

# BI 567– Special Topics in Bible: Italian Art as Biblical Interpretation

UNIVERSITY OF DUBUQUE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

3 CREDIT HOURS

CLASS DATES: FEBRUARY 25 TO MARCH 5, 2023 (AND OTHER TIMES TBA)

CLASS LOCATION: DUBUQUE, ONLINE, FLORENCE, LUCCA, PISA, & ROME

FULFILLS EXEGESIS REQUIREMENT

“Movies and television, even modern novels have taught us to expect dramatic scene painting, psychological probing, explosive exchanges. But the Bible tells a story like Rembrandt etches one. You have to slow down and look closely to see much of anything at all, and then let your heart dwell on what you see.”

Ellen Davis (*Involved with God*, 57)

## Faculty Information:

---

Professor: Matthew R. Schlimm, Ph.D.

Office: Van Vliet 316

Office Hours: Available most afternoons Tuesday–Thursday. Email to confirm.

Office Phone: 563/589-3101

Office Fax: 563/589-3110

Email: [mschlimm@dbq.edu](mailto:mschlimm@dbq.edu) (preferred form of communication)

Website: [www.matthewschlimm.com](http://www.matthewschlimm.com)

## Course Description

---

This course introduces students to the concept of Biblical art as visual exegesis, providing a methodological framework for students to critique artistic depictions of biblical texts, evaluating how artwork serves to interpret the Bible.

## Required Textbooks

---

No single textbook is required of students. Instead, students will utilize online resources and library resources. If they wish to purchase works, they have can do so, but these purchases are not required.

## Resources

- Berdini, Paolo. "Introduction: From Text to Artist." Pages 1–35 in *The Religious Art of Jacopo Bassano: Painting as Visual Exegesis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Devonshire, Jones T, Linda Murray, and Peter Murray, eds. *The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Art and Architecture*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Dyrness, William A. *Visual Faith: Art, Theology, and Worship in Dialogue*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001.
- Evenrud, Jerry A. "Visual Exegesis: 'The Prodigal Son.'" *ARTS* 4, no. 3 (1992): 4–9.
- Exum, J. C., and E. Nutu, eds. *Between the Text and the Canvas: The Bible and Art in Dialogue*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007.
- Ferguson, George W. *Signs & Symbols in Christian Art: With Illustrations from Paintings of the Renaissance*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1961.
- Fewell, Danna Nolan and Gary A. Phillips. "From Bak to the Bible: Imagination, Interpretation, and Tikkun Olam." *ARTS* 21, no. 1 (2010): 21–30.
- Grebe, Anja. *The Vatican: All the Paintings: The Complete Collection of Old Masters Plus More than 300 Sculptures, Maps, Tapestries, and Other Artifacts*. Introduction by Ross King. New York: Black Dog & Leventhal, 2013.
- Hornik, Heidi J., and Mikeal C. Parsons. "Ambrogio Lorenzetti's Presentation in the Temple: A 'Visual Exegesis' Of Luke 2:22-38." *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 28, no. 1 (2001): 31-46.
- LeMon, Joel. "Recasting Genesis in Bronze: Ghiberti's Visual Exegesis in *The Gates of Paradise*." *Biblical Interpretation* 20 (2012): 126–155.
- O'Kane, Martin. "The Artist as Reader of the Bible: Visual Exegesis and the Adoration of the Magi." *Biblical Interpretation* 13, no. 4 (January 1, 2005): 337-373.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. *Bible, Art, Gallery*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2011. ISBN: 978-1906055639.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Borders, Boundaries and the Bible*. London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. *Imaging the Bible: An Introduction to Biblical Art*. London: SPCK, 2008.
- Ramsey, Russ. *Rembrandt Is in the Wind: Learning to Love Art through the Eyes of Faith*. Foreword by Makoto Fujimura. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Reflective, 2022.
- Siedell, Daniel A. *God in the Gallery: A Christian Embrace of Modern Art*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008.
- Williamson, Beth. *Christian Art: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

# Course Objectives

---

Students who complete this course will:

1. Receive an introduction to the methodological issues involved in critically evaluating artistic depictions of biblical texts.
2. Enhance their ability to interpret Scripture.
3. Be better equipped to incorporate artwork in the worshipping life of the church.

In keeping with the stated purpose of the M.Div. degree (“to serve the one God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – and prepare women and men for faithful, compassionate, and effective pastoral ministry”), this course helps meet the following M.Div. curricular objectives:

- Be formed by, live in, and minister out of Scripture and the historical and theological tradition of the church.
- Interpret the Christian Scriptures through faithful exegesis and in light of the Christian tradition.

