

ARTH 102-001 – Symbols and Stories in Western Art

Professor Lisa Passaglia Bauman

Class times: MWF 12:30-1:20

Office hours: Fri 10:30-12:20, or by appointment

Spring 2012E-mail: lbauman@gmu.edu

Office: Robinson B373C

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course provides an overview of the narratives that have had the greatest impact on the Western tradition. In an art history course however, these stories do not exist outside of their artistic embodiment. Consequently, we will also address iconography, the branch of the history of art which is concerned with the meaning of works. We will begin with an introduction to iconographic methodology and the language of symbols, such as attributes, personifications, and allegories. Then we will investigate six specific themes or concepts with an analysis of images, stories, allegories, motifs, and context: creation, cosmic architecture, the body and sexuality, power and politics, the hero, and mortality and immortality.

There is much to cover this semester. It's like starting to watch a soap opera, or the first time you began watching a sports event: you've heard a few of the names already, you catch on to a few key plots, you stick with it for a while, and gradually you're an expert and you realize the field that seemed so vast before was actually finite after all. Ultimately this course looks for these ancient archetypes in contemporary society and asks why these stories continue to engage, entertain, and even shock us.

Bear in mind that the world of stories and myths is large and intractable. The syllabus that follows is an attempt to force that world into some sort of schematic structure. As the class goes along, I may find it necessary to change the syllabus.

This course is my responsibility; don't hesitate to come to me if you have a problem or complaint. I can't promise I'll fix things, but I will do my best. And yes, it fulfills the University's General Education requirement.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. to learn the major myths of the Greeks and Roman and important stories of the Bible by reading primary texts in translation
2. to develop visual literacy, including recognition of key characters and their attributes, their lives and natures, as well as important mythological and biblical events and concepts
3. to develop skills in verbal analysis and critical thinking through reading, discussion, and writing about artistic media
4. to explore the discipline of iconography
5. to recognize mythological themes in high and low modern culture, including art, architecture, literature, music, film

TEXT: If you are expecting one clean packaged textbook with all the stories and all the images in it, please do not take this course. No one has yet written a textbook that covers all this material, but we may consider ourselves as making a beginning here.

The two texts for this class are: James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*, Second edition (Philadelphia, PA: Westview Press, 2007). It retails for \$44 and is available on Amazon.com for \$31.24 (+ free shipping) This book combines religious, classical, and historical themes, plus allegorical figures and characters from romantic poetry and then places them in their narrative, historical, or mythological context. The second book is Richard Taylor, *How to Read a Church: A Guide to Symbols and Images in Churches and Cathedrals* (Mahwah, NY: Hidden Spring Press, 2005). It retails for \$18 and is available at Amazon.com for \$11 (+ free shipping).

If you enjoy this type of material, you should also consider Richard Stemp, *The Secret Language of the Renaissance. Decoding the Hidden Symbolism in Italian Art* (London: Duncan Baird Publishers, 2006). This is a fairly recent coffee-table type book and certainly written to capitalize on the blistering success of the *Da Vinci Code* with its focus on symbols. It is \$22.84 (+ free shipping) at Amazon.com which is unbelievable for such a beautifully illustrated and engagingly written book.

The rest of the reading in this class will be done on-line. See below.

TECH SKILLS REQUIRED: Please activate your GMU e-mail account so that I can communicate with the class at large if necessary.

PARTICIPATION, ATTENDANCE, AND ELECTRONICS: You are expected to come into class with that day's reading assignment completed. Material presented in class is intended to clarify the readings, to provide more extensive background for certain subjects, and to explore new topics. Anything I present in class is fair game for the

tests, so I suggest that you come to class prepared to supplement your knowledge too. During class, I may ask questions about the assigned readings. If you haven't done the reading, then you won't be prepared to answer any questions and that wastes everyone's time.

