

AH/CU331 Imagining Medieval Culture: The Communicative Power of Medieval Images

IES Abroad Barcelona

DESCRIPTION:

Medieval men and women were captivated and amazed by images. This is because images have the potential of generating psychological, cognitive, and emotional responses while communicating social and cultural ideas and concerns. In recent years medieval images have generated excitement among modern art and cultural scholars who recognize their potential as “wordless” records of culture and windows into different medieval mentalities. By studying medieval images, in some cases as if they were modern ones, scholars attempt to understand medieval everyday life experiences, material culture, creation of identities, intellectual development, and even attitudes about the body and sexuality.

The purpose of this course is to explore medieval images within their cultural context in an attempt to: 1) understand how they were conceived and used to communicate the ideas and concerns of the period; 2) assess how they can be useful in reconstructing medieval experiences and perspectives; 3) recognize the difficulties of approaching images from other eras without the appropriate context and methodology; 4) gain a proper understanding of medieval history, art, and thought; and 5) question how medieval images continue to convey messages and construct identities even in our own lives. To this end we will place the images in their cultural and historical framework with the help of modern studies. For example, Jews, Muslims, and heretics were usually portrayed in medieval art in the Christian world as “monstrous figures.” To understand the construction of such imagery, the class will have to consider the role of the creators of such images, their audiences, their media, the current ideology, symbolic meaning, and the political, sacred, and secular context of the representations. The analysis of modern scholars and the discussions in class will help in putting all these concepts into play allowing us to view the images as windows into the medieval conception of the “Other.” Fortunately, the class will have the great opportunity to experience medieval images “first-hand” by visiting in Barcelona the world’s renown Romanesque and Gothic art collections of the MNAC (Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya), the Gothic Choirs from the Cathedral of Barcelona and the church of Santa Maria del Mar, the medieval sculpture collection of the Frederic Marès Museum, and the Cloister of the Monastery of Sant Pau del Camp.

CREDITS: 3 credits

CONTACT HOURS: 45 hours

LANGUAGE OF PRESENTATION: English

INSTRUCTOR:

PREREQUISITES: None

ADDITIONAL COST: None

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

Information is presented in a variety of forms, providing different learning platforms.

- Lectures and class discussions: introduction of the different topics, presentation of methodologies proposed by different scholars, promotion of discussion to share different points of view and foster student participation, development of tools for critical thinking.
- Readings: selected articles and chapters from books that present different approaches and case studies of medieval visual arts and their images.
- Homework assignments: will be based on the reading for a particular session and aim to help the student identify the key points of the readings and facilitate discussion during class. They are due at the beginning of class.
- Class activities: Consists of class discussion (whole class and in small groups), presentations (by each student and by small groups), and field trips to museums and medieval monuments. With these activities students will be able to communicate

their ideas to each other and to the professor. Furthermore, field trips will allow them to visit important medieval landmarks in Barcelona and have a first-hand experience with the materials studied.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

The final grade will be determined as follows:

- **Class participation - 10%**
- **Term Paper - 20%**
- **Midterm exam - 25%**
- **Topic presentations -20%**
- **Final exam - 25%:**

Class participation

Class participation is crucial in this course. By participating in the discussion students can express their points of view about the readings and lectures. The participation also helps the professor assess the degree of implication, understanding of materials, and knowledge about the subject.

Term Paper

2000-words essay on one of the principal topics of the first half of the semester.

Midterm exam

Exam where the students will have to explain different methodologies studied in class, and conduct a recognition, description, and analysis of several images within their medieval historical and cultural context.

Topic presentations

Analysis and presentation of images. Creation and presentation of an iconographical program for an imaginary church or cathedral. With this activity students will have to review all concepts seen during the semester and compile and ensemble a series of medieval images that could have been devised and used by a medieval “iconographic programmer” to send a message in the context of a Romanesque church or a Gothic cathedral. The activity will show the professor how much the students have assimilated the information presented and how they have developed their own approaches and personal points of view about the communicative potential of medieval images.

