

CURE 3130 Religious Imagination and Visual Art
Second Term 2024-25

Teacher: Dr. CHOW Wai Yin

Class Time: Tu 10:30-12:15 (Lecture)

Office Phone no.: 3943 1425

Tu 12:30 - 13:15 (Tutorial Class)

Email: wychow@cuhk.edu.hk (by appointment)

Classroom: Li Dak Sum Building 214 (Lecture)

Course Description: Religion and Art

This course offers an in-depth exploration of the profound relationship between religion and art throughout history. Students will examine how different cultures have expressed their spiritual beliefs through various artistic forms, ranging from ancient artifacts to contemporary installations. By analyzing key themes such as symbolism, iconography, and ritual, the course will highlight the ways in which art serves as a reflection of religious values and practices. Through case studies of significant artworks and architectural masterpieces, students will gain a deeper understanding of the interconnections between faith and creativity across diverse cultures, from ancient Egypt and Greece to modern spiritual expressions.

A. Expected Learning Outcomes

After the completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Content-Related Outcomes

- a. **Articulate Religious Discourse:** articulate how artistic pieces (discourses) shape the interpretive framework of religious beliefs and practices.
- b. **Demonstrate Analytical Concepts:** demonstrate their understanding of fundamental analytical concepts and criteria in the academic study of religion, applying these effectively to artistic works.
- c. **Analyze Artistic Works:** critically **analyze** visual art and performance, recognizing how style and composition reflect, shape, and contest diverse religious beliefs and practices.
- d. **Compare Artistic Periods and Styles:** compare and contrast the characteristics of specific artistic periods or styles, gaining insight into their historical development and social contexts within various religious traditions.

2. Skill-Related Outcomes

- a. **Effective Communication:** develop their written and verbal communication skills, articulating their insights through essays, presentations, and discussions on the relationship between religion and art.
- b. **Critical Thinking:** develop critical thinking skills by evaluating the interplay between art and religion, constructing well-reasoned arguments supported by evidence.
- c. **Research Proficiency:** enhance their research skills by engaging with various sources, including texts, artworks, and multimedia, to support their analyses and comparisons.

3. Attitude/Value-Related Outcomes

- a. **Cultural Sensitivity:** cultivate cultural sensitivity and respect for diverse religious and artistic expressions, recognizing their significance in various contexts.
- b. **Open-Mindedness:** foster an open-minded approach to examining religious and artistic diversity, encouraging dialogue and reflection on differing perspectives.
- c. **Ethical Reflection:** engage in ethical reflection regarding the impact of art on religious beliefs and vice versa, considering the implications of their analyses for contemporary society.

B. Content / Class Schedule

Week	Topic
1 7/1	Introduction to Religion and Art Study Question: How do different artistic expressions across cultures and historical periods shape our understanding of religious beliefs? Thiessen, G. E. (2018). Artistic imagination and religious faith. In <i>The Oxford handbook of religion and the arts</i> (pp. 77-90). Oxford University Press.
2 14/1	Religion and Art in Ancient Egypt Study Question: How do the gods and afterlife iconography in Ancient Egyptian architecture communicate the values and beliefs of their society? Riggs, C. (2014). Art and power. In <i>Ancient Egyptian art and architecture: A very short introduction</i> (online edn). Oxford Academic.
*3 21/1	Ancient Greece and the Divine Study Question: In what ways do Greek sculptures and buildings reveal the cultural values and beliefs of their time? Tanner, J. (2006). Rethinking the Greek revolution: Art and aura in an age of enchantment. In <i>The invention of art history in ancient Greece: Religion, society and artistic rationalisation</i> (Chapter 2). Cambridge University Press.
4 28/1	No Class - Lunar New Year Vacation
5 4/2	Early Christianity and Roman Art: The Transformation of Iconography Study Question: God in Image? How do the shifts from pagan to Christian imagery in early art reflect evolving religious beliefs? Talloen, P. (2011). From pagan to Christian: Religious iconography in material culture from Sagalassos. In <i>The archaeology of late antique paganism</i> (pp. 573-607). Brill.

