

TR271
THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE ARTS
UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE TWIN CITIES
FALL 2010
Tuesdays 1:30-4:45 pm
Classroom A

Professor Jann Cather Weaver
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We will be using the web-based Moodle for communication and additional resources.



COURSE DESCRIPTION

Description:

This course introduces students to the methodological relationships between religion, theology, and the arts. The class will explore this intersection of theology and the arts, as well as the ensuing implications in religious experience, theological education, and the life and worship of the church. Students will study major methodological approaches to theology and the arts expressed through culturally contextual different art media: visual art, film, photography, poetry, music, and theater. Stemming from this study, students will begin an initial development of their own methodological approach to an art form, using ideas from class readings, presentations, and artistic experience.

LEARNING GOALS and COURSE FORMAT

At the end of the course, students should be able –

To converse civilly with people in the class who hold differing theologies, denominations, and cultures:

Students and instructor will listen and civilly articulate in class discussions and in papers what differing theologies, denominations, and cultures offer as critique or as a broadening to their own perspective.

To know the relationships between theology, the church, and various forms of art:

Through the written work, students will articulate the relationships between theology, the church, and various forms of art in response to the assigned readings.

To use major theological methodological approaches for the study of art forms:

Students will use at least two theological methodological approaches that were studied in class in their written work.

To articulate the theological aspects of aesthetics and beauty through visual exegesis:

Students will use theological method of visual exegesis in class and in their written work to articulate the theological aspects of aesthetics and beauty.

To have deepened their religious/spiritual/faith understanding through the explorative paths of the course material:

Though difficult to measure, students will make evident in their final paper/project their spiritual growth and/or the nature of faith as experienced and nurtured through the study of various art forms.

To interpret various art media and their meaning in cultural contexts and uses:

Students will articulate cultural and contextual influences as seen through various art media in class discussion and in their written work.

To interpret and articulate in depth the theological nature of one specific art form (perhaps as represented through a particular artist) with a theological method of interpretation:

Students will choose one specific art form, artist, and artwork, skillfully interpreting the subject matter with a theological method in their final paper/project.

Course Format:

Class time will include opening worship or time for reflection, presentation of material, large and small group discussion, guest lecturers, a visit to the Westminster Presbyterian Church Art Gallery in Minneapolis, and attending as a class (if possible) the Guthrie Theater's performance of *The Master Butchers Singing Club*.

REQUIRED COURSE TEXTS AND OTHER READINGS

Required Reading and Resource Material

- Benjamin, Walter. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*
<http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/benjamin.htm>
(Link On Moodle)
- Finster, Howard. "Sermon on Alvis (*sic*)." In *In Search of Elvis: Music, Race, Art, Religion*. Edited by Vernon Chadwick. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997, chapter 16 with endnotes on pages 274-279, front and back cover, plates on pages 80, 92, 118a, and 118b. (On Reserve)
- Jenson, Robin. *The Substance of Things Seen: Art, Faith, and The Christian Community*. Calvin Institute of Christian Worship Liturgical Studies. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004.
- Johnson, Todd E., and Dale Savidge. *Performing the Sacred: Theology and Theatre in Dialogue*. Engaging Culture Series. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009. (Selections.) (On Reserve)
- Nesbett, Peter T. *Jacob Lawrence: The Complete Prints (1963-2000): A Catalogue Raisonne*. 2nd Edition. University of Washington Press, 2005.
- Pongracz, D. Patricia, Volker Künster, and John W. Cook. *The Christian Story: Five Asian Artists Today*. New York: NY: Museum of Biblical Art, 2007.
- Rilke, Rainer Marie. *Letters to a Young Poet*. Translated by Stephen Mitchell. Vintage, 1986.
- Various Artists. *Our New Orleans: A Benefit Album for the Gulf Coast*. Compact Disc. Nonesuch Records, December 2005. (Not Available in Bookstore.)
- Vrudny, Kimberly J., and Wilson Yates, eds. *Arts, Theology, and the Church: New Intersections*. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2005.
- Weaver, Jann Cather. *Discerning the Religious Dimensions of Film: Toward a Visual Method applied to "Dead Man Walking."* Chapter in unpublished book: *The Theological Eye and Film: Beyond Illustration*. (On Moodle.)
- _____. "Seeing." In *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies*. Edited by Letty M. Russell and J. Shannon Clarkson, 254-255. Westminster John Knox Press, 1996. (On Moodle)
- _____. "Gary Seal and Outsider Art: Engaging the Sacramental through Prophetic Form." In *Visual Theology: Forming and Transforming the Community through the Arts*. Edited by Robin M. Jenson and Kimberly J. Vrudny, 178-191. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009. (On Reserve)
- Wynn, Pam. *Diamonds on the Back of a Snake*. Minneapolis, MN: Laurel Poetry Collective, 2004.

