

**Assignment from:  
American Religious Texts and Traditions  
Fordham University, Lincoln Center  
Prof. John C. Seitz**

**Class Blog: A Sensory Mapping of Religious New York (10%)**

- o A blog will be created for this course. Students will post to the blog by uploading photographs and/or videos and short descriptions and analyses of religious artifacts spotted in the city of New York.
- o Photographs/video/and or audio must be included in each entry. Like the analysis and descriptions, photos and audio or video clips must be students' originals, not copied or cut and pasted from another source. See me if you need to borrow a camera.
- o Artifacts may include paintings, murals, sculptures, graffiti, statuary, sounds, music, pamphlets, garbage, dances, smells, processions, flavors, performances, and more.
- o Excellent descriptions (minimum of 500 words, grammatical, polished) will situate the artifact in its setting, creatively connect the artifact to course material, and compellingly use the artifact as springboard for critical reflection on the notions of "text," "America," and/or "religious."
- o This blog is about thinking critically and creatively about the relationship of religious things and ideas. How do objects act on you or on others who encounter them? What do they provoke? How do they discipline or structure thought or bodies? It is not about reproducing simple research available to anyone online. Do not offer the equivalent of a Wikipedia-type history of the object. Do not offer a summary of "traditional" symbolic meanings of the object (if any).
- o Another thing to avoid: signs, slogans, and other texts. Unless you have an analysis of the text as an object (rather than straight analysis of the words), you should steer clear. Also excluded are all churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples, although particular artistic or architectural elements of these buildings may be acceptable. Items found in museums are also off-limits for this assignment since they have already been curated.
- o Ethical Considerations:
  - Artifacts must be visible to the general public and obviously installed, elevated, performed, posted, and/or framed for public display. Do not invade, disrespect, or badger those for whom the artifact might mean something. Do not exploit: ask permission when it seems appropriate. If in doubt, find something else.
  - This blog will be public. It is your job to think about how you might describe and analyze your object in such a way that your description and analysis reflect your intellectual training while also demonstrating a genuine effort of respect for those for whom the object might mean something. Mocking an object (classic example: gold or bejeweled cross necklaces for sale) is not intellectual engagement. If you can't understand why someone would

embrace or celebrate a particular object, that is your cue to try to figure it out.

- o A minimum of **one blog entry per student** is required. Any entries above one will improve your participation grade and increase your chances of winning the midterm or final exam grade booster (see below). Entries will be evaluated based on their creativity and analytical sophistication in connection with course material and course themes.
- o Entries will be graded on a check plus, check, check minus basis (10% for check plus, 8% for check, 6% for check minus, 0% for failure to post).
- o In an effort to elicit your best efforts, the author of the very best blog entry submitted by October 12 will have 1.5 points added to his or her midterm exam grade (that's 10% of the total). The author of the best blog entry submitted by December 7 will have 2.5 points added to his or her final exam grade (again 10% of the total). One entry could win both contests. Winners will be announced after the midterm and on the day of the final. The only caveat: exam grades cannot exceed 100%.
- o No blog entry will be accepted for a grade after December 7.