I happen to feel very strongly that a university is a community of learners. The GMU catalogue reads: **"Students are expected to attend the class periods of the courses for which they register...instructors may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as *de facto* evidence of nonparticipation."** The decision to take this class is yours. Once you make that decision though, you have responsibilities to everyone else in this community of learners. It is hard to get to know you and each other and continue a line of thought if you are not here. Attendance/participation is worth 15% of the course grade. I will take attendance on an irregular basis—whenever. It could be once a week, it could be every class; we could go a month without an attendance call. Everyone starts with an A and two personal days they can take with no penalty. Three to four absences and you are in the B range. Five to six absences and you are now getting a C. Seven to eight absences is a D; more than that is an F. I am not excusing any absence—that's why you have the two days--so do not email me to tell me that you can't make it to class or to explain to me why you weren't in class. I am not going to answer e-mails that ask what we covered in class today. If you miss a class, get notes from another class member. The first class would be an opportune time to exchange some e-mail addresses with each other. On the other hand, please feel free to email me with questions or if you want to share news or images of relevance.

Also, I am banning all electronic communication during class. No cell phones; no laptops. The first time it happens I'll remind you to put it away and make a note to myself; the second time I will simply make a note and treat it as if you were not present in class that day. If you have a genuine academic reason to use a computer during class for note-taking or accessibility, please discuss this with me at the beginning of the semester. If you are using a laptop, you must sit in the front row.

"The love of wisdom begins in wonder," said Socrates. We learn by asking and working out answers to questions. If you have questions about the readings, please raise these concerns in class. Remember though this class is grounded in the concept of mutual respect, and the bigger the class the more important this fundamental agreement becomes.

ASSIGNMENTS: Of course you will be expected to do the readings on time, attend class, and participate with vigor and intellectual curiosity. The stories we will read in this class will be baffling, challenging, and exciting. You shouldn't need much prodding from me to read and enjoy them. The study of art involves every part of the intellect—your ability to remember and to develop ideas. Both of these will be demanded of you in three exams.

Exam 1: Friday, February 10. Worth 20% of your final grade

Exam 2: Wednesday, March 21. Worth 30% of your final grade

Exam 3: Monday, May 14, 10:30-11:45. Worth 35% of your final grade

Exams include visual analysis material. This means that slides will comprise a portion of each test. Some will be slides you have seen in class and that we have spent some time decoding. You will be expected to explain them. Others will be unknowns. To identify those, pay attention to the images in class; you should be able to differentiate, based on our class notes and the readings, between Apollo and Hercules. Be able to recognize important elements such as attributes or iconography. Exams may also ask you to define technical and stylistic terms and concepts, explain a myth, or identify and interpret a story dependent on its context.

In general, you should:

- know the distinguishing element of each subject.
- know the way each story is presented in art (no, you will not be asked specific questions about specific works of art, like title, artist, and date. Here is a sample question: how is Heracles usually dressed when he is represented in the art of antiquity? Answer: in a lion skin.)
- know the usual iconography associated with each theme.

Exams will also include questions based on the required readings, asking you to explain an author's thesis or present an author's iconographic interpretation.

Since there is no single text for this course, I will be posting powerpoints to Dropbox and will send you a link for each two weeks before the exams.

READING: In addition to the class texts, reading for this class is available in one of three possible formats:

1. **E-mail:** I will send you the reading as a pdf file to your GMU email.
2. **E-reserve:** This is available through the Mason Library website. <http://library.gmu.edu>
In the green tabs on the top, click on **E-reserve**.
Select a course: ARTH102

Select an instructor: Lisa Passaglia Bauman

Enter password: symbols

3. **JSTOR:** This is available through the Mason Library website. <http://library.gmu.edu>

In the green tabs at the top, click on **Databases**.

Type JSTOR in the box. Click Submit. Click on **JSTOR**.

Enter your user name (your Mason e-mail name) and password (your Mason e-mail password)

You will be on a Browse by Discipline page. Click on **Art and Art History**. Journals are arranged alphabetically. Locate your journal, then locate the correct volume/date. Click on the article.

PRIMARY SOURCES: I have attempted to provide an on-line primary source for the majority of the stories we will cover in this class. That way if you miss class, you haven't missed the story. And they are just interesting to read as well.

1. The best single source on the Internet for classical Greek and Roman texts is, *by far*, the Perseus Project web site. You have to see it to believe it. The texts are available here in English translations and in the original Greek with links to online lexical and grammatical aids. All Perseus texts are linked to explanatory notes, maps, images, and other resources. There is also a searchable hypertext encyclopedia of Greek mythology, history, and art which you can use to locate images. For anyone who is even casually interested in this material, Perseus is a resource well worth exploring.