Supplemental (On Reserve)

Dillenberger, Jane. *Image and Spirit in Sacred and Secular Art*. Crossroad Publishing Company, 1990.

García-Rivera, Alejandro R. *A Wounded Innocence: Sketches for a Theology of Art*, Liturgical Press, 2003.

Jensen, Robin M., and Kimberly J. Vrudny, eds. *Visual Theology: Forming and Transforming the Community through the Arts*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009.

Lawrence, Jacob. *The Great Migration: An American Story*. HarperTrophy, 1995.

More Materials on Reserve

All Required Books and Supplemental Books are on Reserve.

In Addition:

Brown, Frank Burch. *Religious Aesthetics : A Theological Study of Making And Meaning*. Princeton University Press, 1989.

_____. *Good Taste, Bad Taste, & Christian Taste: Aesthetics In Religious Life*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Giurescu, Ena, ed. *Reluctant Partners : Art and Religion in Dialogue*. New York : Gallery at the American Bible Society, 2004.

Howes, Graham. *The Art of the Sacred: An Introduction to the Aesthetics of Art and Belief*. I.B. Tauris, 2007.

Viladesau, Richard. *Theology and the Arts: Encountering God Through Music, Art, and Rhetoric*. Paulist Press, 2000.

REQUIRED CLASS WORK

- 1) Class attendance and full participation. **(Only two (2) class absences allowed for extreme extenuating circumstances. Missing more than two (2) sessions) is an automatic grade of "C." Missing 3 sessions is an automatic grade of "F." (N.B. Due to the Flu Virus, stay home if you are sick! Instructor will be lenient on absences due to colds/flu.)**
- 2) Lead the class in an **intentional** 5-10 minute opening worship or time of reflection, with a definite opening and closing. This may be designed using any art form (within reason), scripture, and/or other spiritual readings. You are invited to use this time in creative and meaningful ways.
- 3) Four (4) theological reflection papers, each **one page maximum, double-spaced, Times Roman font no smaller than 12 point, with one inch margins**, on the material assigned for the **upcoming** class meeting. The student will decide on what class-assigned material they will write. See learning goals for what instructor will expecting in these papers.

The **papers** are **due at the beginning of the class session**. Only **one** paper on the material for that specific day's class-assigned material is acceptable at the beginning of a class. It is the student's responsibility to choose the class material on which they will write.

N.B. Papers are due at the start of each class session. No paper will be accepted after the particular class session upon which the student will write. The last paper is due on or before the last day of class.

Criteria for Evaluation

Coke Angel
by Howard
Finster
"Outsider
Artist"



- ◆ Focus of paper is narrow yet shows integration of reading/s
 - ◆ Focus of paper is on a theological issue, method, or questions raised by the readings
 - ◆ Paper reflects your "voice," not a summation of the thinking of others
- You are invited to strike outside the ideas of the class material in sound, artistic, theologically supported ways
- ◆ Tightly written in style, with attention paid to spelling and grammar
 - ◆ Proper academic form in footnotes, **if any**. Instructor is very meticulous about precise footnote style. (Turabian 7th Edition.)

