### Term Information

**Effective Term**
Spring 2018

### General Information

- **Course Bulletin Listing/Subject Area**: Religious Studies
- **Fiscal Unit/Academic Org**: Comparative Studies - D0518
- **College/Academic Group**: Arts and Sciences
- **Level/Career**: Undergraduate
- **Course Number/Catalog**: 3679
- **Course Title**: Popular Culture and World Religion
- **Transcript Abbreviation**: PopCult&WorldRel
- **Course Description**: The representation of religion in visual culture, in the United States and around the world; the ways that religious traditions are represented or misrepresented; the ways religious traditions appropriate popular culture for their own purposes; new forms of religious practice and community that grow directly out of popular culture.
- **Semester Credit Hours/Units**: Fixed: 3

### Offering Information

- **Length Of Course**: 14 Week, 12 Week, 8 Week, 7 Week, 6 Week
- **Flexibly Scheduled Course**: Never
- **Does any section of this course have a distance education component?**: No
- **Grading Basis**: Letter Grade
- **Repeatable**: No
- **Course Components**: Lecture
- **Grade Roster Component**: Lecture
- **Credit Available by Exam**: No
- **Admission Condition Course**: No
- **Off Campus**: Never
- **Campus of Offering**: Columbus

### Prerequisites and Exclusions

- **Prerequisites/Corequisites**: English 1110
- **Exclusions**: Electronically Enforced
- **Electronically Enforced**: No

### Cross-Listings

#### Cross-Listings

### Subject/CIP Code

- **Subject/CIP Code**: 38.0201
- **Subsidy Level**: Baccalaureate Course
- **Intended Rank**: Sophomore, Junior, Senior
Requirement/Elective Designation

General Education course:
Visual and Performing Arts

The course is an elective (for this or other units) or is a service course for other units

Course Details

Course goals or learning objectives/outcomes
- Students will analyze, appreciate, and interpret significant works of art;
- observe and evaluate how images of the sacred are generated and circulated across a number of traditions and contexts;
- shift from a relatively passive mode of consuming of popular culture to a relatively active critical engagement with popular culture;
- develop skills in analytical writing, public presentation and thoughtful, constructive peer review.

Content Topic List
- Popular culture
- art
- film
- comic books
- religion
- Christianity
- Judaism
- Islam
- Hinduism
- Buddhism
- United States
- Asia
- Africa
- museums
- capitalism
- African-American
- Asian-American

Sought Concurrence
No

Attachments
- Popular Culture and World Religion Sample Syllabus.pdf: syllabus
- Popular Culture and World Religion COMPSTD 3679 - GE Visual and Performing Arts - Rationale.docx: GE rationale
- Popular Culture and World Religion COMPSTD 3679 - GE Visual and Performing Arts - Assessment Plan (1).docx: GE Assessment Plan
Comments

Workflow Information

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<th>User(s)</th>
<th>Date/Time</th>
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<td>04/28/2017 03:28 PM</td>
<td>Submitted for Approval</td>
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<td>Heysel, Garett Robert</td>
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<td>Nolen, Dawn Vankeerbergen, Bernadette Chantal Hanlin, Deborah Kay Jenkins, Mary Ellen Bigler</td>
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Course Description
Popular Culture and World Religion considers the intimate relationship between religion and vision, seeing and believing, as it plays out in modern and contemporary popular representations of religion and the filtering of popular culture back into religious art and ritual across the globe. Treating imagery and artifacts from across religious traditions, this class begins with representations of the sacred within the framework of art galleries and museums, and then moves to other sites of creation and consumption. Rather than taking the approach of mechanically decoding religious symbols circulating in popular visual culture, it will concentrate on the ways that religious institutions and actors formulate their own questions of ultimate concern through popular visual culture, and the ways that popular visual cultures have given rise to new kinds of religious iconography and imagination.

Learning Outcomes
By the end of the semester, students will have had an opportunity to
1. analyze, appreciate, and interpret significant works of art;
2. observe and evaluate how images of the sacred are generated and circulated across a number of traditions and contexts;
3. shift from a relatively passive mode of consuming of popular culture to a relatively active critical engagement with popular culture;
4. develop skills in analytical writing, public presentation and thoughtful, constructive peer review.
Readings

To purchase (available at Barnes & Noble and on reserve at Main Library):

The remaining readings will be posted on our Canvas site. You do not need to print out the readings for class; in the event that we will be doing close reading during class time, I will provide hard copies of the text. Some of the “readings” listed in the reading list are actually image galleries, films, and videos—for most of these, you’ll find a link on Canvas that will make it easy to access the material on any device, in your own time. Where the link is to a subscription service, I’ll also set up a screening in Hagerty Hall ahead of time for those who would prefer to watch it together (this is marked on the list with an [X]).

