Art History and Material Culture Studies

—New Lights on Christian Spirituality

藝術史以及物質文明研究——重思基督教靈性

2025. Jan to April
Friday 7:00PM - 9:30PM

Dr. Andrea Chen

Introduction

Arts and artefacts related topics have been marginalized in the Christian worlds, especially of the contemporary Asian Christian communities. Here, the Christian faith has been largely understood through written texts, such as the Bible, the Creeds, writings of theologians, etc. However, as Terry Eagleton comments in 2017, "one of the greatest of all Christian theologians turns out to be in some respects a full-blooded materialist." This course, therefore, shifts the focus from the traditional and textually dominant resources to the various archaeological records such as Christian manuscripts, church buildings, artefacts, daily objects, and objects of veneration. The course stresses that the things themselves disclose fascinating worlds of Christian faith, daily lives of Christian communities, peoples and their ethnicities, cross-regional interactions, and finally, the 3D histories, which are real, somatic, sensory, rich, and deep, and have never faded away despite the decay of papers, loss of artworks or disappearance of traditions. To fulfil this purpose, this course draws strength from both traditional and radical approaches. All these efforts devote to dismantle barriers set by the modern mindset in attempting to reach far-away histories, such as the postulated modern concepts of time and space, and the most influential modern-dualism of mental-material. In this way, the course contributes to an insight that peoples, bodies, arts, artefacts, daily objects, liturgical instruments, etc., namely all entities, of the historical Christian communities have been deeply entangled in the practices of faith—not at the level of concept, but that of real lives. The real lives manifested by arts and materials, therefore, are connecting the past to the present.

Learning Outcomes Intended

✓ Students will be equipped with basic aesthetic competence to learn to appreciate Christian arts.
✓ Students will be able to make a more symmetric evaluation of both traditions of textual and material cultures of Christian faith through critical dialogues with the arts, material, theological as well as spiritual worlds of historical Christian communities.
✓ Students will learn to deconstruct the mental-material dualism, and hence will be motived to reflect on the Christian faith and spirituality dominated by modern mindset.
✓ With these reflections, students will be able to deepen spiritual experiences in real life (churches and families) and approach a more authentic relationships with the world.
✓ For those students who are willing to advance in academic studies of related topics, they will be provided with the theoretical framework of Christian art, archaeology, and material culture studies.

Readings

Art History Related (selected chapters):

1. Asselt, Willem J. van. *Iconoclasm and Iconoclash: Struggle for Religious Identity*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007.
2. Beckwith, John. *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*. 2nd ed. ed. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979.
3. Jensen, Robin Margaret, and Mark D. Ellison. *The Routledge Handbook of Early Christian Art. Handbook of Early Christian Art*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2018.
4. Jensen, Robin Margaret. *The Substance of Things Seen: Art, Faith, and the Christian Community*. Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2004.
5. Preziosi, Donald. *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Biblical Archaeology Related (selected chapters):

6. Cline, Eric H. *Biblical Archaeology: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
7. Davis, Thomas W. *Shifting Sands: The Rise and Fall of Biblical Archaeology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
8. Dever, William G. *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It?: What Archaeology Can Tell Us about the Reality of Ancient Israel*. Pbk. ed. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Pub., 2002.
9. Gilchrist, Roberta. *Sacred Heritage: Monastic Archaeology, Identities, Beliefs*. Cambridge University Press, 2020.
10. lsner J. Archaeologies and Agendas: Reflections on Late Ancient Jewish Art and Early Christian Art. *Journal of Roman Studies*. 2003; 93:114-128.

Material Culture Studies Related (selected chapters):

11. Book chapter: Fleming, Benjamin J., and Richard D. Mann. "Introduction: Material Culture and Religious Studies" in *Material Culture and Asian Religions Text, Image, Object*. New York: Routledge, 2014.
12. Book chapter: Thomas, Julian. "After Descartes: Archaeology, culture and nature" in *Time, Culture and Identity: An Interpretive Archaeology*. London: Routledge, 1996.
13. Gell, Alfred. *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.

Additional Readings (Optional):

14. Elsner, Jaś. *Art and the Roman Viewer: The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity*. Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
15. Mathews, Thomas F. *The Clash of Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993.
16. Morgan, Sandra Knudsen, and Art Metropolitan Museum. *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, 3rd to 7th Century*, [November 19, 1977-February 12, 1978]. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1977.
17. Finney, Paul Corby. *The Invisible God: The Earliest Christians on Art*. Edited by Inc NetLibrary and Inc Ebrary. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Class Arrangement

