
THEO5955

Faith, Art, and Material Culture Studies—A New Paradigm of Spirituality

2021. Jan to May
Tue 7:00PM - 9:30PM
Zoom Lectures

Andrea Chen

***All assignments must be submitted to Blackboard & VERIGUIDE**

***No hardcopy is needed**

***Course webpage: Blackboard**

Introduction

Christian faith has been largely understood through written texts, such as the Bible, the Creeds, writings of theologians, etc. Many contemporary Christians attempt to perceive the so-called “real picture” of the early Christian faith, spirituality, and life experiences mainly through textual means. The importance of Christian manuscripts, church buildings, arts and materials, as events and effects, has long been neglected, or overlooked. These things themselves in fact disclose fascinating worlds of early Christian faith and spirituality which are real, somatic, sensory, rich, and deep, and have never faded away along with the decay of the papers, loss of the artworks (as so during the iconoclastic periods), or disappearing traditions. However, being conditioned, if not confined, by the social-functionalism of Durkheimian model and Cartesian dualism, the modern mind finds it difficult to fully grasp the living spiritual experiences of the faith that the early Christian communities have gone through. This course, therefore, will explore the early Christian faith and spiritual experiences in a paradigm of material cultures studies by deconstructing the dualism of mental-materials with the help of intellectual trends of, for instances, relational ontology, alternative historicity, and symmetrical archaeology. In this way, the course contributes to an insight that peoples, bodies, arts, artefacts, daily objects, liturgical instruments, etc., namely all entities, of the historical Christian communities have been deeply entangled in the practices of faith—not at the level of concept, but that of real lives. The real lives manifested by arts and materials, therefore, are connecting the past to the present.

Learning Outcomes Intended

- ✓ Students will be equipped with basic aesthetic competence to learn to appreciate Christian arts.
- ✓ Students will be able to make a more symmetric evaluation of both traditions of textual and material cultures of Christian faith through critical reflections on the ontologies and the relationships of the two.
- ✓ Students will understand the arts, material, theological as well as spiritual worlds of historical Christian communities through critical dialogues with them.
- ✓ Students will learn to deconstruct the mental-material dualism, and hence will be motivated to reflect on the Christian faith and spirituality dominated by modern mindset.
- ✓ With these reflections, students will be able to deepen the spiritual experiences in real life (churches and families) and approach to a more authentic relationships with the world.
- ✓ For those students who are willing to advance in academic studies of related topics, they will be provided with the theoretical framework of Christian art and material culture studies.

Basic Textbooks

Art History Related:

1. Jensen, Robin Margaret, and Mark D. Ellison. *The Routledge Handbook of Early Christian Art. Handbook of Early Christian Art*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2018.
2. Beckwith, John. *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*. 2nd ed. ed. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979.
3. Asselt, Willem J. van. *Iconoclasm and Iconoclasm: Struggle for Religious Identity*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007.

Critical Reflection Related:

4. Preziosi, Donald. *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
5. Gell, Alfred. *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.
6. Olsen, Bjørnar. *In Defense of Things Archaeology and the Ontology of Objects*. Lanham: Altamira Press, 2010.
7. Book chapter: Hicks, Dan. "The Material-Cultural Turn: Event and Effect." In *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*, edited by Dan Hicks and Mary Carolyn Beaudry. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
8. Book chapter: Thomas, Julian. "After Descartes: Archaeology, culture and nature" in *Time, Culture and Identity: An Interpretive Archaeology*. London: Routledge, 1996.
9. Book chapter: Fleming, Benjamin J., and Richard D. Mann. "Introduction: Material Culture and Religious Studies" in *Material Culture and Asian Religions Text, Image, Object*. New York: Routledge, 2014.

Additional Readings

10. Hartt, Frederick. *History of Italian Renaissance Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*. Edited by David G. Wilkins. 6th ed. ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006.
11. Morgan, Sandra Knudsen, and Art Metropolitan Museum. *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, 3rd to 7th Century*, [November 19, 1977-February 12, 1978]. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1977.
12. Mathews, Thomas F. *The Clash of Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993.
13. Finney, Paul Corby. *The Invisible God: The Earliest Christians on Art*. Edited by Inc NetLibrary and Inc Ebrary. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
14. Joanne Deane, Sieger. "Visual Metaphor as Theology: Leo the Great's Sermons on the Incarnation and the Arch Mosaics at S. Maria Maggiore." *Gesta (Fort Tryon Park, N.Y.)* 26, no. 2 (1987): 83-91.
15. Władysława, Jaworska. "'Christ in the Garden of Olive-Trees" by Gauguin. The Sacred or the Profane?'. *Artibus et historiae* 19, no. 37 (1998): 77-102.
16. Eldridge, Richard Thomas. *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Art*. Edited by Inc NetLibrary. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
17. Elsner, Jaś. *Art and the Roman Viewer: The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity*. Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Class Calendar