*****PLEASE PUT YOUR BOX NUMBER ON ALL SUBMITTED MATERIALS.*****

- 4) A 10-12 page final paper integrating theological interpretation, method (how you will examine your subject), and **your** perceptions on an art form or related art forms discussed in class.

(Paper is to be double-spaced, using Times Roman font no smaller than 12 point, with one-inch margins.) Paper may be submitted in hard copy and/or by email: jweaver@unitedseminary.edu. (Please inform instructor of how you will be submitting your paper. Do not submit online papers in Apple Works' format. Convert paper to PDF if you do not have Word.)

All MA students will write a final paper in the format required for MA theses. This format will be posted on Moodle.

Criteria for Evaluation of Final Paper

Art by Mark Rothko.



- ◆ Paper is focused and shows integration of class material
- ◆ Focus of paper is on theological issue/s, question/s raised by the artwork/artist.
- ◆ Articulation of theological method used to approach the artwork/artist.
- ◆ Paper reflects **your** "voice," not a summary of the thinking of others. You are invited to strike outside the ideas of the class material in sound, creative yet theologically supported ways
- ◆ Tightly written in style, with attention paid to spelling and grammar.
- ◆ **Proper academic form in footnotes and bibliography**

Required Style: *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, by Kate L. Turabian, 7th edition. (Or APA)
Accurate use of academic style notations is expected and used in grade evaluation.

*****PLEASE PUT YOUR BOX NUMBER ON ALL SUBMITTED MATERIALS.*****

Criteria for passing the course are based on the following:

- ◆ Attendance and full participation in class sessions and discussions. Absences will be considered in the final evaluation. A student cannot pass the course with more than **two** excused absences from class, unless the absences are due to extreme circumstances. (Extreme circumstances are (1) extended severe illness of the student or those persons dependent upon the student, (2) or a death among those close to the student. Please notify me before absences from class. **See Flu absences above.**)
- ◆ Satisfactory and timely completion of reading material and written assignments
- ◆ Clarity and depth of your papers, based on the “thickness” of your ability to reflect theologically on various forms of art and methodologies discussed in class
See Learning Goals above.

Evaluation will be weighted with the following values:

(80% is passing)

- ◆ Class Attendance and Participation in Discussions – 30%
- ◆ Four (4), one-page, Theological Reflections on Readings – 40%
- ◆ Final paper – 30%

N.B.

Because of the participatory, conversational character of the course, timely submissions of assignments are very important.

I cannot accept late papers or projects during the semester, except in very extraordinary circumstance.

Papers or projects requiring extensions beyond the last day of class – will only be given until January 3, 2011. Requests for extensions will have to be filed with the registrar’s office with consent of the professor before the last day of the class.

See UTS policy on extensions below or in Masters Student Handbook, 47.

Extensions: (4/28/00; Revised 1/17/01)

The work for a course is terminated at the end of the final class session. The performance in the course is evaluated on the basis of the work submitted by that time, unless an exception is made by the instructor, in which case a formal petition for extension must be approved by the instructor by the end of the final class session. Extensions (of course work) beyond the end of the semester will be approved only under **extraordinary** circumstances. Each instructor will include this policy on each course syllabus as well as the criteria by which she or he will grant such an exception. (Serious illness; Serious injury; Death or serious illness in family.)

In the event such as exception is agreed to, the student shall complete the petition for extension form and the instructor shall file the extension form with the registrar by the date grades are due. The Student Review Committee shall monitor extensions. If no petition for extension is filed, a final grade will be submitted.

An extension may be granted for a period not to exceed six months from the end of the term. If the work is not completed by the date petitioned, a final grade will be submitted. Any renewal of an extension must be approved by the instructor and filed with the registrar prior to the due date on the original petition. No extension or its renewal will exceed six months from the end of the term in question.

