Regent University Mission
Regent University serves as a center of Christian thought and action to provide excellent education through a Biblical perspective and global context equipping Christian leaders to change the world.

School of Communication and the Arts Mission
To prepare emerging and established Christian leaders to inspire, enrich and transform the media, the arts, and the academy through excellence and innovation in scholarship and practice.

**COURSE SYLLABUS**

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**SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION & THE ARTS**
**DEPARTMENT OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION & JOURNALISM**

**COM 709**

Theology and Communication

**FALL 2013**

**COURSE TYPE: DISTANCE**

**COURSE INSTRUCTOR: BENSON P. FRASER, PH.D.**

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.
SECTION 1 – COURSE OVERVIEW

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION:
Instructor: Benson P. Fraser, Ph.D.
Telephone: (757) 352-4227
Fax: (757) 352-4275
E-mail: bensfra@regent.edu

In the subject line of your email, please include the course number (COM 709) and have your full name in your email signature. Note: All students are required to keep their mailing address, e-mail address, and telephone numbers up to date in GENISYS to facilitate communication between instructors and students.

Office Hours: Wednesday 9-12 & 2-5
Office Location: Room 262, Second floor of the Communication Building
Best time to contact me: During office hours

Welcome to our class on Theology and Communication. I hope that this class both challenges and encourages you to live out the Christian faith. There is a lot of reading in this class but I believe it will both inspire you and strengthen your intellect and embodiment of the faith.

SHORT BIO
I have been teaching here at Regent for over 27 years and I love teaching in the doctoral program. I use both qualitative and quantitative methodologies in conduction my research but I generally prefer questions that require the qualitative research approach. My most recently qualitative work has been published in the Journal of International and Inter cultural Communication and is on Maasai women and development.

My doctoral degree is from the University of Washington and I have taught at several colleges before coming to Regent University. I live two blocks from the beach and love the ocean--even in the winter. I have two boys who live in California so I am often in California. Also, I founded a nonprofit organization called Friends for African Development (FAD) that does ministry and development work in Tanzania and Kenya--I frequently visit Africa. Finally, teaching is a passion of mine and I teach a doctoral class on C. S. Lewis that meets at Oxford for a week during the summer. If anyone is interested in joining me and taking this class please let me know. If you need to talk to me you can call me at 757-352-4227 or just email me at bensfra@regent.edu.

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

Theme Scripture:
John 11: 35 “Jesus wept.”
INTEGRATION OF FAITH

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.
SECTION 2 – COURSE EXPECTATIONS

COURSE OUTCOMES
Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

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 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.
REQUIRED MATERIALS
Students are responsible for acquiring the following books and materials for this course before the first class meeting:


**Note:** The School has partnered with the Regent Bookstore to have textbooks available for purchase for all students, including distance students. Items may be ordered using the secured online catalog found at [www.regentbookstore.net](http://www.regentbookstore.net).

- Daily access to the Internet and email
- Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, etc.) version 2007 or later.
- The latest version of a web browser compatible with Blackboard and media players. For assistance, visit the links provided in the Helpful Resources section of the course in Blackboard or contact IT Helpdesk via their website, phone at 757-352-4076, or email helpdesk@regent.edu.
- Additional materials (e.g., PowerPoint files, quizzes, media, and the like) may be provided via Blackboard. Students are responsible for the information and materials distributed in class and on Blackboard (see “Use of Blackboard” below for more information).
- Understand and adhere to the [Regent Honor Code](http://regent.edu) found in the Student Handbook. A persistent link can also be found in Blackboard’s “RU Resources” tab.
Recommended Course Materials:
• Other resources such as writing style guides, Blackboard tutorials, University policies, IT Helpdesk, and information may be accessed via the “RU” and “Helpful Resources” tabs in Blackboard as well as in the Helpful Resources section of this course.

USE OF BLACKBOARD
Blackboard will be used to aid communication and delivery of extemporaneous and other content as the semester progresses. We may also utilize the Discussion Board to extend our in-class discussions. Participation in Blackboard does not supplant course requirements for attendance or class participation. Therefore, while access to and use of Blackboard is required for this course, it should not be seen as a surrogate for class attendance or other course requirements. Also, please keep the following in mind:

• All discussion posts should be scholarly in nature and respectful of colleagues.

• Students are expected to check the Announcements section of Blackboard each week beginning one week before the start of the course.

• Students must keep their e-mail address current in Genisys in order to receive communications from Blackboard and the instructor. Students are expected to check their Regent e-mail daily to ensure timely receipt of messages from the professor.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION
Attendance and active participation is required in order to complete this course. It is expected that you will attend all class sessions. If you miss more than one class without written permission from the professor your grade will be lowered.

