

Territorial Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that we are living and working on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (also known as Neutral), Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes six miles on each side of the Grand River.

For more information about the purpose of territorial acknowledgements, please see the [CAUT Guide to Acknowledging Traditional Territory \(PDF\)](#).

Conrad Grebel University College, University of Waterloo RS 225: Sacred Beauty: Religion and the Arts Fall 2018



Marc Chagall, *Peace Window*, UN, 1967

Class Time: Mondays, 6-8:50 pm

Location: Conrad Grebel University College, Room 1300

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1-3 pm

Did you know that Religious Studies has social media accounts? We post about important dates, events, courses, news, resources, work and educational opportunities, and more. Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [Facebook](#).

Twitter link: <https://twitter.com/UWaterlooRS>

Twitter handle: @UWaterlooRS

Instagram link: <https://www.instagram.com/uwaterloors/>

Instagram handle: uwaterloors

Facebook page link: <https://www.facebook.com/UWaterlooReligiousStudies/>

Facebook page name: UWaterloo Religious Studies

Course Description

This course is an exploration of the spiritual dimension through the medium of art, sacred and secular. Aspects of the quest for meaning in world religions, expressed variously in the visual arts, architecture, music, and the cinema will be considered.

One of the primary ways in which people experience religion is through their senses. Art, whether it is visual, aural, or experienced through smell, touch, or even taste, can be key to religious experience and expression. In this course, we will examine types and roles of art in some of the major world religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam) and occasionally other traditions, sacred and secular. We will begin the course with questions of *how* beauty and art play significant roles in the lives of artists and religious people. As we progress, we will think about how members of a range of religious traditions and within a variety of cultural contexts experience art and religion *differently*. People may perceive differently from culture to culture and religion to religion. Appreciating the importance of beauty and art, and noticing the range of ways in which people experience these phenomena can lead to greater understanding and mutual cooperation.

Course Objectives

1. To understand the role of art in religious experience.
2. To understand how art can embody religious meaning across a variety of religious traditions.
3. To understand how religious meanings are attributed to a variety of art forms.
4. To understand the differences in expressing and perceiving religious meaning across a range of religious traditions
5. To further strengthen reading, writing, and communication skills.

Required Reading Materials

S. Brent Plate, ed., *Religion, Art, and Visual Culture: A Cross-Cultural Reader*. New York: Palgrave, 2002. (This book is abbreviated in the syllabus as RAVC). The book is available as a photocopied book (courseware package) at the UWaterloo bookstore, as RS 225. I have also place a copy on reserve in the Conrad Grebel Milton Good Library (3rd floor of Grebel).

Various readings placed on **LEARN** for the course.

Web Page

This course will make use of a **WATERLOO LEARN** website. This site will provide general information for the course, assignments, and marks. Important announcements such as the cancellation of class due to illness will also be posted there, so please try to check the site before each class, just in case.

Course Requirements

Participation (10%) – The participation mark includes attentive listening to others, asking questions or making comments, and attending class having done the reading/viewing assigned, and prepared to share at least 2 questions and/or comments about the reading. Each class (except for when we have tests) I will ask you do some short writing (marked pass/fail – this

writing will count for 70% of the participation mark) on the reading for that class indicating the main things that you learned from the reading. Feel free to check in with the instructor about how you are doing participation-wise.

3 Papers (60% - worth 20% each) – Each paper should be approximately 1000 words (please provide a word count at the end of the paper). They should be double-spaced in 12 pt. font. They are responses to the course reading and other course materials. Due: **September 24th, October 22nd, and November 26th.**

3 Short Answer Tests (30% - worth 10% each) – Each test will take approximately 30 minutes at the beginning of class. They will occur on **October 1st, November 5th, and December 3rd.**

Late Papers: Students should complete assignments on the dates indicated and submit them in class. Please do not send assignments over email. Late assignments receive a penalty of 2% per day late (if you submit it late, ask the reception at Grebel to date stamp the assignment). Exceptions can be made in the case of illness or family emergency. No late assignments will be accepted after **December 5.**

+++++

Re-writing Assignments: You have the option to re-write a paper (once per paper) but you must hand in everything by **December 5.** You would receive the average of the first and second version of the paper. If you hand in a revision, please hand in the original with it. I encourage you to meet with me if you decide to revise and resubmit your work.

Electronics in class: Please turn off and “safe stow” cell phones during class. You will retain more if you take hand written notes than using a computer. Please note that your participation mark will suffer if you are using the computer for purposes other than taking notes. It also affects the ability of others (even worse!) to concentrate in class.

Schedule

September 10

Introductions; Religion, Experience, and Art

September 17

The Significance of Beauty; Aesthetics

Reading: RAVC, 19-52 (there will be in-class writing on this); bring an image, a piece of music, or a film segment that you think makes a connection between religion and art (from your point of view). We will talk about these in class.

Optional: Oliver Sacks, "To See and Not to See" (ON LEARN)

September 24



Nasir-ol-Molk Mosque, Shiraz, Iran

The Arts: Music, Dance, Architecture, Film

Reading: "The Aura of the Sacred" (ON LEARN); "Dance as a Way of Being Religious" (ON LEARN) (there will be in-class writing on these essays)

1st Paper Due

October 1



Seated Ganesh, 15th century, Thailand

Hinduism

Reading: RAVC, 161-93 (remember to bring questions and/or comments about the reading)

1st Test

October 8 – No class. Thanksgiving Day.

