

# Artistic Expressions of Religious Experience

Summer 2012

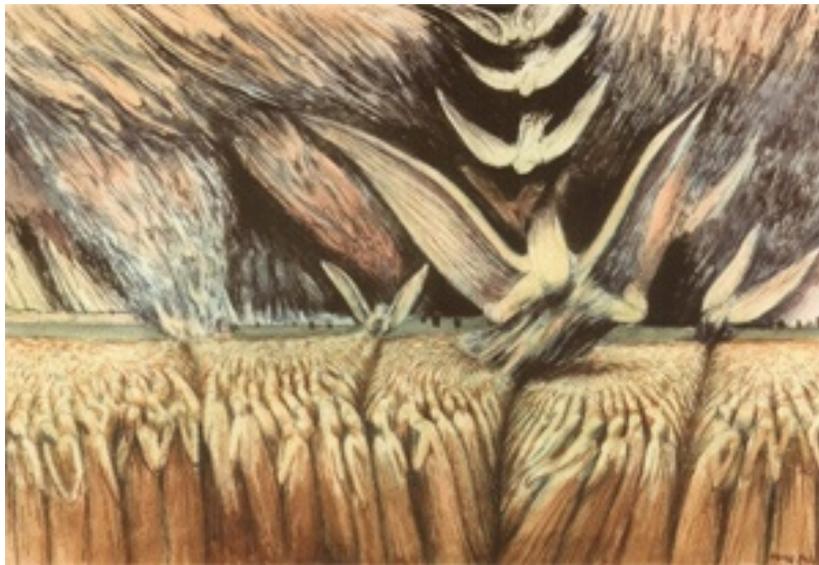
Instructor: Bobbi Dykema

July 23-27, 9:00 – 4:00

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STMM 593

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*Donald Pass, "The Reaper," Watercolor, 1985*

**Course Description:** For at least 30,000 years, human beings have sought to express a myriad of religious experience through the arts. Indeed, until the Enlightenment, the primary purpose of much art, whether visual, literary, or performance, was religious in nature. This course will explore the intersections of art and religion from a variety of perspectives, including theological, spiritual, doctrinal, biblical, ethical, ecclesial, historical, and cross-cultural. Students who are practitioners of any art form will be asked to share work or work-in-progress. Class sessions will be organized thematically and will include seminar-style discussion, slide and other presentations, and field trips.

**Course Objectives:** By the end of the course, students will:

- Have a better understanding in the roles that the work of artists of faith can have in the church, the community, and the larger society
- Be able to articulate a diversity of theological descriptions and interpretations of the role of art and of the artist (interaction of experience and culture)
- Have the tools to interpret works of art as primary theology
- Have a preliminary understanding of the discipline of theological aesthetics
- Be able to consider spiritual, theological, pastoral, and ecclesial dimensions of the arts
- Have engaged with a variety of art forms and works of art in creative and dynamic ways

**Course Requirements:**

- 1) A course journal, beginning ideally with the start of reading of course texts, in which student records thoughts, questions, inspirations, and responses to artworks, discussion, and texts, and kept daily throughout the week of class. Not to be confused with class notes! Recommended length, 15-20 pages
- 2) A work of art, original or in reproduction, found or created and responded to in essay reflection form. Could be visual, literary, or performance (supply picture, text, or digital recording). Essay length, 5 pages.
- 3) Participation in all class discussion and field trips

**Course Texts:**

Begbie, Jeremy. *Beholding the Glory: Incarnation Through the Arts*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker

Academic, 2000.

García-Rivera, Alex. *A Wounded Innocence: Sketches for a Theology of Art*.

Collegeville, MN:

Liturgical Press, 2003.

Gorringer, Timothy. *Earthly Visions: Theology and the Challenges of Art*. New Haven,

CT: Yale

University Press, 2011.

Greeley, Andrew. *The Catholic Imagination*. Berkeley: University of California Press,

2001.

John of Damascus. *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*. Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's

Seminary

Press, 2003.

Scarry, Elaine. *On Beauty and Being Just*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press,

2001.

Viladesau, Richard. *Theology and the Arts: Encountering God Through Music, Art, and*

*Rhetoric*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2000.

### **Class Sessions:**

**Monday morning, July 23, 9:00 – 12:00**

**Theme: Awe**

Artworks centering around themes of creation, beauty, power and presence of God

**Monday afternoon, July 23, 1:00 – 4:00**

**Theme: Desire**

Artworks centering around pilgrimage, seeking, relationship, eroticism, ecstasy, and wedding

**Tuesday morning, July 24, 9:00 – 12:00**

**Theme: Temptation**

Field trip to St. James Cathedral

Artworks centering around encounters with evil

**Tuesday afternoon, July 24, 1:00 – 4:00**

**Theme: Forgiveness**

Artworks centering around reconciliation and mending of relationship

**Wednesday morning, July 25, 9:00 – 12:00**

**Theme: (Comm)unity**

Artworks centering around gathering, oneness in diversity, human family, ecclesiology

**Wednesday afternoon, July 25, 1:00 – 4:00**

**Theme: Memory**

Artworks centering around memory and memorializing, finitude, death and remembrance

**Thursday morning, July 26, 9:00 – 12:00**

**Theme: Suffering**

Artworks centering around finding meaning in the suffering of human beings, creation, and God

**Thursday afternoon, July 26, 1:00 – 4:00**

**Theme: Liberation**

Field trip to Frye Art Museum

Artworks centering around themes of redemption, salvation, liberation, healing

**Friday morning, July 27, 9:00 – 12:00**

**Theme: Hope**

Artworks centering around themes of eschatology, waiting and hope

**Friday afternoon, 1:00 – 4:00**

**Theme: Mystery**

Artworks centering around themes of the ineffable and apophatic in religious experience

### The fine print:

**Late work** will not be accepted without a very good reason, such as serious illness or death in the family. Please contact Bobbi immediately if there is a possibility that you will have difficulty completing any assignments on time.

**Grades** will be determined on the basis of informed and active class participation (40%), a reflection paper (20%) and a course journal (40%). Attendance is required; students who miss more than two sessions may receive a reduced final grade for the course. Students who miss more than four sessions may fail the course.

**Plagiarism** is the presentation of another's words and/or ideas as one's own, including material taken from the internet. Any student work that the professor suspects may include plagiarized material will be handled as indicated in your student handbook; penalties may include failure of the course and up to two years' academic probation.

### **Technology etiquette:**

\*Unless you are on-call for childcare, eldercare, or urgent health matters, cellphones must be turned OFF for the duration of class.

\*Internet resources, such as Bible Gateway and Wikipedia, can be a useful starting point for thinking about a reflection paper, project, or research paper. *They are a starting point only.* In order to demonstrate satisfactory progress in the class, it is essential that the student engage with works of visual and literary art directly, as well as with other resources, particularly for the final paper. Please refer to the supplementary bibliography for suggestions on reading materials for the final paper, or see the instructors if you have questions.