



Nazarene Theological Seminary

1700 E Meyer Blvd • Kansas City, MO 64131 • 816/268-5400

CED605 Mediated Religion Fall 2008

Instructor Information

Professor: Dean Blevins, Ph.D.
Office: (816) 268-5481
Office Hours: Tuesday appointment

Email: dgblevins@nts.edu
Home/Cell: (913) 523-3857 Please do not call
between 9:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m.

Catalog Description

An exploration between Christian faith and current mediated art forms, particularly as they form and shape public "knowing" and ecclesial practice. Students in the course will survey the role of media in culture, explore new forms of media technology, review emerging skills needed to implement the technology, and investigate media's influence in relation to the church.

Course Narrative & Rationale

Mediated Religion provides a "sampler" of the many ways media and religion intersect and engender our understanding of faith and community life. The course assumes that often our understanding of Christian faith and doctrine are interwoven with the media available to local culture. In oral traditions faith is often communicated through narratives; with the rise of printing press faith was seen more in the forms of rational, linear, order; and the current emphasis on the visual and non-linear modes of communication change the "location" of faith from simply cognition to holistic. Such assertions are not absolutes (we have not lost the narrative quality of faith, nor analytic rationality) but they remind us, as Marshal McLuhan notes, the "medium massages the message" so that we "know" our faith through these mediated forms. This course will explore theories of mediated religion, critical and creative in nature, and attempt to tease out their implications...particularly as different forms of media, and faith, intersect. Readings will provide a helpful backdrop and students will be afforded some selection. A key assumption is that the learner will bring his or her knowledge to the class community so that we will construct our understanding of mediated religion together.

Educational Assumptions:

1. The work of the Holy Spirit is essential to the processes of Christian education at any level. I will consistently request the Spirit's presence within and among us.
2. Christian teaching and learning is best done in the context of community. Christian community remains the gift of the Spirit, enhanced or hindered by human effort.
3. Students are valued not only as persons who have potential to learn, but also as persons who already have significant knowledge and experiences to contribute to the purposes of the course. Consequently, some of the course assignments will require cooperative efforts among students. Such cooperation is inherent in a Christian community of learning.
4. The course focuses on the community of faith expressed in a local congregation or parish. In order for the purposes of the course to be fulfilled, each student should have a local church or parish in which he/she regularly participates or is able to "call to mind" a recent congregation that provides a living context for ministry discussion..

5. This is a graduate course. The quality of thinking, writing, speech, and class participation should reflect a graduate level quality. Higher levels of thought (e.g., analysis, synthesis, and evaluation), writing style, spelling, grammar, as well as faithful attendance, consideration of fellow students and their ideas, and timely submission of assignments is expected.

Students with Disabilities:

It is my commitment to make a reasonable effort to facilitate learning for students capable of graduate level seminary work. Any student who has a condition that may prevent full demonstration of his/her abilities as the course is presently designed should contact me at the beginning of the semester to discuss alternative educational practices that have served the student well in the past, and appropriate, mutually acceptable strategies for the present to insure the student's maximum participation and appropriate evaluation in the course. Student learning limitations need to be based on sound clinical diagnosis and include referential material to help with assessment.

Course Outcomes

Upon completion of the course students should demonstrate:

1. Discern both critically and creatively the influence of media on religious thought in light of Christian theological convictions and contextual perspectives.
2. Demonstrate new technical competencies for organically incorporating media in ministry
3. Articulate a working approach to media discernment and implementation in local ministry
4. Demonstrate research capabilities in the field of media theory for future exploration and ministry development

Required Texts & Course Materials

Hipps, Shane A. *The Hidden Power of Electronic Culture: How Media Shapes Faith, The Gospel, and Church*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005. (166 pages) ISBN 0-310-26274-7

Warren, Michael. *Seeing Through the Media: A Religious View of Communications and Cultural Analysis*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997 (193) ISBN 1-56338-211-3

Taylor, Barry. *Entertainment Theology: New-Edge Spirituality in a Digital Democracy*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008. (211 pp) ISBN 978-0-8010-3237-0

NOTE: Several online resources will be employed including articles and pod-casts during the class

Recommended: Choose one from the following:

Clark, Lynn Schofield. *From Angels to Aliens: Teenagers, The Media, and the Supernatural*, New York: Oxford Press, 2003 ISBN 0-19-530023-8

Moore, Jason and Len Wilson. *Design Matters: Creating Powerful Images for Worship*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006. (113 pages) ISBN 0-687-49446-X