Requirements and Evaluations

Attendance and Participation ... 30%
Your consistent attendance and thoughtful participation is essential to the success of the course (and to doing well on all the other assignments) so to reward it directly, it’s a big part of your final grade. But participation grades can also feel kind of subjective. This semester, we’ll use a different approach that involves more work for you but also more control over your grade. I’ll take attendance every class; at the end of the term, I’ll assign you a grade for attendance out of 10 (more than one unexcused absence will impact that grade). Every four weeks or so, you’ll submit a self-assessment of your own class participation, reflecting on your preparation, engagement, and attention; at the end of the term, you’ll assign yourself a grade for participation out of 10 that reflects your effort and growth over the course of the term. And the other members of your team will submit an assessment of your contributions to the success of the team, and assign you a grade out of 10 for those contributions. I reserve the right to adjust this grade if it seems wildly high or wildly low.

Online Gallery Contribution ... 15%
This assignment is designed to develop capacity to attend to the visual environment that surrounds us. As a group, we’ll develop and curate an online gallery of public religious art in Columbus—each member of the class will be tasked with locating three possible images to include in the gallery, selecting one to photograph and research, and writing up a brief note on the provenance and context of the image. The class will host an exhibition during the final week of the term.

Seminar Presentation ... 20% ... 3-4 pages
This paper gives you an opportunity to delve deeply and critically into a single image or artifact—a piece of visual art, a commercial image, a single film scene, a single comic panel—and charges you with unpacking that image or artifact for your peers and leading us in a discussion of it, building on the themes of the unit in which you present. Your paper should reflect both your independent research and your own critical insight. We’ll meet outside of class in teams before you present to discuss your work in progress; you’ll give feedback on one of your team member’s paper outlines and receive feedback on your own outline from another team member.

Final Paper ... 35% ... 12-15 pages
In this final paper, you are free to build on the work you did/are doing for the seminar paper, or to pursue a new question; like the content paper, the seminar paper should focus on close readings of one of the images or artifacts we’ve been discussing, although in this case you may choose to look at more than one image, including images we have considered in class, and you may choose to incorporate illustration or other kinds of creative work. The topic and focus of the seminar paper should reflect the convergence of the themes of the course and your own interests and training. We’ll meet outside of class in teams during the final week of class to discuss your work in progress; you’ll give feedback on one of your team member’s paper outlines and receive feedback on your own outline another team member.

Plus and minus grades will be given according to the following scale:
A 100-93; A- 90-92; B+ 87-89; B 83-86; B- 80-82; C+ 77-79; C 73-76; C 70-72; D 60-69; E 0-59.
Week 1 – Introductions

Tuesday – Defining our terms

Thursday – Defining our terms: religion and visual culture

Weeks 2 & 3 – Religious Art in the Museum Space

* class meets at Thompson Library today

Thursday – How to Display Icons

Tuesday – Museums and the Idea of Sanctity
- * class meets at the Wexner Center for the Arts today
- Look: Rothko Chapel (http://www.rothkochapel.org/).

Weeks 4 & 5 – Religious Art in the Domestic Space

Tuesday – Religious Art in American Homes
- Watch: Kanye West, “Jesus Walks,” versions 1, 2, and 3 (2004).
- Look: Jesus across the Americas (gallery of images on Canvas).

Thursday – Religious Art in South Asian Homes
- Look: Calendar art (gallery of images on Canvas).

Tuesday – Kitsch

Thursday – Presentations: Team 1

Weeks 6 & 7 – Religious Art in Public Spaces

Tuesday – The Idea of Spectacle
- Look: Misemono-e (gallery of images on Canvas).

Thursday – Secular Spectacle

* Saturday – Field Trip to Ark Encounter, Williamstown KY
Tuesday – Religious Spectacle

Thursday – Presentations: Team 2

**Weeks 8 & 9 – Captured by Popular Culture: Religion and Comic Books**

Tuesday – Looking Seriously at Comics
  * class meets at the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum today

Thursday – Cartoon Demons

Tuesday – Real American Hero: Re-Casting Ms. Marvel as Muslim
  * Read: Frances Kai-Hwa Wang, "Comic Heroine Ms. Marvel Saves San Francisco From Anti-Islam Ads,"
  * NBC News (January 27, 2015).

