Holy Images and Worship (7.5 ECTS credits)

Level: 1st cycle
Discipline: THEOLOGY (Theological Studies of Culture and Society)
Course ID: 0229

Admission requirements

General entry requirements for studies at universities. Students taking part in the course as a part of their Bachelor's degree program must have completed Course A, Introduction in Philosophy and Theology (30 ECTS credits). Students taking part in the course as a freestanding course are expected to have corresponding prior knowledge.

Educational goals

After having completed the course the students are expected to:
• have formed a historical consciousness of the controversy provoked by images at different times within Christianity and between different religions;
• articulate the arguments expressed by the Church Fathers in favor and against Christian art and critically assess the archaeological, artistic and literary evidence about art in Christianity from the early period to the Middle Ages;
• understand the aesthetic impact of art on communal worship and private prayer, by recognizing different art forms as expressions of the divine and as privileged places of mediation between the physical and the spiritual worlds;
• competently explore issues of appropriateness and inculturation in different artistic phenomena, by reflecting on their relative value.

Course contents

Religious art, whether in the form of holy images or of other sacred objects with iconic figuration, has given rise to numerous controversies and debates in the course of Christian history. What is at stake in art that makes it so central an issue in theology? Why despite these recurrent problems has the Church decided it cannot dispense with art, but rather wants to continue to take an active role in its production and dissemination? This course addresses these questions from historical, anthropological, and theological standpoints. From the biblical prohibition of the Second Commandment, through debates about early Christian art culminating in Byzantine iconoclasm, arguments pro and contra the use of holy images in worship are examined by reading primary sources in their historical contexts. The use of images in other religious traditions is considered as a point for comparison. Special attention is paid to the images' role in identity formation, communication, memorialization, and in their cultural contribution to the lives of the faithful. In particular, the connection between art and worship is analyzed, both from the point of view of personal prayer and of collective liturgical celebration. The Church's sustained endorsement of the pro-image stance opens the reflection to the heart of the Christian message of the incarnation. The

Church is prepared to celebrate the artist as a co-creator with God of the reality that, through beauty, can evoke for us the divine presence.

Teaching and examination

Local teaching

Local teaching includes lectures and discussion seminars in Uppsala. Students are expected to prepare the assigned readings (found as pdfs on Moodle) and to participate in class discussions. They will also be asked from time to time to introduce a topic for discussion by contributing short oral presentations.

Half-distance teaching

Half-distance teaching is based on assigned readings and shorter written assignments for each teaching unit. Some lectures will be available on the interface. A discussion platform will be operative for exchange among students; interaction among participants is part of the course requirements.

Examination

As examination, students must write a short essay (7-8 pp.) about a topic of their choice agreed with the instructor. For example, they could choose a specific art-object and present it in its sacred context, problematizing its significance in the light of the historical, theological and anthropological lines of enquiry explored in the course.

The course is taught in English. The final paper can be written in English or Swedish.

Bibliography

Mosche Barasch, *Icon. Studies in the History of an Idea* (New York, 1992).

Allan Doig, *Liturgy and Architecture from the Early Church to the Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 2005).

David Freedberg, *The Power of Images* (Chicago and London, 1991).

Robin Margaret Jensen, *Face to Face: Portraits of the Divine in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN, 2005 [or later edition]).

Reference Literature:

Ancient Authors

John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images: Three Apologies against those who attack the divine images* (Crestwood, NY, 1997).

Theodore Abu Qurrah, *A Treatise on the Veneration of the Holy Icons*, transl. by Sidney H. Griffith (Leuven, 1997).

Theodore the Studite, *Writings on Iconoclasm*, transl. Thomas Cattoi (New York, 2015).

Modern Authors

Charles Barber, *Figure and Likeness: on the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm* (Princeton, NJ, 2002).

Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago 1994).

Andrew Louth, *St John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford, 2002).

John Lowden, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art* (London, 1997).

Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1453, Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1972) [several reprints; anthology of texts in English transl.]

M.-J. Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy: the Byzantine Origins of the Contemporary Economy*, transl. Rico Franses (Palo Alto, CA, 2004).

Thomas F. X. Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians* (Philadelphia, PA, 2009).

Kenneth Parry, *Depicting the Word. Byzantine Iconophile Thought of the Eighth and Ninth Centuries* (Leiden, 1996).

Jaroslav Pelikan, *Imago Dei. The Byzantine Apologia for Icons* (Princeton 1990, 2nd edn 2006).

Bissera Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon* (University Park, PA, 2010).

Marina Prusac and Kristine Kolrud, *Iconoclasm from Antiquity to Modernity* (Burlington, 2014).

Linda Safran (ed.), *Heaven on Earth. Art and the Church in Byzantium* (University Park, PA, 1998).

Christoph Schönborn, *God's Human Face: the Christ-Icon* (San Francisco, 1994).

W. van Asselt *et al.* (eds), *Iconoclasm and Iconoclash: Struggle for Religious Identity* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

Specific articles will be provided in addition as pdfs on Moodle.

See also "Kursplaner: allmänna bestämmelser" (Course plans: General rules)

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