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
COMMUNICATION STUDIES

COM 709
Theology and Communication
Fall Semester, 2011

DOCTORAL STUDIES PROGRAM

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION
Associate Professor
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Office hours: Wednesday 10-12 & 2-5.
Second floor Communication Building

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.

*After reading the syllabus please send me a note stating that you have read and understood the requirements for this class. If you do not understand something on the syllabus please contact me immediately so I can clarify the issue.
**Course Description**

COM 709 Theology and Communication. Biblical analysis and evaluation of the purposes and practices of human communication.

**Rationale/Course Overview**

The primacy of communication for Christian theology is to be found in the genesis of being, knowing and redemption. Creation was accomplished by the mere word of God over chaos; knowledge is granted in and through the species - specific quality of being made imago die; salvation is made manifest in the Word being made flesh, becoming incarnate. One can argue, quite convincingly, that before theology, there was communication.

While contemporary communication scholarship is underlined with either explicit or implicit ideological assumptions, rarely are its ideas and values rooted in the orthodox Christian beliefs assumed within this class. It is the task of doctoral scribes to decipher the signs and codes within communication practice and discern both their presuppositions and their implications. What this means is that this class will offer opportunity for theological reflection on communication.

Our concerns in this class are not designed to provide a systematic study of the imperial queen of the sciences, theology, nor to survey the vast history of religion, but to investigate the historical contributions to the field of communication from theology, to explore the communication implications of certain theological doctrines--both orthodox and heretical, and to search out theological positions and implications of chosen disciplines of communication.

The relations among theological, communication and cultural studies are complex and interrelated. Assuming that one cannot speak of anything without reference to one's most fundamental beliefs and values, the condition of this class is to relate our Christian creed and heritage to the vast and unwieldy realms of communication.

**Integration of Faith and Learning**

To begin this section on the integration of faith and learning, we would like to refer to a brief comment made by John Courtney Murray, given at the inaugural series of St. Thomas More Lectures at Yale University. This class, as Father Murray reminds us, raises the question of the uniqueness of our subject matter and the problem of God amid the whole range of problems that we face.

If God is a reality, his reality is unique; it will therefore present to man a unique problem. The problem of God exhibits only the barest analogy with the standard model of a problem as it is found in science. In the scientific world of observation and inference, hypothesis and verification, the data are, as it were, “out there.” The scientist is distant and detached from them; other things being equal any number of men who are scientists can do the same experiment and record the same results. No personal issues arise in the scientific problem. In contrast, the problem of God is primary among the fateful human questions that, as Pascal said, “take us by the throat.” The whole man--is profoundly engaged both in the position of the problem and its solution. In fact, he is in
a real sense a datum of the problem itself, and his solution of it has personal consequences that touch every aspect of his conduct, character, and consciousness. Moreover, the problem of God is unique in that no man may say of it, “It is not my problem.” Dostoyevsky’s challenge is valid: “If God is not, everything is permitted.” But the challenge needs to be amended to include, “except one thing.” If God is not, no one is permitted to say or even think that he is, for this would be a monstrous deception of oneself and of others. It would be to cherish and propagate a pernicious illusion whose result would necessarily be the destruction of man. On the other hand, if God is, again one thing is not permitted. It is not permitted that any man should be ignorant of him, for this ignorance, too, would be the destruction of man. On both counts, therefore, no man may say that the problem of God is not his problem.


As indicated by the quotation above the issues raised in this class speak to the whole of our life not just the academic. We cannot divorce the sacred from the secular, one’s heart from one’s mind, or the God of reason from the God of history.

Furthermore, we engage the content of this class as communication scholars looking at theology and not as theologians looking at communication. By this we mean that you are to respond to questions raised in the class or to specific class assignments as a communication scholar speaking or writing to other scholars in the field. Although the professor provides a framework or structure for the class it is the responsibility of the student to integrate the subject matter of the class into their own worldview.

**Program Goals – Ph.D. in Communication**

1. **Christian Worldview** - Doctoral students will critique the worldviews commonly held by communication scholars and will formulate their own Christian worldview (or Social Imaginaries) as a developing communication scholar.

2. **Academics** - Doctoral students will summarize and explain common ontological, epistemological and axiological approaches to the study of communication and will compose their own definition of communication based on their approach to the field.

3. **Christian Community** - Doctoral students will contribute to the academic Christian community of communication scholars through their participation in on-line or on-campus doctoral colloquiums and academic conference gatherings with other Christian scholars.

