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

COM 708
HISTORY OF COMMUNICATION
FALL, 2011

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Professor: J.D. Keeler
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Office Location: Communication and Arts Building-261

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.
Course Description

An exploration of the history of communication could be approached in a variety of ways. One could examine major shifts in predominant modes of communication and the influences these had on thinking, behavior, and cultures in particular eras. A social historical perspective could be used to determine how conditions in society influenced the content and form of communication in any specific time period. Particular communication technologies, innovations, or media could be studied in terms of how they were developed, shaped by, and had an effect on the cultures of their time. Specific leaders, organizations, or industries in the communication or other fields could be investigated to determine what impact the ideas they communicated and ways they went about it had on their contemporary or future cultures. Scholarly efforts to clearly define the elusive concept of “communication” could be historically traced.

Although this certainly does not exhaust the many approaches that could be used to study the history of communication, each of the above perspectives will be used in this course. A closer examination of communication innovations, changes, influences, and ideas about communication in the past should be interesting and enlightening in itself. However, its greatest value may be that it helps us better understand the dramatically changing and unique mediated communication world we are experiencing in this era and may be experiencing in the future.

Integration of Faith and Learning

Another approach to studying the history of communication is to examine it on the basis of a Christian worldview. A special goal and feature of this course is in part to look at each topic from the standpoint of Biblical truths and how the Christian faith and community have been and will continue to be both influenced and shaped by changes, innovations, events, and ideas related to communication. As we go about this task, it is important to keep in mind that students at Regent University typically come from a wide variety of Christian denominational backgrounds and traditions. While there certainly are many fundamental elements of the Christian faith that we all should agree upon, the specific views of others should be respected.

Course Outcomes

A single course dealing generally with the history of communication cannot possibly adequately cover any specific era, culture, form of communication or medium, trend, issue, person, organization, event, effect of communication or even an approach to studying them. However, this course should greatly broaden your understanding of communication from a historical perspective and provide you with much greater insight about the many ways the history or communication is highly relevant to communication today. At the same time, the course is designed to give you ample opportunity to conduct your own in-depth investigation of a specific historical topic(s) or context(s) or address research questions that interest you most.
Once this course has been completed you should have obtained:

- A much greater comprehension of how major changes in predominant modes of communication and some key technological innovations influenced thinking, behavior and specific communication practices in particular historical periods.

- Enhanced your ability to interpret contemporary communication practices, media and their effects in light of their historical, cultural and technological roots.

- Greater insight on how the Christian faith and community have been and are being influenced by past communication-related ideas, events, developments and trends.

- A better understanding of the various historical roots and perspectives of the idea of “communication” in contrast with a biblically based framework of the concept.

- Fuller awareness of the historical beginnings, development and effects of perhaps the most prevalent characteristic of 20th and 21st century communication—public relations “spin.”

- Insights into the historical underpinnings of the media entertainment and celebrity culture we increasingly are experiencing today and its effects.

- A fuller awareness of how media empires of the 20th and 21st centuries have risen and fallen.

- A thorough understanding of how a particular Christian historical figure you choose to study influenced society or a specific culture through both what and how they communicated or managed communication.

- A greater capability to conduct a scholarly research investigation on a specific topic using historical research methods and to develop an academic paper that reflects this.

- A better ability to explain various approaches historians take as they investigate, interpret and write about communication history.

**Course Format**

An online seminar format will be used in combination with opportunities for independent study through various assigned projects. If the outcomes of the course are to be achieved to the fullest degree, this requires your active and consistent participation in all aspects of the course, but particularly class discussion and responses to the ideas and work of others.
in the class. Each of you has much to offer to the learning experience of others in the class.

My role primarily will be one of facilitating your learning experience by pacing the course, encouraging your thinking, raising questions, guiding you through assignments and pointing you to how our Christian faith relates to the subject matter rather than serving as an online or on-campus lecturer. This format has proven to be very well suited to both graduate education and online learning.

Early each week I normally will introduce the subject matter, readings, online discussion questions or exercises and other assignments that will be covered and address any other significant course concerns. This will be accomplished through the use of the “announcements” feature of our Blackboard (i.e. software Regent University uses for its online courses) course site or through an e-mail that will be distributed to you. Of course you are welcome to interact with me at any time by e-mail, telephone or in person about any matter pertaining to the course.

