

Istanbul: Where East Meets West
Pierluigi Serraino

Syllabus

As Rome's power faded away, Constantinople (modern Istanbul) took on a leading role and Eastern and Western civilization. This course will provide an overview of the countless manifestations of this vibrant city through its architecture, its literature, its food culture, its music, its cinematography, and its public realm, that is all that makes the metropolitan region today a transnational crossroad of world identities. As centuries go by, Istanbul's allure remains unabated.

Lesson 1. ISTANBUL: A LAYERED CITY

Stratification and density are two key attributes of historical cities. In its multiple naming- Byzantium, Constantinople, Istanbul- this extraordinary metropolis has recorded on its physical tissue centuries of political, religious, and cultural changes. This introductory talk will offer an overview of the geography of the area together with the most iconic landmarks of its architectural heritage. Special focus will be given to the accounting of the multiple cisterns carved out of its soil as well as the two major bazaars in Istanbul, veritable sections of neighborhoods vaulted to become vast urban interiors bustling with city life.

Lesson 2. SINAN: THE GREATEST ARCHITECT OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Throughout his very long life, Mimar Sinan (1490-1588) gave typological stability to the architecture of the Ottoman empire. A true royalty in his own time, Sinan became the symbol of the Ottoman aesthetic and its most important monuments. Although his most known projects are mosques, he designed fortification, schools, and many other building types. His trajectory and built legacy in Istanbul through his disciples as well will be the object of this lecture.

Lesson 3. MODERN ARCHITECTURE IN ISTANBUL: PROTAGONISTS AND THEIR BUILDINGS IN A CENTURY OF CHANGE.

Following the end of World War I, the Ottoman Empire disintegrated after centuries of dominance in the region. The 'War of Independence' (1919-22) followed against the occupying allied forces, giving birth to the Turkish Republic headed by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The Modern Movement in architecture signified this new era. This talk surveys the rapid westernization of a country seeking a new identity through its architectural milestone and its national and foreign protagonist giving shape to a new society, still assigning a role to Istanbul as its symbolic center.

Lesson 4. ISTANBUL TODAY: RECENT TRENDS IN ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN DESIGN. Contemporary Istanbul is a 15-million people conglomerate in ongoing urban transformation. Constantly suspended between its Western and Eastern identity, this world-city continues to offer a distinct mixture of these two sensibilities in its architectural offerings. This final lecture will present the last 20 years of built, unbuilt, and forthcoming accomplishments for a metropolis casting perpetual fascination across generations.