Thursday – Presentations: Team 3

**Weeks 10 & 11 – Captured by Popular Culture: Cameras and the Sacred Gaze**

Tuesday – Thinking about Taking Pictures

Thursday – Evil Eyes: The Camera and the Twentieth-Century Zombie

Tuesday – Open Eyes: The Camera and the Twenty-First Century Zombie

Thursday – Presentations: Team 4

**Weeks 12 & 13 – Capturing Popular Culture: Looking to the Future of Religion**

Tuesday – Post-Humanism
  * Watch: Janelle Monáe, “Many Moons” and “Cold War” (2010).

Thursday – Afrofuturism
  * Michael Brandon McCormack, “‘Your God is a Racist, Sexist, Homophobic, and a Misogynist... Our God is Change’: Ishmael Reed, Octavia Butler and Afrofuturist Critiques of (Black) American Religion,” *Black Theology* 14.1 (2016), 6-27.
  * Look: Lina Iris Viktor (www.linaviktor.com).

Tuesday – Afro/Asian/American

Thursday – Presentations: Team 5

**Week 14 – Final Meetings**
Course Policies

Your success in this class matters to me. If there are circumstances that may affect your performance in this class, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can work together to develop strategies for adapting assignments to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Students experiencing personal problems or situational crises are encouraged to contact the OSU Counseling and Consultation Service (614-292-5766; www.ccs.osu.edu) for assistance, support and advocacy. This service is free and confidential.

Laptops, Cell Phones, Email

The evidence increasingly suggests that most students produce better work and receive higher grades when taking notes by hand rather than using a laptop, and that sitting near students using laptops and other electronic devices has a negative effect on your grades even if you are not using such devices yourself. I also find the presence of laptops distracting. For these reasons, I encourage everyone to consider leaving them packed away. If you do wish to use your laptop during class, I ask you to sit in the back row. No laptops out during seminar presentations, and no cell phones or other devices out during class at any time, please.

During the semester, I make answering emails from students a priority—if you email me during the week, you should expect a reply within 24 hours. In the event that you have to miss class, you do not need to email me; you can simply note that fact in the self-assessment you turn in at the end of each unit.

Extensions

Your seminar papers are genuinely the focus of the class on the day—if you’re not prepared to present, we can’t have an effective class, so no extensions are possible on this assignment, except in the event of a documented medical or family emergency. If you need an extension on the final paper, please request one in writing no later than the first day of Week 13.

Disability Services

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor of their needs as soon as possible. The Office of Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Ave (292-0901; www.ods.ohio-state.edu).

Academic Integrity, Plagiarism, and Academic Misconduct

Academic integrity is essential to maintaining an environment that fosters excellence in teaching, research, and other educational and scholarly activities. Thus, The Ohio State University and the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) expect that all students have read and understand the University’s Code of Student Conduct, and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Students must recognize that failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the University’s Code of Student Conduct and this syllabus may constitute “Academic Misconduct.” Plagiarism is the unauthorized use of the words or ideas of another person. It is a serious academic offense, and is described in detail in your student policies handbook. Please read this information carefully, and remember that at no point should words or ideas that are not your own be represented as such. If I suspect that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am obligated by University Rules to report my suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. If COAM determines that you have violated the University’s Code of Student Conduct (i.e., committed academic misconduct), the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University. If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me. For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info_for_students/csc.asp).
Rationale

Comparative Studies 3679: Popular Culture and World Religion is designed around the critical exploration of what it means to represent, and to gaze upon, the sacred. Departing from the usual Protestant-inflected emphasis on texts as the center of religious life, and taking an expansive view of what kinds of artwork qualify as significant, the course asks students to develop an eye for the variety and vibrancy of religious visual culture in the contemporary world. It seeks to illuminate widely circulated images, like Warner Sallman’s *Head of Christ* or Yogendra Rastogi’s *Durga Maa*, by situating them in a historical context; and to cultivate an awareness of the religious repertoires informing apparently secular artists, like the commercial pageantry of Walt Disney or the utopian post-humanism of Afrofuturist artist Lina Iris Viktor. As they develop their skills in critical seeing, students will be asked to think and write about the ways in which religious traditions are visually represented, what it means for a given community to be represented by others and as Other, and how popular culture might open up new avenues of critique and resistance. The course introduces students to some of the many resources on campus for learning more about visual culture, and asks them to contribute to making the public religious art of Columbus more visible. In developing their capacities for aesthetic response to religious visual cultures, students also cultivate an appreciation for religious diversity and a critical awareness of the ethical stakes involved in artistic representation and aesthetic judgment.