Sessions for On-Campus Students

All students enrolled in the course will be involved in all of its online components at our Blackboard course site, including all discussion board assignments and exercises. However, students in the Virginia Beach area also will have the opportunity to meet for a number of sessions on campus. Opportunities for distance students to participate in particular sessions electronically may be provided. A schedule of these on-campus sessions will be provided at a later time, but Wednesday, 1:30-4:30 is the designated time slot for them and we will meet in Room 103 in the Communication and Arts building. *Our first on-campus meeting will be Wednesday, August 24th.*

Texts

The following books are required reading for this course:


An anthology of short articles on the development of communication innovations and their effects organized around various historical eras.


The author provides a fascinating historical treatment of the development of the public relations profession and practices and how they have greatly influenced historical events and our perceptions of the world.

The author historically traces the development of the entertainment culture that seems to be so fully evident in the United States and elsewhere today and how our sense of reality seems to be greatly influenced by it.


Ong’s classic work can be a bit difficult to read, but his exploration of the how our thinking and behavior may have been or can be radically changed by the predominant form of communication in a culture or historical era is one of the best presentations on the subject.


The author mixes history, philosophy, and theology in his investigation of how our ideas of what communication is have evolved.


The author examines the development and consolidation of major 20th and 21st century communication innovations and industries and its cultural effects.

These books should be available through the Regent University bookstore or any Internet bookstore.

**Readings**

In addition to the above texts, various book chapters or articles will be assigned. These do not require purchase and will be made available at our Blackboard course site.


The author explores, scientifically, how the form of communication experienced in a culture may have directly influenced thinking patterns in the past and present.

Additional pertinent readings or other materials may be assigned as part of particular class exercises or discussion questions.

**Recommended Books**


The above books relate well to the overall goals and themes of the course. However, there are numerous books, articles, websites and other materials that deal with some aspect of the history of communication or approaches to the study of history. In other words, there are many resources to draw from that may relate to your particular interests within this larger context.

**Assignments**

**Scholarly Paper**—The purpose of this assignment is to give you an opportunity to conduct historical research and develop an academic paper on a specific topic that interests you. I am open to any study that really interests you and fits the general framework of this course. However, as a starting place for coming up with research ideas you might consider how you can examine in some way the relationships between history, culture and technology. Select any communication or artistic medium of your choice and consider (a) the historical roots and development of the medium (b) how it was influenced by and influenced the culture (s) in which it emerged, and (c) its relationship to general communication and other technological developments of its time.

Beyond these general guidelines, you might begin by selecting a “media” type or genre (e.g. cell phones, blue grass music genre; daytime television talk shows; editorial
cartoons; vaudeville, direct mail; circuses; silent films; soap operas; telegraph; church pulpits as a communication medium, street theatre; “infomercials”). However, you also might choose to focus on a particular communication vehicle (e.g. Harper’s Weekly; Monday Night Football; Edward R. Murrow’s radio broadcasts; the American colonial Boston Gazette; Billy Graham’s televised crusades; Disneyland, Abraham Lincoln’s speeches; Gone With The Wind, Sears, Roebuck &Co. catalog).

Your research and paper can be confined to any particular time period (e.g. Telegrams in 1889; photography during the Civil War; the early days of television; the Party Press era). You also can concentrate on a specific culture (e.g. American teens; evangelical Christian community; Mexican-Americans in the Southwest; the “Hollywood” industry; medieval England; the internal culture within the New York Times; a culture outside the United States).

Usually historical studies that focus on a particular historical theme, research question(s), issue, time, culture, place, person, group, organization or event provide a more fruitful opportunity for research than broader, more far-reaching studies, but again it is your great interest in a particular subject that should most influence your choice of what to study.

A number of the readings in the course concentrate primarily on communication history as it developed in the United States. However, your historical research focus can certainly be on other nations or cultures in this respect.

Your research and paper should clearly approach your topic from an historical research perspective and methodology. Also, make sure that you choose a particular topic and develop a theme or research question (s) that will make an original contribution to or build on previous scholarship in the general subject area. To accomplish this, you need to dig into previous scholarly historical literature related directly or perhaps indirectly related to your particular subject matter to get an idea about what has been studied/written about before and how you might add something new to the body of scholarship in the area.

Although it is not always necessary to find and use primary sources relevant to a topic to make a significant contribution to scholarship, this is something to strive for as they can often greatly enhance the quality and credibility of the project. Find out what archival materials might be available and accessible that could be used in your possible study.

You are welcome to include relevant images or links to relevant audiovisuals that support your research and presentation of it in your paper.

