

**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)

**1. 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.

**2. Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)**

Upon successful completion of CURE 3130, students will be able to:

**A. Analyze Artistic Works:**

- ⑩ Students will analyze works of visual art and performance with sensitivity to how their style and composition reflect, shape, and contest various religious beliefs and practices.

**B. Compare Artistic Periods and Styles:**

- ⑩ Students will compare the characteristics of specific artistic periods or styles in relation to the historical development and social contexts of various religious traditions.

**C. Explain Religious Discourse:**

- ⑩ Students will explain how religious discourse and practices associated with artistic expressions make certain interpretive methods appealing and transmittable.

**D. Demonstrate Analytical Concepts:**

- ⑩ Students will demonstrate an understanding of basic analytical concepts and criteria used in the academic study of religion.

**E. Appreciate Diversity:**

- ⑩ Students will be exposed to and appreciate a diversity of both religious and artistic forms.

### 3. Class Schedule

Week	Topic
1 7/1	<p><b>Introduction to Religion and Art</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study Question: In what ways does artistic imagination shape and reflect religious faith across various cultures and historical periods?</li> </ul> <p>"Artistic Imagination and Religious Faith," in <i>The Oxford Handbook of Religion and the Arts, Chapter 5</i>.</p>
2 14/1	<p><b>Religion and Art in Ancient Egypt</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study Question: In what ways did the iconography of gods and the afterlife influence the architectural designs of pyramids and temples in Ancient Egypt?</li> </ul> <p>"Iconography and Architecture," in <i>The Art of Ancient Egypt</i> by Gay Robins.</p>
3 21/1	<p><b>Ancient Greece and the Divine</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study Question: How does Greek art, particularly sculpture and architecture, reflect the cultural values and beliefs of its time?</li> </ul> <p>"Cultural Values in Greek Sculpture" in <i>Greek Art and Archaeology</i> by John G. Pedley.</p>
4 28/1	<p><b>No Class - Lunar New Year Vacation</b></p>
5 4/2	<p><b>Early Christianity and Roman Art</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study Question: What are the key differences between pagan and Christian iconography, and how did these transitions manifest in early Christian art?</li> </ul> <p>"Pagan vs. Christian Iconography" in <i>Early Christian Art</i> by Charles A. Stewart.</p>
6 11/2	<p><b>The Renaissance: Rebirth of Spiritual Art</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study Question: How did the revival of classical themes during the Renaissance influence the portrayal of spirituality in the works of artists like Michelangelo and Raphael?</li> </ul> <p>"Spirituality in Renaissance Art" in <i>Renaissance Art: A Very Short Introduction</i> by Geraldine A. Johnson.</p>
7 18/2	<p><b>Hinduism and Artistic Diversity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study Question: In what ways do narratives from texts like the Ramayana and</li> </ul>

	<p>Mahabharata influence the portrayal of deities in Hindu art?</p> <p>“Hinduism—Visual Art and Architecture,” in <i>The Oxford Handbook of Religion and the Arts, Chapter 25</i>.</p>
<p>8 25/2</p>	<p><b>Shinto and the Arts: Harmony Between Nature and Spirituality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study Question: In what ways do Shinto beliefs shape artistic practices and expressions, and how do these art forms reflect the relationship between spirituality, nature, and community in Japanese culture?</li> </ul> <p>“Shinto and the Arts” in <i>The Oxford Handbook of Religion and the Arts, Chapter 30</i>.</p>
<p>9 4/3</p>	<p><b>Reading Week – No Class</b></p>
<p>10 11/3</p>	<p><b>Taoism and the Arts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study Question: How do the principles of Taoism influence artistic expression and creativity in various art forms</li> </ul> <p>“Taoism and the Arts” in <i>The Oxford Handbook of Religion and the Arts, Chapter 28</i>.</p>
<p>11 18/3</p>	<p><b>Indigenous Religions and Art</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study Question: What is the significance of ritual objects, such as totem poles and masks, in Indigenous cultures, and how do they convey religious beliefs?</li> </ul> <p>“Ritual Objects in Indigenous Cultures” in <i>Indigenous Australian Art</i> by Margo Neale.</p>
<p>12 25/3</p>	<p><b>Contemporary Art and Spirituality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study Question: In what ways does contemporary art challenge or reinterpret traditional religious narratives?</li> </ul> <p>“Reinterpreting Religious Narratives” featuring works by Anselm Kiefer and Bill Viola.</p>
<p>1/4</p>	<p>Group Presentations</p>
<p>8/4</p>	<p>Group Presentations</p>
<p>15/4</p>	<p>Paper Consultation/ Group Presentations</p>

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

#### 4. Learning Activities

Lecture (hr) in /out class		Tutorial (hr) in /out class		Reading response (hr) in /out class		Final Paper (hr) in /out class	
3		1			2		10
M	M	M		NA	M	NA	M

