

Syllabus for
ENG 451 - Culture and the Christian Imagination
3 credit hours
Spring 2001

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

An interdisciplinary study in theology and the arts. Explores various Christian approaches to art and aesthetics. Readings and course projects are designed to help students develop critical thinking and writing skills as they experience and evaluate various art forms, specifically drama, literature, music, and film. Students are asked to formulate a Christ-centered approach to the arts and develop a mature understanding of how Christian doctrines (for example, creation, the fall, incarnation, and stewardship) are relevant to understanding the arts, how the modern Church can express its deepest truths through art, and how the arts, in general, can be ways of experiencing God and life more fully.

II. COURSE GOALS

This course is designed to increase students' awareness of the powerful ways in which they and their culture are shaped by the arts, the unique contributions a Christian worldview makes to aesthetics, and how the Church can be a powerful influence shaping culture through the arts and through a Christ-centered aesthetic. The course is designed to help students view the arts as incarnational, as ways to express and discover spiritual truth.

III. COURSE OBJECTIVES

Terminal Objectives

As a result of successfully completing this course, the student will be able to do the following:

- A. Explain an understanding of various approaches to Christian aesthetics
- B. Trace the development of Christian aesthetics
- C. Evaluate an experience of an art form by applying specific components of a Christian aesthetic
- D. Write mature analyses of various art forms in light of a clearly defined Christian aesthetic.
- E. Articulate what unique contributions Christianity can make to an understanding of various art forms.
- F. Discuss how theology can be communicated through the arts.
- G. Explain how the Church can benefit from an understanding of cultural trends in the arts.

IV. TEXTBOOKS

A. Required Textbooks

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

Ryken, Leland. The Liberated Imagination. Wheaton: Harold Shaw, 1989.

Sayers, Dorothy L. The Mind of the Maker. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1987.

Various readings on reserve in the library.

B. Recommended books

A college dictionary

V. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A. University Policies and Procedures

1. Attendance at each class or laboratory is mandatory at Oral Roberts University.
2. Double cuts will be assessed for absences immediately preceding or following holidays.
3. Excessive absences can reduce a student's grade or deny credit for the course.
4. Students taking a late exam because of an unauthorized absence will be charged a late exam fee.
5. Students and faculty at Oral Roberts University adhere to all laws addressing the ethical use of others' materials, whether it is in the form of print, video, multimedia, or computer software.
6. Final exams cannot be given before their scheduled times. Students need to check the final exam schedule before planning return flights or other events at the end of the semester.

B. Department Policies and Procedures

1. **Tardies**—Tardies are an inconvenience to the other class members and the professor, and they prevent the late student from obtaining maximum value from the class. Therefore, excessive tardies may adversely affect the semester grade. It is to the student's advantage to make sure that the professor is informed immediately following the close of the class that the student was tardy and not absent. It is not the professor's responsibility to stop the class to mark the tardy; the student is the one responsible for conveying that information immediately following that class, not at a later time.
2. **Incompletes**—As stated in the University catalog, incompletes are granted only for "good cause," such as extended hospitalization, long-term illness, or a death in the family. Students must petition for an incomplete using the form available in the English department. Very few incompletes are granted.
3. **Late Work**
 - a. The student is responsible for obtaining class assignments and material covered during an absence. All work must be completed as scheduled. Late work may result in a lower grade. An absence is not an excuse for turning in late work or for being unprepared with assignments for the class following the absence. Computer or printer malfunction does not constitute an excuse for late work; students should have their work prepared in time to ensure that they can get it proofread, edited, and printed prior to the instructor's due date. Any test taken late will incur a \$10 late-test fee. These responsibilities will assist the student in professional development.
 - b. Each instructor has his or her own late-work policy that is given to students at the beginning of a course. Instructors use their own judgment in accepting late work resulting from all other absences. In cases where these absences can be anticipated, such as for non-University sponsored mission trips, the work should normally be submitted prior to the absence. In unanticipated absences, such as sickness or family crises, the instructor should be notified as soon as possible and agreement reached on due dates and possible penalties.

4. **Attendance**—Because unavoidable circumstances can prevent perfect attendance, each student is allowed to miss class the number of times per week a class meets. This allowance is for absences such as illness, personal business, and emergency. The student may consider this "sick leave." If a student has absences in excess of this number, the earned grade for the course may be affected. A student who leaves class before dismissal may be marked absent. Extended illnesses are handled on an individual basis and require verification from a doctor.
5. **Administratively Excused Absences**—Only absences that are required by approved University activities are given administrative excuses. Students who must miss class for University-sponsored activities must follow these procedures:
 - a. inform the professor before the event and make arrangement for the work to be submitted prior to the absence or at a mutually agreed upon deadline.
 - b. present an administrative excuse form with appropriate signatures when he or she returns to class. Doctors' or nurses' notes, or letters from groups sponsoring mission trips or activities do not qualify a student for an administratively excused absence.
 - c. obtain information covered during an absence. All work must be completed as scheduled.
 - d. not commit to class presentation (oral reports, speeches, group presentations, etc.) on a date that the student will be gone. Makeup work is not permitted if the student voluntarily committed to a performance on the date of an administratively excused absence.
6. **Extra Credit**—Students should not expect extra credit to help raise a grade.
7. **Plagiarism** – Each student attending Oral Roberts University is required to do his or her own academic work and must not inappropriately collaborate with other students on assignments. Students must document all sources and ideas that are not their own original information by following correct MLA (Modern Language Association) documentation procedures. Failure to do this produces a plagiarized paper, which will result in an F for the paper. Flagrant cheating will result in an F for the course.

C. Course Policies and Procedures

1. Evaluation Procedures
 - a. exams required by the individual instructor.
 - b. a minimum of three major essays selected and assigned by the instructor.
 - c. a semester project
 - d. quizzes, daily assignments, and short writing projects
 - e. English majors should retain an essay or the semester project for their portfolios.
 - f. Papers are evaluated for the following:
 - (1) Content
 - (a) The central idea grows from honest grappling with an issue; it is original, insightful, and interesting; and it is convincingly supported by details, examples, and illustrations.
 - (b) The writer is reliable—honestly and sincerely avoiding inaccurate or misleading statements; correctly distinguishing between facts, opinions, and judgments; and acknowledging all borrowings.

- (2) Organization
 - (a) A concise, comprehensive statement of the main idea (a thesis) is the focus of attention.
 - (b) The focus is discernible and consistent in title, introduction, body, and conclusion.
 - (c) Each paragraph contains a controlling idea relevant to the development of the subject.
 - (d) Details and subtopics are arranged in a comprehensible order.
- (3) Style
 - (a) The writer's words reflect a reasonable and responsible attitude toward his or her subject and audience.
 - (b) The language is suitable for subject and occasion.
 - (c) Right words (concrete and specific words) in the right places achieve exactness of meaning.
 - (d) Sentence structure and vocabulary are varied and mature.
 - (e) Phrasing has vitality.
- (4) Mechanics
 - (a) There are no errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation.
 - (b) In addition to providing correctness, the writer should punctuate to promote clarity of meaning, to stress points that need emphasis, and to control rhythm.

2. Portfolio Requirements

English majors should retain an essay for their portfolios.

VI. COURSE CALENDAR

Weeks 1-5	Toward a Christian aesthetic
Weeks 6-10	The Christian imagination and its experiences with the arts
Weeks 11-15	Culture and the Christian imagination
Week 16	Final exam

VII. ASSESSMENT SUMMARY