Your paper should be no less than 12 but no more than 25 pages in length. You may use either MLA or APA style guidelines. It should be submitted by e-mail to me on or before December 2nd. An electronic copy of your paper also should be provided for each member of the class at that time. I will create a “forum” at our Blackboard course site where you will be able to upload it. On campus students also will have an opportunity to present their completed papers in one or our on campus sessions.
I will be glad to help you select and develop this research project. Try to get started **early** on it, aim for an eventual academic conference paper and/or publication, and have fun.

**Historical Christian Communicator Paper and Presentation**—Biographical studies can offer great insights regarding communication within a specific historical context or setting. They also can provide an excellent opportunity to examine the challenges prominent Christian historical figures have had in communicating the Christian faith.

Select a Christian leader or communicator from any historical period. Research the life and works of your chosen figure and develop a short research paper (10-15 pages) that examines how their **life, what** they communicated, **how** they communicated it, and in some cases, **how they managed** communication in organizations that they led: (a) influenced (or in some cases failed to influence) the culture(s) within which they lived; (b) were or were not consistent with biblical principles or truths; (c) are relevant to contemporary Christian communication or communicators (i.e. what lessons can we learn from them). *The structure of your paper need not rigidly follow the above points, but these communication-related points should guide your study much more than merely finding and providing a biographical sketch of the historical figure.*

Your paper should properly reference sources you use (either APA or MLA styles are fine) and include a list of references or works cited. You can cite Scripture where appropriate.

As you work on this historical research project, you will very likely discover that your efforts could lead to a larger, more extensive work dealing with the historical figure sometime in the future.

*Please submit your paper by e-mail to me on or before October 11th.* In addition, a Blackboard course site “forum” will be set up where you will be able to place your paper so that others in the class can read it and give you feedback. On campus students also will have a chance to present their work in one of our on campus sessions.

**Discussion**

A critical component of this course is online discussion and responding to brief exercises and/or discussion questions, using the Blackboard software that Regent University has provided. I have a basic way of handling this that seems to have worked in the past and is flexible enough to allow for a variety of learning experiences and minor adjustments to the course if necessary or desired. Class discussion helps enrich, enliven, pace and build a sense of community in the course. Varied, short exercises that are tied to the online discussion ideally add interest and practical substance to various topics and issues in the area of history of communication.
Each week I will normally post from one to three discussion questions or exercises that relate to specific topics that are being covered that week, particular readings, assignments or other materials. Typically you will have 12-14 days to respond to these questions and/or exercises and to what others in the class post in response to them. However, it will benefit everyone most if you are able to respond initially early in the posting period, therefore leaving time to respond to what others post and providing them with enough time to respond to what you have presented.

Both on campus and online students should respond to these exercises and participate in the online discussion.

Your initial response to each discussion question or exercise should be thoughtful, but not overly lengthy. Several paragraphs or so will suffice in most instances and usually length guidelines for each assignment will be provided. To insure interaction within the group takes place, a “rule of thumb,” for responding to what others in the class post is to respond at least once to what each person presents in the case of each discussion question or exercise. However, the possibility of unnecessary redundancy or the fact that class members may sometimes post their initial responses late in the discussion period sometimes prevents this. Of course you are welcome to respond more often than this and hopefully discussion dealing with various exercises, topics, issues, readings and research dealing with the history of communication will be provocative and interesting enough to stimulate more interactions.

The size of our class should be relatively small in this instance, so the class as a whole will function as a discussion group. However, the class may be divided into two separate discussion groups in some instances.

Although you will have more than a week to respond to any particular week’s assigned exercises or discussion questions, a new set of questions and/or exercises will be posted each week. In other words, you will be responding to a following week’s discussion questions or exercises before the previous week’s assignment and discussion period has been fully completed.

Again, your timely and meaningful participation in class discussion and in completing these brief exercises should not only benefit you considerably but also contribute greatly to the learning experience and enjoyment of others in the class. I will monitor all discussion and post comments where appropriate. For a number of reasons, I do not “grade” particular discussion or exercises as we move along in the course. But I do evaluate overall participation in this element of the course when the course has been completed. If you provide a thoughtful initial response to each discussion question and/or exercise within a specified time frame for completing it, and interact with others in the class that have responded to it, it should be just fine or represent a “pass” for the particular question or exercise. Further explanation of this will be provided at a later time.
Grading

There are no exams in this course. Course grades will be determined on the following approximate basis:

- **Scholarly paper/critique**—40%
- **Historical figure paper/presentation**—30%
- **Discussion questions/exercises/class participation** (quantity, quality and timeliness)—30%

Incomplete Grades

It is Regent University policy that incomplete grades are to be given only for legitimate deficiencies due to severe illnesses or emergencies or other significant reasons acceptable to the professor and not because of neglect on the student’s part.