The expected learning outcomes for Visual and Performing Arts are as follows:

1. Students analyze, appreciate, and interpret significant works of art.
2. Students engage in informed observation and/or active participation in a discipline within the visual, spatial, and performing arts.

Religion and Popular Visual Culture addresses these learning outcomes in its course objectives, readings, topics, assignments, and classroom activities.

a) Course objectives. This course examines how religious ideas and communities represent themselves visually, how they are represented by others, how these representations are circulated and consumed, and how they ramify. Focusing on popular culture broadly defined, it asks students to shift from a relatively passive mode of consuming visual cultures to a more active critical engagement with visual cultures, both familiar and unfamiliar. It looks to take advantage of the immediacy and vividness of popular visual culture to provide an entry point to challenging theoretical approaches and cultivate new knowledge of and sympathetic interest in diverse religious traditions. Students will leave the course with increased sensitivity to the aesthetic principles informing popular expressions of religious feeling and belief, and to ethical questions around questions of representation, commodification, and appropriation.

b) Readings. The course focuses on the analysis and interpretation of modern and contemporary images and artifacts, including painting, architecture, film, photography, and comics. The works we consider invite students to attend to the complexity of visual cultures they might otherwise
dismiss, and to notice the ways in which they respond to widely circulated images as though they directly represent reality (as in, for example, one student’s offhand remark that he “knows what Jesus looked like”). The supplementary readings, from scholars working across a variety of disciplines, including art history, theatre, anthropology, communication studies, folklore, history, and religious studies, introduce critical vocabulary and frameworks to support interpretation and analysis, and give students models for informed observation of religion and popular culture.

c) **Topics.** The topics address the expected learning outcomes by presenting examples drawn from modern and contemporary popular religious visual cultures in both the United States and globally; exposing students to visual cultures they have not previously encountered; exploring different approaches to analyzing and interpreting visual cultures; and considering the norms and values circulated through visual cultures. The course is organized under two broad rubrics. It looks first at how visual cultures drawing on religious repertoires make different kinds of sense, inviting different kinds of interpretation and appreciation, in different settings—the museum, the home, the public square, and the marketplace. It then takes up questions of representation and the sometimes agonistic encounter between religion and popular culture, exploring both how religious traditions have been captured by the interests and demands of popular visual cultures and how those traditions have sought to resist capture or establish new kinds of vision.

d) **Assignments.** The seminar presentation and final paper explicitly require students to interpret and analyze one or more significant works of art, to use the vocabulary and frameworks provided by the readings to arrive at an informed observation of those works, and to guide their team members and peers toward a thoughtful appreciation of those works. The contribution to the online gallery invites students to contribute to an online exhibition, taking on the role of curator (in selecting a piece for inclusion and providing the context that will allow the audience to appreciate the work) and of art historian (in researching and reporting on the provenance of the work).

e) **Classroom Activities.** The class emphasizes interpretation and analysis of works of art, with time scheduled in every class meeting for group discussion of our responses to specific pieces. Three special classes are planned that will bring students to places on campus where they can encounter religious art and popular visual culture in differently mediated ways—sacred manuscripts held by the Thompson Library, contemporary art in the Wexner Center for the Arts, and religion in comic books at the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum. During the final week of the class, students will also organize and host their own digital exhibition of public religious art in Columbus. Students will be organized into teams and asked to work together throughout the semester as peer reviewers, giving students an opportunity to come to know each other better, to observe their own development as sophisticated viewers and critics over the course of the semester, and to share their work in progress with a generous audience.
GE Status for Popular Culture and World Religion COMPSTD 3679
Visual and Performing Arts

Assessment Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GE Expected Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Methods of Assessment</th>
<th>Level of student achievement expected for the GE ELO</th>
<th>What is the process that will be used to review the data and potentially change the course to improve student learning of GE ELOs?</th>
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| **ELO 1**
Students analyze, appreciate, and interpret significant works of art. | Direct methods
Analysis of seminar presentation and final paper. (Please see 1 below.)
Indirect methods
End of course discursive evaluation question. (Please see 3 below.) | Please see 4 below. | Please see 5 below. |
| **ELO 2**
Students engage in informed observation and/or active participation in a discipline within the visual, spatial, and performing arts. | Direct methods
Analysis of online gallery contribution, seminar presentation, final paper. (Please see 2 below.)
Indirect methods
End of course discursive evaluation question. (Please see 3 below) | Please see 4 below. | Please see 5 below. |

1. **Method of assessment for GE ELO 1: Direct methods**
Analysis of seminar presentation and final paper. Significant writing assignments may vary across semesters, but students will be required to prepare both a presentation and a final paper. The presentation offers students an opportunity to develop their skills as public speakers and facilitators, to practice analysis and interpretation, and to lead others toward a critical appreciation of the piece they are discussing. The final paper builds on the foundation established in the presentation, inviting students to expand and refine their analysis by taking up two works in conversation with one another. Both the presentation and the final paper thus require the analysis, appreciation, and interpretation of significant works of art.