All work in this class is expected to follow the Copyright Compliance Policy in the Masters Student Handbook (99-100). The full Copyright Policy is at the Circulation desk in the Spencer library.

All work in this class is expected to follow the Academic Integrity Policy in the Masters Student Handbook (50).

All work in this class is expected to follow the Inclusive Language Policy in the Masters Student Handbook, with opportunities for discussion on differences (110).

A selection from Implications of Inclusive Language Policy

3. Racially and ethnically inclusive language rejects the equating of color with virtue and does not equate darkness with negative qualities or lightness with positive qualities. It also rejects the use of or construction of "otherness" in language that connotes superiority of the dominant group.

All work in this class is expected to follow the Policy Regarding Confidentiality and Disclosure within Small Group Settings in the Masters Student Handbook (120-121). Regarding Professorial Boundaries, see Statement on Boundaries in the Masters Student Handbook (111-113).

CLASS SCHEDULE

September 14—First Class Session



Opening Reflection
Introductions
Review of Syllabus
Art as Theology, Theology as Art: Implicitly and Explicitly Religious
What is a Hermeneutic?
Paul Ricoeur’s “Pre-critical – Critical – Post-critical” Method
Bigelow Chapel
DVD: “Common Ground...Sacred Space”
“Tour” of Bigelow Chapel

Photo Credit: © 2004 Paul Warchol

September 21—Theological Aesthetics, Art, and Spiritual Formation

Readings: Jenson, *The Substance Of Things Seen*, Chapter 1
Weaver, “Seeing,” in *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies*, 254-255. **(On Moodle)**

Opening Reflection
To See and then to *See*, Actively
Discussion of Theology and Art: Beauty, Theology, and Spiritual Formation
according to Jenson

September 28—Visual Narrative of Jacob Lawrence

Readings: Jenson, *The Substance Of Things Seen*, Chapter 2
Peter T. Nesbett, *Jacob Lawrence: The Complete Prints (1963-2000), a Catalogue
Raisonne*

Research: Jacob Lawrence and his works online

Supplemental:
Jacob Lawrence, *The Great Migration: An American Story* (HarperTrophy, 1995).
(On Reserve)

Opening Reflection
Visual Exegesis of the Narrative Art and Theology of Jacob Lawrence

**October 5—The Art of John August Swanson
Field Trip to Westminster Church**

Research: John August Swanson's Serigraph Process:

<http://www.johnaugustswanson.com/default.cfm/PID=1.6>

Readings: Jenson, *The Substance Of Things Seen*, Chapter 4
Vrudny and Yates, *Arts, Theology, and the Church*, 11

1:30 PM – Westminster Gallery, Director and Curator Rodney Schwartz,
Ph.D.

Westminster Presbyterian Church
1200 Marquette Ave
Minneapolis, MN 55403
(612) 332-3421

www.ewestminster.org [Get directions](#)

PARKING lot, street level

Behind the church in the adjoining surface lot on Marquette Avenue.

BUZZ to have door opened. Tell receptionist you are here for the class in the
Gallery.

Jann's Cell Phone: 763.443.9067

Art in Worship and Evangelism

Art as Decoration

Art as Didactic

Art as an Aid to Devotion

Art as Prophecy

October 12—Visual Art: Five Asian Artists – Part I

Readings: Pongracz, Küster, and Cook, *The Christian Story: Five Asian Artists Today*:

1) Preface; 2) Pongracz, Patricia, "Religious or Aesthetic Lessons? The Bible Illustrated by Asian Artists," and cited catalog prints; 3) Volker Künster, "Christian Art is Asia: Yesterday and Today," and cited catalog prints.

Opening Reflection

Discussion: Biblical and Christian Art in Asia according to Pongracz and
Künster

Feminine Divine in the Chinese Art of He Qi

October 19—Visual Art: Five Asian Artists – Part II

Readings: Pongracz, Küster, and Cook, *The Christian Story: Five Asian Artists Today*: John W. Cook, “Introducing Asian Biblical Art to a Western Audience,” and cited catalog prints.