	<p>In-Depth Reading: Ensen, R. M. (2022). Holy portraits: Controversies and commendation. In R. M. Jensen (Ed.), <i>From idols to icons: The emergence of Christian devotional images in late antiquity</i> (pp. 90-107). University of California Press.</p>
<p>*6 11/2</p>	<p>Religion and Spirituality in Renaissance Art</p> <p>Study Question: How did Renaissance art reflect and influence the concepts of religion and spirituality during this transformative period?</p> <p>Talon-Hugon, C. (2023). Ideas of Art in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. In <i>The Routledge Companion to the Philosophies of Painting and Sculpture</i> (pp. 94-102). Routledge.</p> <p>In-Depth Reading: Johnson, G. A. (2005). Michelangelo: The birth of the artist and of art history. In <i>Renaissance art: A very short introduction</i> (pp. 120-133). Oxford University Press.</p>
<p>7 18/2</p>	<p>Hinduism and Artistic Diversity</p> <p>Study Question: How do stories from the Ramayana and Mahabharata influence the artistic representation of deities in Hindu art?</p> <p>Elgood, H. (1998). Sacred imagery. In <i>Hinduism and the religious arts</i> (Chapter 2). Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.</p> <p>In-depth Reading: Chakrabarti, A. (2016). Refining the Repulsive: Toward an Indian Aesthetics of the Ugly and the Disgusting. In A. Chakrabarti (Ed.). <i>The Bloomsbury Research Handbook of Indian Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art</i> (pp. 149–164). London: Bloomsbury Academic.</p>
<p>8 25/2</p>	<p>Field Study: "Notre-Dame de Paris: The Augmented Exhibition" – The Integration of Religion, Art and Technology</p>
<p>9 4/3</p>	<p>Reading Week – No Class</p>
<p>10 11/3</p>	<p>Taoism and the Arts</p> <p>Study Question: How do Taoist principles inspire creativity in various art forms?</p> <p>Sommer, D., & Brown, F. B. (2014). Taoism and the arts. In <i>The Oxford handbook of religion and the arts</i>. Oxford University Press.</p> <p>In-Depth Reading: Serfontein, I., McCarthy, J., & Wyver, J. (2019). <i>Art of faith: Volume 2. Daoism and Shinto</i> [Film]. Illuminations TV.</p>

11 18/3	<p>Indigenous Religions and Art</p> <p>Study Question: What role do ritual objects like totem poles and masks play in Indigenous cultures?</p> <p>Ross, L. (2009). Indigenous religions of Oceania. In <i>Art and architecture of the world's religions</i> (Vol. 1, pp. 147-169). Greenwood Press.</p> <p>In-Depth Reading: van Beek, W. E. (2024). Masks versus cattle: The ecology of an African art form. <i>Human Ecology</i>, 52(5), 851–865.</p>
12 25/3	<p>Contemporary Art and Spirituality</p> <p>Study Question: How does contemporary art challenge or reinterpret traditional religious narratives?</p> <p>Arya, R. (2016, August 31). Spirituality and Contemporary Art. <i>Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion</i>.</p> <p>In-Depth Reading: Alexandrova, A. (2017). <i>Breaking resemblance: The role of religious motifs in contemporary art</i>. Fordham University Press.</p>
13 1/4	Student Performances/Presentations
14 8/4	Student Performances/Presentations
15 15/4	Student Performances/Presentations Course Conclusion

C. Learning Resources

1. Core Readings

Brown, F. B. (Ed.). (2014). *The Oxford handbook of religion and the arts*. Oxford University Press.
(Reprinted 2018)

Rennie, Bryan. *An Ethology of Religion and Art: Belief as Behavior*. Routledge 2020.

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

2. Further Readings (See Part H Below)

3. Online Museum Resources

a. The British Museum (London, UK)

The British Museum offers engaging virtual tours and interactive exhibits that allow visitors to explore ancient artifacts and learn about diverse cultures. You can view highlights such as the

Rosetta Stone and Egyptian mummies, making it a fantastic resource for understanding the historical context of various civilizations.

Access Link: [British Museum Virtual Tours](#)

b. The Vatican Museums (Vatican City)

Experience the grandeur of the Vatican Museums, including the breathtaking Sistine Chapel, through immersive virtual reality tours. These tours provide an in-depth look at the art and architecture that define this iconic religious site, allowing students to appreciate the intersection of art and spirituality.

Access Link: [Vatican Museums Virtual Tour](#)

c. The Metropolitan Museum of Art (The Met, New York City, USA)

The Met offers a variety of virtual resources, including 360-degree tours and online exhibitions. Students can explore the museum's vast collection, which spans over 5,000 years of art from around the world, making it an invaluable resource for art history and cultural studies.

Access Link: [The Met Virtual Tours](#)

d. 中国国家博物馆 (National Museum of China)

The National Museum of China offers a virtual experience that allows users to explore its extensive collections and exhibitions online. Students can view a wide range of artifacts, from ancient relics to modern art, providing a comprehensive understanding of China's cultural heritage.