Academic Integrity

As should be expected, particularly at a Christian university, students should adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty. This includes avoidance of plagiarism, defined as the uses of written and oral words of another person, including another student, without the expressed acknowledgement of the speaker or writer’s indebtedness to that person. This also applies to the use of papers or other materials previously submitted for grading purposes to instructors of other classes, either at Regent University or other institutions. Any violation of this policy normally will result in failure of the course.

Office Hours

I welcome the opportunity to interact with or pray for you about any course or personal matter in person, by phone or by e-mail. I will usually be in the office on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday each week and have posted office hours of Tuesday/Wednesday, 10 a.m. –12 p.m. If I am unavailable by phone, simply leave a message with one of the faculty administrative assistants and I will be glad to call you at a time that is convenient for you. I normally check e-mail each weekday and will respond as quickly as possible. The great volume of e-mail I receive and a great many other work-related responsibilities and activities with which I am involved sometimes inhibit this process. However, please be assured that I am anxious to get to know you and be of any help that I can.

Student feedback

At or near the end of the course, you will receive an opportunity to evaluate course content and instruction. Students can access the University’s online evaluation system at: [http://evalu.report.edu/regentsurvey/students.cfm](http://evalu.report.edu/regentsurvey/students.cfm) However, you are invited and
encouraged to interact with me regarding the course at any time during the semester. Again, I am delighted to have the opportunity to serve you and see that the course fits your needs as much as possible.
# Course Schedule

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<th>Week of:</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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| Aug. 22nd  | Historical Approaches to the Study of Communication; Value of a “media ecology” approach; “Information Revolutions.” | On campus students meet  
Wed., 1:30 in Communication and Arts Bldg., Rm 103.  
One discussion board exercise. |
| Aug. 29th  | Choosing a Scholarly Research Project. Historiography; Christian Perspectives of History. | Readings: Cairns;  
Two exercises. |
| Sept. 5th  | Changing from the Preliterate to the Literate Mind and World.          | Readings: Wolfe, chs., 1-3; Crowley & Heyer articles to be assigned.  
Two exercises. |
| Sept. 12th | Changing from the Literate to the Print Mind and World.                | Readings: Ong book; Crowley & Heyer articles to be assigned.  
Two exercises. |
| Sept. 19th | Changing from the Print to the Mass Media Mind and World; Telegraph, Early Film and Radio. | Readings: Czitrom,  
chs. 1,2,3. Crowley & Heyer articles. to be assigned.  
Two exercises. |
One exercise. |
| Oct. 3rd   | The World of Television.                                               | Readings:  
Articles to be assigned.  
One exercise. |
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<tr>
<th>Oct. 10th</th>
<th>Historical Christian Communicators.</th>
<th><strong>Historical Christian Communicator Paper Due Oct. 11th.</strong></th>
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<td>Exercise: Respond to Papers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 17th</td>
<td>Modular Class Week</td>
<td>No new assignments.</td>
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<td>Oct. 24th</td>
<td>Home Toolshed and Digital Worlds.</td>
<td>Readings: Crowley &amp; Heyer articles; Friedman, Ch.2; Wu book.</td>
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<td>Two exercises.</td>
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<td>One exercise.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 14th</td>
<td>History of Communication and the Church.</td>
<td>Readings: Nord, <em>National Courier</em> articles and article to be assigned.</td>
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<td>One exercise.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 21st</td>
<td>Media Histories; History of Communication and Global Concerns.</td>
<td>Readings: Anderson/Edgerton articles; Article to be assigned.</td>
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<td>Nov. 28th</td>
<td>Presentation of Scholarly Research Papers.</td>
<td><strong>Scholarly Research Paper Due November 30th.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec. 5th</td>
<td>Critique of Scholarly Research Papers.</td>
<td>One exercise.</td>
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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

Disability Statement—the student is responsible for contacting the assistant director of Student Services at 752-353-4486 to request accommodations, provide necessary documentation, and make arrangement with each instructor. The student services website above 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 and their classes.