

## Religion and the Arts

840:132 (section 1)

MW 2:50-4:10

Fall 2020

\*\*There may be minor revisions of this syllabus before September. The final version will be posted in Canvas.\*\*

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The arts – such as music, dance, drama, painting, sculpture – provide a unique avenue into the world of religious experience. For religious practitioners, the connection between the arts and religion is almost taken for granted, such that they may not even realize the degree to which some element of artistic expression is involved in their experience. Expressions of religious life are often situated in ritual contexts which evoke all the senses through sound, color, imagery, gesture, movement, smell, and embodiment. Indeed, the origin of meaning or worldview for religious people arises from the dynamic interaction of the cognitive and the experiential.

At the same time, performing and visual artists sometimes utilize religious themes and imagery and are themselves often engaged in the same kinds of exploration of meaning that religions pursue and attempt to offer answers. As sociologist of religion Robert Wuthnow explains, the arts can “draw people closer to God, often by expressing what cannot be put into words. They spark the religious imagination and enrich personal experiences of the sacred.” Thus, even the most “secular” kinds of artistic production may still convey a kind of religiosity.

In this course, we will explore both how religion is manifested and used in the arts AND how the arts are manifested and used in religion. From that dialectic, we will utilize a combination of cognitive and experiential methods to learn more about the interaction and permeable boundaries between religion and the arts. We will then apply this knowledge to the analysis of specific manifestations of “religious art” both within and outside of religious contexts.

**NO prior experience or expertise** in either religion or the arts is necessary.

This course fulfills the following core curriculum learning goals of Rutgers University: **[AHp]**

\* Students will be able to analyze arts and/or literatures in themselves and in relation to specific histories, values, languages, cultures, and technologies.



### Additional course objectives:

- \* Students will understand multiple ways religion and the arts intersect.
- \* Students will be able to articulate ways that various religions make use of the arts.
- \* Students will develop tools for assessing how religious themes are deployed in artistic contexts.
- \* Students will be exposed to and appreciate a diversity of both religious and artistic forms.

## Required Texts:

*The Oxford Handbook of Religion and the Arts*, edited by Frank Burch Brown. Oxford University Press, 2014 (reprinted 2018). ISBN: 978-0-19-087119-2 (paperback). Also available as e-book: ISBN: 978-0-19-9721030. Please acquire a copy for yourself asap.

Assigned articles from the journal *Religion and the Arts*, available through Rutgers Libraries. ISSN: 1568-5292 (access via Canvas).

## Course Requirements:

### 1. *Participation:*

We will be holding synchronous online sessions of the course, so attending each session by logging in and being engaged during that time is important. If you have a hardship that prevents you from logging in live, each session will be recorded and you will be able to watch it that way. Some of the material covered in lectures and in-class discussion is not found in the textbooks, additional details may be given in class regarding particular assignments, and you will often be asked to contribute something particular to discussion boards at the end of the class; so if you are unable to attend a live session, it is vital that you watch it before the next session occurs.

In general, good participation requires completing the assignments before each class session, taking notes, and being actively engaged in any class discussion inasmuch as this is possible for you. How and what you learn from listening to a lecture, reading a textbook, doing research, etc., is exponentially enhanced when you have immediate access to other students' perspectives on the material. Thus, it is equally important and helpful that you share your perspective so that others may benefit from what you have to say. It also proves that you are thinking about the material. I encourage you to make vocal contributions when you can and also to add brief comments and/or questions to the public chat. While not ideal, the online format may actually be more comfortable than in-person for those who are shy about speaking in public.

Participation also includes your sharing of "reactions" to artistic material shown in class. Sharing of responses/reactions is integral to the experience of the arts. Our reactions are often influenced and colored by the reactions of those around us. Indeed, the audience "matters." At the end of each of our Wednesday classes, you will be given a "focus piece" (art/performance) to observe. For each of these, you will post your initial reaction to the pieces of art or performance and do your best to describe why you are responding this way. Similarly, you will also post follow-up assessments to your case study responses (explained below), after our discussion of the cases each Monday. In this case, you will be posting how your response to the case in point shifted or developed as a result of our class discussion and the responses of your class members.

These responses provide the foundation for deeper critical thinking about how the arts intersect with religion and spirituality. You will post your comments either to Voice Thread or Discussion boards in Canvas. Each discussion will remain open for a limited time, so be sure to make your contribution in a timely manner. Further instructions and rubrics will be given in class/Modules.

