Seeing – Believing
FYS 028
Drake University Fall 2014, CRN 3006
T/TH 12:30-1:45
Medbury Hall, Room 115

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Course description
This course will offer an opportunity to explore the connection between seeing and believing. Is seeing believing? Is our vision limited by what we believe? Are our beliefs limited by what we can see? What do beliefs look like? Since religion has a long history of both turning to the visual arts to express its beliefs (iconophilia), and turning from representation of the divine (iconoclasm), this interdisciplinary journey will lead us to the intersection of art and religion. We will examine visual manifestations of belief through architecture, sculpture, and painting. We will consider the distinction between sacred and profane through writing assignments focused on space, objects, and time.

As a First Year Seminar (FYS), this course will be writing-intensive. You will have the opportunity to read your work to the class through formal and informal presentations. This FYS will be conducted as a seminar – meaning, discussion will be the primary mode of engagement. You will be required to lead the discussion at least once during the semester.

Course Requirements:
1) Attendance of every class. More than two absences will adversely affect your grade.
   Absence from more than five class sessions will lead to an “F” in the course, regardless of the quality of other work. There are no “excused” absences except for documented university-related activities, family emergency, or severe illness. Exceptions may be granted to the above policy if the Office of Academic Affairs informs me of extraordinary circumstances.
2) Careful and close reading of all assigned texts.
3) Completion and submission of all writing assignments on time. Except in the case of serious illness or family emergency, each day an assignment is late will result in the drop of one full grade
4) Active and high-quality participation in discussions.
5) Check your Drake email account and Blackboard regularly.
6) Consult with the Writing Workshop at least twice during the semester.

**Assigned readings**


*When God Is Gone Everything Is Holy*, by Chet Raymos, Sorin Books, 2008 (aka When God Is Gone)

(e) indicates assignments that may be turned in electronically.

**The Writing Workshop**

Each student is required to visit the Writing Workshop twice. The first time will be before the paper is due. It is your responsibility to schedule your appointment with the Writing Workshop. They will contact me with a report following your visit.

**Leading a Discussion**

Each of you will be asked to lead the discussion during one of our class sessions. (Check the Course Calendar for your assigned date.) To successfully fulfill the requirements for this assignment you must:

- Read the assigned pages carefully (twice, even). It is your responsibility to know what material will be covered.
- Write three discussion questions derived from the readings, or other primary sources.
- Contribute mightily to the class discussion with insightful comments and engaging questions.

**Group Discussion**

We will review, discuss, and revise the document, *A Covenant of Mutual Respect* as a class. This document will chaperone our discussions as we enter the intensely personal subject of belief. Consent of this document is a prerequisite.

**Writing Assignments**

1. **Journal**

   These short papers (the length of each will vary) will be come as journal entries. Largely reflective writing, these papers will give you the opportunity to demonstrate thoughtful and critical engagement with the readings, while also considering ideas that might work their way into your larger papers.

2. **Seeing Belief I (5 pages)**

   In this assignment you will be asked to choose a work of visual art (sculpture, painting, architecture - not a reproduction) that is a visual manifestation of a belief(s) you hold. Write a five page paper that begins with a detailed description of what you see (no less than one page), an articulation the beliefs that are represented in the piece (no less than one page), and a reflection on your experience of this work of art (no less than one page). Assume your reader has not seen this work of art before, and neither have they knowledge of the beliefs you find
represented or embodied in it. Places to look: Drake campus (especially Anderson Gallery), Des Moines Art Center, Woodland Cemetery, Papajohn Sculpture Park. The paper and an informal presentation are due Sept. 16.

3. Profane/Sacred Object/Space (5 pages)
Write a five-page paper (in two parts) about an object or space that is considered sacred or profane. This object/space may or may not be religious in nature. You must be able to touch the object or enter the space – in other words, you can’t work from a photograph. Part one of your paper will be a detailed description (no less than one page). What do you see? Consider all visual information like color, scale, and material. Assume the reader of your paper is unfamiliar with the object or space, or the beliefs associated with it. You may illustrate your paper with a detailed drawing no larger than one-half page. No photographs. In part two of your paper you will explore the sacred/profane nature of the object/space. Some questions you might want to consider: What beliefs do you see? If it is functional, how is it used? If it is symbolic, what does it symbolize? Is it for public or private use? What do the words “sacred” and “profane” mean? How does an object or a place become profane/sacred? Who decides? How do you know when/if a thing is sacred/profane? What is the relationship between religion and the profane/sacred? Due Oct. 21.

4. Intersections (5-8 pages)
Write a paper exploring the intersections between at least two of the assigned texts and class discussion. It is strongly recommended that you explore ideas that will find their way into your final paper. An excellent paper will be well organized, demonstrate a clear grasp of the material, and will present an informed argument. (See the document “Academic Writing” on Blackboard). Due Oct. 30, (e).