Access Link: [中国国家博物馆官网](#)

D. Learning Activities

Lecture (hrs) in /out class	Tutorial (hrs) in /out class	Exhibition Study (hrs) in /out class	Group Project & Presentation (hrs) in /out class	Creative Project / Final Paper (hrs) in /out class
2	1	4	10	10
M	M M	M	M	M

M: Mandatory activity

O: Optional activity

NA: Not applicable

1. Participation

- Active Engagement:** Attend all live classes and participate actively. If you miss a session, watch the recording before the next class, as key material may not be in the slides. Engage in discussions and use the chat for comments or questions, especially if public speaking is challenging.
- Artistic Responses:** Respond to the artistic material shown in class. Post your initial thoughts on the "focus piece" and follow up with reflections on case studies after discussions.
- Tutorial Class Sessions:** Use this time to ask questions, seek clarification on complex topics, and engage in deeper discussions with your peers. Prepare in advance by reviewing relevant readings

and notes, and come ready to share your insights. Active participation will enhance your learning experience and contribute to a collaborative environment.

Assessment Criteria: Please refer to the **Participation Marking Rubric** on Blackboard

2. Exhibition Review: "Notre-Dame de Paris: The Augmented Exhibition"

Objective:

Students will visit "Notre-Dame de Paris: The Augmented Exhibition," presented by Visionairs. This innovative exhibition merges immersive augmented reality (AR) technology with historical artifacts to explore the cathedral's 850-year legacy.

Developed by "Histoverly" in collaboration with Rebuilding Notre-Dame de Paris, this project serves as a unique platform for engaging with **the intersection of religion, art, and technology** in the context of Notre-Dame's storied past.

Writing Instructions:

- Following your visit, you are required to write a **1500-word review** that critically analyzes the exhibition.
- Emphasize the themes of **religion, art, and technology** throughout your review. Discuss how the exhibition uses AR to reinterpret religious motifs and artistic expressions within the context of Notre-Dame's history.
- Reflect on the role of augmented reality in enhancing the understanding of the cathedral's religious-cultural significance for both locals and visitors, and how it transforms the art experience.
- Ensure your review is well-structured, supporting your analysis with specific examples from the exhibition and relevant course materials.

Visit Details:

- Date: TBC
- Venue: West Kowloon Cultural District (West K)
- Exhibition: Notre-Dame de Paris: The Augmented Exhibition

Assessment Criteria

- **A:** Insightful reflections that deeply connect personal experiences with readings and concepts from the course; demonstrates critical thinking about the interplay of religion, art, and technology.
- **B:** Thoughtful entries that relate personal insights to course materials; shows good understanding of concepts with relevant examples.
- **C:** Basic reflections that touch on course themes; may lack depth or clear connections but demonstrate some understanding of the material.
- **D:** Minimal engagement with the course themes; reflections are superficial and show little connection to the content discussed in class.

- **F:** No submissions or entries that are disrespectful; fails to engage with the themes of religion, art, and tradition in a meaningful way.

3. Group Presentation - Creative Project or Research Project

⇒ *Creative Project Option (See the examples behind)*

- Objective:** In groups of four, students will create a project that integrates readings and concepts from the course, exploring the relationship between religion and art in a **creative** format.
- Guidelines:** Students can choose one of the following for their project:
 - Create a piece of religious art.
 - Perform a 10-minute religious drama, dance, or music video.
 - Develop a 10-minute multimedia presentation on a religious theme (e.g., Religion and Architecture, Religion and Drama).

Submit an explanatory note of about **1,200 words** discussing the significance of your work in religious and artistic traditions. Prepare a **15-minute presentation** that integrates relevant course readings and analyzes how your art reflects or challenges religious beliefs. Collaborate in groups with defined roles, meet individually with the instructor to refine your concept, and emphasize creativity by showcasing your unique talents.

or

⇒ *Research Project for Students Who Do Not Wish to Pursue a Creative Project*

- Objective:** In groups of four, students will analyze 3 to 4 religious visual artifacts to explore their significance in conveying religio-cultural meanings, integrating relevant course readings and concepts.
- Presentation Guidelines:** In your **25-minute presentation**, select 3 to 4 religious visual artifacts and discuss their significance in conveying religio-cultural meanings. Integrate relevant course readings and concepts, and work collaboratively as a group, allocating clear roles and contributions to each member. Organize your presentation logically to maintain a clear flow of ideas and ensure thorough engagement with the material.

Assessment Criteria: Please refer to the **Presentation Marking Rubric** on Blackboard

4. Term Paper

Following your group presentation, write a term paper of approximately **3,500 words** that explores the themes of religion and art discussed. Start with a clear thesis statement that defines your central argument. Organize your paper into an introduction, body, and conclusion, with the body divided into sections that address specific themes related to religion and art. Use evidence from course materials and scholarly sources to support your analysis. Ensure proper citation and formatting according to the required style guide.