PART I: Christian Material Culture Heritage in New Lights Each lecture consists of two parts. The first part introduces the world of Christian materials, primarily Christian arts, focusing on the basic knowledge of issues, elements, schools, historical moments, and more. The second part of the lecture aims to stimulate intellectual and spiritual growth by adopting case studies that nurture critical thinking and generate new understandings of Christian lives. **第一部分：重新審視基督教物質文化遺產** 每一課堂分為兩階段。第一階段旨在介紹以基督教藝術為主的物質文明世界，著眼於基礎知識，元素，流派，歷史時刻等。第二階段引入個案研究來鼓勵批判性思維，旨在激發知智與靈性的成長，以及更新對於基督教生活的認識。	Readings: Art History Related
PART II: Things that Connect the Past and the Present This section zooms in on Christian objects. Lectures in this part also consist of two steps. First, they further nurture new insights by exploring biblical archaeology. Second, they employ case studies to achieve an epistemological shift from static historical materials to the concern for historicity manifested by these things, which is critical to a renewed understanding of Christian history and identity. **第二部分: 連接過往和現在之物** 此部分更集中在具體的基督教遺物上。每一課堂同樣分為兩階段。第一段在聖經考古領域深化已初形成的新思維。第二段用個案研究尋求認知跨越，從靜態的歷史遺物轉去探討他們所呈現的歷史性，這對於更新基督教歷史和身份的理解尤為重要。	Readings: Biblical Archaeology Related
PART III: Material Culture Studies and the Revolution of Mind Based on the previous lectures, the first two lectures of this section introduce the movement of the material culture studies. The following lectures challenge a linear, orderly, and linguistically informed historicity that once defined and reinforced the so-called "historical truth" most familiar to us, thereby shaping who we are. New insights and discoveries that may inspire a revolution of mind and a re-approach to the Christian life will be encouraged. **第三部分：物質文明研究和思想的革新** 基於前面所學，這部分的首兩課介紹物質文化遺產研究這一學術運動。接下來的課堂挑戰線性的、秩序性的，由語言學把控的歷史性（歷史觀）——她曾一度定義和強化了我們熟悉的 "歷史事實"， 而我們也被這些所謂的事實所塑造。課堂鼓勵新的探索，發現和亮光，期盼能帶來思想的革新，並對基督教生活有更多思索。	Readings: Material Culture Studies Related
PART IV: Summary and conclusion This section will, after summarizing some key discourses of the course, concentrate back on "what these mean to us—ordinary Christians living in a secular world." Discussions will lead to a reflection that: since all minds are shaped, managed, organized, customed, and are hence temporal and limited, can the calling for a "returning" to the ontological thinking of all relations among entities of the mundane world help to "train" the freedom of will? And more importantly, will this call be related to our Christian spirituality, and in what way they are related? **第四部分：總結** 此部分總結回顧整個課程的重要知識點，再回到討論的核心： "這些知識對於我們身處世俗的基督徒來說究竟意味著什麼"？ 進而探索： 既然所有的思維都是被塑造，經管，組織，裁製而成的，從而也是暫時和有局限的，那麼這一回歸本體性思考的呼籲，即： "世上所有**造物**皆應彼此相關"，是否可以幫助我們訓練意志的自由？ 更重要的是，此呼籲是否同我們基督教靈性的成長相關，如何相關？	

*No hardcopy of course materials will be distributed

*All assignments must be submitted to Blackboard & VERIGUIDE

Assessment

1. **One short reading report (20%)**
    1.1 The reading report should be based on one or two chapters of any book, or any article listed in the reading list including the basic textbooks and the additional readings.
    1.2 It is suggested that the report comprise at least two main parts:
        * The first part includes a brief summary of the selected work. Please note that the summary should NOT proportionally exceed half of the report.
        * In the second part, a critical reflection on or/and a critical dialogue with the selected work is expected. In-depth interaction with the work shows good digestion of what you have learnt in the course.
    1.3 The report is expected to be submitted in the middle of the semester (March 2025)
    1.4 A length of **1000 to 1500 words** is highly recommended.
    1.5 Either **English or Chinese** can be used in writing, but all languages other than these two in the report must be followed by an English or Chinese translation.
    1.6 The reading report **MUST** go through the **VERIGUID** system and a copy of the receipt issued by the VERIGUID system is required to be co-submitted with the report.