Perseus Project: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/>

Go to Collections/Texts

Scroll down to Greek/Roman materials.

Scroll down for author's name. Click on blue triangle to the left of the name to reveal works. Click on work. Use line numbers on the left to navigate the stories.

2. The Old and New Testament is available at numerous sites, including the Perseus Project. You can compare and contrast different translations of the Bible at Bible Gateway. <http://www.biblegateway.com> (I am using The New American Bible which is the classic Bible for Catholics and have cited from it.)

3. Stories of the saints are compiled in a Renaissance book, Jacopo da Voragine's *The Golden Legend*: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/goldenlegend/>

ASSIGNMENT POLICIES: Consider exam dates etched in stone. I will only give a makeup if you have a legitimate written medical excuse, on printed letterhead stationery, with a phone number I can call for confirmation. I mean this seriously. Do not call me with some excuse about a car accident or a bad love affair—even if it's true. **If you miss an exam without a legitimate written excuse, you will receive a 0 for that exam.** Better to take the exam and get an F than to receive a 0.

GRADING POLICY: In order to receive a grade in this course, students must complete all assigned work. Grades will not be calculated on the basis of a percentage of work completed. **There are no extra credit projects.** There are often questions about grading and evaluation policies, especially for those who have never taken an art history class before and are concerned about how their work will be evaluated. Grade ranges and a description of the sort of work expected are as follows—please read them carefully.

- **A** (90-92 is an A-; 93-96 is an A; 97-100 is an A+) Startlingly good, exceeding my expectations, and well-written. Must be imaginative; NOT given for simply following directions
- **B** (80-82 is a B-; 83-86 is a B; 87-89 is a B+) Good effort with a good result. This indicates above average mastery of the material, clear and well-produced written presentation on all assignments.
- **C** (70-72 is a C-; 73-76 is a C; 77-79 is a C+) Perfunctory; or tried but missed the point; or did something well but it wasn't the assignment; or a good idea but careless or sloppy. It is given for rudimentary understanding of factual material and just competent written presentation.
- **D** (60-69) Warning: accepted under protest. This suggests less-than-satisfactory preparation of factual material and poor written work.
- **F** (Below 60) Unacceptable as college-level work. See me immediately if you find yourself in this situation.

CLASSROOM ATMOSPHERE: Courtesy and common sense please. We're all adults; sometimes emergencies come up. However, talking to friends during lectures, wandering in and out, obviously cell phones, and eating smelly or crunchy food are all badly distracting to everyone else. Chronic chatters and latecomers are disruptive and will be asked to leave the classroom. If you know you will have to leave a few minutes early, please sit on the aisle.

PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING: These are not fooling-around offences with me. If you cheat, I will send you and your work on to the Dean of Students. No excuses, no tears, no “But we weren’t talking about the test” stories. Jefferson said “Character is destiny.” Enough said.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS: I have planned this course according to the George Mason University calendar. If you observe a religious holiday that the University does not, please let me know.

DISABILITIES: I am happy to make the necessary accommodations for students with documented disabilities. I need to see and sign the documentation from the Disabilities Services office well before tests and assignments are given, in order to accommodate you. If you have a learning disability, it must be properly documented by the Disabilities Service office. Please contact them for more information.

SCHEDULE OF LECTURES:

1/23: Introduction to the Course: Syllabus and Assignments

1/25 and 1/27: Images and Iconography

Readings:

- (1) Brendan Cassidy, “Introduction: Iconography, Texts, and Audiences,” in *Critical Perspectives in Art History*, ed. John C. McEnroe and Deborah F. Pokinski (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002), pp. 84-90. **Email**
- (2) Erwin Panofsky, “Jan van Eyck,” from *Critical Perspectives in Art History*, ed. John C. McEnroe and Deborah F. Pokinski (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002), pp. 80-83. **Email**
- (3) Lisa Jardine, “Prologue to *Worldly Goods*,” in *Critical Perspectives in Art History*, ed. John C. McEnroe and Deborah F. Pokinski (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002), pp. 90-91. **Email**