Submission Guidelines:

Papers must be submitted in soft copy via VeriGuide by **5:00 PM on April 29, 2025**. Late submissions will incur a penalty of 10 marks per day, with a zero mark assigned after 10 days.

Assessment Criteria:

Papers will be evaluated on content, clarity of argument, depth of discussion, and adherence to academic referencing standards. The primary objective is to familiarize students with original source materials and relevant literature on the topic. Please refer to the detailed **Marking Rubric for the Term Paper** on Blackboard.

E. Assessment

Course Grades will be based on the following formula:

- Participation 15%
- Exhibition Review 25%
- Group Presentation 25 %
- Term Paper 35%

F. Grade Descriptors

- A** Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.
- A-** Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.
- B** Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.
- C** Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weakness.
- D** Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes.
- F** Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specific requirements.

G. Use of AI tools: allowed with explicit acknowledgement and proper citation

- Students may use some AI tools in some class activities and assignments on the condition that they **make explicit acknowledgement** and **proper citations** of the input from AI tools.
- Acknowledging support from AI tools: Students are required to acknowledge all functional uses of a generative AI tool and **cite it when they paraphrase, quote, or incorporate into their own work any content** (whether it is text, image, data, or other format) that was created by it.
- **An example of acknowledgement**
'I acknowledge the use of (name of AI tool – e.g. ChatGPT (<https://chat.openai.com/>) to (specify the support, e.g. plan my essay, generate some ideas for the content, ask for examples of data collection instruments, get the dates of historical events, etc.).
- **An example of citation**
OpenAI. (2023). *ChatGPT* (Mar 20 version). <https://chat.openai.com/chat>

- **An example of including texts generated by an AI tool in work**
"The following text was generated by an AI tool / language model (ChatGPT):"
[Insert the text generated by ChatGPT here.]
- **An example of including texts generated by an AI tool and the prompts that were used to elicit the text from the AI tool**
"[The prompt], as generated by an AI language model (ChatGPT):"
[Insert the text generated by ChatGPT in response to the prompt.]
- **Students** are reminded to learn and use the AI tools responsibly and ethically and be aware of the limitations
- **Students** are reminded to clarify with the course teacher and obtain permission if necessary when in doubt.

H. Further Readings

- Ahmed, S. (2004). *Visual culture and the politics of emotion*. Routledge.
- Apostolos-Cappadona, D. (Ed.). (1984). *Art, creativity, and the sacred: An anthology in religion and art*. Continuum.
- Boyd, B. (2009). *On the origin of stories: Evolution, cognition, and fiction*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Brown, F. B. (Ed.). (2014). *The Oxford handbook of religion and the arts*. Oxford University Press.
- Brown, F. B. (Ed.). (2017). *Religious aesthetics: A reader*. Indiana University Press.
- Dissanayake, E. (1988). *What is art for?* University of Washington Press.
- Dutton, D. (2009). *The art instinct: Beauty, pleasure, and human evolution*. Bloomsbury Press.
- Elkins, J. (2004). *On the strange place of religion in contemporary art*. Routledge.
- Harvey, S. A., & Hunter, D. G. (Eds.). (2020). *Art and religion in the 21st century*. Routledge.
- Mâle, É. (2008). *图像学：12 世纪到 18 世纪的宗教艺术 = Iconology: religious art from the twelfth to the eighteenth century* (第 1 版). 中国美术学院出版社.
- McCarty, J. W. (1998). *Art and religion: A historical introduction*. Pearson.
- McLennan, R. (Ed.). (2010). *Religion and art: Theoretical approaches*. Ashgate Publishing.
- Mithen, S. J. (1996). *The prehistory of the mind: A search for the origins of art, religion and science*. Thames and Hudson.
- Morgan, D. (2005). *The sacred gaze: Religious visual culture in theory and practice*. University of California Press.
- Morgan, D. (2017). *The embodied eye: Religious visual culture and the social life of feeling*. University of California Press.
- Rosen, A. (2015). *Art + religion in the 21st century*. Thames & Hudson Inc.
- Sandel, M. J. (2009). *The meaning of art: Aesthetic education in the era of globalization*. Harvard University Press.
- Smith, D. L. (2021). *Art as spiritual practice: A theology of making*. Cascade Books.

Turner, M. (Ed.). (2006). *The artful mind: Cognitive science and the riddle of human creativity*. Oxford University Press.

Vischer, R. (2015). *The power of images in the age of anxiety*. Cambridge University Press.