Additionally, this course helps meet the following MAMC curricular objective:

- Articulate and reflect critically and constructively on the biblical and theological foundations of God's mission to the world.

# Course Requirements:

---

Students will be expected to demonstrate their learnings through these assignments:

1. *Background knowledge exam* (25% of final grade): Students’ knowledge of the following topics will be assessed: [1] basics of biblical exegesis, [2] core methodological issues in evaluating how art interprets the Bible, and [3] Italian art in the Renaissance. Due: Mon Feb 13 at 11 pm CST. See course objectives 1 & 2.
2. *Presentation in Italy* (25% of final grade): Prior to the trip, students will select a work of art they will view in Italy. Then in Italy, they will give a presentation on that work of art, devoted to background issues and how the artist interprets scripture. Due: during trip. See course objectives 1 & 2.
3. *Identification Paper* (25% of final grade): After the trip, students are required to submit a five-page paper with photographs explaining five to ten works of art seen on the trip. They need to correctly identify the artist, related biblical texts, and the type of interpretation employed by the artist. Due Mon Mar 27 at 11 pm CST. See course objectives 1 & 2.
4. *Reflection Video* (25% of final grade): After the trip, students are required to submit a six- to eight-minute video explaining how a work of art caused them to think differently about a biblical text. It should end with a description of one specific way they plan to better integrate art into the life of their primary ministry setting. Due Mon Apr 17 at 11 pm CST. See course objectives 1, 2, & 3.

## Grading Scale

93 – 100%      A

90 – 92%	A-
87 – 89%	B+
83 – 86%	B
80 – 82%	B-
77 – 79%	C+
73 – 76%	C
70 – 72%	C-
67 – 69%	D+
63 – 66%	D
0 – 62%	F

## Course Requirements: Summary

Component	Portion of Final Grade	Due Date	Course Objectives
Background Knowledge Exam	25%	Mon Feb 13 at 11 pm CST	1 & 2
Presentation in Italy	25%	During Trip (Feb 25-Mar 5)	1 & 2
Identification Paper	25%	Mon Mar 27 at 11 pm CST	1 & 2
Reflection Video	25%	Mon Apr 17 at 11 pm CST	1, 2, & 3

## Administrative Information:

---

### Attendance and Make-up Policies:

Students are required to watch all lectures, attend all Zoom meetings, and participate fully in the trip to Italy. If students would like to request an excuse from doing something at the designated time, they should make their request via email to [mschlimm@dbq.edu](mailto:mschlimm@dbq.edu). If appropriate arrangements are not made ahead of time, then the relevant grade will be reduced by 5 percentage points for each twenty-four hour period it is late.

### Plagiarism:

As stated in the UDTS Student Handbook, "The Seminary defines plagiarism as the copying or use of another person's work in any form without acknowledgment. Students shall not represent the work of another as their own or in any way misrepresent their own work, or the work of another. The use of any outside source, whether of idea or of paraphrase, shall be properly acknowledged. Any quotation, even of phrase, shall be marked by quotation marks. Misrepresentation shall be avoided. The first offense of plagiarism definitively established will be penalized by an 'F' on the assignment. Second offense, definitively established, will be penalized with an 'F' for the course. Third offense, definitively established, results in the student being subject to dismissal from the Seminary."

### Inclusive Language Policy:

As stated in the UDTS Catalog, "The University of Dubuque Theological Seminary affirms the equality of women and men in ministry and in the theological seminary, and affirms that language used in reference to humanity and to the people of God shall be gender inclusive. Papers and assignments done in the theological seminary shall conform to this guideline. Papers having gender biased language are unacceptable and shall be returned to the student for correction and, if applicable, a late penalty will apply. The seminary encourages all members of the community to be patient and encouraging with one another, as we all work

toward the goal of language that reflects the unity and diversity of God's people." Furthermore, while students are not required to avoid the use of masculine pronouns when referring to God, they are encouraged to avoid excessive masculine language when describing God in commentary (translations should match the Hebrew text). As Scripture teaches (Luke 15), God is both the shepherd who searches for his lost sheep and the woman who searches for her lost coin.

