
TOPICS: FALSE IDOLS in Spring 2021 (AH3091)

Course Code	AH3091	Professor(s)	Marsha Libina, Bernard Zirnheld
Prerequisites	None	Office Number	
Class Schedule	M: 15:20-16:40 in C-101 W: 12:10-13:30 in V-1 W: 13:45-15:05 in C-101	Office Hours	
Credits	4	Email	mllibina@aup.edu, bzirnheld@aup.edu
Semester	Spring 2021	Office Tel. Ext.	

Course Description

In 2015, ISIS militants smashed ancient Assyrian statues, calling them “false idols.” Since the ancient world to the present, people have endowed material objects with powers that go beyond their physical appearance. Statues of gods, miraculous icons, amulets, and relics are just a few examples of art that is believed to point to an otherworldly reality. Yet how were these material manifestations of different gods able to co-exist in an increasingly global world? The European colonization of parts of Africa, Asia, and the New World brought about the meeting of diverse belief systems and the cult objects that embodied them. How did Europeans react when they encountered the veneration of non-Christian gods and spirits, and how was this encounter informed by Europe’s own image debates? How did African, Asian, and Latin American cultures integrate, appropriate, or resist the Christian cult images of their colonizers? To answer these questions and others, we will examine the topic of idolatry—the worship of lifeless images or false gods—and its significance for image-making and destruction as part of a global history of art. In doing so, this course will explore the ramifications of cross-cultural encounters between societies whose gods and objects of worship were often perceived to be radically different from one another. Our objects of study will come from the 16th-18th centuries and will include paintings, engravings, codices, textiles, and sculptures.

Course Learning Outcomes

General Education

Course Outline

Meeting Schedule

Unit 1. Europe

Week 1. Introduction: What is an Idol? The Power of Images

Mon, Jan 18: Read syllabus

Wed, Jan 20: Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol*, p.27-44, 73-77.

Week 2. The Reformation Debate on Images in Protestant and Catholic Europe

Mon, Jan 25: Carlos M. N. Eire, *War Against the Idols*, p.54-73, 83-85, 197-200.

Joseph Koerner, *The Reformation of the Image*, p.27-32.

Wed. Jan 27: Alexander Nagel, *The Controversy of Renaissance Art*, p.2-5.

Michael Cole, "Perpetual Exorcism in Sistine Rome," p.57-68, 73-76.

Stephen Campbell, "Fare una Cosa Morta Parer Viva," p.606-609.

Week 3. Idolatry and Iconoclasm

Mon, Feb 1: David Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, p.378-86, p.421-24.

Wed, Feb 3: Lee Palmer Wandel, *Voracious Idols and Violent Hands*, p.93-101.

Joseph Koerner, *The Reformation of the Image*, p.104-116, 127-132.

Week 4. Mini-break. NO CLASS

Unit 2. The New World

Week 5. A Meeting of Religions

Mon, Feb 15: Patricia Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest*, p.1-3, 55-63.

Michael Gaudio, *Engraving the Savage*, p.xiv-xix, 87-88, 97, 103-108.

Wed, Feb 17: George Kubler, "On the Colonial Extinction of the Motifs of Pre-Columbian Art,"
p.14-34.

Colleen Ebacher, "Whose Paradise is This?," p.47-54, 57-70.

Week 6. Religious Conversion: Confronting America's Idols

Mon, Feb 22: Maya Stanfield-Mazzi, *Object and Apparition*, p.1-5, 9-23.

Jeanette Favrot Peterson, "On Sacred Matter," *Visualizing Guadalupe*, p.13-16.

Wed, Feb 24: **Mini-break. NO CLASS**

Week 7. Appropriating Christian Art in New Spain

Mon, March 1: Serge Gruzinski, *The Mestizo Mind*, p.48-49, 55-63, 110-116.

Samuel Y. Edgerton, *Theaters of Conversion*, p.1-11, 65-71, 155-171.

Wed, March 3: Carol Damian, *The Virgin of the Andes*, p.50-75, p.80-88.

Jeanette Favrot Peterson, "The Virgin of Guadalupe," p.39-47.

Jeanette Favrot Peterson, "Creating the Virgin of Guadalupe," p.582-585.