Sample, Tex. *Powerful Persuasion: Multimedia Witness in Christian Worship*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005. (197 pages) ISBN 0-687-33901-4

Schultze, Quentin J. *Habits of the High-Tech Heart: Living Virtuously in the Information Age*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002 (207 pages) ISBN 0801027810

Recommended but out of print (elective)

Mitchell, Joylon and Sophia Marriage, Eds. *Mediating Religion: Conversations in Media, Religion and Culture*. London: T & T Clark, 2003. (350 pages) ISBN 0-567-08807-3

Course Assignments & Requirements

1. **Class participation:** (400 points) students are expected to read and discuss assigned reading in a timely fashion. Students will be given some latitude with what they read many of the weeks of class (choosing from a range of readings). For the sake of other learners in the class, students need to be able include engage, summarize, and apply readings not only for themselves but their classmates. The assumption remains that our collective insight weekly will make for a richer learning community.

Blackboard Discussion Component: To assist in this process, and also to allow students to demonstrate process strengths more written than oral, a Blackboard discussion process will be included. Students will be required to **report two crucial** insights or emerging themes from the assigned weekly reading (including citing the location of the insight) **before midnight Saturday prior to class**. In addition students will **write responses to two insights**, one of their own and one posted by another student in the class, and **discuss the implications of this knowledge** for ministry **before midnight Monday prior to class**. The quality of these discussions will provide background for in-class discussion as well.

2. **Comparative Book review** (100 points): Students will be asked to read and write a 5-7 comparative review of Shane Hipps' *The Hidden Power of Electronic Culture: How Media Shapes Faith, The Gospel, and Church* and Michael Warrens' *Seeing Through the Media: A Religious View of Communications and Cultural Analysis*. This review should note the overarching theory of media analysis that guides each text, their nuanced differences and observations of how both assist in understanding religion and media.

3. **Reading reaction** (50 pts): Students will be asked to read/survey one of the recommended texts and provide a "reaction" paper. The paper need only note the central theme of the book and how it contributes to the larger conversation on mediated religion. Students may recommend specific use in ministry contexts or merely suggest the implications for ministry, 2-3 pages maximum.

4. **Research topic:** (250 points) Each student will select one key issue in mediated religion and explore it to a greater depth through academic research. Preliminary approval of the topic and a working Bibliography must be submitted prior to mid-semester break. If presented as a paper will be 7-8 pages in length, reflecting sound research methods including: establishing a key thesis for the paper, establishing backing and warrants for the thesis as well as providing qualifications as necessary, and following Turabian form and style. **HOWEVER**, Students may present their findings through other forms of media as appropriate including: the development of a website, creation of a documentary, or creation (and delivery) of a multimedia presentation. Students electing alternative approaches need to consult with the professor to insure that both academic rigor and creativity inform the project.

5). **Comprehensive essay** (100 points). At the end of the semester the student will write a summative essay (5-7 pages) giving their own approach to discerning media that will guide future ministry. This summative paper may draw from sources within the class but should reflect the student's synthesis of the material presented in class.

6) **Oral Final** (100 points): Students will be asked to participate in an oral final examination discussing aspects of the class. The professor will initiate the conversation but students will be asked to sustain the conversation. In addition students will be asked to provide assessment of the course (oral and written).

Method for Submitting Assignments

Please use the assignments section of Black Board unless otherwise directed.

Policy Regarding Late Work & Missed Exams

Late posts receive a 15% daily reduction the week of the assignment. Posting after the assigned week will not be graded. All research/project work is due midnight of the date assigned. Late work without a valid reason (illness or death in family) is reduced by 15% the first week and an additional 10% each week following. No coursework may be submitted after the last day of the regular semester.

Course Grading

1000-901: A 900-801: B 800-701: C 700-600:D 599 or Below: F

Grade Descriptions

“A”-EXCEPTIONAL WORK (surpassing, markedly outstanding achievement of course objectives)

“B”-GOOD WORK (strong, significant achievement of course objectives)

“C”-ACCEPTABLE WORK (basic, essential achievement of course objectives)

“D”-MARGINAL WORK (inadequate, minimal achievement of course objectives)

“F”-UNACCEPTABLE WORK (failure to achieve course objectives)

See rubrics for major assignments and posting for further information on assessment.

