

Indiana Wesleyan University
John Wesley Honors College
HNR 175B: What is Beauty? (Spring 2013)
12:10 PM to 1:05 PM (M, W & F), Goodman 204

Todd C. Ream, Ph.D.

Senior Scholar for Faith and Scholarship & Associate Professor of Humanities

Office: Goodman 203G

E-Mail: todd.ream@indwes.edu

Office Phone: x1743 / Home Phone: 765.628.3397

Office Hours: Mondays, Wednesdays, & Fridays from 1:10 PM to 3:30 PM, and by appointment

Course Description

Liberal Learning and Life Calling Seminars are interdisciplinary studies of the foundational questions intrinsic to human existence (e.g., What is truth? How do we know? What is humanity? What is the good life? What is beauty? Who is our neighbor? How should we live?). Each seminar explores the nature and significance of one of these questions: most fundamentally, within the framework of historic Christian theology and practice, but also in the light of various relevant academic disciplines and contemporary ideologies. The ultimate goal of these seminars is to equip students to better understand the meaning and purpose of life by cultivating an historic Christian vision of human flourishing and the capacity to discern how this vision relates to competing conceptions of human existence.

What is Beauty?

“Do we love anything but the beautiful? What, then, is the beautiful? And what is beauty? What is it that attracts us and draws us to things we love? For, unless grace and beauty of form were in them, they certainly would not draw us to themselves.” Augustine’s questions serve to orient this course towards an understanding of beauty and its relationship to the Christian faith. As one of the transcendentals, an understanding of truth and goodness without beauty leaves them without attractive power. Seeing the beautiful helps as we seek to rightly order our loves. It also helps us to understand the nature of God. By coming to see the beauty in all acts of creation, we can see the goodness of the created world because of God’s past and continuing work within it. The beauty of the Incarnation and the Sacraments and the grace given in them are the most obvious points of this work.

This course will explore the definition and understanding of beauty and how it reveals God’s nature. Readings will come from major writers in the field of Christian aesthetics, as well as the great philosophers of Western culture. Works of art (all the arts—visual, performing, and digital), both historical and contemporary, will be examined. Through seminar discussions, writing assignments, creating works of art, and attending art events, students will come to understand the importance of the arts and artistic expression for giving meaning to human life and the Christian faith. Prerequisite: HNR 150

Course Outcomes and Goals

By participating in and completing the course requirements, students should achieve the following course outcomes and demonstrate growth in the following course goals –

Course Outcomes

Students should be able to:

1. Articulate the theological significance of aesthetic expressions and their implications for illuminating meaning and significance in life;
2. Describe the historical developments and cultural dynamics that have shaped the fine arts in their past and present forms;
3. Practice methods by which aesthetics can illuminate the pursuit of knowledge and truth; and
4. Evaluate the meaning and significance of artistic works critically, reflectively, and charitably.

Course Goals

Students should develop:

1. Devotion to the glory of God as expressed through artistic expression and interpretation;
2. Dedication to integrating the arts into a spiritual rule of life that facilitates formation in Christian virtue;
3. Understanding for how the arts can contribute to physical and spiritual wholeness; and
4. Appreciation for the body of Christ as their primary interpretive community for discerning beauty.

Required Texts:

Benson, Bruce Ellis. *Liturgy as a Way of Life: Embodying the Arts in Christian Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013);

Treier, Daniel J., Husbands, Mark, & Roger Lundin (eds.). *The Beauty of God: Theology and the Arts*. (Downers Grove, MI: InterVarsity Press, 2013); and

Wolterstorff, Nicholas. *Art in Action: Towards a Christian Aesthetic* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987).

*Select Readings Posted on BlackBoard from the Church Fathers.

Students with Disabilities:

In an effort to meet the aspiration of its mission to develop world changers and to respect federal law, Indiana Wesleyan University provides reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Students need to self-identify in order to be eligible for such accommodations. In partnership with faculty members and administrators, this process is coordinated by staff members in the Center for Student Success. Please contact Mr. Nathan Herring (Student Center 220, x2257) for further assistance.

Course Requirements:

Participation (20%) – In order to learn to think critically about your sense of vocation as a Christian scholar, one must not only be present in class but also be an active participant in the seminar discussions. Your input into our classroom conversation is not only measured by how it reveals your efforts to understand yourself and the material but also by how it draws your fellow students into the conversation. In addition, students are also required to bring to class the text(s) we will be discussing on the given day as we will often need to refer to them and give select passages in-depth readings.

The Art of Worship Assignment (15%) – Students will attend a variety of liturgical/art events over the course of the semester. In particular, they will write a reflection paper drawing upon themes from Bruce Ellis Benson’s *Liturgy as a Way of Life: Embodying the Arts in Christian Worship* and comparing them to their worship experience at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart at the University of Notre Dame (4 pages).

Art Critic Assignment (20%) – Students will work in groups to present a work of art to the class, explaining what it is, exploring its meaning, and giving a history of interpretation. Their grade for this assignment will not only come as a result of the quality of their in-class presentation but also the review they write pertaining to the particular work of art (4 pages).

Art Creator Assignment (15%) – Students will work in groups to create a work of art in a media as determined by the will of the class. Their grade for this assignment will not only come as a result of the quality of their in-class presentation but also the details they provide in writing pertaining to the work of art they created (4 pages).

Philosophical Theology of the Arts Assignment (30%) – For their final paper, students will write a philosophical theology of the arts and Christianity, exploring the nature of beauty, its relationship to the nature of God, how the arts can contribute to a life well-lived, while also drawing upon examples from Morten Lauridsen’s *Lux Aeterna* (10 pages).