October 15

Hinduism cont'd – Music in Bali; Gamelan Workshop

Reading: "Hinduism and Music" (on LEARN) (there will be in-class writing on this)

October 22



Japanese Garden, Portland, Oregon

Buddhism

Reading: RAVC, 125-59 (there will be in-class writing on this)

Viewing: Portions of “Dream Window”

2nd Paper Due

October 29

Judaism

Reading: RAVC, 195-232 (there will be in-class writing on this)

November 5

Judaism cont’d/Introduction to Christianity

Reading: RAVC, 53-72

2nd Test

November 12 – Islam, including calligraphy workshop

Reading: RAVC, 89-124 (there will be in-class writing on this)

Guest: [Soheila Esfahani](https://soheila.ca/), artist (<https://soheila.ca/>)

November 19 – No class. Please watch 5 segments (about 15 minutes each) of the online film:

The Face: Jesus in Art, Part 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YX1yZdzOHpo>

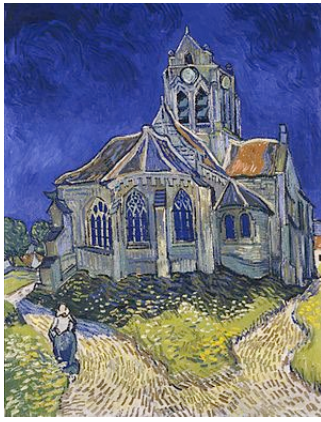
and *Part 2:* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSl2YjDLlrU>

and *Part 3:* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9OXXQV44AsA>

and *Part 4:* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=alm0ndXfNLc>

and *Part 5:* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xquV10a35q4>

November 26



Vincent van Gogh, "Church at Auvers-sur-Oise," Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Christianity cont'd

Reading: RAVC, 73-86 (there will be in-class writing on this and on *The Face: Jesus in Art*)

Guest for second part of the class: [Paul Roorda](http://www.paulroorda.com/), artist (<http://www.paulroorda.com/>)

3rd Paper Due

December 3

The Power of Photography

Reading: "The Prophetic Act of Bearing Witness: The Work of Sebastião Salgado" (ON LEARN)

Viewing: "Salt of the Earth"

3rd Test



Franz Marc, "Tower of Blue Horses" (1913 – now missing)

Cross-listed course

Please note that a cross-listed course will count in all respective averages no matter under which rubric it has been taken. For example, a PHIL/PSCI cross-list will count in a Philosophy major average, even if the course was taken under the Political Science rubric.

Academic Integrity and Discipline

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. See the [Office of Academic Integrity webpage](#) for more information.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. Check [the Office of Academic Integrity](#) for more information. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to [Policy 71 - Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties check [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

Grievances and Appeals

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read [Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances](#), Section 4. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to [Policy 72 - Student Appeals](#).

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

Note for students with disabilities: The [AccessAbility Services](#) office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (1401), collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS office at the beginning of each academic term.

Mental Health Support

All of us need a support system. The faculty and staff in Arts encourage students to seek out mental health supports if they are needed.

On Campus

- Counselling Services: counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca / 519-888-4567 ext 32655
- [MATES](#): one-to-one peer support program offered by Federation of Students (FEDS) and Counselling Services
- Health Services Emergency service: located across the creek from Student Life Centre

Off campus, 24/7

- [Good2Talk](#): Free confidential help line for post-secondary students. Phone: 1-866-925-5454
- Grand River Hospital: Emergency care for mental health crisis. Phone: 519-749-433 ext. 6880
- [Here 24/7](#): Mental Health and Crisis Service Team. Phone: 1-844-437-3247
- [OK2BME](#): set of support services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning teens in Waterloo. Phone: 519-884-0000 extension 213

Full details can be found online at the Faculty of ARTS [website](#)

Download [UWaterloo and regional mental health resources \(PDF\)](#)

Download the [WatSafe app](#) to your phone to quickly access mental health support information

Academic freedom at the University of Waterloo

[Policy 33, Ethical Behaviour](#) states, as one of its general principles (Section 1), “The University supports academic freedom for all members of the University community. Academic freedom carries with it the duty to use that freedom in a manner consistent with the scholarly obligation to base teaching and research on an honest and ethical quest for knowledge. In the context of this policy, 'academic freedom' refers to academic activities, including teaching and scholarship, as is articulated in the principles set out in the Memorandum of Agreement between the FAUW and the University of Waterloo, 1998 (Article 6). The academic environment which fosters free debate may from time to time include the presentation or discussion of unpopular opinions or controversial material. Such material shall be dealt with as openly, respectfully and sensitively as possible.” This definition is repeated in Policies 70 and 71, and in the Memorandum of Agreement, Section 6.

Writing and Communication Centre

The Writing and Communication Centre (WCC) works with students as they develop their ideas, draft, and revise. Writing and communication specialists offer one-on-one support in planning assignments, synthesizing and citing research, organizing papers and reports, designing presentations and e-portfolios, and revising for clarity and coherence.

You can make multiple appointments throughout the term, or you can drop in at the Library for quick questions or feedback. To book a 25- or 50-minute appointment and to see drop-in hours, visit uwaterloo.ca/wcc. Group appointments for team-based projects, presentations, and papers are also available.

Please note that communication specialists guide you to see your work as readers would. They can teach you revising skills and strategies, but will not change or correct your work for you.