Final exam

Exam where the students will conduct a recognition, description, and analysis of a medieval image in connection to a text written by Hildegard von Bingen.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Place medieval visual arts within an expressive, functional, geographical, and historical context.
- Have an understanding of the communicative role of images in medieval culture.
- Identify different theories and methodologies proposed in the understanding of medieval art and images.
- Analyze and describe medieval images from a multidisciplinary perspective taking into consideration their creators, their audiences, the chosen media, and the cultural precepts that allow them to affect and communicate ideas.
- Develop an understanding of medieval history, contexts and mentalities.
- Find bridges between the use of medieval images and our modern conception of images and assess how medieval images continue to work in our imagination.

ATTENDANCE POLICY: As a member of our class community, you are expected to be present and on time every day. Attending class has an impact on your learning and academic success. For this reason, attendance is required for all IES Barcelona classes, including course-related excursions. If a student misses more than three classes in any course without justification, 3 percentage points will be deducted from the final grade for every additional absence. Seven unjustified absences in any course will result in a failing grade. Absences will only be justified, and assessed work, including exams, tests and presentations rescheduled, in cases of documented medical or family emergencies.

Course Organization

The whole course is organized in two main sections:

The first one (sessions 1-12) approaches the development and functionality of images in medieval culture taking into consideration contemporaneous theories about aesthetics, rhetoric, cognition, memory, textuality, and allegory. The performative element represented by gesticulation and the use of figurative representations as both depictions of reality and symbols for the beyond also will be discussed during this section.

The second section (sessions 13-24) explores how medieval society and culture are mirrored in their images and how images can be great sources of information about medieval experiences, concerns, and ideas. Intellectual thought, the creation of history and identity, power, the role of women in society, the construction of the “Other”, and material culture will be analyzed through specific case studies.

CONTENT:

Session	Content	Assignments
Session 1	• Introduction to the course • Forming “The Period Eye:” The art work as a product of its cultural context (Michael Baxandal)	• Introduction to the course
Session 2	The evolution of art and images in Medieval Europe I (9th-11th centuries) • Evolution of art and images in parallel with that of the material and cultural structures of society. • The development of images as forms of mediation, edification, and affirmation of power.	• Duby, Georges (2000). <i>Art and Society in the Middle Ages</i> (pp. 1-41). Polity Press.
Session 3	The evolution of art and images in Medieval Europe II (12th-14th centuries) • Images responding to the creation of the European “landscape” in the 12th and 13th centuries. • Art, images, and a profane new world.	• Duby, Georges (2000). <i>Art and Society in the Middle Ages</i> (pp. 42-86). Polity Press.
Session 4	Medieval Theories of Art • Medieval theorists and their concepts of art. • Aesthetics and image creation in Romanesque art.	• Eco, Umberto (1986). <i>Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages</i> (pp. 92-104). Yale University Press. • Schapiro, Meyer (1977). On the Aesthetic Attitude in Romanesque Art” In <i>Romanesque Art, Selected Papers</i> (pp. 1-27). George Braziller.
Session 5	Images and Theories of Cognition • The mnemotechnic use of images. • Images and meditation. • Iconographical programs as encyclopaedias.	• Carruthers, Mary (1998). <i>The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images 400-1200</i> (pp. 196-209, 256-276). Cambridge University Press.
Session 6	Symbolism and Allegory • Physical and metaphysical beauty. • The focus on proportion.	• Eco, Umberto (1986). <i>Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages</i> (pp. 52-83). Yale University Press.