In general, you should think of participation being assessed according to the following standards:

- A: You have completed all assigned work before each class session and consistently play an active role in discussions. Your comments reflect excellent preparation and project a commitment to the learning goals of the course. Your reactions/responses reflect a deep encounter with the art forms and the accompanying subject matter. You build upon the comments of others and pose insightful critical questions that foster further discussion and advance the level and depth of the conversation.
- B: You have completed your assigned work before most class sessions and often play an active role in discussion. Your comments reflect good preparation and a desire to learn. Your reactions/responses are mostly on target and demonstrate interest. Your comments are relevant and demonstrate that you are listening to the contributions of other students.
- C: Your preparation is inconsistent and you only occasionally engage in discussions. Your comments reflect adequate preparation when you do contribute. Your reactions/responses are inconsistent and do not always demonstrate interest in the material.
- D: You are often unprepared and almost never contribute to discussions -and/or- your comments and/or reactions/responses reflect a lack of interest, engagement, or focus.
- F: You never contribute or participate at all or your participation disrespects others.
2. *I-C-Q Briefs*, for each of the Wednesday readings. Based on the assigned reading of the day, you will submit a thought brief highlighting one thing you found particularly Interesting, one thing that Challenged you to think about something in a new way, and one thing that raised a Question for you. These will need to be submitted just before class begins and will be used as a basis for our discussion that day. More instructions to come.
3. *Case Study Analyses*, due as indicated on the syllabus. These are **one-page papers** based on particular cases of artistic presentations, some of which are especially representative of our subject matter and some of which have generated controversy because of their use of religious content. You will begin with your emotional/affective response to the art or performance and then draw on Deborah Haynes's interpretive model to discuss the case in terms of creator, object/ritual/event, viewer/audience, and context. You will use this template to link the piece to course material and to analyze and think critically about it. You will need to complete **6 of the 10** (excluding 2 Deep Dives and 2 skipped) responses that are assigned on the syllabus, though you must still view the art or performance for each case study so that you can participate fully in our discussion of it. More instructions will be given on Canvas, but the general grading rubric will be as follows:
- 4 = A (Wow! Very insightful and nearly flawless! It exceeds expectations in substance)  
3 = B (**The typical grade for completing the paper as assigned, without mistakes**)  
2 = C (Not complete or not clear or poorly written or some mistakes)  
1 = D (Overly problematic, but at least you wrote something)

4. *Deep Dive Reflections*, due as indicated on the syllabus. For each of the case studies and chapters on particular religious traditions, extra readings (or other digital materials) are given if you would like to explore the topic or related ideas more deeply. These are optional readings/viewings and you only need to complete **three (3)** of them total (two from set I and one from set II). We will divide these among the students in the class and you will hopefully be able to sign up for the material you find most interesting and relevant. For the reflection, you will first need to prepare a brief presentation (slides) to share with the class what the material is all about. Then you will write a **two-page paper** reflecting critically on the material in light of the case study pieces and other relevant readings, based on guidelines to be given on Canvas. This will give you an opportunity to engage with the deep dive material and other subject matter more substantively.
  
5. (*Worship Service Critique*. Students will visit a religious service and observe how the arts are used or not, and assess the experience based on course material. **This will not be a requirement this semester due to the problems with attending live events in the midst of the Coronavirus pandemic.**)
  
6. *Performance or Presentation*, to be presented in our class sessions during the last two weeks of the semester. You will have a great deal of latitude to construct a project you will find appealing, in consultation with me. This will allow students who are so inclined to utilize their own talents, key into their specific interest area, and engage with the course material on a visceral-experiential level. Students may choose to produce a work of “religious” art or perform a piece of “religious” drama, dance, or music, and provide program notes, or something similar. Students may work in groups and also propose their own options. You will need to meet with me individually to determine the shape and scope of your project. This is your chance to be creative!
  
7. *Research Paper/Project* for students who do not wish to perform or present.

Grades will be based on the following formula:

Participation	20%
I-C-Q Briefs	10%
Case Study Analyses	25%
Deep Dive Reflections	20%
Performance, Presentation, or Project	25%

General Criteria for Evaluation:

- accuracy and precision of scholarship
- clarity of oral and written expression
- progress in critical thinking skills
- completion of assignments and readings on due dates
- thoroughness, creativity, originality and contribution to field of inquiry

Be sure to take advantage of the many academic support services Rutgers offers through a variety of Learning Centers. Go to <https://rlc.rutgers.edu/about-us> for more information.