M: Mandatory activity

O: Optional activity

NA: Not applicable

#### 5. Assessment and CLO

Learning Activities for Assessment	CLO				
	A	B	C	D	E
<p><b><u>Class Participation (10%)</u></b></p> <p><b>Description:</b> In the class, you will be asked to post your initial reaction to the art or performance pieces and explain your feelings. By the end of the class, you will share how your response has changed or developed based on our discussions and the insights of your classmates.</p> <p><b>Assessment Methods:</b> You demonstrate completion of your assigned work during class sessions and actively participate in discussions.</p>	●				●
<p><b><u>Tutorial Participation (10%)</u></b></p> <p><b>Description:</b> Consistently engages respectfully with others by responding to their points in a constructive manner.</p> <p><b>Assessment Methods:</b> Students will be evaluated on their engagement in class discussions, focusing on the frequency of their participation. They should respond to peers constructively and respectfully, fostering further dialogue by building on others' ideas.</p>	●			●	●
<p><b><u>Art Piece Catalog Entry for Social Media Publication (20%)</u></b></p> <p><b>Description:</b> In pairs, students will research and write a catalog entry for one religious artifact from a specific religious tradition, focusing on its artistic and cultural significance (200-300 words).</p> <p><b>Assessment Methods:</b> Entry will be assessed on clarity, depth of analysis, and the ability to connect the artwork to broader cultural and religious themes. Selected entries may be published on social media platforms.</p>	●		●		●

<p><b><u>Group Presentation / Performance or Creative Project (25%)</u></b></p> <p><b>Description:</b> 4 students in small groups, students will present on a specific religious art piece, exploring its cultural context, symbolism, and significance within its tradition (25 minutes).</p> <p><b>Assessment Methods:</b> Presentations will be evaluated based on content, engagement, and the ability to facilitate discussion among peers.</p> <p><i>For Performance Project, please see the guidelines provided below.</i></p>	●	●	●	●	●
<p><b>Creative Project / Research Paper (35%)</b></p> <p>See the Description below</p>	●	●	●	●	●

⇒ [Creative Project \(See the examples behind\)](#)

**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.

**Project Overview:**

Students can choose **one** from the following options:

- Create a piece of religious art
- Perform a religious drama, dance, or music piece in video format in **10 mins**
- Develop a multimedia presentation on a religious theme in **10 mins**

**Requirements:**

- Notes for the Creative Project you choose from the options above:
  - Provide explanatory materials (about 1,200 words) that contextualize the work and its significance in religious and artistic traditions.
- Integration of Course Materials:
  - Include relevant readings and concepts from class.
  - Show how the chosen art form reflects or contests religious beliefs.
- Collaboration:
  - Work in groups, with each member outlining their roles and contributions.
- Consultation:
  - Meet individually with the instructor to discuss and refine the project concept.
- Creativity:
  - Be innovative and utilize your unique talents, reflecting personal engagement with

the course material.

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

#### **Objective:**

- In groups of four, students are required to write a research paper on how a series of 3 to 4 religious visual artifacts convey personal and cultural meanings.

#### **Research Paper:**

- Following the group presentation, each group will write a term paper (~3500 words) that explores the themes discussed.

#### **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.

#### **Grading Criteria:**

- Papers will be evaluated based 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.

## **6. 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.

## **7. Further Readings**

- Apostolos-Cappadona, Diane, ed. (1984). **Art, Creativity, and the Sacred: An Anthology in Religion and Art**. New York: Continuum.
- Barkow, J. H., Leda Cosmides, and John Tooby, eds. (1995). **The Adapted Mind: Evolutionary Psychology and the Generation of Culture**. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Boyd, Brian (2009). **On the Origin of Stories: Evolution, Cognition, and Fiction**. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Boyer, Pacal 2001. **Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought**. New York: Basic Books.
- Dissanayake, Ellen (1988). **What is Art For?** Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Dutton, Denis (2009). **The Art Instinct: Beauty, Pleasure, and Human Evolution**. New York, Berlin, and London: Bloomsbury Press.
- Elkins, James (2004). **On the Strange Place of Religion in Contemporary Art**. Routledge.
- Gell, Alfred (1992). "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology," in **Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics**, ed. Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 40-63.
- Mithen, Steven J. (1996). **The Prehistory of the Mind: A Search for the Origins of Art, Religion and Science**. London, UK: Thames and Hudson.
- Morgan, David (2005). **The Sacred Gaze: Religious Visual Culture in Theory and Practice**. University of California Press.
- Morgan, David (2017). **The Embodied Eye: Religious Visual Culture and the Social Life of Feeling**. Berkeley: University of California.
- Pyysiäinen, Ilkka and Veikko Anttonen (eds. 2002). **Current Approaches in the Cognitive Science of Religion**. London and New York: Continuum.
- Rosen, A. (2015). **Art + religion in the 21st century**. New York: Thames & Hudson Inc.
- Stausberg, Michael (2009). **Contemporary Theories of Religion: A Critical Companion**. London and New York: Routledge.
- Turner, Mark (2006) ed. **The Artful Mind: Cognitive Science and the Riddle of Human Creativity**. Oxford University Press.
- Wrangham, Richard (2010). **Catching Fire: How Cooking Made us Human**. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- 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). 杭州: 中国美术学院出版社.

## 8. 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.

## 9. 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*.

## **10. 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](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.



## **Guidelines for Performance Presentation or Creative Project:**

### **Create a Piece of Religious Art**

For your Performance/ Creative 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.