Mission Statement:
Our mission is to serve as a leading center of Christian thought and action providing an excellent education from a biblical perspective and global context in pivotal professions to equip Christian leaders to change the world.

COURSE SYLLABUS

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION & THE ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES

COM 636 (3 cr/hrs)
Critical and Cultural Approaches to Digital Communication

Instructor: Dr. William J. Brown
Office Hours: Mon., 3-6 pm and Tue. 9:00-noon, and by appointment
On-campus discussion forums: will be scheduled twice monthly with on-campus students
Phone: 757-352-4216 (appointments can be set with Suzanne Morton)

Supporting Professor:
Dr. Markus Pfeiffer, (markpfe@regent.edu)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the rhetorical, historical and critical framework for understanding and exploring the use of digital media in every area of life. We will study the confluence of digital media and society; how these confluences exert symbolic/persuasive forces that to shape how individuals and communities think; how they see reality, themselves and their relationships with other people; what they value; and what they hope for and how they view the world. We will help you to apply critical skills to learn how to analyze all forms of digital communication, including films, television and video programs, scripts, new media and advertisements. We will also give you assignments that will help you integrate digital media knowledge and skills in your own life.

COM 636 is a graduate level course specifically designed and required for strategic communication majors but also open to all graduate students in the School of Communication and the Arts and at Regent University with permission from the instructor.

All students are required to read and have a thorough understanding of the syllabus. Any questions or concerns need to be addressed to the instructor.
CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Our philosophy on the integration of faith and learning is substantively informed by our experiences as Christian leaders in local churches, missions, and educational institutions.

The mission of the School of Communication and the arts is to provide Christian communication professionals and aspiring scholars with graduate level knowledge of communication from a biblical perspective. In this course we will read and discuss the activities of social scientists within the context of Christian thought and action. We will specifically discuss:

1. The biblical foundation for social science theory and research.
2. The application of social science research to fulfill the God-given responsibilities of Christians.
3. The application of social science research to fulfill the mission of the church.

PREREQUISITES

Students must be a graduate student in the School of Communication and the Arts or must have been admitted into a graduate degree program at Regent University and have obtained permission from the instructor.

DEPARTMENTAL PROGRAM OUTCOMES

1. Christian Worldview - Students will formulate their own Christian worldview as communication professionals working in the field of digital media.
2. Academics - Students will evaluate and critique their own digital media skills and practices and will learn how to competently manage their own digital media consumption.
3. Christian Community - Students will contribute to Christian community at Regent University through their interactions with other Regent University students, faculty and staff.
4. Mission Impact - Students will conduct research and writing projects that contribute to our knowledge of the use of digital media.

COURSE OUTCOMES

Students who successfully complete this course (grade C or higher) will be able to:

- Explain and critically assess “media literacy” and “media ecology” perspectives on media influence, and be able to apply one’s own reasoned critical and theoretical perspective in assessing the function and impact of digital media forms and content.

- Assess and explain how new communication technology—and technology more generally—changes and complicates understandings and functions of knowledge, and
understand the relationships between technology and cultural manifestations of post-modernity.

- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of contemporary communication technology—and digitally mediated communication in particular—as a vehicle for the conduct of public discourse in a pluralistic and democratic society.

- Understand the bias of particular media forms in shaping particular understandings of what human community should be.

- Understand the development and use of social networking media and its impact on society and culture, including social relationships, political processes, and the diffusion of innovations.

- Synthesize a faith-informed perspective on authentic human community, and be able to discern the ways in which contemporary communication technology bolsters and/or degrades human community (properly understood).

**COURSE MATERIALS**

**A note about our reading materials:**

Digital media is obviously a rapidly changing field of study. As soon as any textbook is published, it is already too old for this field in terms of the technology in covers. However, in terms of the major issues surrounding the use of digital media it covers and the implications of its use, these do not change very quickly. That is why George Orwell’s class novel, *1984*, which he published in 1949, is still often referred to in today’s debates about government control of communication technology. For example, Gitlin’s book is still very relevant – only the size of the media ocean he speaks about has increased – the nature of that ocean, which we all live in, hasn’t changed. Potter’s book, in its fifth edition, is excellent and completely up to date – notice the 2011 official publication date.

Regarding the articles, some are classic older articles that you should read and three of them are recent publications. We may add a sixth reading at the end of the semester if I see something interesting come out during the next couple of months. We will post these articles on Blackboard.