A Note about Grading: A's are supposed to be exceptional grades. In order to earn an A (Outstanding) in this course, you must complete all assignments **really well**. Your work should not only be flawless, but also above and beyond expectations. Doing all assignments **well** fits more appropriately in the B(+) range of grades ((Very) Good). When work is flawed, late, or incomplete, it fits into the C (Satisfactory) and D (Poor) range.

Remember that if you EVER consult an outside source for something you are writing, you MUST acknowledge it through an appropriate citation. Portraying someone else's ideas or work as your own is **plagiarism** and any student found plagiarizing will receive an F for the entire course. (<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>)

NOTE: If you have any special needs or a disability that requires any special accommodation to fulfill any course requirements, you need to provide acceptable documentation to the Office of Disability Services. That office will then make arrangements as needed with Dr. McGinley.

### **Schedule of Topics, Readings and Assignments**

Readings and papers are DUE on the date for which they are listed.

Sep 2	<u>Course Introduction</u> Plate, An Aesthetic Approach to Religion (Canvas)	
Sep 8 (Follow Monday Schedule)	<u>Theory and Method</u> <i>Handbook</i> Chapter 1: Mapping the Terrain of Religion and the Arts	
Sep 9	<u>Theoretical and Methodological Concerns</u> <i>Handbook</i> Chapter 2: Aesthetics and Religion	I-C-Q Brief (Practice)
Sep 14	<u>Theoretical and Methodological Concerns</u> <i>Handbook</i> Chapter 6: Creativity at the Intersection of Art and Religion	
Sep 16	<u>Artistic Ways of Being Religious</u> <i>Handbook</i> Chapter 13: Visual Arts as Ways of Being Religious	I-C-Q Brief
Sep 21	Case Study: Art Exhibitions: "Buddhism and Its Artistic Expression" (The Indian Museum, Kolkata) and "Heavenly Bodies: Fashion and the Catholic Imagination" (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)(Canvas) <b>Deep Dive:</b> <i>Handbook</i> Chapter 36: Art, Material Culture, and Lived Religion (Required reading for all students)	Case Study Analysis #1  Deep Dive (practice)

Sep 23	<u>Artistic Ways of Being Religious</u> <i>Handbook</i> Chapter 7: Musical Ways of Being Religious	I-C-Q Brief
Sep 28	Case Study: Musical Performance: Messiaen's "Quartet for the End of Time" (Canvas) <b>Deep Dive:</b> Greene, "Open Completeness" (Journal 2013: Vol. 17, No. 5)(Canvas)	Case Study Analysis #2 DD option (set I)
Sep 30	<u>Artistic Ways of Being Religious</u> <i>Handbook</i> Chapter 11: Dance as a Way of Being Religious	I-C-Q Brief
Oct 5	Case Study: Dance Performance: Paul Taylor's <i>Speaking in Tongues</i> (Canvas) <b>Deep Dive:</b> Shawn, "Religious Use of the Dance" (Canvas)	Case Study Analysis #3 DD option (set I)
Oct 7	<u>Artistic Ways of Being Religious</u> <i>Handbook</i> Chapter 10: Dramatic Ways of Being Religious	I-C-Q Brief
Oct 12	Case Study: Sachs, "The Religious Nature of Theater and the Theatrical Nature of Religion" and <i>The Passion Play of Oberammergau</i> (documentary) (Canvas) <b>Deep Dive:</b> Terrence McNally's <i>Corpus Christi</i> ; Controversial productions (Canvas)	Case Study Analysis #4 DD option (set I)
Oct 14	<u>Liturgy vs. Performance</u> <i>Handbook</i> Chapter 31: Artistry and Aesthetics in Modern and Postmodern Worship <b>Deep Dive:</b> Kast, "Dancing in Sacred Space: Some Reflections on Liturgy and Performance" (Journal 2000: Vol. 4, No. 2)(Canvas)	I-C-Q Brief DD option (set II)
Oct 19	Case Study: Musical Performance: Leonard Bernstein's <i>Mass</i> (Canvas) <b>Deep Dive:</b> "Revisiting Bernstein's Immodest Mass" (NPR Interview); Compare Washington and Paris Productions (Canvas)	Case Study Analysis #5 DD option (set I)
Oct 21	<u>Religious Ways of Being Artistic</u> <i>Handbook</i> Chapter 16: Judaism and Music; Chapter 17: Judaism – Visual Art and Architecture <b>Deep Dive:</b> Arya, "Reflections on the Spiritual in Rothko" (Journal 2016: Vol. 20, No. 3)	I-C-Q Brief DD option (set II)

