History of Christianity, Qualifying Exam 5

Byzantine Christianity and Visual Culture (ca. 330-1453)

Description

Visual culture constituted an intrinsic part of Byzantine Orthodoxy. Accordingly, this examination focuses on the visual arts as primary sources informative on the history of Christianity in the Byzantine Empire from the reign of Constantine the Great to the Ottoman conquest. Not only do works of art and architecture supplement primary writings in significant ways, but they are often also the only testimonies of religious phenomena of various kinds.

Key themes covered in this examination include Christian iconography and visual exegesis, art and the liturgy, public ritual, private devotion and spirituality, the veneration of saints, pilgrimage, the cult of relics, donation and patronage, death and the afterlife, etc. While the reading list reflects the relevance of these and other topics in their historical development, students may concentrate on a specific time frame within the long period of the Empire’s existence. The main foci of the examination will be determined in consultation with the examiner and in view of the student’s research interests.

In the wider context of religious studies, this exam offers students the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the methodology and terminology pertinent to the study of the visual arts as an essential form of human expression.

Relevant courses:

- Byzantium: Art–Religion–Culture (HCHR/RLIT 32302 - ARTH 22302/32302 - RLST 28310)
- Early Christian Art (HCHR/RLIT 43107 - RLST 28315 - ARTH 20609/30609)
- Art and Ritual in Byzantium (HCHR/RLIT/ARTH 43010)
- The Cult of Relics in Byzantium and beyond (HCHR/RLIT 41604 - ARTH 41602)
- Byzantine Art: Iconography (HCHR/RLIT/ARTH 44604 - RLST 28304)

Examinations on Byzantine icons and image theory are offered in the Religion, Literature, and Visual Culture area (see RLVC Examinations 1: Theories of Criticism, and 2: Genres).
The Early Byzantine Period and Iconoclasm (ca. 330-843)

Readings

The Middle and Late Byzantine Periods (843-1453)

Readings

Select Works for Consultation

Exhibition Catalogs

Introductory Works

Reference Works

Online Resources
- kubikat (comprehensive catalog of international publications in the visual arts and related fields): [http://aleph.mpg.de/F?func=file&file_name=find-b&local_base=kub01&con_lng=eng](http://aleph.mpg.de/F?func=file&file_name=find-b&local_base=kub01&con_lng=eng)
- Byzantium. Byzantine Studies on the Internet (Byzantine Online Sources, Bibliographies etc.): [http://legacy.fordham.edu/Halsall/byzantium/index.asp](http://legacy.fordham.edu/Halsall/byzantium/index.asp)
- Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Resources: [http://www.doaks.org/resources](http://www.doaks.org/resources)
- The Victoria & Albert Museum, Search the Collections (“Byzantium”): [http://collections.vam.ac.uk/search/](http://collections.vam.ac.uk/search/)
- The University of Chicago Visual Resources Center (LUNA; ARTstor): [https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/vrc/](https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/vrc/)