Note: International students should consult the Office of International Student Services before registering for a Distance or Modular course.

SUBMISSION OF ASSIGNMENTS
Unless otherwise instructed, all assignments for this course must be submitted via the “Assignment Link” found in Blackboard. All files should be submitted using the following naming convention:

YourName_AssignmentName (e.g. John Smith_Essay 1)

• Papers should be in MS Word format (.docx) compliant with the APA writing style guide.

Unless otherwise stated in Blackboard, no assignment will be accepted if submitted via any method other than Blackboard. Assignments are due no later than 11:59 pm on Monday. It is recommended that students give themselves a buffer of time before the deadline to allow for troubleshooting should your upload attempt fail. Students should look at the assignment submission page to verify that the submission was successful.

Late Assignments
You are expected to meet all assignment due dates. If there is a reason why you may be late immediately contact the professor. Your grade will be lowered, at the professor’s digression, if you turn in a late assignment.

NOTE: Technical difficulties when submitting to Blackboard will not be accepted unless documented by the IT Help Desk. The IT Help Desk is your first point of contact for problems with Blackboard. Deadline extensions will be allowed only when a system issue occurring on Blackboard’s side is documented by Regent University IT department.
METHOD OF EVALUATION

The final grade for the course will reflect mastery of course content and quality of thought as expressed in:

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. These reviews are due in class the week they are assigned—see Course Schedule. The reviews will not be individually graded but I will evaluate the total body of your work at the end of the semester as part of the in class assignments. Some weeks you will have time to do more and other weeks you will not have time to do as much. That is expected as long as you have a good balance and understanding of the material at the end of the semester. Your critical reviews and the in class discussion will make up the class participation part of your grade.

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 5, 2013.

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 Bonhoeffer’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 17, 2013. An outline of the paper is due November 12, 2013. The paper is due on November 26, 2013. 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 3, 2013 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).

1. Assignment 30%
2. Assignment 10%
3. Assignment 50%
4. Assignment 10%
Total 100%
**Grading Rubric**

The following grading scale will be used:

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<th>Quality Points</th>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>93-95</td>
<td>3.67</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>90-92</td>
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**SECTION 3 – SCHEDULE AND EVALUATION**

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

The schedule below includes the due dates for all assignments in this course. It is recommended that you place this Course Schedule in a convenient place and refer to it each week of the course. You need to follow it closely, as late assignments may be subject to a grade reduction.

Tuesday marks the beginning of the week for this course. Therefore, **unless otherwise stated in Blackboard, assignments for each week must be submitted no later than Monday, 11:59 pm (Eastern time) of each week.**

**Week 1: August 20 to August 26**
- **Topic:** Introduction to the class.
- **Readings:** none
- **Assignment Due:** none

**Week 2: August 27 to September 2**
- **Topic:** The Question of God
- **Readings:** Nicholi
- **Assignment Due:** In class discussion

**Week 3: September 3 to September 9**
- **Topic:** Interpersonal Relationship and the inner life
- **Readings:** Augustine
- **Assignment Due:** In class discussion
Week 4: September 10 to September 16  
**Topic:** Communication, Faith, Teaching & Story  
**Readings:** Chesterton & Lewis  
**Assignment Due:** In class discussion

Week 5: September 17 to September 23  
**Topic:** What is the cost of communication?  
**Readings:** Bonhoeffer  
**Assignment Due:** In class discussion & Term Paper Topic Due: September 17, 2013.

Week 6: September 24 to September 30  
**Topic:** Telling the Truth & Story  
**Readings:** Kiekegaard & Craddock  
**Assignment Due:** In class discussion

Week 7: October 1 to October 7  
**Topic:** Story, Communication, Christian Worldview  
**Readings:** Sayers  
**Assignment Due:** In class discussion.

Week 8: October 8 to October 14  
**Topic:** Communication, Rituals and Worldview  
**Readings:** Smith  
**Assignment Due:** In class discussion

Week 9: October 15 to October 21  
**Topic:** Spring Break (NO CLASS)  
**Readings:** none  
**Assignment Due:** none

Week 10: October 22 to October 28  
**Topic:** Flannery O’Connor  
**Readings:** Articles and Stories of O’Connor  
**Assignment Due** Work on paper.

Week 11: October 29 to November 4  
**Topic:** Communication, Media, and Culture  
**Readings:** Warren  
**Assignment Due:** In class discussion
Week 12: November 5 to November 11  
Topic: Literature Review  
Readings: Literature Reviewed  
Assignment Due: Review of New Literature (November 5).