Oct 26	<p>Case Study: Metropolitan Museum of Art Exhibition: <i>Jerusalem 1000-1400: Every People Under Heaven</i> (Canvas)</p> <p><b>Deep Dive:</b> Art and the Religious Imagination (Podcast from the Museum of Contemporary Religious Art, SLU) (Canvas)</p>	<p>Case Study Analysis #6</p> <p>DD option (set I)</p>
Oct 28	<p><u>Religious Ways of Being Artistic</u> <i>Handbook</i> Chapter 19: Christianity and Music Chapter 20: Christianity and Visual Art</p> <p><b>Deep Dive:</b> Fowler, “Herman Trunk’s Cubist Crucifix: A Case Study” (Journal 2011: Vol. 15, No. 5) and <i>A Fire in My Belly</i> by David Wojnarowicz (Canvas)</p>	<p>I-C-Q Brief</p> <p>DD option (set II)</p>
Nov 2	<p>Case Study: Dance Performance: Paul Taylor’s <i>Beloved Renegade</i> and (Canvas)</p> <p><b>Deep Dive:</b> Karayanni, “Sacred Embodiment: Fertility Ritual, Mother Goddess, and Cultures of Belly Dance” (Journal 2009: Vol. 13, No. 4) and Scolieri, “Ted Shawn and the Defense of the Male Dancer” (Canvas)</p>	<p>Case Study Analysis #7</p> <p>DD option (set I)</p>
Nov 4	<p><u>Religious Ways of Being Artistic</u> <i>Handbook</i> Chapter 22: Islam and Visual Art Chapter 23: Islam and Music</p> <p><b>Deep Dive:</b> Blair, “Invoking the Prophet Muhammad Through Word, Sound, and Image” (2016: Vol. 20, No. 1-2)</p>	<p>I-C-Q Brief</p> <p>DD option (set II)</p>
Nov 9	<p>Case Study: Radius Video: “Exploring Religious Drama”; Drama Reading: Ayad Akhtar’s <i>Disgraced</i>; “Meet the Playwright” (Canvas)</p> <p><b>Deep Dive:</b> Assorted Interviews with Ayad Akhtar; Yeghiazarian, “On Ayad Akhtar’s <i>Disgraced</i>”; Martinez-Vazquez, “Universality in <i>Disgraced</i> by Ayad Akhtar: Does the Intent Justify the Impact?” (Canvas)</p>	<p>Case Study Analysis #8</p> <p>DD option (set I)</p>

Nov 11	<u>Religious Ways of Being Artistic</u> <i>Handbook</i> Chapter 25: Hinduism – Visual Art and Architecture Chapter 26: Hinduism and Music <b>Deep Dive:</b> Clooney, “Encountering the (Divine) Mother in Hindu and Christian Hymns” (2008: Vol. 12, No. 1-3) (Canvas) - <b>OR-</b> <i>Handbook</i> Chapter 24: Hinduism – Aesthetics, Drama, and Poetics	I-C-Q Brief  DD option (set II)
Nov 16	Case Study: Art Exhibitions: “A Century of Sacred Art: Hindu Gods in Print” (Ravi Varma Fine Arts Lithographic Press) and “Art of the Islamic Worlds” (Museum of Fine Arts, Houston) (Canvas) <b>Deep Dive:</b> Asher, “Uneasy Bedfellows: Islamic Art and the Politics of Indian Nationalism” (Journal: 2004: Vol. 8, No. 1) (Canvas)	Case Study Analysis #9  DD option (set I)
Nov 18	<u>Religious Ways of Being Artistic</u> <i>Handbook</i> Chapter 27: Buddhism – Image as Icon, Image as Art <b>Deep Dive:</b> Smith, “Nam June Paik’s TV Buddha as Buddhist Art” (Journal 2000: Vol. 4, No. 3) (Canvas)	I-C-Q Brief  DD option (set II)
Nov 23	Case Study: Eastern Virginia Gospel (Virginia Folklife Program) (Canvas) <b>Deep Dive:</b> <i>Handbook</i> Chapter 37: Sacred and Secular in African American Music	Case Study Analysis #10  DD option (set I)
Nov 25 (Follow Friday Schedule)	NO Class (Thanksgiving Break)	
Nov 30	Pop Culture Explorations: Bhangra Dancing, Apache Indian, Matisyahu, Muslim Rap, Aretha Franklin, Madonna, and Kanye West	
Dec 2	Student Performances/Presentations	
Dec 7	Student Performances/Presentations	
Dec 9	Student Performances/Presentations Course Conclusion	Projects/Papers Performance Notes