Grading:

Letter grades are calculated and assigned in light of the University’s policy concerning grading and evaluation.

A	94-100%	C	74-76%
A-	90-93%	C-	70-73%
B+	87-89%	D+	67-69%
B	84-86%	D	64-66%
B-	80-83%	D-	60-63%
C+	77-79%	F	59% and Below

Academic Honesty/Plagiarism: Any form of academic dishonesty and/or plagiarism is deemed to be a serious violation of the fabric of our character as a community. As a result, any confirmed case of academic dishonesty and/or plagiarism will be referred to the John Wesley Honors College Committee in order that his or her further standing in that community can be reviewed. Confirmed cases of academic dishonesty/plagiarism are also submitted to the Academic Affairs Office of the College of Arts and Sciences and are thus subject to further review from that office.

Late Assignments: Any assignments turned in late will receive a 20% deduction for each day past the due date. Assignments turned in more than two days late will not be accepted and the student will receive a zero for that particular assignment.

Absences: Given the seminar nature of this course, students are expected to attend each class session. Failure to attend a particular class session will result in a 5% reduction of your participation grade. Excused absences will be issued in cases of illness, family emergencies, and university-related business. Absences for university-related business must come in advance with notification being from the supervisor for that particular experience. Ideally, notice of your absence from class will come in advance of the meeting time for that particular class session. In the case of emergencies, such notification should simply come as soon as is convenient. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class. Any students not in class at the time attendance is taken will be marked absent for the day.

Inclement Weather: In the case of a winter storm warning, class will be cancelled. Notification of that cancellation will come via e-mail at least one hour prior to the time the class is scheduled to meet. The cancelled class session will be re-scheduled for a later date and time that works for both the students and the professor.

Course Schedule:

Part 1: Beauty and the Life of Worship

Monday, 1/7: Introductions/Distribute Syllabus

Wednesday, 1/9: Introductory Observations

Friday, 1/11: Reading from the Church Fathers – To Be Posted on BlackBoard

Monday, 1/14: Benson pp. xiii-xxxi

Wednesday, 1/16: Benson pp. 1-15

Friday, 1/18: Reading from the Church Fathers – To Be Posted on BlackBoard

Monday, 1/21: Benson pp. 17-37

Wednesday, 1/23: Benson pp. 39-65

Friday, 1/25: Reading from the Church Fathers– To Be Posted on BlackBoard

Monday, 1/28: Benson pp.67-94

Wednesday, 1/30: Benson pp. 95-124

Part 2: Modern Aesthetics and the Eclipse of Beauty

Friday, 2/1: Treier, Husbands, and Lundin, pp. 184-208

Sunday, 2/3: Worship at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart—University of Notre Dame /
Details TBA

Monday, 2/4: Wolterstorff pp. ix-18
Wednesday, 2/6: Wolterstorff pp. 21-63
Friday, 2/8: Reading from the Church Fathers – To Be Posted on BlackBoard
Monday, 2/11: Wolterstorff pp. 67-90
Wednesday, 2/13: Wolterstorff pp. 91-121
Friday, 2/15: Reading from the Church Fathers – To Be Posted on BlackBoard
Monday, 2/18: Wolterstorff pp. 122-155
Wednesday, 2/20: Wolterstorff pp. 156-174
Friday, 2/22: Reading from the Church Fathers – To Be Posted on BlackBoard
Monday, 2/25: Wolterstorff pp. 177-199
Wednesday, 2/27: Wolterstorff pp. 203-221
Friday, 3/1: Reading from the Church Fathers – To Be Posted on BlackBoard
Monday, 3/4: No Class—Spring Break
Wednesday, 3/6: No Class—Spring Break
Friday, 3/8: No Class—Spring Break

Part 3: Beauty Regained? Contemporary Voices in Theology and the Arts

Monday, 3/11: Treier, Husbands, & Lundin pp. 7-44
Wednesday, 3/13: Art Critic Group Project Presentations
Friday, 3/15: Art Critic Group Project Presentations
Monday, 3/18: Treier, Husbands, & Lundin pp. 45-83
Wednesday, 3/20: No Class—Rescheduled to 2/3/13
Friday, 3/22: No Class—Rescheduled to 2/3/13
Monday, 3/25: Art Creator Group Project Presentations
Wednesday, 3/27: Art Creator Group Project Presentation
Friday, 3/29: No Class—Good Friday
Monday, 4/1: No Class—Travel Day
Wednesday, 4/3: No Class—Rescheduled to 4/12/13 / World Changer Convocation
Friday, 4/5: No Class—Rescheduled to 4/12/13
Monday, 4/8: Treier, Husbands, & Lundin pp. 87-120
Wednesday, 4/10: Treier, Husbands, & Lundin pp. 121-141
Friday, 4/12: Reading from the Church Fathers – To Be Posted on BlackBoard / Indianapolis
Symphonic Choir's Performance of Morten Lauridsen's *Lux Aeterna* – Details TBA
Monday, 4/15: Treier, Husbands, & Lundin pp. 145-160
Wednesday, 4/17: Treier, Husbands, & Lundin pp. 161-183
Friday, 4/19: Treier, Husbands, & Lundin pp. 209-226
Monday, 4/22—Wednesday, 4/24: Finals Exams / Date and Time to Meet and Discuss the
Philosophical Theology of the Arts Assignment TBA