**Required Texts**


**Other Required Reading** (We will post these in Blackboard)


In addition to these three articles we may find other important articles and post them in Blackboard during the course of the semester.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

The class assignments will consist of reading assignments given to you by your professor-advisor, on-line discussion assignments, lab assignments and written work. These assignments are provided below and also will be posted later during the semester on Blackboard.

The annotated bibliography and applied course projects will be explained in detail in course assignment handouts that will be posted on Blackboard.

Several assignments will require you to upload videos to YouTube and then to download them into Blackboard. Part of the learning process is discovering how to use digital media, so although we will not provide a “how-to-do” set of instructions for using digital media, we will always be available to help you if you get stuck.

**Projects**

We have designated 70 percent of this course to be class projects. There are five projects worth 700 points total. These projects will take several hours to complete. Because two of these projects involve internet research, we will arrange three specific labs during the semester when Dr. Pfeiffer will be teaching you digital media computer skills.
Project 1 (100 pts total)

Project Description: Your task is to find and explore an on-line media literacy course (for example, Kid’s First, found at http://www.kidsfirst.org/), and write a 4-5 page paper that describes and critiques what you found. In your paper provide the following content: (1) the name and location (URL) of the course, (2) a summary of the content of the course, (3) a description of the strengths and weaknesses of the course from your perspective, and (4) a description of what you would add to the course to make it better. The paper should be referenced according to the APA style manual.

Project 2 (150 pts total)

Project Description: Your task is to survey 12 other people about their use of a social networking website such as Facebook, Linked in, etc. We will provide you with a survey questionnaire link on Survey Monkey. Send this link to as many people as needed in order to get 12 confirmations from you potential respondents confirming that they have completed the survey. Then conduct in-depth interviews (about 20-30 minutes) with at least three of these respondents. You can conduct your interviews face-to-face, by phone, over the Internet, or any other method you choose. Write a 2-page summary of what you learned as a result of the interviews you conducted. For one of these interviews, we want you to record them on camera and then upload them to YouTube and embed them into our Blackboard class for others to see. We will tell you where to place them.

Project 3 (200 pts total)

Project Description: Each year more companies are looking to hire graduates that can demonstrate web development and multimedia skills and are able to feature their academic work online. It is important to us that our students produce excellent academic work, as well as having the practical ability to create digital multi-media content. Such content is distributed through various channels. One of the most prominent channels is the Word Wide Web. During your course of your graduate studies, you will produce content that we would like for you to feature on your personal website (i.e. e-portfolio). Your task is to complete your own on-line website and provide your website link to other members of the class. You are encouraged to upload all applicable assignments from this course as well as other courses (papers, audio, video, etc.) to your personal website and to create a comprehensive online portfolio. This portfolio site will not only feature your content, but also showcase your web design ability. Your website can become an important part of your resume and future job applications.

Professor Markus Pfeiffer will provide you with the information you need for website design and will assist you with the creation of your site. The three labs he will offer both on campus and by distance will provide you with the skills you need to complete this project. Dr. Pfeiffer will work out with the class the times and days for these three labs during the month of October. He also will help you to purchase your own domain name and web hosting space. This domain name and hosting space will belong to you and is completely independent from Regent University.
Project 4 (150 pts total)

Project Description: Your task is to visit a website for a specific organization that you are involved with or connected to in some way, analyze its style and content, and then prepare a report for that organization about the use of digital communication for that website. Websites are important communication tools for companies, organizations, ministries, etc. The structure, design and content of a site are crucial for its effectiveness. You will be given a number of evaluation criteria how to measure the effectiveness of a website. Apply these principles to a professional news website of your choice and write a 4-5 page report analyzing the site according to the criteria provided below. Your paper needs to contain screenshots and graphics that illustrate your points. Post your paper in the designated Blackboard Discussion Board.

The criteria that you should use to analyze the site are as follows:

1. Overall: does the site leave you with a positive and professional first impression? Does the site deliver the primary content (headline news) in a clear manner? How current is news content updated? (minutes, hours, daily?)
2. Site Architecture: Observe the navigation structure of the site. Are the links easily recognized, consistently placed? Is content (editorial sections) organized and laid out well.
3. Design: Is the site aesthetically pleasing? Are the font sizes, typography and colors appropriate? What are the dominate colors and what emotional effect do they have on you. (Evoke trust, news sensationalism etc.) Does the organizations logo and branding appear consistently? Based on the design; what target audience do you think is being reached?
4. Web 2.0 Components and Multi Media: Does the site make usage of interactive components such as rating abilities (user rate and vote on stories), comments and blog features, mobile access, RSS feeds, Podcasting. Does the site make use of video footage from its primary news company and does it utilize audio and video blogging? What is the quality and download speed of audio and video? Does the site incorporate social networking?
5. Originality: Are there unique and innovative features of the site that makes it stand out from other news sites? Example http://www.tenbyten.org/10x10.html
6. Research on Blog Aggregators such as http://technorati.com/ and http://www.blogpulse.com/ the credibility the site enjoys in the Blogosphere and with the Internet Community in general. Use tools such as http://www.alexa.com/
7. Create a short (a couple minutes) screen video tutorial in which you explain the audience the features you like about the news website you chose as you show it to them. Then upload this video to YouTube and embed it into our Blackboard class for others to see.
8. Finally, provide a copy of your review, including the link to your YouTube video, to the organization represented by the website you reviewed so its web designers can use your feedback to improve their website.
Project 5 (100 pts total)

Project Description: Your task is to take an inventory of all the digital communication technology that you use in your PERSONAL life and analyze three aspects of your interaction with this technology in a 4-5 page written paper. First, explain the usefulness of each technology and whether each one facilitates education, entertainment, or personal communication, such as staying in touch with family and friends or conducting personal business. Second, consider the amount of time you spend using these technologies. Third, consider the effects of each technology on your PERSONAL life. Consider how much money you are spending on these technologies and if their use is making you more competent (a better professional) or more godly (a better person). Also, think about the technological displacement these technologies produce in your life. In your paper try and take a neutral stance as much as you can in analyzing your own life and make recommendations for any changes you think you should make in response to your self-analysis. Think about where you fit with regards to the adoption, use and proficiency in digital technology. Are you wanting to increase your own proficiency or not? How are you going about increasing your proficiency? The paper should be referenced according to the APA style manual. Finally, produce a 30-60 second video about some aspect of the way you are using and/or using digital technology. Feel free to be humorous in good taste, or just plain clever. Upload your video to YouTube and then embed it into our Blackboard course for others to see.

ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION POLICY

Students are expected to enter their Blackboard discussion forums when assigned and take part in meaningful interactions with the instructor(s) and with other students in the course. On-campus students are expected to participate in on-campus discussion forums with professors and to come prepared to contribute to the forum.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The instructor along with the Regent University community of teachers and scholars upholds the standard of academic integrity. The University will not accept academic dishonesty of any kind (e.g., lying, cheating, defrauding) or plagiarism (e.g., failure to acknowledge indebtedness to another for the source of salient points, presenting the concepts or writings of another as one’s own). In addition to receiving an F on the assignment in question, additional discipline as noted in the Regent University Catalog and student handbook may also be in order. It is the responsibility of students to understand how to properly cite and reference academic papers when referring to or utilizing the academic work of others.

Reading. All reading assignments are to be completed and studied carefully by the assigned class day, so that vigorous and productive discussion can take place. Readings not in the required texts will be placed on e-reserve or be made available to you by some other means. While the vast majority of the reading is listed on the course calendar (below), I reserve the right to add additional items to the reading list from time to time.
Writing. At the graduate level, your written work is assumed and expected to be polished, refined, and audience-sensitive (i.e., written for an audience of scholars in rhetoric and communication). The manuscripts you submit should reflect revision (on both substantial and stylistic levels) and careful proofreading. Please don’t damage your credibility—and disappoint yourself—by submitting work that is in rough-draft or first-draft form, that is not proofread, or that is otherwise unprofessional in an academic context.

Late work. Barring acute, severe, and unforeseen circumstances, late work will be given a grade deduction for every week it is late.

INCOMPLETE GRADES POLICY

Students desiring an incomplete must submit their request to the course instructor and academic dean prior to the end of the term. An incomplete grade will be given in a regular course only for legitimate deficiencies due to illness, emergencies or extraordinary reasons acceptable to the professor, including equipment breakdown or shortages, and not because of neglect on the student’s part. Incompletes require the final approval of the school dean or his/her authorized representative. A regular grade will be given by the instructor if all requirements for the course are submitted by the end of the following academic term. The instructor will submit the new grade to the Registrar’s Office no later than two weeks after the beginning of the subsequent term. If all work is not submitted by the end of the term following the granting of the incomplete, a grade of FX (NP for pass/fail courses) will be posted automatically unless a Request for Extension of Incomplete has been approved and submitted to the Registrar’s Office. The FX shall be counted as an F in the computation of the GPA. Any student desiring reinstatement to the course after an FX or NP has been posted must register for the course in a subsequent term and pay the full current tuition for the course.

