COM/THL/SRP 479: Communication and Theology

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Office hours: Tues/Wed/Thur, 2:30 – 4:00 pm; or by appointment

Based on Jesuit traditions, the Department of Communication Studies recognizes that communication competence is an integral component of an undergraduate Liberal Arts education. Therefore, we prepare students to reach their potential as citizen-scholars through the individual development of communication competence at both the theoretical and applied levels. To do this, we provide a scholarly environment that includes participative learning, encourages critical thinking, embraces diversity, and promotes social consciousness.

Communication . . .
   . . . constructing reality
   . . . creating connections
   . . . engaging community
   . . . enabling change
   . . . serving the greater good.

COURSE RESOURCES:

1. Guest Lectures (pending course approval): (a) By Creighton Jesuits Dennis Hamm (scripture), Gregory Carlson (humanities), Laurence Gillick (spirituality), Andrew Alexander (the internet), Donald Doll (modern media), Michael Flecky (photography), William Harmless (Christology; Interreligious Dialogue), Eric Zimmer (Cross-Disciplinary Study; Social Media--the Rich and the Poor). (b) By Creighton Experts Erika Kirby (Organizational Studies) and John O’Keefe (Communications and Historical Theology).

2. Reading materials will be articles, monographs, book chapters, and other documents available on BlueLine. Films will also be assigned for viewing. The course schedule previews the readings to be used.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

BULLETIN DESCRIPTION: This course explores communication from a Christian perspective. Christian values such as charity, justice, freedom, human dignity, reconciliation, and peace as developed in Sacred Scripture, Church documents, and by great Christian thinkers are applied critically to issues and cases from three areas of communication studies: Interpersonal Communication, Organizational Communication, and Mass Communication.

EXPANDED DESCRIPTION FOR ACTUAL SYLLABUS: Students of this course will study communication from a Christian perspective. The course is interdisciplinary, featuring the discovery of crossroads and the common ground of Theology (e.g., Sacred Scripture, Christology, Ignatian Spirituality, Christian Ethics) and Communication. Values such as charity, justice, freedom, human dignity, reconciliation, and peace as developed in Sacred Scripture, Church documents, and by great Christian thinkers are applied critically to issues and cases from three areas of communication studies: Interpersonal Communication, Organizational Communication, and Mass Communication.

In addition to being interdisciplinary in content, this course will also be interdisciplinary in its mode of instruction. Guest lecturers will give insights into Communication and Theology from the perspective of...
their respective disciplinary specialties. The course will also review the interface of Communication Studies and Theology with public culture by addressing pertinent social issues as they relate to the responsible use of the power and means of social communication. Further, going beyond moral responsibility, it will explore the Christian mandate to use this power and these means for the greater common good and to foster the union of minds and hearts in ways that reflect the vision and example of Christ.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

After completing the course, students will be able to:

1. Apply theological and ethical concepts and values such as charity, justice, freedom, human dignity, reconciliation, and peace (as developed in Sacred Scripture, Church documents, and by great Christian thinkers) to issues in:
   a. Interpersonal Communication,
   b. Organizational Communication, and

2. Articulate ways for the Christian community to deal with the power and effects of secular media on society.

3. Explore the ways and means by which the Christian community itself can use media to address social issues, and work with media professionals to use the power and means of human communication for the greater good.

4. Integrate the study of Theology and Communication with their learning and experiences from working through the University’s core curriculum and the curricular fundamentals of their major.

**COURSE TOPICS:**

- Peace, reconciliation, and the field of communication: How can we use the means of communication to heal the divisions of society and to counteract society’s fragmentation by building community?
- The relationships between communication, community and culture: How can Christian values empower us to make these relationships symbiotic?
- Communication and the common good: Truth, Justice, and Faith.
- A Christian vision for communication: the process of communication according to the insights of Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits.
- The responsibility of communicators to their respective listeners, viewers, and readers.
- Interreligious Dialogue (dealing with issues related to the common ground and also the points of division between and among Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Muslims, and believers from other religious traditions).

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS TO ASSESS COURSE OBJECTIVES***:

- One-Page Paper Assignments (25%)
- Mid Term Exam (25%)
- Final Exam (30%)
- Class Attendance and Participation (20%)
* As a certified writing course, students will submit assignments totaling a minimum of 25 pages. In addition, certified writing guidelines provide for the revision of work (see one-page papers).

Students are expected to attend all classes, take tests, and submit papers and other work at the times specified. The professor will evaluate students who are repeatedly absent from class to ascertain their ability to achieve the course objectives, and to continue in the course. The Professor will announce in advance, tests and examinations based on material covered in class lectures and discussions, as well as other assigned material. A student who is absent from class on the day of a previously announced examination including the final examination is not entitled, as a matter of right, to make up what was missed. The professor involved is free to decide whether a make-up will be allowed.

ONE-PAGE PAPER ASSIGNMENTS: Throughout the course, students will complete 13 “one-page paper” assignments (200 -300 words). The first will be submitted as a draft for criticism; the student will then write a final draft with revisions taking into account the professor’s critique. Once graded, the first paper is worth 1% of course grade. Students will then be prepared to write the remaining series of papers, and those 12 will be weighted at 2% (of course grade) each.