Week 8. Mid-semester

Mon, March 8: Review Session

Wed, March 10: **Midterm exam**

Unit 3. Western Africa

Week 9. Portuguese Missions, Demonic Possession, and African "Fetishes"

Mon, March 15: Suzanne Preston Blier, "Capricious Arts," in *The Idol in the Age of Art*, p.16-21.

On African fetishes, TBA.

Wed, March 17: Suzanne Preston Blier, "Imaging Otherness in Ivory," p. 375-396.

Week 10. The Christian Cross in Kongoles Art

Mon, March 22: Cecile Fromont, "Under the Sign of the Cross," *The Art of Conversion*, p.65-108.

Wed, March 24: N/A

Unit 4. East Asia

Week 11. Jesuit Art and Christianity in East Asia

Mon, March 29: TBA

Wed, March 31: TBA

Week 12.

Mon, April 5: **Easter Monday. NO CLASS**

Wed, April 7: Quai Branly museum visit

Week 13. "Hidden Christians": Trampling *Fumi-e* Tablets as Ritualized Iconoclasm

Mon, April 12: Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *Toward a Geography of Art*, p.303-340.

Wed, April 14: Mia Mochizuki, "Idolatry and Western-Inspired Painting in Japan," p.239-66.

Unit 5. Postcolonial Art and Reflections

Week 14. Reframing the Past: Heritage, Controversy and Modern-Day Iconoclasm

Mon, April 19: W.J.T. Mitchell, "Offending Images," in *What do Pictures Want?*, p.125-44.

Wed, April 21: Student Presentations

Week 15. Conclusion

Mon, April 26: Review Session

Wed, April 28: **Final Exam**

Textbooks

This course doesn't have any textbook.

Attendance Policy

Students studying at The American University of Paris are expected to attend ALL scheduled classes, and in case of absence, should contact their professors to explain the situation. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of any specific attendance policy that a faculty member might have set in the course syllabus. The French Department, for example, has its own attendance policy, and students are responsible for compliance. Academic Affairs will excuse an absence for students' participation in study trips related to their courses.

Attendance at all exams is mandatory.

IN ALL CASES OF MISSED COURSE MEETINGS, THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMUNICATION WITH THE PROFESSOR, AND FOR ARRANGING TO MAKE UP MISSED WORK, RESTS SOLELY WITH THE STUDENT.

Whether an absence is excused or not is ALWAYS up to the discretion of the professor or the department. Unexcused absences can result in a low or failing participation grade. In the case of excessive absences, it is up to the professor or the department to decide if the student will receive an "F" for the course. An instructor may recommend that a student withdraw, if absences have made it impossible to continue in the course at a satisfactory level.

Students must be mindful of this policy when making their travel arrangements, and especially during the Drop/Add and Exam Periods.

Grading Policy

Readings:

Readings will be made available online through Blackboard as PDFs.

Grading:

Quizzes (15%)

Midterm exam (20%)

Project presentation (10%)

Final research paper (25%)

Final exam (20%)

Participation (10%)

All work must be completed to pass the course. There will be no make-up exams without a medical note.

Assessment:

Quizzes

There will be quizzes on the assigned readings throughout the semester. Quizzes will be short answer format and will be graded on a scale of 1–3 as follows: (3) the response demonstrates high proficiency in the tested material; (2) the response demonstrates general competence in the tested material; (1) the response not demonstrate satisfactory understanding of the material.

Visual Analysis Research Paper and Presentation

I will provide you with a list of possible paper topics. The paper consists of two key parts: an opening, in which you introduce the topic and identify a problem that your selected work(s) raise(s); and the body of the paper, which constitutes your sustained analysis of the object(s) in response to the problem you identified.

Midterm and Final Exam

The exams are non-cumulative and will be a combination of slide ID, compare and contrast, and short essay answer questions. Testable material includes lectures and readings.

Participation

Attendance and participation are expected at all class meetings. Your participation grade will be based on your active involvement in class discussion. Attendance is key to your success in the course.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

1. Come to class and take careful notes.
2. Do the readings and take notes on them at home.
3. Make flashcards of the images on the study guide for the exam. You are responsible for knowing the artist, title, date, and medium of each work, as well as its meaning and relevant historical context.
4. Cramming does not work. Do not wait until the last minute to study. The course covers a lot of material and you will quickly become overwhelmed if you do not keep up with the readings and lectures.
5. Contact me any time for help.

Other
