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REL 204
Introductory Seminar in Religion Art
and Visual Culture

CREDITS: 3:3
PREREQUISITES: none

Tuesday Thursday 9:30-10:45
Library 574

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course introduces students to the study of religion, art and visual culture. It asks: How do humans see the world? And what does it mean to see “religiously”? How does visual culture affect the way religions are practiced? And, consequently, how might an understanding of the role of visual objects affect the way we study religion? What do visual arts tell us about religions in ways that written scripture cannot? And what does religion tell us about the meanings of visual arts in ways that art history cannot?

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: While I want you to gain a general knowledge of religion and visual culture, it is also important that you learn how to think and interpret them. Accordingly, our goal in this class is not only to learn about art and religion, but also to learn how to think critically. In this class you will engage in discussion, listen to lectures, watch audio-visual presentations, take exams, work in groups, as well as read and write critically. In the class:

- students will demonstrate a working knowledge of some significant elements of religious art as it is manifested in particular traditions and cultures;
- students will become familiar with the ways in which religious visual culture is shaped by contemporary social institutions;
- students will make critical comparisons among religious traditions, experiences, and practices across culture, time, ethnicity, race, and gender;
- students will demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between visual culture, religion and other elements of society, such as the connection between religion and power, the role of religious movements as forces of personal and social transformation, and as social justice;
- and students will demonstrate a working knowledge of, and the ability to apply to religious phenomena, various theories, methodological perspectives, and experiential approaches to religious studies.

TEACHING METHODS AND ASSIGNMENTS FOR ACHIEVING LEARNING

OUTCOMES: This course is designed as a seminar and writing workshop. Student participation is essential, and while the professor will lead discussion and occasionally lecture, student-led

discussion will drive the course. Students will also engage in library research, as well as study the craft of writing academic research papers.

Student participation is graded on the classroom assessment evaluation designed by Kathleen Tunney, of the Southern Illinois University department of Social Work (<http://www.siu.edu/~deder/partrub.html>). Library research and writing is evaluated through the completion of a writing portfolio whose pedagogy is based on the writing and pedagogy program developed by Joe Williams (The University of Chicago) and Greg Colomb (University of Illinois). (CF. Booth, Wayne, Greg Colomb and Joe Williams. *The Craft of Research*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995). Two written exams evaluate the students' ability to classify and describe topics in South Asia, as well as make critical comparisons between religion and other elements of society. A final research paper will evaluate how the student formulates relationships between religion and other social formations, as well as his or her ability to apply various theories and methodological perspectives in religious studies.

FINAL EXAMINATION: There is no final exam, but the final paper is due the final day of class at 4:59PM.

IN CLASS RULES

What I try to cultivate in students: Critical thinking, imagination, curiosity, and a healthy skepticism tempered by wisdom, compassion, diligence and a sense of humor.

- *Meta-rule*—There are no excuses for not being prepared for class, for not handing in assignments on time and for not following these guidelines. If you have a situation in which you are unable to comply, come and speak with me before the problem arises.
- *Reading*—You must come to class with material carefully read. Not coming to class prepared and with the text, whether a book, an article or information from the web — in hand counts as an absence.
- *Computer Access* —All students must have regular access to a computer that is connected to the internet and to a printer.
- *Group Work*— You must have a willingness to read and have other students read your writing. You must have a responsibility of respect towards other students' views, and a duty to take seriously the ideas, words and writing that they put forward.
- *No late Assignments*— All assignments must be turned in on time; those turned in late will not be given credit (assignments are due at the beginning of the class period in which they are marked in the syllabus). If you must for any reason miss an exam, you must let me know in writing before not after the date. You will receive a zero on the exam if you do not inform me beforehand.
- *No Cellular Phones or Instant messaging!* — Cellular phones must be turned off in the classroom. If your phone rings I will deduct one half letter from your final grade. If you talk on the phone or text message, I reserve the right to fail you. Turn them off before you enter the room!
- *Proper use of laptop computers in classroom* — You may use computers to take notes. This privilege will be revoked if you use the computer for any other purpose. This includes "surfing" the internet, answering emails or playing games.
- *No Chatter* — If I am lecturing, or if a student "has the floor," other talking is highly distracting. If you have something to add to the conversation, please raise your hand and I will call upon you in turn. If you have something to say, which is not related to the class,

please wait until the period is over.

- *No Hats, Sunglasses and Roller Skates* — Hats, sunglasses and roller skates are not appropriate in the classroom. Please take them off before you enter.
- *No Eating in Class*— It is not appropriate to eat in the classroom. Please eat outside of the class period.

