Religion 176
Religion and Art

Fall 2017, Westminster College
Prof. Bryan Rennie

Office: Patterson Hall 366
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Required Reading:

- Eliade, Mircea. “What the Symbols Reveal.” From *The Two and the One*, 201-211.

Schedule
Class will meet MWF from 11:00-12:00.

**Week One**

**Monday, 8/28**

**Wednesday, 8/30**
Another part of the Problem—the Biblical Injunction against the “graven image”: “Judaism and Art” by David Altshuler and Linda Altshuler in *Art, Creativity, and the Sacred* edited by Diane Apostolos-Cappadona (hereafter ACS), 155-163. Exodus 20.1–17 and Deuteronomy 5.6–21.
Friday, 9/1
John Hinnells, “Religion and the Arts.”

Week Two
Monday, 9/4
The attraction of idolatry: “Reading Images in the Religious Studies Classroom” by Steven Engler and Irene Naested.

Wednesday, 9/6

Friday, 9/8
Art and Religion at work: The Church at Assy: “Artists and Church Commissions” by John Dillenberger ACS, 193-204.

Your first submission of your class documentation is due at this point. It should be submitted to D2L by Saturday at 5 pm at the very latest (earlier is better!).

Week Three
Monday, 9/11

Wednesday, 9/13
The Classical Roots of Religious Art: Orthodox Iconography:

Friday, 9/15

Week Four
Monday, 9/18
Wednesday, 9/20

Your second submission of your class documentation is due today. Please turn it in by 5 pm Saturday at the latest.

Friday, 9/22

Week Five
Monday, 9/25

Wednesday, 9/27
But how does it all work? “Concerning the Spiritual in Art” by Wassily Kandinski, ACS 3-7.

Friday, 9/29

Week Six
Monday, 10/2

You must submit a prospectus for your first short research paper by this date.

Wednesday, 10/4

Friday, 10/6

Your third submission of your class documentation is due this Saturday.

Week Seven
Monday, 10/9
Wednesday, 10/11

**Your first short research paper is due today. (1,000 words.)**

Friday, 10/13

Week Eight

**Monday, 10/16**
Islamic Art: “An Islamic Perspective on Symbolism and the Arts” by Lois Ibsen Al-Faruqi ACS 164-178.

**Wednesday, 10/18**

**Friday, 10/20**

Fall Break: Saturday October 21st through Tuesday 24th.

Week Nine

**Wednesday, 10/25**

**Friday, 10/27**
“What the Symbols Reveal” by Mircea Eliade, from *The Two and the One*, 201-211

**Your fourth submission of your class documentation is due Saturday.**

Week Ten

**Monday, 10/30**
Some more theoretical considerations: “The Sacred and the Modern Artist” by Mircea Eliade ACS 179-183 and “What the Symbols Reveal” by Mircea Eliade, from *The Two and the One*, 201-211.
Wednesday, 11/1

Friday, 11/3

Week Eleven
Monday, 11/6

Wednesday, 11/8

Friday, 11/10

Week Twelve
Monday, 11/13
“Seeing the Unseen”: A chapter from *Skill and the Sacred: The Common Ancestor of Religion and Art*.

Wednesday, 11/15

Friday, 11/17
“Religion and Art as Adaptation”: A chapter from *Skill and the Sacred: The Common Ancestor of Religion and Art*.

Your fifth submission of your class documentation is due this Saturday.

(“The Flammarion Engraving”, c. 1888)
Week Thirteen
Monday, 11/20

Thanksgiving Break: Wednesday November 22nd through Sunday 26th.
Your second short research paper is due today. (1,500 words.)

Week Fourteen
Monday, 11/27

Wednesday, 11/29
“The Art in Religions”: A chapter from *Skill and the Sacred: The Common Ancestor of Religion and Art*.

Friday, 12/1
“Religion in the Arts”: A chapter from *Skill and the Sacred: The Common Ancestor of Religion and Art*.

Week Fifteen
Monday, 12/4

Wednesday, 12/6
Conclusions.

Friday, 12/8 Last Class.

Your sixth and final submission of your class documentation is due today. The final resubmission including all of your documentations is due in by the time of our final examination period.
Outcomes:

Content Acquisition: the successful student will demonstrate a familiarity with various objects and activities from the history of religious art and should be able to recognize and locate various art objects and activities from around the world and across time.

Theoretical Sophistication: the successful student will become familiar with a complex theoretical account of the origin, nature, and function of religion and art behavior that will allow a consistent, coherent, and comprehensible description of these behaviors, their operation, and their relation.

Aesthetic Sensitivity: by exposure to, consideration and discussion of, and a deliberate attempt to empathize with, the art objects and activities that have been associated with the religious traditions of the world, the successful student will develop a sensitivity to these objects and events that promotes a creative response to them as well as an ability to expound upon their signification.

Refined Skills: the successful student will demonstrate their ability to locate and acquire reliable information, to integrate that information into a coherent explanatory framework, and to articulate that framework and its implications.

Assessment:

All of the above outcomes will be fostered by practice and refinement through collaboration with and feedback from the instructor. They will be continuously assessed by a process of repeated submission and eventual resubmission of the students’ written responses to the class content. As well as these submissions participation in ongoing classroom discussion of the materials will be required as an indication of the students’ ability to articulate an increasing familiarity with and understanding of the subject. Two pieces of formal written work will enable further assessment of the students’ content acquisition, theoretical sophistication, aesthetic sensitivity, and skill. Finally, the requirement to produce a piece or performance that artistically expresses the student’s internalization of an understanding of the working of art in connection with religion will enable an assessment of their sophistication and grasp.

Grading:

The most important single element will be the creation of pieces of student visual and/or performing arts relevant to religion in the final weeks of the course, but there will also be formal written work (two short papers on religion and art: one around the middle of the semester and another towards the end. There will be a final essay exam (a short essay, c. 1,000 words on subjects to be announced).

Also very important will be the ongoing documentation of students' responses to the course material (with optional readers’ responses at periodic intervals). Students will also be asked to report on “Co-curricular activities,” that is, activities or events outside of class that the student deems relevant to the topic of this course (2 in all).
Documentation **15 points** including optional readers' responses and co-curricular reports up to 10 points. These readers' responses (three in all) should be short focused reviews of specific pieces of reading. Choose one chapter, or even one part of one chapter, from the required reading and write a short (c. 250 words) summary and review. Explain its contents and your reaction to it. This response will count as part of the overall length of your documentation.

**Visual or Performance Art 20 points.** Remember that this must be visual or performance art. Although you can use any artistic medium, you must provide a visual display or performance for the class. So, for example, you can write a poem, but you have to recite it before the class.

**Paper #One 5 points.** A short essay showing your own original research into some facet of the course material and demonstrating your own understanding of religion and the arts.

**Paper #Two 10 points.** A second, slightly longer, essay showing your own original research into some facet of the course material and demonstrating your own understanding of religion and the arts.

**Final Exam 20 points.** The final examination will consist of a final re-submission of your entire class documentation from the beginning to the end of the semester. This should be corrected and upgraded. Comments and ideas from later in the course should be integrated into the materials from earlier. The instructor's responses, corrections and comments should likewise be integrated into the final text.

**Notes and Possible Themes:**
- Is the search for the all in the one characteristic of religious art? Consider, for example, ACS pp. 9, 138 & 208.
- Eliot’s *Four Quartets* illustrates the theme of the Quest (v. Laub-Novak, ACS 20).
- The *Tao Te Ching* as poetry.