



Visual Culture and Iconoclasm (7.5 ECTS credits)

Level: 1st cycle

Discipline: THEOLOGY (Theological Studies of Culture and Society)

Course ID: 0413

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 arguments in favor and against Christian art and critically assess the archaeological, artistic and literary evidence about art in Christianity across the centuries;
- understand the aesthetic and cognitive role played by visual art in 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;
- consider the role of the artist in the making of visual language and experiences;
- objectively explore issues of appropriateness and inculturation in different artistic phenomena, by reflecting on their relative value.

Course contents

Images are a form of communication that we find all around us and that, like texts, need to be decoded and placed in an appropriate web of meaning. Against previous scholarly neglect, visual studies have emerged as an important tool for analysis when dealing with concepts such as symbol and ritual, with important applications to the religious and theological fields. This course surveys different attitudes to images from early Christianity to Byzantine iconoclasm and beyond.

Teaching and examination

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 (50% of final mark) and give a PPT presentation during the second meeting (30% of final mark). Participation in class and in online discussion is also part of the final assessment (20% of mark).

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

Bibliography

Carnes, Natalie, *Image and Presence: a Christological Reflection on Iconoclasm and Iconophilia* (Stanford, CA, 2018).

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

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

Selected articles in PDF.

Reference literature:

Edmonds III, Radcliffe G., & Destrée, Pierre (eds.), *Plato and the power of images* (Leiden: Brill 2017).

Gaut, Berys Nigel, & Livingston, Paisley (eds.), *The creation of art: new essays in philosophical aesthetics* (New York, NJ: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Humphreys, M. T. G. (ed.), *A companion to Byzantine iconoclasm* (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

Kind, Amy (ed.), *The Routledge handbook of philosophy of imagination* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016).

Lindén, Elias (red.), *Ikonoklasm: Förkastandet av det förflutna* (Bokförlaget Stolpe, 2024).

Palazzo, Eric, *L'invention chrétienne des cinq sens dans la liturgie et l'art au Moyen Âge* (Éditions du Cerf, 2014).

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

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Valid as 2025-07-15