	- Medieval tendency of understanding the world in terms of symbols and allegory. - Biblical typology.	- Sears, Elizabeth (2002). Medieval Sign Theory. In: E. Sears and T. K. - Thomas (Eds), <i>Reading Medieval Images: The art Historian and the</i> <i>Object</i> (pp. 16-17). The University of Michigan Press.
Session 7	Rhetoric and art - The rhetorical <i>ductus</i> in the examination of an art piece. - The artist as a teacher	Carruthers, Mary (2010). The concept of <i>ductus</i>, journeying through a work of art. In M. Carruthers (Ed), <i>Rhetoric Beyond Words: Delight and Persuasion in the Arts of the Middle Ages</i> (pp. 190-213). Cambridge University Press.
Session 8	Gesticulation, Performance, and the Visual Arts - Medieval culture as performative. - Communicating through body movement. - Symbolic language in gesture. Course-related trip: Visit to the Frederic Marès Museum and the Portals of the Cathedral of Barcelona to study its sculpture collection.	- Camille, Michael (2002). 'Seeing and Lecturing': Disputation in a - Twelfth-Century Tympanum from Reims. In: E. Sears and T. K. - Thomas (Eds), <i>Reading Medieval Images: The art Historian and the</i> <i>Object</i> (pp 75-87). The University of Michigan Press.
Session 9	Image Analysis (Reading) - The concept of reading the object of study. - The non-verbal signifying systems as language. -Analysis of form and content interaction in relation to image making and viewing.	- Sears, Elizabeth (2002). "Reading' Images, and Portraits in - Counterpoint. In E. Sears, In E. Sears and T. K. - Thomas (Eds), <i>Reading Medieval Images: The art Historian and the Object</i> (pp 1-7, 61-75). The University of Michigan Press. - Thelma K. Thomas (2002). Understanding Objects. In In: E. Sears and T. K. Thomas (Eds), <i>Reading Medieval Images: The art Historian and the Object</i> (pp. 9-15). The University of Michigan Press.
Session 10	The Romanesque Image as Text - Images inside the Romanesque church. - Representation of the beyond through the known. - Images serving as text. Course-related trip to the MNAC (National Art Museum of Catalonia) to study the collection of Romanesque Wall Painting	Duggan, Lawrence G. (1989). Was Art Really the Book of the Illiterate? <i>Word & Image</i> 5(3), 227-51.

Session 11	Student presentations of three images from the MNAC (captured by the students) applying the concepts and methodologies explored in the class.	Class presentation
Session 12	Midterm Exam	
Session 13	Images as Historical Evidence: - Images and History. - Images and Material Culture.	Burke, Peter (2001). <i>Eyewitnessing: The Use of Images as Historical Evidence</i> (pp. 9-20; 81-122). Cornell University Press.
Session 14	Image as a Reflection of Intellectual Thought - Panofsky and his Iconographical and Iconological Analysis. - The importance of the intellectual context. - The theory and creation of the “iconographical program.”	Burke, Peter (2001). <i>Eyewitnessing: The Use of Images as Historical Evidence</i> (34-58). Cornell University Press.
Session 15	Art in the Social Context - Culture and society as primary actors in medieval art. - The terrestrial representing the beyond. - Performers and performance in medieval iconography.	- Kraus, Henry (1967). <i>The Living Theatre of Medieval Art</i> (pp. 100-118). Indiana University Press. - Molina, Mauricio (2010). <i>Frame Drum in the Medieval Iberian Peninsula</i>, (pp. 107-127). Reichenberger.
Session 16	Secular Life and The Image - Images in Gothic Art. - Representation of Secular Life. - Images and naturalism. Course-related trip to the MNAC to study the collection of Gothic Art	Givens, Jean A. (2005). <i>Observation and Image-Making in Gothic Art</i> (pp. 5-37, 82-106). Cambridge University Press.
Session 17	Representations of Women I - Medieval attitude toward women - Women, the naked body, and Luxuria - Eve and the Virgin Mary	- Kraus, Henry (1967). <i>The Living Theatre of Medieval Art</i> (pp. 41-62). - Indiana University Press.
Session 18	Representations of Women II - Images used to construct the female body as an object of view. - Oversexuality. - Sirens	Caviness, Madeline H (2001). <i>Visualizing Women in the Middle Ages. Sight, Spectacle and Scopic Economy</i> (pp. 17-26, 89-119). University of Pennsylvania Press.
Session 19	Antisemitism in Medieval Art I The altercation between Church and Synagogue.	Kraus, Henry (1967). <i>The Living Theatre of Medieval Art</i> (pp. 139-172). Indiana University Press.