2. **Method of assessment for GE ELO 2: Direct methods**
Analysis of seminar presentation and final paper; analysis of online gallery contribution. The seminar presentation and final paper give students an opportunity to rehearse and put to use the critical frameworks developed by scholars of religion, visual culture, popular culture, and folklore, including John Berger, Zora Neale Hurston, David Morgan, and Scott McCloud. The online gallery contribution asks students to act as curators, first training their eyes to notice the
richness of religious visual culture in Columbus, then selecting the work that is most compelling to them and articulating to their peers what makes that work compelling, and finally researching the work and devising a way to make it speak to a public audience outside of its original context. Success in these three assignments will allow students move from informed observation of religion and popular visual culture to active participation in making religion and popular visual culture visible to larger communities, within and beyond the classroom. (For a description of the assignments, please see sample syllabus.)

3. Method of assessment for GE ELO 1 and 2: Indirect methods
End of course discursive evaluation questions. Students will be given the opportunity to reflect on their learning experience over the course of the semester with respect to the two expected outcomes. An example of the self-evaluation survey reads as follows:

**Expected Learning Outcome 1**
Students analyze, appreciate, and interpret significant works of art.

This course provided opportunities for me to meet this objective.
Strongly Agree—Agree—Disagree—Strongly Disagree
How was the learning objective reached? Please comment.

**Expected Learning Outcome 2**
Students engage in informed observation and/or active participation in a discipline within the visual, spatial, and performing arts.

This course provided opportunities for me to meet this objective.
Strongly Agree—Agree—Disagree—Strongly Disagree
How was the learning objective reached? Please comment.

4. Level of student achievement expected for GE ELO 1 and 2
Direct methods
In general, “success” means that at least 75% of student will achieve level 2 or higher (out of a possible 4) according to the following scoring rubric:

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<th>(1) Novice (Basic)</th>
<th>(2) Intermediate</th>
<th>(3) Advanced</th>
<th>(4) Superior</th>
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<td>Shows limited ability to analyze and interpret visual arts; has limited set of critical tools to draw upon in order to articulate appreciation of specific images and works; seems unaware of the ethical and aesthetic investments shaping the representation of</td>
<td>Shows comprehension of the critical tools but does not fully manage to apply the concepts to the analysis of specific images and works; shows an emerging awareness of the ethical and aesthetic investments shaping the representation of</td>
<td>Shows comprehension of the critical tools and is able to successfully use those tools to analyze, interpret, and articulate a critical appreciation of specific images and works; consistently shows an awareness of the ethical and aesthetic investments shaping the representation of</td>
<td>Shows facility with the critical tools and is able to draw insightful connections across readings and examples, connecting concepts in new ways; consistently shows an awareness of the ethical and aesthetic investments shaping the representation of religion in art and</td>
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Indirect methods
End of course discursive evaluation questions: Faculty members will consider the self-reported responses of students. Student “success” will mean that at least 75% of respondents select “agree” or “strongly agree,” and are able to come up with their own examples of how the learning objectives were reached during the semester, during both the first and second half of the course.

5. What is the process that will be used to review the data and potentially change the course to improve student learning of GE ELOs?
As noted above, faculty will evaluate the direct and indirect methods of assessment. Generally speaking, instructors will consider the extent to which students are able to articulate a critical appreciation of specific works of art, at the micro level, and complex interactions between religious traditions and popular visual culture, at the macro level, in addition to how well students are able to speak to the ethical questions involved in representing religion and religious communities. Based on an analysis of seminar presentations and fieldwork assignments, the instructors will identify problem areas and discuss possibilities for changing the course and the presentation of materials to ensure better fulfillment of the GE expected learning outcomes. They will also analyze the self-evaluation questions carefully to judge how students perceived their own progress and to determine whether student perception accorded with performance. If there is a conflict, adjustments to the presentation and assessment of material will be recommended. The assessment documents and end-of-semester reports will be archived in the department so that future instructors, coordinators, and subcommittees can have access to the materials and gauge the effectiveness of any changes made.