4. **Mission Impact** - Doctoral students will identify the major international organizations in the field of communication study and will explain their contributions to the field.
OBJECTIVES

Framing Objective:
Communication scholars do not operate in a vacuum, but within the framework of their communities, traditions, commitments, and beliefs. This class intends to help you develop your thinking and practice as communication scholars by examining the flies of theology in order to understand how men and women communicate, particularly on and in the realm of Christian discourse.

Specific Objectives:
After completing the course you should be able to:
1. Explain what are the implications that Christian theological beliefs have on communication scholarship and theory.
2. Extrapolate implication for communication theory and practice from historical Christian communicators.
3. Identify many of the major theological issues Christian communications scholars are addressing.
4. Demonstrate an integration of personal faith, theological doctrine, and communication scholarship in discussions and scholarly activities.
5. Conceptualize and undertake a research project addressing both a significant communicate and theological issue.
6. Become actively involved in or closely acquainted with a professional scholarly organization like the Religious Communication Association (RCA) that seeks to connect theology and communication.

COURSE MATERIALS

Texts (Required)


**Texts** (Recommended)


COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Course Procedures

The course will consist of doctoral level interaction among students enrolled in the course. A considered response to the reading assignments will be made in writing. The work for this class will consist of four major assignments: 1) critical interactions/reviews of the texts, 2) class participation (including discussion and in class assignments), 3) a major paper, and 4) a critical review of an assigned class paper.

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Each student is responsible for assigned readings and course participation. Discussion and debate are crucial for the successful integration of scholarly materials. Missing class or weekly interaction may result in the lowering of the student’s final grade. Other students depend on you participation in the class and on your providing them with written assignments and dialogue.

Eleven critical reviews will be required for this class. This assignment is designed to give you experience in reading and understanding a published work. Hopefully by reading, analyzing and discussing key books and articles you will improve your ability to understand and practice communication behavior that is consistent with a Biblical understanding of our world. This paper is to be no longer than three pages and you may be called upon to publicly defend your paper.

Each critical book review should include the following:

- A review of the major points make in the article or book.
- A critical analysis of the major points or at least two or three of the major points. If there are too many ideas to easily review and critique you should identify two or three major points made in the article or book and comment on them. I would rather you argue and critically analyze two or three ideas in-depth rather than to review all points with a thin argument or in a shallow way.
- A discussion of how the information in the article integrates into what we already know about the field of communication and the world in general.
- Finally, you are to discuss the contribution of this text to our understanding of communication and theology.

In addition, when completing each critical book review you should keep the following in mind:

- Relate the assigned readings to other scholarly writings and to chapters assigned in the major text.
• If appropriate reflect on the significance of the assigned book in light of its contribution to communication and theology or to our understanding of the field of communication in general.

2. Each student is asked to research and design an annotated reading list of articles and books that pertain to the specific scholar or Christian artist you are going to write about in your final paper. Let me be clear, this reading list is intended to relate to your final project. The annotated bibliography should consist of 10 to 15 recent works on your research topic and should include three or four paragraphs on each work cited. After a brief introduction to your topic a full citation of each work is required along with your critical comments. Use either the APA or the MLA style sheet for this assignment. This assignment is due November 14, 2011.

3. Each student is required to research and write an article for publication in an appropriate scholarly journal or for presentation at a communication conference (e.g. within the community of scholars in Religious Communication Association). The topic of your scholarly paper should be on the contribution of a specific theologian or Christian artist to our understanding of communication and/or communication theory (For example: What was Bonhoffer’s contribution to communication theory?). The professors should approve your topic. The topic for this paper is to be turned in for approval by September 19, 2011. An outline of the paper is due October 10, 2011. The paper is due on November 28, 2011. MLA or APA style sheets are encouraged.

4. Each student will write a critical review of an assigned research paper. This review will be due December 5, 2011 and needs to follow either the APA or the MLA style sheet.

GRADING

1. Class participation including weekly papers and comments of the weekly reading assignments make up 30% of the grade for this class. The critical book reviews are part of the weekly assignments.
2. The new article list will be 10% of the grade for this class and should be related to your final project for this class.
3. The research paper will make up 50% of the final grade.
4. A two to four page critical review of an assigned paper (10% of the final grade).

| Assignment | 30% |
| Assignment | 10% |
| Assignment | 50% |
| Assignment | 10% |
| Total | 100% |
If you have more than 2 absences you will lose 5 points from your final grade for each additional absence. Assignments turned in late will result in a drop in grade. Assignments turned in late may be graded and returned but with only limited or no written feedback.