1/30 and 2/1 and 2/3: The Language of Symbols: attributes, emblems, personifications, symbols, and allegories

Reading:

- (1) James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*, 2nd ed (Boulder, Co: Westview Press, 2008), vii-xxi. **class text**

2/6 and 2/8: Creation and Structure: The Gods of Olympus

Reading:

- (1) Albert Elsen, “Images of Gods,” in *Writings about Art*, ed. Carole Gold Caro (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1994), 11-32. **Email**

Optional Primary Sources: Castration of Uranus/Birth of Aphrodite (Hesiod. *Theogony*. III, 156-187); Cronus devours his children (Hesiod. *Theogony*. 453-467); Prometheus (Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. I. 76-86); Pandora (Hesiod. *Works and Days*. 42-104)

2/10: EXAM #1

2/13 and 2/15 and 2/17: Creation and Structure: The Judeo-Christian World

Handout on basic concepts of Christianity sent via email

Reading:

- (1) Richard Taylor, *How to Read a Church* (Mahwah, NJ: Hidden Spring Press, 2003), 1-12; 48-91. **class text**

Concepts: Trinity, Transubstantiation, Redemption of sin

Optional Primary Sources: Creation & Adam and Eve (Genesis. ch.1-3); Nativity (Luke 2: 1-20); Beginning (John 1: 1-34) **Abraham & Isaac** (Genesis. ch. 21 and 22); **Moses** (Exodus. ch.1 -14, ch.19-20, ch.34: 27-35); **Jesus: Fishing for Souls:** Calling of Peter: Matthew 6: 18-19; Calling of Matthew: Matthew 9: 9-10; Entry into Jerusalem: John 12:12-19; Betrayal: Matthew 26:36-51; **Body of Christ:** Last Supper: Matthew 26:26-30; Jesus Arrested: Matthew 26: 47-56; Mocking of Christ: Matthew 27: 27-31; *Ecce Homo*: John 19:5; Crucifixion: Matthew 27:32-54; Descent from the Cross: Matthew 27:55-59;

Lamentation; Entombment: Matthew 27:60-66; **Triumph over Death:** Resurrection: Matthew 28:1-8;

2/20: Decoding Number and Color

Reading:

- (1) Richard Taylor, *How to Read a Church* (Mahwah, NJ: Hidden Spring Press, 2003), 13-18. **class text**
- Last day to drop this class in Friday, February 24.**

2/22 and 2/24 and 2/27: Typology and Disguised Symbolism

Reading:

- (1) Erwin Panofsky, "Jan van Eyck's 'Arnolfini' Portrait," *Burlington Magazine* 64 (1934): 117-127. **JSTOR**
- (2) Margaret Koster, "The Arnolfini double portrait: a simple solution," *Apollo* (Sept 2003). **E-reserve**
- (3) Margaret B. Freeman, "The Iconography of the Merode Altarpiece," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 16, 4 (Dec 1957): 130-139. **JSTOR**
- (4) Cynthia Hahn, "'Joseph Will Perfect, Mary Enlighten and Jesus Save Thee': The Holy Family as Marriage Model in the Merode Triptych," *The Art Bulletin* 68, 1 (March 1986): 54-66. **JSTOR**

2/29 and 3/2 and 3/5: Cosmic Architecture: Places of Worship, Interiors, and Altarpieces

Reading:

- (1) Vincent Scully, "The Sacred Mountain in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Aegean," in *Writings about Art*, ed. Carole Gold Caro (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1994), 33-44. **Email**
- (2) Richard Taylor, *How to Read a Church*, pp. 21-47. **class text**
- (3) Caroline Humphrey and Piers Vitebsky, *Sacred Architecture* (London: Duncan Baird, 1997):
"Celestial Alignments," 14-15;
"Temples as Mountains," 22-23;
"Dwellings of the Gods," 26-27; and
"Churches," 124-127. **E-reserve**

3/7 and 3/9: Power and Politics: Location and Leaders

Reading:

- (1) Richard Leppert, "The Male Nude: Identity and Denial," in *Viewpoints. Readings in Art History*, ed. Carole Gold Caro (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001), pp. 275-286. **Email**
- (2) Geraldine A. Johnson, "Idol or Ideal? The Power and Potency of Female Public Sculpture," in *Picturing Women in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. Geraldine A. Johnson and Sara F. Matthews Grieco (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 222-245. **E-reserve**
- (3) Caroline Humphrey and Piers Vitebsky, *Sacred Architecture* (London: Duncan Baird, 1997):
"Architecture and Power," 54-55. **E-reserve**

Optional Primary Sources: David (1 Samuel 17); Judith (Judith 1-14)

3/12-3/16: NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

3/19: Power and Politics: Location and Leaders, cont.

3/21: EXAM #2

3/23 and 3/26 and 3/28 and 3/30: The Hero

Reading:

- (1) "Heroes and Villains. Why We Love Them Both," *Entertainment Weekly* (April 3, 2009), pp. 30-39. **Email**
- (2) Bernard Welt, "St. Dorothy of Oz," in *Mythomania. Fantasies, Fables, and Sheer Lies in Contemporary American Popular Art* (Los Angeles: Art Issues Press, 1996), pp. 41-45. **Email**
- (3) Bernard Welt, "Splendor and Misery of Jeopardy," in *Mythomania. Fantasies, Fables, and Sheer Lies in Contemporary American Popular Art* (Los Angeles: Art Issues Press, 1996), pp. 24-28. **Email**

Optional Primary Sources: **Perseus & Medusa** (Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. IV. 753-803); **Perseus & Andromeda** (Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. IV. 663-752); **Hercules** (Apollodorus. *Library*. II. 4.8 - 2.7.7); **Theseus and the Minotaur** (Apollodorus III.15-"Epitome" 1);

4/2 and 4/4 and 4/6: The Body and Sexuality: the feminine body and the gaze

Reading:

- (1) Kenneth Clark, "The Naked and the Nude," in *Critical Perspectives in Art History*, ed. John C. McEnroe and Deborah F. Pokinski (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002), pp. 121-126. **Email**
- (2) John Berger, "Ways of Seeing," in *Critical Perspectives in Art History*, ed. John C. McEnroe and Deborah F. Pokinski (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002), pp. 112-119. **Email**

4/9 and 4/11 and 4/13: The Body and Sexuality: Love and Metamorphosis

Optional Primary Sources: Cupid & Psyche (Apuleius. *The Golden Ass*. IV, 28 - VI, 24); Diana and Endymion (Apollodorus. *Library*. I. 7.5); Narcissus and himself (Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. III. 337+); Artemis & Actaeon (Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. III. 138-252); Apollo & Daphne (Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. I. 452-567); Zeus & Danae (Apollodorus II.14-21?); Zeus & Ganymede (Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. X. 143+); Zeus and Io (Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. I. 567+); Zeus & Europa (Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. II. 833+) [Ovid will be found in the Perseus Project under his Latin name P. Ovidius Naso. I prefer the Brookes More translation.]

4/16 and 4/18: The Body and Sexuality: Vulnerability

4/20 and 4/23: The Body and Sexuality: Form and Function

Optional Primary Sources: Aeneas & Dido (Virgil. *Aeneid*. IV. 584-705); Sabines (Livy. *History of Rome*. I. 12-13); Lucretia (Livy. *History of Rome*. I. 57-59)

4/25 and 4/27: Mortality and Immortality: classical and Biblical

Optional Primary Sources: Demeter, Persephone and Hades (*Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. 1-381, 399-457); Orpheus/Eurydice (Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. X. 1-85); **Last Judgment** (Matthew 25:31-46)

4/30 and 5/2: Mortality and Immortality: Tombs, Monuments and Memorials

Reading:

- (1) Caroline Humphrey and Piers Vitebsky, *Sacred Architecture* (London: Duncan Baird, 1997):
"The Needs of the Dead," 146-150;
"Public Memorials," 154-155. **E-reserve**
- (2) Explore the website devoted to the 9/11 Memorial at the World Trade Center in New York City
<http://www.911memorial.org/memorial>

5/4: Catch-up and Review

Monday, May 14, 10:30-11:45: EXAM #3