Working Class Schedule (subject to change) with readings & resources

| Date | Topic | Reading |
|----------------|---|---|
| Wk 1 9/9 | Introduction/Class Theme | HP=Hidden Power of Electronic Culture MR = Mediating Religion (optional readings) |
| Wk 2 9/16 | Definitions and Methods Orality Considerations | Supplemental Material tba MR chpts 1, 2, 8, 12 |
| Wk 3 9/23 | Literature/Publishing/Journalism | HP chapt 3 (pp. 45-61) Supplemental Material includes 50 pages from <i>Religious Education</i> Vol 103, no 3 (May-June, 2008); MR chpt. 10 |
| Wk 4 9/30 | Drama/ Sports | Pdf documents online at Blackboard, |
| Wk 5 10/7 | Music/Radio/Broadcasting | Supplemental Material tba including either Begbie or Carter podcast at Black Board Site MR chpt 9 |
| Wk 6 10/14 | Television as entertainment and news | Supplemental Material tba MR chpts 3, 4, 6, 11 |
| Wk 7 10/21 | R & R | |
| Wk 8 10/28 | Theoretical Discussion/ Advertising (case study) | Comparative Book Review (Hipps and Warren) |
| Wk 9 11/4 | Film | Supplemental Material tba MR chpts 15-18 |
| Wk 10 11/11 | Gaming | Reading tba NOTE: research topic and Bibliography due |
| Wk 11 11/18 | Internet/Blogs/Podcasting | Supplemental Material tba MR chpts 19-23 |
| Wk 12 11/25 | Worship/ Graphic Arts/Screens | <i>TBD</i> |
| Wk 13 12/2 | Mediated Religion: future considerations | |
| Wk 14 12/9 | Final exam Dec 12th | |

Grading Rubrics

Posting Rubric

| | Poor | Below Average | Average | Great |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| Participation and Initiative Shown | Rarely participates in discussion; does not make an effort to participate; seems indifferent | Limited initiative, does not post minimum requirement; occasionally makes meaningful reflection on group's efforts; marginal effort to become involved with group | Posts minimum requirement; attempts to direct the discussion and to present relevant viewpoints for consideration by group | Demonstrates good self-initiative; posts frequently; attempts to direct the discussion and to present relevant viewpoints for consideration by group; interacts freely |
| Relevance of Posts | Posts responses which do not relate to the discussion content; makes short or irrelevant remarks | Occasionally posts off topic; most responses are short in length and offer no further insight into the topic | Frequently posts responses that are related to discussion content; prompts further discussion of topic | Consistently posts responses related to discussion topic; cites additional references related to topic to further discussion |
| Clarity of opinions/ideas; connection to topic | Does not express opinions or ideas clearly; evidences grammatical/spelling mistakes | Unclear connection to topic evidenced in minimal expression of opinions or ideas; occasional spelling/grammatical errors | Opinions and ideas are stated clearly; occasional lack of connection to topic; well-written and presented | Expresses opinions and ideas in a clear and concise manner with obvious connection to topic; well-planned |
| Totals | | | | |
| | | | | |

Grading Rubric for Reading and Research

Student

| Preliminary Considerations | Cognitive Levels (Reasoning) | Recognition & Recall | Comprehension | Analysis | Synthesis | Evaluation | Comments |
|--------------------------------|---|---|--|---|--|--|----------|
| Target Level | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| | Reading/ Research Indicators | | | | | | |
| Point/ percentage of writing | Overview of writing or introduction to paper | Able to identify/ state key claim(s) of reading/ paper | Able to explain claims in clear & concise manner | Able to indicate how key claim develops through reading/writing | Relates Key Claim to Class focus | Indicates importance of material to Class focus | |
| Point/ percentage of writing | Primary review/ development of writing | Identifies primary support claims and backing | Able to define clearly & concisely support claims, backing, and qualifications | Able to identify warrants & assumptions support claims & backing | Relates support claims to each other and to class focus | Able to show relative strengths and weaknesses of support claims | |
| Point/ percentage of writing | Personal Interaction | Connects specific claims to personal interaction | Demonstrates why claim elicits response | Reflection nuances range of writings support claims | Reflection indicates sources that endorse/dispute writing | Reflection references constructive alternatives or application | |
| | Argumentation Level | Attention | Structure | Response | Detail | Demand | |
| Target Level | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Point/ percentage of writing | Form & Style Level | Demonstrates standard form (pagination) and clear writing style | Consistent outline with headings and subheadings detailing development of argument | Forceful writing with consistent documentation at key claims and clear transitions and anticipates qualifications | Documentation addresses supporting claims & backing internally with detailed transitions and intersects with issues in class | Wide range of academic sources with strong rhetorical skills at each level. Clearly identified audience to elicit response | |
| | Surprise Factor | | | | | | |
| Total point/ percentage | | | | | | | |