Week 13: November 12 to November 18  
Readings: Webber  
Assignment Due: In class discussion & Outline for the Final Paper (November 12)

Week 14: November 19 to November 25  
Topic: Review of Class material  
Readings: Reading for final paper  
Assignment Due: Work on Final Paper

Week 15: November 26 to December 2  
Topic: Final Project  
Readings: Professor assigns final paper review!  
Assignment Due: Final Paper (November 26).

Week 16: December 3 to December 9  
Topic: Final Project Review  
Readings: Review classmates paper as assigned  
Assignment Due: Review of assigned classmate’s final paper (December 3).

SECTION 4 – PROGRAM GOALS

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION AND THE ARTS MISSION STATEMENT  
To prepare emerging and established Christian leaders to inspire, enrich and transform the media, the arts, and the academy through excellence and innovation in scholarship and practice.

PROGRAM GOALS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION & JOURNALISM.

Ph.D. in Communication

1. Christian Worldview: Development of Christian worldview as professionals working in the field of communication study.
2. Academics: Exploration of at least a dozen important theories of human communication and of the three common methodological approaches used to conduct communication research.
3. Christian Community: Development of Christian community at Regent University through interactions with other Regent University students, faculty and staff.
5. Global Competence: Understanding of international and intercultural communication through interactions with international students, communication scholarship, and travel to other countries for teaching, research and ministry.
M.A. in Communication; Major: Strategic Communication
1. **Christian Worldview**: Development of a personal Christian worldview as professionals working in the field of communication with specialization in strategic communication.
2. **Academics**: Exploration of at least a dozen theories of human communication and knowledge of the common methodologies used to conduct communication research.
3. **Christian Community**: Development of Christian community at Regent University through interactions with other Regent University students, faculty and staff.
4. **Mission Impact**: Knowledge of the global implications of technologies used for strategic communication.
5. **Global Competence**: Understanding of international and intercultural communication through interactions with international students, communication scholarship, and travel to other countries for teaching, research and ministry.

M.A. in Journalism; Major: Journalism
1. **Christian Worldview**: Application of biblically-based approaches to the practices of journalism.
2. **Academics**: Exploration of emerging theories, skills and practices of journalism as it pertains to all areas of media and society, with knowledge of the changing forces that influence journalistic media standards and practices.
3. **Christian Community**: Development of Christian community through interactions with other Regent University students, faculty and staff.
5. **Global Competence**: Exploration of the interactive nature of the Internet as it pertains to professional journalistic practices and the media industry, particularly as it intersects with the impact on local and global media communications and community.

M.A. in Communication; Major: Cinema-Television
1. **Christian Worldview**: Biblically-based exploration of the impact of cinema-TV on the audience and/or creators.
2. **Academics**: Sustaining a creative educational experience where students learn through scholarship and the creation of artistic projects that examine and reflect our ever-changing industry.
3. **Christian Community**: Fostering an environment in and out of the classroom that promotes the principles of a Christian community.
4. **Global Competence**: Critically examining through scholarship and creative projects the aesthetics and techniques of artists and artifacts (in film, video, internet, etc.) from various cultures.
5. **Stewardship**: Teaching biblical and professional principles of faithful stewardship through scholarship and practice.

**SECTION 5 – UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

Students should become familiar with all university policies as outlined in the Student Handbook including:

- Disability services (Note: Requests for accommodation must first be submitted through Disability Services).
- Regent Honor Code (as an academic and Christian community, Regent University takes seriously the call for integrity and penalizes breaches of academic integrity.)
• Withdrawing from a course or the University

• Discipline policies

A link to the Student Handbook can also be found in Blackboard’s “RU Resources” tab along with links to University Library, Student Services, University Bookstore, academic writing assistance resources, and more.

Blackboard’s “Help” tab provides additional resources including:

• Blackboard tutorials

• IT Help Desk contact information

STUDENT COURSE EVALUATION

Students have the opportunity to provide feedback throughout the course through e-mail, telephone, and on-campus appointments. Near the end of the course, students will complete an anonymous online course evaluation form. Since the results contribute to improving course design and presentation, it is important that students be honest and constructive in their evaluations. Students will receive an e-mail reminder from the University when it is time to complete these evaluations. Please take time to provide this input. Students can access the online evaluation system at:

http://eval.regent.edu/regent/survey/students.cfm

If you have questions about the online evaluation please contact evaluation@regent.edu.

This syllabus is subject to change without notice.

Last updated: 7/25/2013