2. **One homework reflecting on any selected topic taught by the course (15%)**
    2.1 The homework is expected to be submitted at any time in the second half of the semester (March to April 2025).
    2.2 There is **no genre limit** for this homework, meaning that **it could be an essay (no less than 400 words, in that case, the essay must go through VERIGUID system)**, or poem (English or Chinese style), or drawing, or sculpture, or pottery works, or singing, or hand-made bakery, or DIY artefacts, or dancing, or reading aloud of an essay or a poem in a video clip, etc. All forms of the homework, except the written one (e.g., essay or poem), can be submitted by means of video clips or any other means appropriate for both the student and the teacher.
    2.3 It is to be observed that all forms of the work must **be related to the topics** of the course. Therefore, explanations of the motivation, reflection, and/or creating process can be added to the works when necessary.
    2.4 It should be noted that any artwork(s) (original or quoted) must always be followed with the caption and copyright clarification. If the works were in the form of video clips, simple substitutes including these necessary data should be added. (*****Research Ethic Concern**)
    2.5 If any **AI** has been used in creating the homework, students should discuss their design with the teacher, including how they will use AI and what percentage of the work will be AI-generated (**30% is the upper limit**). Additionally, they should provide **explicit acknowledgment of the AI's contribution** in the final version of the submitted homework.

3. **Term Paper (65%)**
    3.1 The term paper is expected to be an **integration** of knowledge (as that of arts, art histories, artworks, Christian spirituality, philosophy of Art, material cultures studies, critical theories, etc.), critical reflections, personal explorations, etc., inspired by and obtained in the course.
    3.2 A paper would be ranked high if it could concentrate on one major topic selected from the topics of the course. It means that in-depth discussions are preferred over general summaries of what the course has taught.

3.3 <u>The paper is expected to be submitted within two weeks right after the final lecture.</u>

3.4 A length of **2000 to 2500 words** is highly recommended (main text).

3.5 Either **English or Chinese** can be used in writing, but all languages other than these two in the paper must be followed by an English or Chinese translation.

3.6 The term paper **MUST** go through the **VERIGUID** system and a copy of the receipt issued by the VERIGUID system is required to be co-submitted with the paper.

Assessment Rubrics for Term Paper

CATEGORY	Excellent 5	Good 4	Fair 3-2	Poor/ Inadequate 1-0
Introduction/ Thesis (10%) ____	- exceptional introduction that grabs interest of reader and states topic. - thesis is exceptionally clear, arguable, well-developed, and a definitive statement.	-proficient introduction that is interesting and states topic. -thesis is clear and arguable statement of position.	-basic introduction that states topic but lacks interest. -thesis is somewhat clear and arguable.	-weak or no introduction of topic. -paper's purpose is unclear/thesis is weak or missing.
Program Design / Quality of Information (30%) ____	-makes in-depth synthesis of thoughtfully connections between what is learned/observed from outside experiences/observations and the topic. -information clearly relates to the thesis. -paper is exceptionally researched and extremely detailed.	-makes general connections between what is learned/observed from outside experiences/observations and the topic. -information relates to the main topic. -paper is well-researched in detail and from a variety of sources.	-identify some general ideas or issues from outside experiences/observations related to the topic. -information relates to the main topic, few details and/or examples are given. -shows a limited variety of sources.	-weak to relate the outside experiences/observations and the topic. -information has little or nothing to do with the thesis. -Illogical with little evidence

Support of Thesis/Analysis (30%) ____	-exceptionally critical, relevant and consistent connections made between evidence and thesis. -excellent analysis.	-consistent connections made between evidence and thesis -good analysis.	-some connections made between evidence and thesis. -some analysis. -lack of analysis.	-limited or no connections made between evidence and thesis.
Conclusion (10%) ____	-excellent summary of topic with concluding ideas that impact reader. -introduces no new information.	-good summary of topic with clear concluding ideas. -introduces no new information.	-basic summary of topic with some final concluding ideas. -introduces no new information.	-lack of summary of topic.
Organization/ Development of Thesis (10%) ____	-exceptionally clear, logical, mature, and thorough development of thesis with excellent transitions between and within paragraphs.	-clear and logical order that supports thesis with good transitions between and within paragraphs.	-somewhat clear and logical development with basic transitions between and within paragraphs.	-lacks development of ideas with weak or no transitions between and within paragraphs.
Citation/ Bibliography Format (10%)	-conforms to academic rules for formatting and citation of sources are perfect.	-conforms to academic rules for formatting and citation of sources with minor exceptions.	-frequent errors in academic format.	-lack of academic format/numerous errors.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

    1. Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/.

    2. With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed declaration that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures. In the case of group projects, all students of the same group should be asked to sign the declaration, each of whom is responsible should there be any plagiarized

contents in the group project, irrespective of whether he/she has signed the declaration and whether he/she has contributed directly or indirectly to the plagiarized contents.

3. For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment. Assignments without the properly signed declaration will not be graded by teachers. Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.

4. The submission of a piece of work, or a part of a piece of work, for more than one purpose (e.g. to satisfy the requirements in two different courses) without declaration to this effect shall be regarded as having committed undeclared multiple submission. It is common and acceptable to reuse a turn of phrase or a sentence or two from one's own work; but wholesale reuse is problematic. In any case, agreement from the course teacher(s) concerned should be obtained prior to the submission of the piece of work.

Contact Details of Teachers

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