



**BRISBANE COLLEGE OF THEOLOGY  
UNIT OUTLINE**

**GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN THEOLOGY  
GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN MINISTRY**

UNIT TITLE	WORSHIP, THEOLOGY & VISUAL ART
UNIT CODE	E74028
UNIT STATUS	Elective
HOST FIELD	E
PREREQUISITE/S	Nil
INCOMPATIBLES	E52028 Worship Theology & Visual Art
CREDIT POINTS	10cp
REQUIREMENTS	3 hours per week contact and 7 hours per week study over a 13-week semester; or its equivalent
FREQUENCY OF OFFERING	Odd Years – Semester 2
PREPARED BY	Rev Dr Geraldine Wheeler
UNIT COORDINATOR	Rev Dr Neil Sims
TEACHING STAFF	Rev Dr Geraldine Wheeler
DATE PREPARED	8 September 2006

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**Rationale**

The society in which we live and minister has a highly visual culture. There is great diversity across the Christian churches in relation to the use of images in the liturgical space and how these function in Christian worship. There is also a very diverse scene in relation to visual art at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. At the time of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformations in the western church, different approaches were taken by the Lutheran, Reformed and Radical streams of Christianity and the Roman Catholic Church also reviewed the usage and veneration of images to remove excesses. The Orthodox (or even more broadly, all the eastern churches) and the Roman Catholic Churches, have continued to use icons and images, although with different emphases, observing the decisions of the Second Council of Nicea (787 CE). Some Protestant churches have approached any use of images with great suspicion, while the Anglican Church (also some in the Methodist Church and occasionally some in the Reformed tradition) in the last two centuries have sought to have images/or visual art within the worship space and develop a theological understanding for this usage. Given the varied approaches to the visual elements in liturgy in contemporary church practices, this unit provides students with a theological, cultural and historical basis for more informed dialogue and appreciation of liturgical expressions.

**Aims**

The unit aims to introduce the student to the practices of the different churches in relation to the use of visual objects in worship, icons, images and visual art; to take a historical overview of the practices, debates and decisions about these objects through Christian history; and to encourage a theological understanding of the question of the visual and worship in the light of the different

church traditions, both theological and liturgical, and the importance of the visual aesthetic of the worship space.

<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	
At the end of this unit the student should be able to:	
1.	Analyze the historical and theological significance of the main elements that have contributed to the different Christian traditions and their liturgical practices in relation to the visual dimension of worship (icons, images and visual art);
2.	Assess the role of some major works of visual art and certain icons/images which have played a significant part in the worship of the church in different places and traditions;
3.	Produce a statement of theological understanding of the place of the visual dimension of worship in the student's own tradition;
4.	Construct criteria for the evaluation of the churches' current usage of visual communication (including media technology) in the worship of the church.

### **Content**

- 1 Images in the early church: a) until the time of Emperor Constantine; b) from the time of Emperor Constantine I (d 337) to Pope Gregory the Great (d 604)
- 2 Images, icons and the iconoclastic controversies of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries
- 3 Examples of images/visual art in east and west, approximately 600 to 1000 CE
- 4 Images in the western church, approximately 1000 to 1517 CE
- 5 The Reformation debates and resulting changes
- 6 The late 16<sup>th</sup> century to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century: artists interpreting biblical themes and church tradition
- 7 A visit to the city churches of Brisbane
- 8 A biblical study
- 9 The eastern traditions, especially the Orthodox: churches and icons, until the present. This includes a visit to an Orthodox church.
- 10 Examples of religious art in 20<sup>th</sup> century Roman Catholicism
- 11 Visual art and churches in the Reformed tradition (and other churches which rejected the use of images)
- 12 Visual art and churches in the Anglican, Methodist and Lutheran traditions
- 13 The present challenges and opportunities

### **Organization and Teaching Strategies**

The material is organized first in chronological periods, then according to the characteristics of different Christian traditions. Throughout there is an examination of practice, both the style of images and the liturgical usage of these images, together with the theological rationale for the practice.

The following methods will be used in the classroom:

1. lecture presentation;
2. discussion of material and chapters distributed for reading;
3. the viewing and discussion of many relevant images using power point.

Beyond the classroom, students will be asked to read texts, look at images, find relevant web sites and, if possible, visit churches in the different Christian traditions to study the visual aspects of the building and the way that images function for worshippers.

## Assessment

	Type of assessment	No of words	Weighting %	Due date	Learning Outcomes covered
1	A short paper Students to demonstrate their understanding of the issues surrounding the debates at the time of the iconoclastic controversies of the 8 <sup>th</sup> and 9 <sup>th</sup> centuries.	1000	10%	Week 4	1 & 2
2.	Essay Example: The paper aims to allow students to demonstrate their knowledge of the use of images in the church, to examine and describe certain images and to make comparisons between certain images from the first millennium and others from later centuries.	2000	40%	Week 9	1 & 2
	Essay To be presented at the end of the course selected from a range of given topics or as proposed by the student and approved by the course co-ordinator.	3000	50%	Week 14	2, 3 & 4

## Bibliography

### Textbooks

Dyrness, William A. *Visual Faith: Art, theology and worship in dialogue*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001.

### Important general texts

Dillenberger, John. *A Theology of Artistic Sensibilities: The visual arts and the church*. London: SCM, 1986. (out of print but very useful)

Murray, Peter & Linda. *The Oxford Companion to Christian Art and Architecture*. Oxford: OUP, 1996.

Thiessen, Gesa E. *Theological Aesthetics*. London: SCM, 2004.

### Important texts in specialist areas

Apostolos-Cappadona, Diane. *Art, Creativity and the Sacred: An anthology in religion and art*. New York: Crossroad, 1984.

Begbie, Jeremy. *Voicing Creation's Praise: Towards a Theology of the Arts*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991.

Besançon, Alain. *The Forbidden Image: An Intellectual History of Iconoclasm*. Trans Jane Marie Todd; Chicago/London: Chicago University Press, 2000.

Brown, Frank Burch. *Religious Aesthetics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.

Chinn, Nancy. *Spaces for Spirit: Adorning the Church*. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1998.

De Gruchy, John W. *Christianity, Art and Transformation: Theological Aesthetics in the Struggle for Social Justice*. Cambridge: CUP, 2001.

Dillenberger, John. *Images and Relics: Theological Perceptions and Visual Images in Sixteenth-Century Europe*. Oxford: OUP, 1999.

John of Damascus. *On the Divine Images*. New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980.

Jensen, Robin Margaret. *Understanding Early Christian Art*. London/New York: Routledge, 2000.

Limouris, Gennadios (ed). *Icons: Windows on Eternity*. Faith and Order Paper 147; Geneva: WCC, 1990.

- Lowden, John. *Early Christian & Byzantine Art*. London: Phaidon, 1997.
- Mathews, Thomas F. *The Clash of the Gods: A re-interpretation of early Christian art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Miles, Margaret. *Image as Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christian and Secular Culture*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1985.
- Nees, Lawrence. *Early Medieval Art*. Oxford: OUP, 2000.
- Tillich, Paul. *On Art and Architecture*. Ed Jane Dillenberger & John Dillenberger; New York: Crossroad, 1987.
- Viladesau, Richard. *Theology and the Arts: Encountering God through Music, Art and Rhetoric*. New Jersey: Paulist, 2000.

### **Websites**

Several websites provide access to view many paintings by most of the well known artists in western art. (There are also many others for specialist areas.)

[www.textweek.com/](http://www.textweek.com/)

[www.wga.hu](http://www.wga.hu)

Other sites for more specialist areas are listed with the sessions.

Additional specific readings and websites will be indicated for each session of the unit.