Communication, Religion, and the Arts
COMM/RELS 257
Fall 2017

Instructor: Jessica M. Havens
Instructor Office: 205A, Bolton Hall
Instructor Contact: jmhavens@tamu.edu
Office Hours: T/T 9:30-12:00
Meeting time: TR 12:45-2:00
Location: BLTN 003

Catalog Course Description
COMM/RELS 257: Communication, Religion, and the Arts. Credit 3. Introduction to artistic, religious communication; survey of communication art and media art practices across religious contexts; consideration of communication aesthetics that mediate religious experience.

Core Curriculum: Creative Arts
This course is part of the core curriculum in creative arts. As such we focus on appreciation and analysis of creative artifacts and works of human imagination. We synthesize and interpret artistic expression, and enable critical, creative, and innovative communication about works of art, in this course, religious works of art.

Communication, Religion, and the Arts offers a broad survey of art in the context of media and religion in a variety of media and across cultures. In this course students learn about the power of media as a communicative force of social transformation, and how it continues to shape the ways we know and understand the world around us. A historical overview of art and communication theory, and aesthetics provides students with the theoretical foundation necessary to interpret and analyze the communicative influence of religious forms of art. Through visual assignments and open critique format, students will learn how to analyze visual arguments and become more effective visual communicators.

In this course we will engage in
critical thinking which involves creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information
communication which involves effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication
teamwork which involves the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal
social responsibility which involves intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.

Learning Outcomes
Students who satisfactorily complete this course should have developed their Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Social Responsibility skills that will allow them to:
• Interpret and analyze works of art through a variety of theoretical lenses.
• Discuss religion from a secular academic perspective.
• Effectively articulate arguments through written, oral, and visual communication.
• Solve problems within a group to achieve a final goal.
• Develop the secular vocabulary in common to assess and critique works of religious art across cultures using multiple theoretical frameworks.
• Analyze and compare works of art from both Western and non-Western cultures.
• Identify and critique forms of art and visual culture that reify normative ways of seeing.

Required Texts
Barnes, Susan B. Introduction to Visual Communication.
ISBN: 9781433112577
ISBN: 9780141035796

ISBN: 9780192804631

All other assigned texts will be available through Ecampus.  
*You must bring the assigned readings with you to class on the days that they are assigned.*

**Major Assignments**

- **Participation:** Participation will be tracked through attendance and in-class contributions to discussion. To contribute to class discussion you must ask questions or comment so as to move the conversation forward in a meaningful way.

- **Visual Assignments:** There will be four visual assignments throughout the semester. These assignments will allow the student to participate in visual exercise related to the content for that section of the course. These assignments will be done in pairs or groups.

- **Pop Quizzes:** These are simple quick quizzes that will be random throughout the semester based on the reading for that day. Since attendance is required at each meeting of COMM 257, prior announcement of the pop quiz dates is not necessary.

- **Mid-term Exam**

- **Final Exam**

- **Final Project:** Each student will choose one topic from the course and explore this topic further in relation to his/her lived experience of art and religion through the creation of a visual project. The final project includes a three-page analysis paper. Additional guidelines for the final project will be provided.

- **Final Project Presentation:** Each student will present to the class their final project. The class will respond to the work.

**Grading Rubric**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Assignments</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop Quizzes</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term Exam</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project Presentation</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total points</strong></td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grading Scale**

- **A=450-500** Exceptional ability to conceptualize and present ideas; effort beyond meeting basic criteria; you have sought out new ideas and information; your work is thorough and original; your work shows initiative and imagination; there are few to no errors in your written work; overall your work shows a trajectory of development and growth. You have exceeded expectations for research, writing, or speaking at the lower division level in a Research I university.

- **B=400-449** Solid work; meets basic requirements; evident language competency; few errors; you are able to engage but generally do not go beyond information and ideas readily accessible through class, readings, and discussions. Your research, writing, and speaking are commensurate with lower division standing in a Research I university.

- **C=350-399** Marginal work; writing assignments and discussions demonstrate limited ability or effort to engage ideas and information; written assignments have many errors (sentence structure, spelling, grammar, etc.) and/or are underprepared. Your research, writing, and speaking are slightly below
expectations for students with lower division standing in a Research I university and should be improved with additional effort.

**D=300-349** Quantity and quality of work falls far below the expectations of lower division students in a Research I university. You are either not expending enough effort or you need help to accomplish the work required.

**F=below 300** Usually the result of missing work, missed classes, inattention, lack of preparation, unwillingness to engage, etc...

**Attendance**

Attendance is mandatory at all classes. You may miss up to three classes for any reason without penalty with the exception of the mid-term exam and the final exam. More than three unexcused absences will lower your course grade by one letter grade per absence. For excused absences the Texas A & M Student Rule will be followed. [http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07](http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07)

**Students with Disabilities**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, currently located in the Disability Services building at the Student Services at White Creek complex on west campus or call 979-845-1637. For additional information, visit [http://disability.tamu.edu](http://disability.tamu.edu).

**Plagiarism**

According to the Aggie Honor System plagiarism is "the appropriation of another person’s ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit". Any evidence of plagiarism will be pursued according to A & M university guidelines. [http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu/](http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu/)

"An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do."

**Tentative Course Schedule**

**Week One**

T  Introduction to the course: distribute syllabus.

R  **Reading: Ecampus:** John Dewey “Art As Experience”

Discussion: How do we define art? What makes an artwork religious? What is the connection between religion and art? What are some of the common forms of religious art in the modern world?

**Week Two**

T  **Readings: Ways of Seeing** John Berger: Chapters 1

R  **Readings: Ways of Seeing** John Berger: Chapters 2 & 3

**Week Three**

T  **Readings: Ways of Seeing** John Berger: Chapters 4 & 5

R  **Reading:** *Ways of Seeing* John Berger: Chapters 6 & 7

**Visual Communication**

**Week Four**

T  Visual Assignment 1

R  **Reading:** *An Introduction to Visual Communication*: Chapter 1

**Week Five**
Art Theory
Week Six
T  Visual Assignment 2
R  Reading: *Art Theory* "Blood and Beauty"

Week Seven
T  Reading: *Art Theory* "Paradigms and Purposes"
R  Reading: *Art Theory* "Cultural Crossings"

Week Eight:
T  Reading: *Art Theory* "Cognition, Creation, Comprehension"
R  Midterm Exam

The Icon
Week Nine
T  Reading: *Ecampus* "Mapping of the Terrain" & "Christianity and Visual Art"
R  Reading: *Ecampus* "Buddhism-Image as Icon, Image as Art"

Art as Ritual and Worship
Week Ten
T  Visual Assignment 3
   Reading: *Ecampus* "Dance as a Way of Being Religious" Sufi Whirling, Hindu Dance
R  Reading: *Ecampus* "The Religious Sublime", Tibetan Sand Painting and "The Ghost Dance War"
   *Cultural Resistance Reader* Elaine Goodale Eastman

Week Eleven
T  Reading: "Islam and Visual Art" Margaret S. Graves
R  Visual Assignment 4

Week Twelve
T  Reading: *Ecampus* Adorno, "Theses on Religion and Art"
R  Reading: *Ecampus* John M. Warbeke, "The Power of Art"

Secular Humanism: Art that Transcends
Week Thirteen
T  Reading: *Ecampus* Arthur C. Danto, "Learning to Live With Pluralism"
R  Student Presentations

Week Fourteen
T  Student Presentations
R  Student Presentations

Redefined days
T  Last Day Of Classes: Student Presentations
   (attend R classes)

Final Exam: 8-10 am. As per University Final Exam Calendar