| Topics | Suggested Readings |
|--|--|
| <p>Jan 12, Jan 19, and Jan 26, <i>Introducing into the world of Art with a focus on the Christian arts including basic knowledge of issues, elements, schools, historical moments, etc.</i></p> <p>*This section can be regarded as a basic education of Art, which has its root deep in the educational tradition of the west, whereas seems highly insufficient, if not completely absent, in east-Asian educational environment. The knowledge introduced in this section will serve as the ground for following exploration.</p> | <p>*Repeated names of readings may refer to different chapters and sections of the same work</p> <p>Readings: Art History Related: no.1 to 3 Additional Readings: no.10 and 11</p> |
| <p>Feb 2, and Feb 9 <i>The epistemological shift from arts (artworks) to the philosophy of art, art history, archaeology, and anthropology of art: from “what it is” to “why it is what it is.”</i></p> <p>*In this section, the epistemological effort will be shifted from the artworks per se, to the grunder theories of art; from esthetic appreciation of the artworks to the critical thinking of the disciplinarity of the Art and the art history, and many related others in the field.</p> | <p>Readings: Critical Reflection Related: no.4 Additional Readings: no.12 to 17</p> |
| <p>Feb 16, Feb 23, March 2, and March 9 <i>Paradigm shift: the ontological shift from the epistemological knowledge of Christian arts to the material cultures studies.</i></p> <p>*This section might be the most difficult part of the whole course because a paradigm shift will be introduced and dissected here. Ontological thinking of things, Christian material cultures, Christian spirituality, Christian life experiences, in light of critical theories and most advanced archaeological as well as social sciences trends, will be the focus.</p> | <p>Readings: Critical Reflection Related: no.5 to 11</p> |
| <p>March 16, March 23, and April 13 <i>Special focus: Christian material cultures in contexts.</i></p> <p>*In this section, a linear, orderly, linguistic informed historicity will be challenged. New discoveries, discourses, discussions, and theories concerning the so-called “historical truth” of the Christian life will be introduced and analyzed based on the ontological shift in the field of the material cultures studies.</p> | <p>Readings: Critical Reflection Related: no.4 to 6, 9 Additional Readings: no.12 to 17</p> |
| <p>30/3</p> | <p>Reading week (no class)</p> |
| <p>April 20 <i>Summary and conclusion: the limitation of mind and the freedom of will.</i></p> <p>* As the whole course is grounded on critical theories and developing intellectual trends, the conclusion will, after summarizing some key discourses of the course, concentrate back on “what these mean to us—ordinary Christians living in a secular world.” Discussions will lead to a reflection that: since all minds are shaped, managed, organized, customed, and are hence temporal and limited, can the calling for a “returning” to the ontological thinking of all relations among entities of the mundane world help to “train” the freedom of will? And more importantly, will this call be related to our Christian spirituality, and in what way they are related?</p> | |

*As assigned and distributed in class sessions

*No hardcopy of course materials will be distributed

Assessment

1. One short reading report (20%)

- 1.1 The reading report should be based on one or two chapters of any book, or any article listed in the reading list including the basic textbooks and the additional readings.
- 1.2 It is suggested that the report comprise at least two main parts:
 - The first part includes a brief summary of the selected work. Please note that the summary should NOT proportionally exceed half of the report.
 - In the second part, a critical reflection on or/and a critical dialogue with the selected work is expected. In-depth interaction with the work shows good digestion of what you have learnt in the course.
- 1.3 **The report is expected to be submitted in the middle of the semester (March 2 to March 9, 2021)**
- 1.4 A length of **1000 to 1500 words** is highly recommended.
- 1.5 Either **English or Chinese** can be used in writing, but all languages other than these two in the report must be followed by an English or Chinese translation.
- 1.6 The reading report **MUST** go through the **VERIGUID** system and a copy of the receipt issued by the VERIGUID system is required to be co-submitted with the report.

2. One homework reflecting on any selected topic taught by the course (15%)

- 2.1 **The homework is expected to be submitted at any time in the second half of the semester (March 9 to April 20, 2021).**
- 2.2 There is **no genre limit** for this homework, meaning that **it could be an essay (no less than 400 words, in that case, the essay must go through VERIGUID system)**, or poem (western or Chinese style), or drawing, or sculpture, or pottery works, or singing, or hand-made bakery, or DIY artefacts, or dancing, or reading aloud of an essay or a poem in a video clip, etc. All forms of the homework, except the written one (e.g. essay or poem), can be submitted by means of video clips or any other mean appropriate for both the student and the teacher.
- 2.3 It is to be observed that all forms of the work must **be related to the topics** of the course. Therefore, explanations of the motivation, reflection, and/or creating process can be added to the works when necessary.
- 2.4 It should be noted that any artwork(s) (original or quoted) must always be followed with the caption and copy right clarification. If the works were in the form of video clips, simple substitutes including these necessary data should be added. (**Research Ethic Concern)

