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 685
Seminar: Indirect Communication in Critical Perspective
Summer Semester, 2011

DOCTORAL STUDIES PROGRAM

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Associate Professor
Benson Fraser, Ph.D.
Telephone: (757) 352-4227
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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 685
Seminar: Indirect Communication in Critical Perspective

**Rationale/Course Overview**

The development of strategies for communicating the truth (especially in the area of religious communication) is an important topic of interest for communication researchers, theologians and communication scholars in general. The uniqueness of the gospel message (both in content and in apprehension) requires both careful and patient thought. As Murray states “If God is a reality, his reality is unique; it will therefore present to man a unique problem.” The uniqueness of Christ and of the gospel message has bearing on our communication behavior as artists and communication professionals with Christian concerns. This is a major issue for anyone who is serious about communicating the truth of the gospel to others but it takes on special significance for us in light of the fact that our nation (and almost all western nations) has heard the Biblical stories time and time again. The real question may well be how we communicate a “new hearing” of the gospel to (what Kierkegaard would call) Christendom?

Years ago a Danish scholar Soren Kierkegaard began to address the uniqueness of communicating the Gospel to those who thought they already knew the Gospel but did not hold it inwardly. The distinctiveness of “the problem of God” is a challenge for all artists and communication professionals with Christian concerns who are trying to communicate today. This class will take this question seriously and try to advance our understanding of communication scholarship in this area.

**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 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 colloquiaums 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 and developing your own understanding of indirect and direct communication practices. In order to understand how men
and women communicate, particularly on and in the realm of Christian discourse we will be examining several scholars, artists and theologians and authors.

Specific Objectives:
After completing the course you should be able to:
1. Explain what are the implications that Christian theological beliefs have on indirect and direct communication scholarship and theory.
2. Extrapolate implication for indirect and direct communication theory and practice from historical Christian communicators.
3. Identify many of the major theological issues Christian communications scholars are addressing with regard to indirect and direct communication.
4. Demonstrate an integration of personal faith, theological doctrine, and communication scholarship in discussions and scholarly activities of man and women communicating both directly and indirectly.
5. Conceptualize and undertake a research project addressing both a significant of indirect and direct communication for the church and for artists and professional communicators.

Course Materials

Texts (Required)

Readings (Specific chapters from the books listed below will be assigned. I will provide these chapters for you.)

Readings (The articles listed below are to be read for class. I will make these articles available to you.)


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 three major assignments: 1) critical interactions/reviews of the texts and class participation (including discussion and in class assignments), 2) a critical review of a text assigned by the professor, and 3) a major paper.

**Class Participation**

**Assignment 1**

For the first assignment will require bye weekly *critical reviews* of the readings assigned. 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*. I will identify a site for each of you to place your review on the discussion board section of blackboard. Please feel free to read and discuss each other’s papers.

Each critical book review should include the following:

1. A review of the major points make in the article or book.
2. A critical analysis of the major points made in the article or book.
3. 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.
4. Finally, you are to discuss the contribution of this text to our understanding of direct or indirect communication and theology.
5. Relate the assigned readings to *other scholarly writings* and to chapters assigned in the major text (either in step two or three).

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

- If appropriate reflect on the significance of the assigned book in light of its contribution to redemptive communication or to our understanding of the field of communication in general (usually done in step three).
- Include at the end of the critical review or abstract several discussion questions.
These reviews will be part of the class participation grade and will not be individually graded. What I will do is keep a record of your participation and evaluate the papers at the end of the semester. Sometimes you may not have as much time as you would like to complete the assignment and your work will show it. I understand this but you should be able to turn in something even if it is not your best work. You can make up for it by writing a better review on other papers. I would expect your work to improve over the course of the semester as you interact with me and your fellow students—especially after the on campus portion of the class.

Assignment 2

You will be asked to critically review a work identified by the professor. This critical review must take the form of careful analysis and insight into advancing this written document. Included in your paper is: 1) a critical review, 2) comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the ideas presented, 3) suggestions for improving the document and 4) a bibliography of further works to be consulted in order to strengthen the document.

Assignment 3

Each student is required to research and write a scholarly article. The topic of your scholarly paper should be on the contribution of indirect or direct communication to our understanding of those Artists or professional communicators with Christian concerns. For example: What was Bonheoffer’s contribution to indirect communication theory? The professors must approve your topic. The topic for this paper is to be turned in for approval during the week you are on campus. An outline or paper proposal must be submitted on June 10, 2001. The paper is due on August 1, 2011. MLA or APA style sheets are required.

Grading

1. Assignment 30%
2. Assignment 20%
3. Assignment 50%
Total 100%

Assignments turned in late will result in a lowering of the final grade as well as significantly limiting the amount of feedback form the professor.

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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

FOR THE ON CAMPUS PORTION OF THE CLASS

DAY 1 // June 6
Topic: Introduction to the course—communicating Faith in “A Secular Age”
  Worldview and the Fall
  Taylor, Charles. (2007). A Secular Age (selected pages)
Assignments Due: Respond to readings
  Major paper topic

DAY 2 // June 7
Topic: Man, Myth & Imagination
  The Great Commission, the Cultural Mandate & Homo let ergical
  Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. (1954). Life Together (selected pages)
  Smith, K. A. James., (2009). Desiring the Kingdom (selected pages)
Assignments Due: Respond to readings
DAY 3 // June 8
Topic: Indirect Communication & Homo narrative
Turnbull, Jamie. (2008). Kierkegaard, indirect communication, and ambiguity (article)
Assignments Due: Respond to readings

DAY4 // June 9
Topic: Homo Narrative & Making the Familiar Strange
Kierkegaard, Søren. (1962). The Point of View (selected pages)
Ward, Graham. (2006). Narrative and ethics (article)
Assignments Due: Respond to Readings

DAY 5 // June 10
Topic: Ritual, Belief and Technology
Readings: Craddock, F. B. (2001). As one Without Authority
Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. (1999). Fiction from Tegel Prison (selected pages)
Assignments Due: Respond to readings
Outline of major paper

Post-on campus assignments // June 12 – August 2

Topic: Work on Major Paper and write critical review
Readings: Read for Major Paper and critical; review
Assignments Due: Write and work on major paper. Paper is due: August 1, 2011
Write up critical review of assigned document. Due: July 11, 2011
Paper must be emailed to me and submitted on blackboard by midnight on the August 1, 2011.
Review must be emailed to me and submitted on blackboard by midnight on the July 11, 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.)
- 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.

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