art History 331
Muslims, Jews, and Christians in Medieval Iberia
Prof. Stephen Clancy

RESEARCH PROJECT

Submissions and deadlines: Write a research paper of 10-12 pages on one of the topics listed below. **THE FINAL VERSIONS OF ALL PAPERS ARE DUE ON MONDAY, MAY 4, 2009.** However, in order to insure a smooth and *unhurried* transition from original idea to final paper, you must also hand in the following, by the dates indicated:

1. A **topic statement** (a few sentences long): by **Thursday, March 5.**
2. A **bibliography** of at least eight potential sources for your paper, including at least two journal articles, and including no more than two internet sources: by **Thursday, March 26.** For citation form, see the "Guidelines for Preparing Written Material in Art History" (on the course website)
3. Two polished paragraphs detailing the *specific argument(s)* your paper will be making, and the steps or kinds of proof you will be marshalling in support of your arguments. This paragraph should *not* be a generic statement of your topic (e.g., "I'm going to write about the Pamplona casket, and I'm doing lots of research on it"), but should instead be a statement of the specific thoughts you have developed *about* your topic. This is due **by Tuesday, April 14.**

You should also **set up a meeting with me** sometime before March 3, in order to discuss your ideas and interests.

A general statement concerning deadlines: I set specific deadlines for specific reasons, and treat deadlines as they are treated in business or "real world" work settings. If, as a deadline approaches, it turns out that I will not need your submission by that particular date, I will let you know well in advance, and give everyone an extension. If I do *not* give an extension, it means that (just like your "boss" in a work setting) I *do* need your submission by a particular date. If I do not receive it on time, ***I will begin lowering your project grade.*** And one more note: "second-semester senior" status is not an excuse for lateness!

Your tasks: Pick a specific work of art or an aspect of a building created in Iberia between the 6th and the 15th centuries (or a specific type of subject matter, visual motif, or architectural aspect) that will serve as a vehicle for exploring visual manifestations of *cross-cultural encounters*. This concept is central to the course and, as you will recall, was discussed by Glick and al-Asad, as well as many other authors we'll be reading this semester. Good places to begin your explorations are the three catalogs I've placed on reserve: *Al Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain*; *Art of Medieval Spain, A.D. 500-1200*; and *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain*. I will be asking you (see above) to pass your topic choice by me first, since some topics will be far too broad for you to tackle (e.g., something as broad as "The Alhambra," although parts/aspects of the Alhambra would work). With a particular work or aspect of a building as your starting point, you should explore the ways in which your work or building

visually encodes the nature and impact of encounters between at least two of the cultures we are dealing with this semester. In so doing, you should consider or tackle the following:

First, place the work in its proper *socio-political-historical* contexts. Who might it have been made for and why? Where was the work made or originally used (this is especially important in relation to the back-and-forth territorial struggles between Muslim and Christian forces)? Who funded the project (patronage)? What kinds of historical developments (military or political battles, religious struggles or initiatives, etc.) were occurring about the time the work was created? How might any of these contexts have impacted your work or building?

Second, place the work in appropriate *visual* contexts. How and why does this work or aspect of a building resemble other works of the same type, medium, or function? How and why does it differ? Are the differences primarily stylistic or iconographical, and why? How and why might its function or appearance have changed over time during the Middle Ages? How and why does it relate to works or buildings that came before it? Came after?

Third, based on your observations above and research, explain how the work visually encodes the nature and impact of encounters between at least two of the cultures we are dealing with this semester. What insights can it provide into the ways cultures interact visually, either parallel with, or in contrast to, their political or military encounters? How might it embody ideas of appropriation? integration? resistance? "filtering" of ideas from other cultures through the "lens" of the maker's or patron's cultural ideas?

Fourth, based on your research, what conclusions can you come to about the dominant scholarly "lens(es)" through which your work or issue has been approached in the literature? Have those lens(es) helped or hindered your efforts to arrive at a true "cross-cultural" assessment of role of "cultural encounter" in shaping the work or subject at the core of your paper?

Academic honesty: Keep in mind this statement from the course syllabus:

The project will require that you consult books, articles, and online resources. *You must cite any source not only from which you quote, but also from which you paraphrase words or borrow ideas.* I will not tolerate any student using another person's words or ideas, and passing them off as his or her own, even if unintentionally. If you have any questions about documentation, *ask me before you hand in the paper.* Do not end up failing the course or getting suspended because of an avoidable mistake.

The bottom line: *when in doubt, cite!*