

The University of Western Ontario
Department of Visual Arts
2015–2016

Visual Arts History 3392F: Special Topics in Art History

Topic: Imag(in)ing the Afterlife in Medieval Art

Tuesdays, 11:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m. – VAC, Room 100

Professor:

Dr. Adam Stead

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Office Hours: TBA

Course Description:

Prerequisite(s):

VAH 1040 or two of VAH 1041A/B – VAH 1045A/B or permission of the department.

Overview:

From the earliest Christian art through the late Gothic era, the afterlife constituted one of the most central and enduring themes in Western European visual culture. When it came to visualizing the apocalypse, heaven, hell, and life after death, medieval artists faced a fundamental paradox: how to represent what no mortal had seen or, indeed, was capable of seeing. As this course demonstrates, medieval artists and their patrons produced an astounding and highly imaginative variety of responses to this issue. Taking a roughly chronological approach, we will examine medieval artistic visions of the afterlife from ca. 300–1400 in various media, ranging from the monumental arts of mosaics, wall painting, and sculpture to small-scale objects, such as manuscripts, ivory carving, and the sumptuary arts. Reflecting the material, our survey will be interdisciplinary in nature and will address a range of topics, including conceptions of the body, the devil and demons, earthly and heavenly cities, the macabre, and the modern “afterlife” of medieval conceptions of the afterlife. Throughout, emphasis will be placed on understanding the different functions and audiences of medieval artistic visions of the afterlife, and how they intersect with the specific cultural contexts in which they were created.

Learning Outcomes:

This course will allow students to gain thorough knowledge of central aspects of medieval visual

Please note that, after three unexcused absences, I will automatically reduce your final grade by 2.5% (continual absen

E-Mail Policy

I will do my best to reply to your e-mail within two business days (business days being Monday through Friday). Should you wish to discuss something by e-mail, please contact me well *in advance* of deadlines, and not at the last minute (e.g., the night before an assignment is due).

Also be advised that:

- a. Assignments to be submitted by electronic submission may *only* be submitted on OWL, *not* by e-mail. I will not accept assignments submitted by e-mail.

You will submit your critique electronically on OWL by 5:00 p.m. on 29 September. Submissions made after this cut-off will be subject to the late penalty outlined in the course policies above.

B) Virtual Exhibition Project (**Peer-review sessions in class: 13 October, 10 November, 24 November; Final Dossier: due 1 December**)

For this assignment, you will curate a virtual exhibition relating to the theme of “Imag(in)ing the Afterlife in Medieval Art.” You will select from *one* of the assigned weekly readings (except for the weeks of 1 and 8 December) *one artwork* that you find interesting. Like a curator preparing an exhibition, you will write a short text for your work in the manner of an explanatory label beside an artwork in an exhibition, complete with an identification of the work, its date, its place of origin, its material/medium, and your text of ca. 300 words. Your goal is to use the knowledge you have gained abo

exhibition visitor's "burning" questions: "Why should I care about the afterlife in medieval art? Why is it interesting and significant?" Prior to the class of 24 November, you will send your peer reviewer your dossier so that she or he can review it; you and your partner will then discuss each other's complete dossiers in class on 24 November (during the second half of class). Taking account of your reviewer's suggestions/critique, you will complete your final dossier and hand it in in class on 1 December.

In addition to the above, further guidelines on requirements, formatting, style, illustrations, and a sample label are available on OWL (document: "Virtual Exhibition Project").

OWL:

This course will have an OWL

Class of 10 November:

Lecture: Private Visions: Gothic Manuscripts and Ivories; **Exhibition Peer Review 2**

Reading:

1. Suzanne Lewis, "Exegesis and Illustration in Thirteenth-Century English Apocalypses," in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, eds. Emmerson and McGinn, 259–75. [CR]
2. Harvey Stahl, "Heaven in View: The Place of the Elect in an Illuminated Book of Hours," in *Last Things: Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, edited by Caroline Walker Bynum and Paul Freedman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 205–32. [CR]

Class of 17 November:

Lecture: *Requiescit in pace*: Tombs and Bodies; **QUIZ 2 (ONLINE OWL)**

Reading:

1. Binski, *Medieval Death*, 70–115. ("Death and Representation") [CR]

Class of 24 November:

Lecture:

**The University of Western Ontario
Visual Arts Department**

POLICIES

Student Conduct:

All students will conduct themselves in a manner that will be consistent with the maturity and academic integrity expected of university students. Student conduct shall be consistent with the general laws of the community and with University regulations. Students shall show regard and respect for the rights, safety, and property of all members of the University community and are expected to act in a responsible manner within the University and the community at large.

Attendance:

A student who misses more than 15% of the course hours, without written corroboration for health or bereavement, can be debarred from writing final exams, or participation in final studio evaluations. Note that if a student consistently is absent from a 3-hour class for 1 hour, they will exceed the 15% cutoff and can be debarred.

Prerequisites:

You are responsible for ensuring that you have successfully completed all course prerequisites and that you have not taken an antirequisite course. Lack of prerequisites may not be used as basis of appeal.

If you are not eligible for a course, you may be removed from it at any time, and you will receive no adjustment to your fees. These decisions cannot be appealed.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism, which may be defined as "The act or an instance of copying or stealing another's words or ideas and attributing them as one's own," will not be tolerated. (Citation excerpted from Black's Law Dictionary, 1999, 7th ed., p. 1170). (Refer to <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2015/pg113.html> or the 2015/2016 Western Academic Calendar, with regards to academic penalties for plagiarism.)

Medical Policy:

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. See course outline for specific arrangements regarding less than 10% of assignments.

Building Access:

The John Labatt Visual Arts Centre will be closed at 10:30 pm each night. There will be no after-hour access for undergraduate students. The Centre is open weekends 12:00 noon-5:00 pm. Students should be prepared to vacate the building promptly at 10:30 pm and 5:00 pm. You must also sign-in with the building monitors when working in the workshop areas outside of regular office hours.

Please remember:

One of the most important resources for of r mo

**The University of Western Ontario
Department of Visual Arts**

Undergraduate Grading Guidelines - Art History

These guidelines are benchmarks that are not to be followed as rigid regulations. They will be adjusted as appropriate to take into account the level of the course and any specific instructions given by a professor. For example, grades in first-year courses are generally lower than in fourth year.

90-100 (Outstanding, A+)

The writing shows significant originality and exhibits a high degree of critical engagement. Sophisticated synthesis and analysis of the theoretical and conceptual dimensions of the topic are demonstrated. Mastery of complex material and ideas is immediately evident. The topic is treated with

Below 50 (Unacceptable, F)

The writing demonstrates a failure to comprehend the topic. Written material is disorganized and unintelligible. The work clearly does not meet the minimal requirements of the assignment. Regarding research, secondary sources pertaining to the topic have not been consulted and proper citation has not been used.