IN PROGRESS

In Progress grades will not be given in this course. IP grades are only given for independent studies, internships, practica, portfolios, theses and dissertations. An IP is also an appropriate grade for courses in which the completion of course requirements for

Evaluation and Grading

A. Grades and Weights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annotated Bibliography</th>
<th>150 pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Readings Assignments, Forums &amp; Participation</td>
<td>150 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied Class Projects</td>
<td>700 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total points for course</td>
<td>1000 pts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B. Grading Scale

940 to 1000 points .................... A  
900 to 939 points .................... A-  
870 to 899 points .................... B+  
830 to 869 points .................... B  
800 to 829 points .................... B-  
730 to 769 points .................... C  
770 to 799 points .................... C+  
700 to 729 points .................... C-  
699 points or less ..................... F

Calendar (Subject to Change) – On-Campus Forums and Workshops

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date(s)</th>
<th>Discussion Topic(s)</th>
<th>Meeting Time and Place</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forum One</td>
<td>Thinking Critically about Media Influence</td>
<td>1:30-4:30 pm COM 102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forum Two</td>
<td>Digital Media Culture</td>
<td>1:30-4:30 pm COM 102</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forum Three</td>
<td>Digital Media Environment</td>
<td>1:30-4:30 pm COM 102</td>
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<td>September 25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forum Four</td>
<td>Digital Media &amp; Interpersonal Communication</td>
<td>1:30-4:30 pm COM 102</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 9</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Forum Five</td>
<td>Workshop – Professor Pfeiffer</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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<td>week of Oct</td>
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<tr>
<td>22-26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forum Six</td>
<td>Workshop – Professor Pfeiffer</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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<td>week of Nov</td>
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<td>5-9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forum Seven</td>
<td>Workshop – Professor Pfeiffer</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 19-23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forum Eight</td>
<td>Digital Media Research</td>
<td>1:30-4:30 pm COM 102</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 4</td>
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Course Calendar (Subject to Change) – Blackboard Discussion Forums

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date(s)</th>
<th>Topic(s)</th>
<th>Reading/Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Week One  | Introduction to Course; Thinking Critically about Media Influence | Media Literacy  
Potter: Parts I and II |
| Week Two  | Thinking Critically about Media Influence     | Media Literacy  
Potter: Parts III and IV |
| Week Three| Digital Media Culture Part I                  | The Young and the Digital  
Chapters 1-5 |
| Week Four | Digital Media Culture Part II                 | The Young and the Digital  
Chapters 6-Conclusion |
| Week Five | Media Environment Part I                      | Turkle – Part I               |
### Recommended Classic Books for For Further Reading and Reflection

**Thinking Critically about Media Influence**


**Media and Popular Culture**


**Media and the Nature of Knowledge**


**Media and Public Discourse**


**Post-Modernism**


UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Please review the following links for important information on University policies:

- Academic Calendar/Registrar Information
- Bookstore
- Honor/Plagiarism Policy
- Regent Library
- Student Services (includes links to student handbook, disability services, University calendar, University Writing Center, etc.)
- Technical Support – University Helpdesk
- Grading Policies (incompletes, extensions, IPs, etc.) (Regent website)
- Student Course Evaluations (links will be emailed to you at end of course)
- Disability Statement – the student is responsible for contacting the assistant director of Student Services at 757.352.4486 to request accommodations, provide necessary documentation, and make arrangement with each instructor. The following website is designed to help our disabled students learn of their rights and responsibilities with regard to disability services. The site also has resources for faculty to become better informed of their responsibilities toward the disabled students in their classes.
  www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/student_life/disabilities.cfm

Feedback. Because your education is of great importance to us, we always encourage feedback about the course and about our practices as your instructors. At the end of the semester, you will have an opportunity to provide formal and anonymous feedback about us and about this course. We earnestly hope, though, that you won’t wait until then to let us know if there are particular questions or concerns you have. We want to do as much as I can to help you to think more critically, more humanely, and more Christianly about matters of faith and communication.

Reservation of the right to modify. While we have sought to provide with this syllabus a comprehensive picture of what we’ll be doing this semester and how we’ll be doing it, this syllabus does not contractually define the complete nature or parameters of the course. We reserve the right to add to, cancel, or modify any statement, requirement, assignment, deadline, or other element of this course. In all cases, though, we will seek to do so in as timely and non-disruptive a manner as possible.

Last Updated: 5/15/2012

At times, due to unforeseen circumstances, course content may be subject to change. Please check with your professor to insure you have the most recently updated Syllabus for this course.