# Iconology and Visual Culture

## Prof. Kevin McManus

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The course aims to provide students with the specific methodology for interpreting images and their role in the history of culture, but also the particular position of the artistic image in the broader field of visuality. During the course, students will engage in processes of image analysis and investigation; for this reason, attendance in lectures is strongly recommended.

By the end of the course, students will be able to interpret the visual experience, analysing its components (image, gaze, forms and processes of mediation). This skill will benefit art history students, who will be trained in interpreting works of art from an iconological point of view, but also all students who deal with images within another field of study, such as literature, philosophy, or psychology.

***COURSE CONTENT***

The course is divided into two parts:

1. Visual culture and iconology. An introduction

2. *Who is afraid of pictures?* For a history of iconoclasm.

The first, shorter, section will be dedicated to a presentation of the discipline and some of its key concepts. The second, more extensive, section will present the terminology, topics and investigation field of the discipline through its direct application to a specific problem such as iconoclasm; this concept will be examined by way of some historical examples, from the Byzantine age to modern times, including the most current chronicled cases, with a particular reflection on its recurrence in media, visual and artistic practices.

***READING LIST***

For point 1:

P. Burke, *Testimoni oculari. Il significato storico delle immagini,* Carocci, Roma, 2002, chapters 2 and 10.

A. Pinotti-A. Somaini (ed.), *Teorie dell’immagine,* Cortina, Milan, 2009, chaps. 2 and 3.

W.J.T. Mitchell, *Pictorial Turn. Saggi di cultura visuale,* ed. by M. Cometa, Cortina, Milan, 2017, chaps. 1 and 2.

For point 2:

D. Freedberg, *Il potere delle immagini. Il mondo delle figure: reazioni e emozioni del pubblico*, Einaudi, Torino 1993, cap. XIV.

H. Bredekamp, *Immagini che ci guardano. Teoria dell’atto iconico*, Cortina, Milano 2010, pp. 33-39 e cap. 4.

L. Russo (edited by), *Vedere l’invisibile. Nicea e lo statuto dell’immagine*, Aesthetica, Palermo 1999, pp. 171-206.

B. Latour, *Che cos’è* iconoclash*?*, in A. Pinotti-A. Somaini (a cura di), *Teorie dell’immagine*, Cortina, Milano 2009, pp. 287-330.

B. Groys, *ArtPower*, Postmediabooks, Milano 2012, pp. 77-93.

The reading list does not replace the attendance of lectures, the contents of which will in any case constitute the fundamental starting point during the exam.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Frontal lectures with video screenings. Students will be invited to participate actively in class discussions.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Students will be assessed by oral exam only, taking place during the official exam sessions. The exam will address the contents of the lectures and reading list, and will assess students’ abilities to interpret images with sufficient skill and appropriate language, and to contextualise them appropriately within the conceptual framework presented on the course.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

Study of the material on the reading list is complementary and *cannot* be seen as a substitute to lecture content, upon which the exam will generally be based. For this reason, non-attending students must contact the lecturer to agree on supplementary reading material.

There are special prerequisites for this course in terms of prior knowledge. Naturally, a good level in the fields of art history and philosophy will help students understand certain themes and examples, particularly at the beginning of the course

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board.