	The witnesses of the ancient law.	
Session 20	Antisemitism in Medieval Art II Topics: Extravagant hyper-visibility of the Jews in art.- Separation of Jews and Christians.	- Cahn, Walther (2001). The Expulsion of the Jews as History and Allegory in Painting and Sculpture of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries. In M. A. Singer (Ed). John. <i>Jewish and Christians in Twelfth-Century Europe</i> (pp. 94-108). Notre Dame Press. - Morrow, Kara Ann (2007). Disputation in Stone: Jew Imagined on the Saint Stephen Portal of Paris Cathedral. In: M.B. Merback (Ed). <i>Beyond the Yellow Badge: anti-Judaism and Antisemitism in Medieval and Early Modern Visual Culture</i> (pp. 63-86). Brill.
Session 21	Creating the Other I - Defining the “Other”. - Images and the creation of the European identity.	- Burke, Peter. 2001. <i>Eyewitnessing: The Use of Images as Historical Evidence</i> (pp. 123-139). Cornell University Press. - Strickland, Debra Higgs (2003). <i>Saracens, Demons, and Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art</i> (pp. 29-48). Princeton University Press.
Session 22	Creating the Other II The “monster races”. - The medieval monster as a hybrid. - The monster as identity (Wilfrid the Hairy).	Strickland, Debra Higgs (2003). <i>Saracens, Demons, and Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art</i> (pp. 48-61; 241-255). Princeton University Press.
Session 23	Student presentations I - Creation of an “Iconographical Program” for a Romanesque Church (painting) or for a Gothic Cathedral (sculpture).	References and images to be researched by students.
Session 24	Student presentations II - Creation of an “Iconographical Program” for a Romanesque Church (painting) or for a Gothic Cathedral (sculpture).	References and images to be researched by students.
Session 25	Submission of Final	

COURSE-RELATED TRIPS

- Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya (MNAC): Romanesque and Gothic Art. The Collection of Romanesque wall painting is the most important in the world.
- Museu Frederic Marès: Important collection of Romanesque and Gothic sculpture.

REQUIRED READING:

- Burke, Peter (2001). *Eyewitnessing: The Use of Images as Historical Evidence* (pp. 9-20, 34-58, 81-122, 123-139). Cornell University Press.
- Camille, Michael (2002). Seeing and Lecturing’: Disputation in a Twelfth-Century Tympanum from Reims. In E. Sears and T.K.
- Thomas (Eds), *Reading Medieval Images: The art Historian and the Object* (pp 75-87). The University of Michigan Press.
- Cahn, Walther (2001). The Expulsion of the Jews as History and Allegory in Painting and Sculpture of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries “. In M. A. Singer and J. van Engen (Eds) *Jewish and Christians in Twelfth-Century Europe* (pp. 94-108). Notre Dame Press
- Carruthers, Mary (1998). *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images* (pp. 400-1200, 196-209, 256-276). Cambridge University Press.

- Carruthers, Mary (2010). The concept of ductus, journeying through a work of art. In M. Carruthers, Mary (Ed). *Rhetoric Beyond Words: Delight and Persuasion in the Arts of the Middle Ages* (pp. 190-213). Cambridge University Press
- Caviness, Madeline H. (2001). *Visualizing Women in the Middle Ages. Sight, Spectacle and Scopic Economy* (pp. 17-22, 89-119). University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Duby, George. (2000). *Art and Society in the Middle Ages* (pp. 1-41, 42-86). Polity Press
- Duggan, Lawrence G. (1989). Was Art Really the Book of the Illiterate? *Word & Image* 5(3), 227-51.
- Eco, Umberto (1986). *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages* (pp. 52-83, 92-104). Yale University Press.
- Givens, Jean A. (2005). *Observation and Image-Making in Gothic Art* (pp. 5-37, 82-106). Cambridge University Press.
- Kraus, Henry (1967). *The Living Theatre of Medieval Art* (pp. 41-62, 100-118, 139-163). Indiana University Press. Indiana.
- Molina, Mauricio (2010). *Frame Drum in the Medieval Iberian Peninsula* (pp. 107-122). Reichenberger.
- Schapiro, Meyer (1977). On the Aesthetic Attitude in Romanesque Art. In *Romanesque Art, Selected Papers* (pp. 1-27). George Braziller.
- Sears, Elisabeth (2002). Reading' Images. In: E. Sears and T. K. Thomas (Eds), *Reading Medieval Images: The art Historian and the Object* (pp. 1-7). The University of Michigan Press.
- Sears, Elisabeth (2002). Portraits in Counterpoint". In: E. Sears and T. K. Thomas (Eds), *Reading Medieval Images: The art Historian and the Object* (pp. 61-75). The University of Michigan Press.
- Sears, Elisabeth. (2002). Medieval Sign Theory. In: E. Sears and T. K. Thomas (Eds), *Reading Medieval Images: The art Historian and the Object*. (pp. 16-17). The University of Michigan Press.
- Strickland, Debra Higgs (2003). *Saracens, Demons, and Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art* (pp. 9-61; 241-255). Princeton University Press.