Catalog

Covenants in the Old Testament

Infancy of Christ

Ministry

Passion

Gospel Messages in Today’s World

Vrudny and Yates, *Arts, Theology, and the Church*, Chapter 7

Opening Reflection

Discussion: Asian Art to a Western Eye, and Portraits of the “Invisible” God

Portraits of God in the art of Sawai Chinnawong, Nyoman Darsane,

Nalini Jayasuriya, He Qi, and Wisnu Sasongko

October 26— Reading Week

November 2—Theater Performance

Research: The novel, screenplay, and Guthrie’s production of *The Master Butchers Singing Club*:
http://www.guthrietheater.org/whats_happening/shows/2010/master_butchers_singing_club

Reading: Johnson and Savidge, *Performing the Sacred*:

Foreword, Introduction, Chapters 1—2 (**Book on Reserve**)

Attend (compliments of the arts programming budget at United) Tuesday **Evening’s** Performance of

The Master Butchers Singing Club, Script by **Marsha Norman**

Based upon the novel by **Louise Erdrich**

Developed and directed by **Francesca Zambello**

7:30 PM

Guthrie Theater

Wurtele Thrust Stage

November 9—Photography

Readings: Vrudny and Yates, *Arts, Theology, and the Church*, Chapters 4 and 12

Opening Reflection
Photography as Religious Art

November 16—Poetry

Readings: Rilke, Rainer Marie, *Letters to a Young Poet*. Translated by Stephen Mitchell
Wynn, Pam, *Diamonds on the Back of a Snake (Poems)*
Skim: Vrudny and Yates, *Arts, Theology, and the Church*, Chapter 3

Guest Lecturer: The esteemed writer and poet, our own Pam Wynn

Opening Reflection
Theological Methods and Approaches to Poetry

November 23— Film

Readings: Benjamin, Walter. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*
<http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/benjamin.htm> **(Link on Moodle)**
Weaver, *Discerning the Religious Dimensions of Film: Toward a Visual Method applied to "Dead Man Walking."* **(On Moodle)**
Vrudny and Yates, *Arts, Theology, and the Church*, Chapter 10

Opening Reflection
Filmic Method of Chiasmic Structure
Film as Theological Text

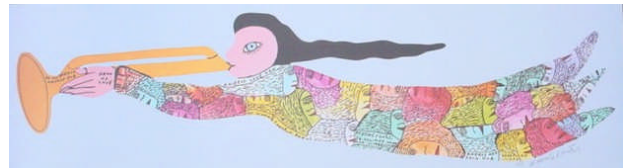
November 30—Music

Audio: Various Artists, CD: *Our New Orleans: A Benefit Album for the Gulf Coast*.
Research, study, and listen to this CD and the background history of its music in depth. (Web, etc.)

Opening Reflection
Theological Contextual and Culture Music

December 7—Outsider Artists

- Readings:** Finster, Howard. “Sermon on Alvis (*sic*).” In *In Search of Elvis: Music, Race, Art, Religion*. Edited by Vernon Chadwick. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997, Chapter 16 with endnotes on pages 274-279. **See also front and back cover, plates on pages 80, 92, 118a, and 118b. (On Reserve)**
- Jenson, *The Substance of Things Seen*, Chapter 6.
- Weaver, Jann Cather “Gary Seal and Outsider Art: Engaging the Sacramental through Prophetic Form.” In *Visual Theology: Forming and Transforming the Community through the Arts*. Edited by Robin M. Jenson and Kimberly J. Vrudny, 178-191. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009. **(On Reserve) (Better photograph on Moodle)**



Trumpet Angel by Howard Finster ©

Opening Reflection
“Outsider” Artists: Who says?
Howard Finster
Gary Seal
Outsider Photographers

December 14— Final Class

Due: Final Paper

Due: Last class to accept the last of four papers

Concluding Discussion
Class Evaluation Forms