UNDERGRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTION

Term: Fall 2014
Instructor: Dr. Deirdre Dempsey
Course #: THEO 2310
Section: 901 (Honors)
Course Title: Explorations in Christian Theology:
Topic: Theology and the Visual Arts

Description:

We'll be looking at a variety of art works, in a variety of media, to achieve the learning outcome that is central to this second level Theology course: at the end of the course, the student should have the tools (by which I mostly mean the background knowledge) to take a look at a work of art that comes out of a Christian context and make some solid judgments about: 1. the historical context of the artist; 2. the subject matter of the painting; 3. the theological message intended by the artist or whoever commissioned the work. We'll mostly be working with paintings and works on paper, but toward the end of the class we'll consider films, as well.

So, two examples, both taken from the collection of the Haggerty Museum of Art: Juan Correa de Vivar's The Lamentation of Mary over the Body of Christ, from the mid 1500's, and Salvador Dali's Madonna of Port Lligat, from 1949. By the end of the course, a student should be able to see both of these and: 1. identify the figures; 2. take a good stab at the historical context -- in the case of the first painting, to be able to make the educated guess that the painting comes out of the Catholic Reformation, given the importance Mary is accorded; 3. infer, from the symbols in the Dali painting that the painting is leaning heavily on earlier Christian artwork to convey a theological message and make an educated guess at that theological message.

Requirements: two presentations; two papers (5 pages); two exams; participation.