3. Term Paper (65%)

- 3.1 The term paper is expected to be an **integration** of knowledge (as that of arts, art histories, artworks, Christian spirituality, philosophy of Art, material cultures studies, critical theories, etc.), critical reflections, personal explorations, etc., inspired by and obtained in the course.
- 3.2 A paper would be ranked high if it could concentrate on one major topic selected from the topics of the course. It means that in-depth discussions are preferred over general summaries of what the course has taught.
- 3.3 **The paper is expected to be submitted within two weeks right after the final lecture (April 20 to May 4, 2021).**
- 3.4 A length of **2000 to 2500 words** is highly recommended (main text).

- 3.5 Either **English or Chinese** can be used in writing, but all languages other than these two in the paper must be followed by an English or Chinese translation.
- 3.6 The term paper **MUST** go through the **VERIGUID** system and a copy of the receipt issued by the VERIGUID system is required to be co-submitted with the paper.

Assessment Rubrics for Term Paper

| CATEGORY | Excellent 5 | Good 4 | Fair 3-2 | Poor/ Inadequate 1-0 |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| Introduction/ Thesis (10%) —— | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - exceptional introduction that grabs interest of reader and states topic. - thesis is exceptionally clear, arguable, well-developed, and a definitive statement. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -proficient introduction that is interesting and states topic. -thesis is clear and arguable statement of position. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -basic introduction that states topic but lacks interest. -thesis is somewhat clear and arguable. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -weak or no introduction of topic. -paper's purpose is unclear/thesis is weak or missing. |
| Program Design / Quality of Information (30%) —— | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -makes in-depth synthesis of thoughtfully connections between what is learned/observed from outside experiences/observations and the topic. -information clearly relates to the thesis. -paper is exceptionally researched and extremely detailed. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -makes general connections between what is learned/observed from outside experiences/observations and the topic. -information relates to the main topic. -paper is well-researched in detail and from a variety of sources. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -identify some general ideas or issues from outside experiences/observations related to the topic. -information relates to the main topic, few details and/or examples are given. -shows a limited variety of sources. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -weak to relate the outside experiences/observations and the topic. -information has little or nothing to do with the thesis. -Illogical with little evidence |

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|--|--|---|---|---|
| <p>Support of Thesis/Analysis (30%)</p> <p>_____</p> | <p>-exceptionally critical, relevant and consistent connections made between evidence and thesis.</p> <p>-excellent analysis.</p> | <p>-consistent connections made between evidence and thesis</p> <p>-good analysis.</p> | <p>-some connections made between evidence and thesis.</p> <p>-some analysis.</p> | <p>-limited or no connections made between evidence and thesis.</p> <p>-lack of analysis.</p> |
| <p>Conclusion (10%)</p> <p>_____</p> | <p>-excellent summary of topic with concluding ideas that impact reader.</p> <p>-introduces no new information.</p> | <p>-good summary of topic with clear concluding ideas.</p> <p>-introduces no new information.</p> | <p>-basic summary of topic with some final concluding ideas.</p> <p>-introduces no new information.</p> | <p>-lack of summary of topic.</p> |
| <p>Organization/ Development of Thesis (10%)</p> <p>_____</p> | <p>-exceptionally clear, logical, mature, and thorough development of thesis with excellent transitions between and within paragraphs.</p> | <p>-clear and logical order that supports thesis with good transitions between and within paragraphs.</p> | <p>-somewhat clear and logical development with basic transitions between and within paragraphs.</p> | <p>-lacks development of ideas with weak or no transitions between and within paragraphs.</p> |
| <p>Citation/ Bibliography Format (10%)</p> | <p>-conforms to academic rules for formatting and citation of sources are perfect.</p> | <p>-conforms to academic rules for formatting and citation of sources with minor exceptions.</p> | <p>-frequent errors in academic format.</p> | <p>-lack of academic format/numerous errors.</p> |

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

1. Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academic_honesty/.

2. With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed declaration that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures. In the case of group projects, all students of the same group should be asked to sign the declaration, each of whom is responsible should there be any plagiarized

contents in the group project, irrespective of whether he/she has signed the declaration and whether he/she has contributed directly or indirectly to the plagiarized contents.

3. For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment. Assignments without the properly signed declaration will not be graded by teachers. Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.

4. The submission of a piece of work, or a part of a piece of work, for more than one purpose (e.g. to satisfy the requirements in two different courses) without declaration to this effect shall be regarded as having committed undeclared multiple submission. It is common and acceptable to reuse a turn of phrase or a sentence or two from one's own work; but wholesale reuse is problematic. In any case, agreement from the course teacher(s) concerned should be obtained prior to the submission of the piece of work.

Contact Details of Teachers

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