5. Final Presentation – Seeing Belief II
In this assignment, you are asked to create a visual manifestation of one of your beliefs. You may use the subject of your first paper, if you wish. This is an exercise in visual communication – not fine art. This assignment has four parts. Part one, due Oct 16 (e), is a written proposal for your project. This will include a sketch, a verbal description of the design and the belief manifested. You will also outline the connections between your work and our readings and class discussions. After your design is approved, you may move on part two - a visual manifestation of one of your beliefs. You may use any medium. The substrate (12” x 16” baltic birch) will be provided. Write a short (100 words maximum) (e) statement articulating the belief(s) represented in your piece beginning with the words, “I believe…” Part two is due Nov. 11. An exhibition of
all of our work will be on display at the Wesley House Gallery for the remainder of the semester with an opening reception/party Nov.14, 6-8pm.

Part three is a paper (8-10 pages) articulating the belief made visible; it's history, materials, connection to readings, discussions. Due Dec. 10.

Part four is a 15 minute oral presentation of your work. You may use a photograph of your piece (or the actual piece). An excellent presentation will involve more that a reading of your paper.

Course Policies:
1) Inclusive language. All of your written work is to employ inclusive language. If you mean both male and female people, the appropriate terminology is “human,” “humankind,” “humanity,” or “people” (not “man,” or “mankind”). Any written work that does not conform to inclusive language guidelines will be returned for a rewrite. If you are quoting an author who does not use inclusive language, these guidelines do not apply.

2) Plagiarism. Since you will be doing a good deal of writing in this class, it is critical that you acquaint yourself with the rules regarding plagiarism. Any material borrowed, rephrased, or quoted from another source must be cited according to an acceptable academic style sheet. Any clear cases of plagiarism will result in an “F” for the assignment and, upon the instructor’s discretion, may result in an “F” for in the course.

Clear cases include any amount of word-for-word copying, or ”paraphrases” that merely substitute a few words of your own for the words of the author. The student will also be referred to the appropriate disciplinary channels within the University.

3) Learning Disabilities. Every effort will be made to accommodate students with specific learning needs. If you have a disability and require academic accommodation, I will be happy to discuss your needs. Accommodations are coordinated through Student Disability Services: www.drake.edu/sds/. Please contact Michelle Laughlin, SDS coordinator at michelle.laughlin@drake.edu.

Assessment

Contribution 25 %
Seminars are, by nature, an attempt at collective learning. You contribute to the process by your attendance, participation in discussions (both as leader and participant), group and reflective writing. Active and quality class participation is required of every student. Quality participation means being prepared: you have done the assigned readings and are ready to discuss them. It also means that you listen attentively to others and reflect actively on the material and class discussion. It is impossible to be fully engaged in a class discussion while texting, emailing, or playing Candy Crush. Such activity will have a detrimental impact on your grade.

Written assignments 75%
- Journal entries - BB 25%
- Long papers (5-10 pages) 25%
- Final Project 25%

Course Calendar (subject to change at the whim of the professor)

Aug. 26  Introductions, syllabus,
Aug. 28  Covenant
Sept. 2  Discuss Academic writing essay,
RAVC, pp.1-17
Sept. 4  RAVC, pp.19-52
Sept. 9  Cowles Library 45, re information - How do you know what to believe?
Does Google + Wikipedia = scholarly research?
Sept. 11 Discuss RAVC, pp.89-124
Sept. 16 Paper Due – Seeing Belief (e), Informal presentations
Sept. 18 Discuss RAVC,
Sept. 23 Discuss RAVC, pp.53-87 (Braiden, Emma)
Sept. 25 Discuss RAVC, pp.125-159 (Emily, Alyssa)
Sept. 30
Oct. 2  Discuss RAVC, pp.160-193 (Megan, David)
Oct. 7  Discuss RAVC, pp.195-233 (Morgan, Kyla)
Oct. 9
Oct. 14 No Class – Fall Break
Oct. 16 Paper Due - Proposal for Seeing Belief II – (e)
Discuss Object, pp.1-85 (Jordan, Ali)
Oct. 21  **Paper Due – Sacred/Profane (e)**
Discuss *Object*, pp.86-159 (Victoria, Ian)

Oct. 23  Discuss *Object* pp.160-242 (Haley, Tyler)

Oct. 28  Discuss *Object*

Oct. 30  Discuss *When God Is Gone* pp.1-48 (Carmen, Alec)

**Paper Due - Intersections (e)**
Discuss *When God Is Gone* pp.49-100 (Nathan, Nathan)

Oct. 4   Discuss *When God Is Gone* pp.101-142 (Kelsey, Tasha)

Oct. 6   Discuss *When God Is Gone*,
Final Presentations

Nov. 4   Final Presentations

Nov. 6   Art 316 Open House (316 SW 5th, DSM) not required

Nov. 11  **Seeing Belief II – visual component + 100 words (e) due**
Final Presentations

Nov. 13  Final Presentations

Nov. 14  Seeing-Believing – Opening, 6-8pm Wesley House (2718 University)

Nov. 18  Final Presentations

Nov. 20  Final Presentations

Nov. 25

Nov. 27  No Class – Thanksgiving

Dec. 2   Final Presentations

Dec. 4   Last Class

Dec. 10  **Paper Due Seeing Belief II - 2:00-3:50pm**