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**Incomplete Grades**

It is University policy that incomplete grades are to be given only for legitimate deficiencies due to severe illness or emergencies or other significant reasons acceptable to the professor and not because of neglect on the student’s part. I cannot deviate from this policy. Please consult the Regent University Academic Catalogue for a more complete statement of university policy. If any of your assignments are late for any reason I may grade your work but I will not be responsible for providing extensive feedback on late assignments.

**Academic Honesty**

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

**Student Feedback**

You will be given the opportunity to provide me, as well as the college administration, with written feedback and to evaluate the course structure and its conduct. However, you should feel free to bring any concerns to my attention at any time during the semester. We welcome your input, feedback and constructive criticism on this course.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 August 22, 2011
Topic: Introduction to the class.
Readings: none
Assignment Due: none

Week 2 August 29, 2011
Topic: The Question of God
Readings: Nicholi
Assignment Due: In class discussion

Week 3 September 5, 2011
Topic: Interpersonal Relationship and the inner life
Readings: Augustine
Assignment Due: In class discussion

Week 4 September 12, 2011
Topic: Communication, Faith, Teaching & Story
Readings: Chesterton & Lewis
Assignment Due: In class discussion

Week 5 September 19, 2011
Topic: What is the cost of communication?
Readings: Bonhoeffer
Assignment Due: In class discussion & Term Paper Topic Due: September 19, 2011.

Week 6 September 26, 2011
Topic: Faith & Imagination
Readings: Jensen
Assignment Due: In class discussion

Week 7 October 3, 2011
Topic: Telling the Truth & Story
Readings: Kiekegaard & Craddock (read Craddock first)
Assignment Due: In class discussion

Week 8 October 10, 2011
Topic: Story, Communication, Christian Worldview
Readings: Sayers
Assignment Due: In class discussion & brief outline of Major Paper Due: October 10, 2011.

Week 9 October 17, 2011
Topic: Spring Break (NO CLASS)
Readings: none
Assignment Due: none
**Week 10 October 24, 2011**
*Topic: Communication, Rituals and Worldview*
*Readings: Smith*
*Assignment Due:* In class discussion

**Week 11 October 31, 2011**
*Topic: Flannery O'Connor*
*Readings: Articles and Stories of O'Connor*
*Assignment Due: Work on paper.*

**Week 12 November 7, 2011**
*Topic: Communication, Media, and Culture*
*Readings: Warren*
*Assignment Due: In class discussion*

**Week 13 November 14, 2011**
*Topic: Postmodernism: A critical analysis of one current worldview.*
*Readings: Webber*
*Assignment Due: In class discussion*

**Week 14 November 21, 2011**
*Topic: Literature Review*
*Readings: Literature Reviewed*
*Assignment Due: Review of New Literature due: November 14, 2011.*

**Week 15 November 28, 2011**
*Topic: Final Project*
*Readings: none*
*Assignment Due: Final Paper due November 28, 2011.*

**Week 16 December 5, 2011**
*Topic: Final Project Review*
*Readings: Review classmates paper as assigned*
*Assignment Due: In class review of your classmate’s final paper by December 5, 2011.*
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.)
- Grading Policies (incompletes, extensions, IPs, etc.)
- 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

STUDENT COURSE EVALUATION

Becoming Christian leaders includes learning how to evaluate others by providing honest evaluations that include positive affirmation and constructive feedback, as appropriate. In addition, such evaluation leads to the continual improvement of courses and student learning. Consequently, university policy requires that all students submit a formal student evaluation of teaching form at the end of the academic term. This mandatory requirement must be completed before students will be able to access their final course grade. This form is only available in an online format. Prior to the end of the course, students will receive an e-mail indicating that the form is available. Instructions on accessing the evaluation will be included. Since these evaluations are only available for a limited time, students should complete the evaluation as soon as they receive the e-mail notification that the evaluation form is available. Instructors will not have access to course evaluations until after grades have been submitted and will only have access to anonymous summary data. Students are also encouraged at any point during the term to offer comments that may be helpful to the improvement or refinement of the course. Students can access the online evaluation system at: http://eval.regent.edu/regentsurvey/students.cfm. If you have questions about the online evaluation please contact evaluation@regent.edu.

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.