## Academic Success Center:

As stated online ([www.dbq.edu/asc](http://www.dbq.edu/asc)), "The Academic Success Center at the University of Dubuque is located on the second floor in the Charles C. Myers Library. The goal of the Academic Success Center is to empower students and to connect them with the resources necessary to achieve both academic and personal goals. Services provided by the Academic Success Center include:

- Individual Tutoring
- Writing Center
- Disability Accommodations
- Testing Services
- Academic Probation Support Services
- Opportunity Program Tutoring Services"

For more information, see [www.dbq.edu/asc](http://www.dbq.edu/asc)

## Subject to Change:

This syllabus, course calendar and other attending documents are subject to change during the semester.

## Americans with Disability Act (ADA) Statement:

Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have a documented disability. Please notify the instructor during the first week of class of any accommodations needed for the course. Late notification may cause the requested accommodations to be unavailable. Confidentiality of all requests will be maintained. All requested accommodations must be approved through the Academic Success Center, 2nd floor Myers Library (589-3262 or [ASC@dbq.edu](mailto:ASC@dbq.edu) ).

# Netiquette

---

## Netiquette: A Summary

All posts should reflect Christian character:

- Do solid work, "as unto the Lord."
- Do your own work; "Thou shalt not steal."
- Be kind; "Speak the truth in love."

Posts that do not do the assigned tasks will not receive credit. Inflammatory or insulting posts will be deleted, and can result in discipline, per institutional policy.

## Netiquette: The Details

- **Do solid work, "as unto the Lord."**
  - Carefully **proofread**, ensuring everything is clear and easy to understand.
  - **Follow the instructions** given for the discussion. Give particular attention to show long posts should be.
  - **Directly relate** your post to the forum. If you would like to chat about issues unrelated to the questions posted, please use the "Coffee House" link found near the top of our website.
- **Do your own work; "Thou shalt not steal."**
  - As stated in the UDTs Student Handbook, "The Seminary defines **plagiarism** as the copying or use of another person's work in any form without acknowledgment. Students shall not represent the work of another as their own or in any way misrepresent their own work, or the work of another. The use of any outside source, whether of idea or of paraphrase, shall be properly acknowledged. Any quotation, even of phrase, shall be marked by quotation marks. Misrepresentation shall be avoided. The first offense of plagiarism definitively established will be penalized by an 'F' on the assignment. Second offense, definitively established, will be penalized with an 'F' for the course. Third offense, definitively established, results in the student being subject to dismissal from the Seminary."
  - **Copying and pasting** material from other websites constitutes plagiarism (unless such material is properly quoted and cited).
- **Be kind; "Speak the truth in love."**
  - Be **respectful** of each member of the classroom, including peers and instructor. You are encouraged to write as if you were talking to the person face to face. If you would hesitate to say out loud and in company what you're preparing to post or email, it is probably wise not to press the "send" or "post" button.
  - **Avoid cynical or humorous comments**, as they can be misinterpreted.
  - **Concisely** give readers something **substantive** to read.
  - **Avoid dominating** class discussions.
  - Use **gender-inclusive language**. As stated in the UDTs Catalog, "The University of Dubuque Theological Seminary affirms the equality of women and men in ministry and in the theological seminary, and affirms that language used in reference to humanity and to the people of God shall be gender inclusive."
  - **Evaluate** the course (teaching materials, instruction strategies, work load, and classroom administration) in an appropriate context which will be made available at the end of the term. If there are specific questions or concerns, please address them directly to your instructor.
- If another student makes a post that you believe does not abide by this etiquette, please **email** the professor as soon as possible.

## Tentative Schedule

---

### Pre-Trip: Jan 17–Feb 13

During this period, students are expected to watch four lectures (about one hour each) and take the background knowledge exam (due Feb 13 at 11 pm CST).

## Immediately Before Trip: Feb 14–23

During this period, students should focus on preparing to leave the country. There will be one Q & A gathering online at a time TBA.

## Trip: Feb 24–Mar 5

During this period, students will travel to Florence, Pisa, Lucca, Rome, and back home. While in Italy, they are expected to present on one work of art while standing next to it.

## Immediately After Trip: Mar 6–16

During this period, students should focus on recovering from traveling and getting caught up in other subjects.

## Post-Trip: Mar 17–Apr 24

During this period, students are expected to revisit and reflect on the trip and what they have learned. A five-page identification paper is due Mon Mar 27 at 11 pm CST. A six- to eight-minute video is due Mon Apr 17 at 11 pm CST. Between Apr 18 & Apr 24, students will meet online for one or two hours to reflect on the trip.