

## **BCRE17 Religion in Public: Great Images (CA)**

**Semester: B**

**ECTS Credits: 5**

**Duration: 11 weeks**

**Contact Hours: 22**

**Quota: None**

**Prerequisite subjects: None**

Religion is too often seen as a matter of reading and interpreting holy books and doctrinal formulations. Religious expression, however, is also a function of the eyes, where seeing and being seen play a central role in the public expression of religious thoughts. "Great Images" are visual examples of the public understanding of religion from antiquity to contemporary society which will be studied at different levels (political, social, and cultural). Students will be offered the opportunity to reflect on examples of religious visual culture such as the depiction of crucifixion in early Christianity, the role of icons in Orthodox Christian devotion and worship, important landmarks of Islamic architecture, the role of artistic expression in the theological debate of European modernity, as well as its role in religious propaganda, conflict and contemporary interreligious dialogue.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

On successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

Identify and assess the importance of materiality and visual culture for the understanding of the impact of religion in the public sphere.

Recognise the main methods of investigation and the core methodological issues related to the study of religious visual culture in the public sphere, learning to approach the use of images in religious thought with a methodological awareness which goes beyond the divide between word and image and the centrality of verbalisation of belief.

Identify religion and religions as an important factor in the production and fruition of visual culture in ancient as well as in contemporary society.

Understand the centrality of the study of the religious gaze and of religious visual culture as a learning tool for further research in fields such as history, politics and sociology and for independent thinking on the study of religion and transfer the awareness of the discourse on religious images to the comprehension of the function of images in contemporary debates about public life, democracy and politics.

### **Indicative Reading:**

Bal M. *Reading "Rembrandt". Beyond the Word-Image Opposition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) Baxandall M. *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy. A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Elsner J. *Art and the Roman Viewer. The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Heath J.M.F. *Paul's Visual Piety. The*

*Metamorphoses of the Beholder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Morgan D. *The Sacred Gaze. Religious Visual Culture in Theory and Practice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

**Assessment:** CA and one 3,000 word essay

**Name of Lecturer(s)**

Prof. Daniele Pevarello, Prof. Cathriona Russell, Dr Gesa Thiessen, Dr Walter Young