EVALUATION: (100 points possible)

Student Participation, group and in-class work10%

Weekly Blackboard Comments:10%

You need to comment on the readings and/or class sessions at least once a week during weeks 2-10. The comments can be made in your small group area or in the larger class area.

You will be graded on quantity, quality and also on the level of maturity you show in your messages. Print your comments up and turn in December 4, 2006.

Portfolio25%

Each Assignment in the portfolio must be typed, double spaced, in 12 point font in black ink, on white paper, with title and name. For format see "paper template" on Blackboard. For citation use the Chicago Manual of Style [see web site below or the reference desk at the library]. Also remember to follow rules of plagiarism [see academic integrity and plagiarism web pages listed below]).

Topic (3 points)

Annotated Bibliography (3 points)

X, Y Z Exercise (3points)

Paper Structure (3 points)

Revised Paper Structure (3 points)

First Version (3 points)

Re-written Introduction and Conclusion (3 points)

Second Version (4 points)

Two Exams 10 points each 20%

Final Oral Exam 5%

Final Research Paper.30%

*The standards for grading are those described in the Undergraduate Bulletin, pp. 37-40, and at <http://www.uncg.edu/reg/Catalog/0001/uncgGradingSys.htm>. Each student is required to sign the Academic Integrity Policy on all major work submitted for the course. Refer to the UNCG *Undergraduate Bulletin* [see web site listed below].

REQUIRED TEXTS/READINGS/REFERENCES:

Booth, Wayne. *The Craft of Research*. Chicago: The Universtiy of Chicago Press, 1995.

Plate, Brent. *Religion, Art and Visual Cutlure: A Cross Cultural Reader*. New York: Palgrave, 2002.

Sturken, Marita and Lisa Cartwright. *Practices of Looking: an Introduction to Visual Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

WEBSITES:

See Blackboard for many websites and online articles that will help you in choosing and researching a topic for the final paper.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Week 1—Introduction

Tuesday Aug 15: Introduction to course

Thursday Aug 17:

LECTURE: Thinking about Religion, Art and Visual Culture
Introduction (Plate, pages 1-18)

* How to Read a College Text Book

<http://www.ocean.edu/ReadColText/HowToReadCollegeTextDrJohnWeber.htm>

Week 2 — Paths of Perception?

Tuesday Aug 22:

LECTURE: Practices of Looking: Images, Power, and Politics
(Sturken and Cartwright, pages 10-43)

* How to take notes in class

<http://www.csbsju.edu/academicadvising/help/lec-note.htm>

<http://www.englishcompanion.com/Tools/notemaking.html>

Thursday Aug 24:

SEMINAR: Aesthesis (Plate, pages 19-52)

Ackerman, *A Natural History of the Senses*

Gregory, *The Psychology of Seeing*

Elkins, *The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing*

Brakhage, "Metaphors on Vision"

Week 3—Christianity, Painting and the Image

Tuesday Aug 29:

LECTURE: Viewers Make Meaning
(Sturken and Cartwright, pages 45-70)

Thursday Aug 31:

SEMINAR: Icon (Plate, 53-86)

Miles, "Image"

Drury, *Painting the Word: Christian Pictures and the Their Meaning*

Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art in the Modern*

Oblivion.

Morgan, "Would Jesus have Sat for a Portrait?"

Week 4— Islam, Calligraphy and the World-image

Tuesday September 5:

LECTURE: Spectatorship, Power and Knowledge
(Sturken and Cartwright, pages 72-107)

Thursday September 7

SEMINAR: Qalam (Plate 89-124)

Grabar, *Mediation of Ornament*

Schimmel, *Calligraphy and Islamic Culture*

Nasr, "The Spiritual Message of Islamic Calligraphy"

Ali, "Modern Islamic Art"

Week 5— Exam # 1

Tuesday September 12:

FILM: Cecil B. Demille's *The Ten Commandments*

Thursday September 14

EXAM #1: Take home Exam, 3-5 pages

Due Friday 11:30 PM

Week 6—Buddhism Seeing the Mind/Body

Tuesday September 19

LECTURE: Reproduction and Visual Technologies
(Sturken and Cartwright, pages 109-149)

Thursday September 21

(Sturken and Cartwright, pages 109-149)

SEMINAR: Shinjin (Plate 125-159)

Pilgram, *Buddhism and the Arts of Japan*

Yuasa, *The Body, Self-Cultivation and Ki-Energy*

Nagatomo and Winfield, "The Japanese Garden: Seeing and Cultivating
Micro-Macrocosmic Correlativity."

