

RELIGIOUS VISUAL AND MATERIAL CULTURE

Prof. Judith Weisenfeld

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Office Hours: W 10:30-12:00

Assistant in Instruction:

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Course Description:

The goal of the Junior Colloquium is to prepare majors to undertake sustained, independent research in the study of religion. This semester we will use the thematic lens of visual and material culture studies (largely in U. S. contexts) to engage in critical reading, analysis, and discussion of approaches to and sources for the study of religion. Our emphasis is not on mastering a body of literature, nor is our particular focus intended to privilege the questions our theme raises over other sets of questions. Instead, the theme will allow us to think about the discipline of religious studies and the craft of research broadly to help you begin your own independent research projects.

As part of your preparation for conducting independent research, we will also emphasize developing research skills – defining and describing a topic, doing bibliographic research, selecting appropriate methodological approaches, and constructing an argument, for example. By the end of the term, each student will have researched, written, and revised a proposal for the Junior Paper.

Books:

- Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research*, Second Edition (Chicago, 2003)
- Melanie McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945* (University of California Press, 2005)
- Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (Yale, 1995)
- David Morgan, *The Sacred Gaze: Religious Visual Culture in Theory and Practice* (California, 2005)

Additional readings and visual materials are available on 3-Hour Reserve or Electronic Reserve through the course Blackboard site.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS, CLASSES, AND DEADLINES

Week 1: Introduction and Introductions

I. RELIGIOUS VISIONS

Week 2: Theoretical Orientations

- David Morgan, *The Sacred Gaze Religious Visual Culture in Theory and Practice*, Introduction, chapters 1 and 2

→ **DUE TODAY: Statement of Interests and Ideas**

Week 3: Religious Images and Artifacts

- Diana L. Eck, *Darsán: Seeing the Divine Image in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), chapters 1 and 2 [NB: *Chapter 1 is on Electronic Reserve and Chapter 2 is on 3-hour Reserve - BL1205 .E25 1998*]
- Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity*, chapter 2
- Booth, Colomb, and Williams, *The Craft of Research*, chapters 3 and 4

Week 4: Materializing Visionary Experiences

- Sally M. Promey, "Celestial Visions: Shaker Images and Art Historical Method," *American Art* 7:2 (1993), 72-99
- Daniel Wojic, "'Polaroids from Heaven': Photography, Folk Religion, and the Miraculous Image Tradition at a Marian Apparition Site," *The Journal of American Folklore* 109: 432 (Spring 1996): 129-148
- Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity*, chapter 5

→ **DUE TODAY: Description of JP Topic Idea**

Week 5: Overthrowing the Idols

- David Morgan, *The Sacred Gaze*, chapter 4
- Sabine MacCormack, "Gods, Demons, and Idols in the Andes," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67: 4 (October 2006): 623-647

- S. Brent Plate, *Blasphemy: Art that Offends* (Black Dog Publishing, 2007), chapter 1
- Booth, Colomb, and Williams, *The Craft of Research*, chapters 5 and 6

Week 6: **Library Session**
 details to be announced

- Booth, Colomb, and Williams, *The Craft of Research*, chapters 7-11
- Begin reading Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945*

→ **DUE TODAY: Preliminary Bibliography**

F A L L R E C E S S

II. ENVISIONING RELIGIONS

Week 7: **Media Matters**

- Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945* (especially Introduction, chapters 1 and 3)

→ **DUE TODAY: First Draft of JP Proposal**

Week 8: **Workshops**

- Group workshops on JP proposal drafts

T H A N K S G I V I N G B R E A K

Week 9: **Media Matters**

- Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters* (especially chapters 4, 5 and Conclusion)

III. SPACE AND PLACE

Week 10: The Living . . .

- Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity*, chapter 3
- David H. Brown, "Altared Spaces: Afro-Cuban Religions and the Urban Landscape in Cuba and the United States," in Robert A. Orsi, ed., *Gods of the City: Religion and the American Urban Landscape* (Indiana, 1999)
- Vasudha Narayanan, "Sacred Land, Sacred Service: Hindu Adaptations to the American Landscape," in Stephen Prothero, ed., *A Nation of Religions: The Politics of Pluralism in Multireligious America* (University of North Carolina Press, 2006)

→ **DUE TODAY: Second Draft of JP Proposal**

Week 11: . . . and the Dead

- Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity*, chapter 4
- Sandra E. Greene, *Sacred Sites and the Colonial Encounter: A History of Meaning and Memory in Ghana* (Indiana University Press, 2002), introduction and chapter 3
- Edward T. Linenthal, "Locating Holocaust Memory: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum," in David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal, eds., *American Sacred Space* (Indiana University Press, 1995)

Week 12: Religions in Public

- David Morgan, *The Sacred Gaze*, chapter 7
- Sally M. Promey, "Public Displays of Religion," in David Morgan and Sally M. Promey, eds., *The Visual Cultures of American Religions* (University of California Press, 2001), 27-48
- Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity*, chapter 8

January 15: Dean's Date deadline for written work

→ **DUE TODAY: Final Version of JP Proposal**
Submit to Kerry Smith, Room 145 1879 Hall

Course Requirements:

1. Each student is expected to attend class having read the assigned texts carefully and critically and to contribute actively and regularly to class discussions. Each student is also expected to engage the work of other students in the course and to provide substantive and constructive comments on work-in-progress.
2. Weekly 1-2 page reflection papers on the week's readings to be posted on the course Blackboard site (click on "Communications" at left and then "Discussion Board") **by 5pm the day before your section meets.**

Each response should include a brief summary of the main argument of one of the week's readings and a brief critical analysis of that reading (Although these reflection papers are informal, they should nevertheless be concise, well organized, and clearly written. Late or unsatisfactory work will count against your final grade.

3. Completion of the various stages of the preliminary work for writing the Junior Paper proposal and submission of a JP proposal as the final project for the colloquium.

Stages:

- 1-page statement of interests and ideas (due week 2)
- Description of topic (due week 4)
- Preliminary Bibliography (due week 6)
- Draft of proposal (due week 7 - after Fall Break)
- Second draft of proposal (due week 10 - after Thanksgiving Break)
- Final proposal (due January 15)

Evaluation:

The junior colloquium grade counts for 40% of the junior independent research grade and the junior paper 60%. Your grade for the colloquium will be based on attendance, participation in our class session, your written reflection papers, and the quality of the JP proposal (in all its stages).