



Theology & Spirituality of Icons

RGH3755 / 6755H

BRIEF SYLLABUS

On-line resources:

1. Selected images of icons used in course lectures. [No longer available]
2. [Table Comparison](#) of Iconophile and Iconoclast doctrines.
3. Information on [assignments and researching](#).

Description: The history of the iconoclastic controversy and ecumenical councils, especially for the development of christology. History of early Christian art and icons. Readings from Nicea II, Theodore the Studite, John of Damascus and Theodore Abã Qurrah. Iconography and spirituality. Byzantine & Ukrainian icons. Writing an icon. Museum/Church visit. Weekly slide-shows. Lectures seminar, reflection papers, major paper. [Cross listed to Theology].

Goals: To situate the debate about icons within a historical context and within the history of Christian images. To critically analyze and reflect upon the theology of icons in historical figures and modern theologians. To gain an appreciation of symbolism and art in the Eastern Christian tradition. To be able to interpret icons and their theology, and to situate iconography within the liturgical tradition of the Eastern churches.

Course Evaluation, Requirements & Due Dates:

- a. Reflection paper #1 20%
- b. Reflection paper #2 20%
- c. Research Essay 40%
- d. In-Class tutorial participation 20%

a & b. Reflection papers:

Reflection papers are based on the reading or topic listed below, and should be between 1.5-2 pages. See "essay requirements" below.

- i. First paper: Due: Week # 4. Reflection paper on the Lecture/Tutorial readings of Theodore the Studite.
- ii. Second paper: Due: Week # 6. Reflection paper on only one icon of either Christ, Mary or a Saint. Describe everything you see or read in the icon. Assume that you are interpreting the icon for someone who is entirely unfamiliar with Eastern iconography. Please provide a black-and-white photocopy of the

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icon and its source/location.

c. Research Essay:

The research paper is to be 8-10 pages, and should conform to the "essay requirements" listed below. The essay topic can be either on the theological history and development of iconography, or a theological interpretation of any icon(s) of your choosing. Keep in mind that such an icon(s) should yield enough information for an 8-10 page essay. Please provide a black-and-white photocopy of the icon and its source/location. Due: Week 11.

d. In-class participation in lectures and tutorials:

Lectures will be the first hour of the class, while the tutorials will immediately follow the lecture. Students will be expected to discuss and critique the readings during the lecture and tutorial sessions.

Essay Requirements:

Research Essays must include a title page, an introductory/thesis paragraph, the main body of text (ideas, arguments, critique), endnote or footnotes, a concluding/summary paragraph, and a bibliography. The research essays are composed of synthesis and critical analysis of a theme/idea/event in systematic theology and/or historical theology, and are presented from an objective point of view. The level of discourse for research essays is "systematic theology." All written work is to be typed and double-spaced, and is based in 12 pt. font.

Reflection Papers include the same elements as a research paper, with the addition of some subjective (personal, spiritual and pastoral) reflections, but no title page and bibliography. For a formatting reference guide, see: Kate L. Turabian. *A Manual For Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*. Chicago: Chicago, 1973. For a guide to style, grammar and composition in general, see: William Strunk. *The Elements of Style*. Rev., intro. and a chapter on writing by E.B. White. 2. ed. New York: Macmillan, 1972. Or, Joseph M. Williams. *Style: Toward Clarity and Grace*. Chicago: Chicago, 1990.

Course Texts:

- a. Baggley, John. *Festival Icons for the Christian Year*. Crestwood: St Vladimir's, 2000.
- b. Nouwen, Henry. *Behold the Beauty of the Lord*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria, 2000.
- d. Selected photocopied materials, and on-line resources.

COURSE OUTLINE

1. Introduction & Overview

- course requirements; overview of materials; web-resources; introductory video (23 min.).

2. Historical Background: Christology & Iconoclasm

- the prohibition of images in the Scriptures; the christological context; Dura-Europas.

Icons: [Dura-Europas and the catacombs](#).

Toronto site: Royal Ontario Museum (ROM): [Early Byzantine Art](#).

Site: [Early Byzantine art](#).

Geography: [Map of early Byzantium](#) (PDF).

3. The Triumph of Orthodoxy: The Iconophile Position (I)

John of Damascus (676-749); Theodore Ab Qurrah (755-830); Iconoclastic council of 754; St. Catherine's monastery (Sinai) & St. Sophia's (Constantinople); [types of icons of Christ](#) (PDF).

Icons: [Of Christ](#).

Icons: [St. Catherine's Monastery \(Sinai\)](#)
[Some images, icons and commentary].

Site: [Hagia Sophia](#) (Constantinople, modern Istanbul)

4. The Triumph of Orthodoxy: The Iconophile Position (II)

- the Council of Nicea II (787) and the Sunday of Orthodoxy; Theodore The Studite (759-826); [types of icons of Theotokos-Mary](#).

Icons: [Of the Theotokos - Mary](#).

Site: [Byzantine Images in Ravenna](#).

Comparison Table: [Iconoclasts v.s. Iconophiles](#) [handed out as part of your syllabus].

5. Spirituality of Icon Writers & Icons In Worship

- prayer: before writing an icon, and for the consecration of icons; beginning to read & write icons.

6. Iconography in Kyivan-Rus'

- Ukrainian and Russian Icons (11th - 15th centuries); St. Sophia's (Kyiv); Rublev's Trinity.

Icons: [Rublev's Trinity](#).

Icons: Rublev's Trinity ([lines and perspectives](#)).

Site: [Ukrainian icons](#) (see the section on c.11-15th centuries).

7. Evolution of Architecture, Iconostases and Festival Icons

- ancient, medieval and modern icon-screens; initial stages of writing an icon.

Icons: [Iconostasis \(icon-screen\) & Saints](#).

Site: [Icons of the Liturgical year](#).

8. Festival Icons of Christ & Development of Colours and Perspectives in Iconography

- laws of colour and inverse-perspective; stages of writing an icon.

9. Festival Icons, Non-Byzantine/Slavic Icons & Popular Icons

- Video excerpts: painting and layers.

Icons: [Coptic Icons](#).

10. Icons of the Pascha & Completing an Icon

- Video excerpts: final touches on icons.

11. Liturgy & Icons: A Modern Ukrainian Church

- icons in the liturgical and architectural setting; preparation for church visit.

n.b.: The scheduling of the following two weeks and the places we visit may vary.

12. Aesthetics, Architecture and Worship

- Visit to a church to experience iconography in its liturgical and architectural setting; OR a museum visit.

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13. Conclusion: Aesthetics, Architecture and Worship

- Visit to a church to experience iconography in its liturgical and architectural setting; OR a museum visit.

During regular class hours.

St. George's Greek Orthodox Church
115 Bond St (E. of Yonge, N. of Dundas).

[MAP \(PDF\)](#)