Holborn, "*The Ocean in the Sand*"

Week 7— Hinduism and the Divine image in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction

Tuesday September 26

LECTURE: The Mass Media and the Public Sphere
(Sturken and Cartwright, pages 151-187)

Thursday September 28

SEMINAR: Darshan (Plate, 161-193)

Eck, *Darshan*

Davis, *Lives of Indian Images*

Hawley, *Devi: Goddess of India*

Lutgendorf, "All in the (Raghu) Family"

Week 8— Architecture and Modern Jewish Memory

Tuesday October 3

LECTURE: Consumer Culture and the Marketing of Desire
(Sturken and Cartwright, 189-235)

Thursday October 5

SEMINAR: Zakhor (Plate, 161-193)

Cohen, *Jewish Icons*

Young, *The Texture of Memory*

Stier, "Holocaust Icons, Holocaust Idols"

Plate, "Building Zakhor"

Week 9 —

Tuesday October 10 (No Class for Fall Break)

Thursday October 12

LECTURE: Postmodernism and Popular Culture
(Sturken and Cartwright, 189-235)

Week 10

Tuesday October 17

LECTURE: Scientific Looking, Looking at Science
(Sturken and Cartwright, 279-313)

Thursday October 19

LECTURE: The Global Flow of Visual Culture
(Sturken and Cartwright, 315-346)

Week 11— EXAM #2

Tuesday October 24:

FILM: Bernardo Bertolucci's *Little Buddha*

Thursday October 26:

EXAM # 2: Take home Exam, 3-5 pages

Due Friday 11:30 PM

Week 12-16: In the final section of the class we will put the text to work by writing a final 5-7 page research paper. This creative undertaking is based upon Wayne Booth's *Craft of Research*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995). These will include the creation of an Annotated bibliography, XYZ problem, Claim, Introduction, Conclusion, Evidence (Sub-claims), Warrant, Qualification. At this time we will break down into smaller groups of five persons.

Final Paper Topic: Using at least one theoretical approach from the readings, make an argument about a specific piece of visual religious culture. You need to be able to bring in a photograph, Xerox, video or the actual object. Use websites on Blackboard to help you locate a topic.

Tuesday October 31: What is Your Topic!

READ: Booth 1-33

DUE: Your topic. a piece of visual culture

* Library Visit

Thursday November 2—*Topics, Questions, Problems*

(SMALL GROUP)

Reading: Booth, 40-89

Due: Annotated Bibliography [At least five sources, three of which must be through the library.]

* Museum visit Weatherspoon Museum: *Dario Robleto: Folk Visiting Artist.*

Description: Dario Robleto has achieved international recognition for his sculptures and installations that integrate historical artifacts (in particular old vinyl records and wartime relics) to create new histories. His work shows us how the original artifacts he uses carry both personal and cultural meaning that survives their transformation. Robleto is heavily influenced by DJ culture and the theory and practice of mixing and sampling. Catalogue.

* Extra Credit Film: *Mana-Beyond Belief* on Thur November 2, 7pm at the Weatherspoon Museum

Tuesday November 7 — *Making a Claim*

(SMALL GROUP)

Reading: Booth, 111-138

Due: X, Y Z Exercise

Thursday November 9—*Subclaims: Evidence, Qualifications and Warrants .*

(SMALL GROUP)

Reading: Booth, 138-181

Due: Paper Structure

Tuesday November 11 — *Planning and Revising*

(SMALL GROUP)

Reading: Booth, 189-221

Due: Revised Paper Structure

(Thanksgiving Break)

MONDAY November 27, email first version to small group members and professor

Tuesday November 28—*Introduction and Conclusion*

(SMALL GROUP)

Reading: Booth, 222-237

Other Group members papers [print up and bring to class]

Due: First Version

Thursday November 30— Revising

Reading: Booth, 263-288

Due: Re-written Introduction and Conclusion

MONDAY December 4th, **Hard copy** of *second version* and Portfolio are due in my out box by 4pm. (Religious Studies Office, Foust 109). Remember the meta-rule. Emailed or late copies will not be accepted.

Wednesday and Thursday November 6 and 7th,

FINAL ORAL EXAM and conversation about research paper.

MONDAY December 11th, **Hard copy** of *final version* is due in my out box by 4pm.

(Religious Studies Office, Foust 109). Remember the meta-rule. Emailed or late copies will not be accepted.