李欣. (2016). 心灵的意义表达: 艺术与宗教. 中文科技期刊数据库 (全文版) 自然科学, (10), 00296-00296.

I. Feedback for Evaluation

End-of-term university course evaluation will be conducted in class. Students' comments and feedback on the course through e-mails or personal meeting with the instructor are always welcomed.

J. A Facility for Posting Course Announcements

Course announcements, assignment, and feedback will be given through *Blackboard Learn*. All questions regarding the course could be posted on the discussion forum or via e-mails within the *Blackboard Learn*.

K. Academic honesty and plagiarism

Each student must upload a soft copy of the completed final paper to the plagiarism detection engine VeriGuide, at the URL: https://academic.veriguide.org/academic/login_CUHK.jspx. The system will issue a receipt that also contains a declaration of honesty. You must sign and attach the receipt to the paper you hand in.

Assessment Guidelines for Creative Project

Grade A: Exceptional Work

- Demonstrates a profound understanding of the relationship between religion and art.
- The performance or presentation is highly creative, innovative, and engaging.
- Integrates course readings and concepts seamlessly, providing deep insights and reflections.
- The explanatory note is well-organized, approximately 1,200 words, and articulates the significance of the work in religious and artistic traditions.
- Group collaboration is excellent, with clearly defined roles and contributions from all members.
- Presentation is polished, with effective use of media or visual aids.

Grade B: Strong Work

- Shows a good understanding of the relationship between religion and art.
- The performance or presentation is creative and engaging, with some innovative elements.
- Effectively integrates course readings and concepts, with relevant examples presented.
- The explanatory note is clear and organized, discussing the significance of the work in a thoughtful manner.
- Group collaboration is strong, with contributions from most members.
- Presentation is well-prepared, with appropriate use of media or visual aids.

Grade C: Satisfactory Work

- Demonstrates a basic understanding of the relationship between religion and art.
- The performance or presentation is competent but may lack depth or originality.
- Integrates some course readings and concepts but may not connect them effectively.
- The explanatory note meets the word count but may lack clarity or depth in discussing significance.
- Group collaboration is evident but may not be balanced among members.
- Presentation is adequate, with limited use of media or visual aids.

Grade D: Needs Improvement

- Shows minimal understanding of the relationship between religion and art.
- The performance or presentation is lacking in creativity and engagement.
- Little integration of course readings and concepts, with superficial connections.
- The explanatory note may be unclear or poorly organized, and does not adequately address significance.
- Group collaboration is weak, with uneven participation among members.

- Presentation is unpolished, with minimal use of media or visual aids.

Grade F: Unsatisfactory Work

- Fails to demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between religion and art.
- The performance or presentation lacks creativity and does not engage the audience.
- No meaningful integration of course readings or concepts.
- The explanatory note is missing, incomplete, or disrespectful in nature.
- Group collaboration is ineffective, with little to no participation from some members.
- Presentation is poorly prepared, with no use of media or visual aids.

Guidelines for Creative Project / Performance Presentation:

Create a Piece of Religious Art

For your Creative/Performance project, choose one of the following art forms —painting, sculpture, or installation art—to express a significant religious theme or symbol. Ensure that your work reflects the cultural and spiritual dimensions of the chosen subject, encouraging viewers to engage with and contemplate the deeper meanings behind your creation.

Create a visual Art Form

- **Painting:** Create a painting that depicts a significant religious story or figure, such as an interpretation of the Last Supper or a scene from the life of Buddha.
- **Sculpture:** Craft a sculpture representing a religious symbol, like a cross, mandala, or the Tree of Life, using materials like clay or recycled objects.
- **Installation Art:** Design an installation that explores themes of faith and spirituality, using everyday objects to evoke a religious experience or narrative.

Perform a Religious Drama, Dance, or Music Piece in Video Format

- **Drama:** Film a short play that dramatizes a well-known religious parable, such as "The Good Samaritan," incorporating dialogue and character development.
- **Dance:** Choreograph and record a dance that expresses themes from a religious tradition, such as a Hindu classical dance that tells a story from the Ramayana.
- **Music:** Create a video performance of a religious song or hymn, either as a solo or group piece, highlighting its significance in worship.

Develop a Multimedia Presentation on a Religious Theme

- **Theme Exploration:** Create a PowerPoint presentation on the concept of pilgrimage in various religions, including images, videos, and personal reflections.
- **Comparative Analysis:** Develop a multimedia project comparing the rituals of two different religious traditions, using video clips, images, and text to illustrate similarities and differences.
- **Interactive Presentation:** Design an interactive presentation that allows classmates to explore religious symbols from around the world, using QR codes linked to videos or articles for deeper understanding.