



# 4.629

## **Mughal Landscapes History, Heritage, and Design**

This seminar focuses on environmental design during the Mughal empire of South Asia (16<sup>th</sup> through 18<sup>th</sup> centuries), a dynasty of Central Asian origins that extended over what are today the territories of India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.

The seminar will critically evaluate places described as gardens, cities, landscapes, and territories, along with their changing meanings over time. These sites range from tomb-gardens such as the Taj Mahal to palaces, citadels, waterworks, and pleasure gardens. They have meanings that conjoined religious symbolism with economic production, environmental functions, and political power.

We will begin with modern debates over the cultural heritage value, conservation, and design significance of Mughal landscapes. From these modern questions, which constitute “the designer’s problem,” we follow diverse strands of evidence that may help us reconstruct and interpret these historic places. Some students may focus on the representation of landscapes in texts, paintings, or historical photography. Others may choose to analyze extant landscape forms, shapes, and metrics. Each type of evidence raises as many questions as it answers. We will work together to weigh and synthesize the results in ways that reinterpret the history, heritage, and design of Mughal landscapes; and strive to assemble our findings in an edited report.

Each year the seminar will focus on a specific issue. In Fall 2008, we will seek to explain the transition from garden design to urban design in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, during the reign of Akbar, a ruler distinguished by his extraordinary combination of cultural and architectural creativity, and controversy. The sites will thus include Humayun’s tomb in Delhi; the citadels of Agra, Ajmer, and Lahore; the ceremonial palace complex of Fatehpur Sikri; and early Mughal encounters with Sultanate, Kashmiri, and European cultures. While Akbar’s body lies in an enigmatic tomb-garden outside Agra, his legacy continues to be debated by scholars and designers over four centuries later, and we will seek to advance those debates.

### **Time**

Tuesdays & Thursdays 5:00-6:30  
Room 5-216

### **Instructor**

Jim Wescoat  
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### **Prerequisite**

Permission of Instructor

**Units** 3-0-9 **Level** H

**School of Architecture & Planning SA+P**