MIDTERM AND FINAL EXAMS: Midterm and final examinations will be typewritten (word processed) scholarly essays. The technical requirements of this kind of writing will be taught, and correctness of grammar and spelling, and the avoidance of typographical errors will be expected. Grading of these exams will include the assessment of the essays according to the standards of Creighton University’s certified writing courses.

CLASS ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION: A substantial (20%) of the course grade is comprised of marks for the quality and quantity of the student’s participation in class. Participation is comprised of oral reports that are used to start class, contributions to class discussion, and attendance. A student who is absent from class is responsible for obtaining knowledge of what happened in class, including information about announced tests, papers, or other assignments. A student missing a class is also expected to consult with classmates and to review class notes for lecture material missed while absent. [In cases of prolonged absence the student or a family member should communicate with the Dean of Arts and Sciences as soon as the prospect of extended absence becomes clear.]

COURSE POLICIES:

ATTENDANCE: (See prior section.)

CLASS CANCELLATION: If the weather is severe enough to create a question as to whether we will have class, the policy is: If a decision is made to cancel a class for inclement weather, a message will be left on the instructor’s voicemail and an e-mail will be sent via BlueLine. If at all possible, a departmental representative will also post a note on the classroom door.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS (Mechanics and Late Policy): All out-of-class writing assignments MUST be typed (unless otherwise indicated by me). Style and mechanics of writing will affect the grade. Unless otherwise directed, all outside of class assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date. Work is late as soon as papers have been collected. Late assignments in this class will result in a five percent reduction (on a 100% scale) from the grade otherwise merited for each day beyond the due date. If you have an emergency, please notify your instructor as soon as possible. Emergencies do NOT include computers and printers that crash or otherwise do not work. Allow yourself enough time to print professional-looking work despite equipment failure; know where you can use back-up equipment quickly.
ACADEMIC CONDUCT: You are expected to abide by general University rules and regulations. The pursuit of knowledge can proceed only when scholars take responsibility and receive credit for their work. Recognition of individual contributions to knowledge and of the intellectual property of others builds trust within the university and encourages the sharing of ideas that is essential to scholarship. Similarly, the educational process requires that individuals present their own ideas and insights for evaluation, critique, and eventual reformulation. Presentation of others’ work as one’s own is not only intellectual dishonesty, but also undermines the educational process. Academic integrity is violated by any dishonest act which is committed in an academic context including, but not restricted to the following.

Cheating is the fraudulent or dishonest presentation of work. Cheating includes but is not limited to:
- use/attemted use of unauthorized aids in exams or other academic exercises submitted for evaluation;
- fabrication, falsification, or misrepresentation of sources for papers or reports;
- falsification of papers, official records, or reports;
- copying from another student’s work;
- unauthorized cooperation in completing assignments or during an examination;
- the use of purchased essays or term papers, or of purchased preparatory research for such papers;
- submission of the same written work in more than one course without prior written approval from the instructors involved;
- dishonesty in requests for make-up exams, for extensions of deadlines for submitting papers, and in any other matter relating to a course.

Plagiarism is the deliberate act of taking the words, ideas, data, illustrations, or statements of another person or source, and presenting them as one’s own. Each student is responsible for learning and using proper methods of paraphrasing and footnoting, quotation, and other forms of citation, to ensure that the original author, speaker, illustrator, or source of the material used is clearly acknowledged.

Collusion is defined as assistance or an attempt to assist another student in an act of academic dishonesty. Collusion is distinct from collaborative learning, which may be a valuable component of students’ scholarly development. Acceptable levels of collaboration vary in different courses, and students are expected to consult with their instructor if they are uncertain whether their cooperative activities are acceptable.

Other breaches of academic integrity include:
- the misrepresentation of one’s own or another’s identity for academic purposes;
- the misrepresentation of material facts or circumstances in relation to examinations, papers, or other evaluative activities;
- the unauthorized removal, mutilation, or deliberate concealment of materials in University libraries, media, or academic resource centers.

Academic dishonesty of any type will not be tolerated. All violations will be referred to appropriate people for specific disciplinary action. Any form of cheating or plagiarism may result in at a minimum, a failing grade (0) for that assignment, at an intermediate level, a drop of a letter in your final course grade, and potentially a failing grade for the entire course. a grade of “F” for the assignment, and may result in an “F” for the course. For details, consult the Bulletin and the Handbook [http://www.creighton.edu/Registrar/Bulletin/COURSES/administrationandsuper.htm](http://www.creighton.edu/Registrar/Bulletin/COURSES/administrationandsuper.htm) and the policy in Arts & Sciences at [http://www2.creighton.edu/fileadmin/user/CCAS/docs/acadhonesty.html](http://www2.creighton.edu/fileadmin/user/CCAS/docs/acadhonesty.html)

To help preserve academic integrity, the Student Senate drafted an Integrity Code in 2003 and asked the College to endorse it and promote its use by our faculty through an Integrity Pledge. In keeping with this policy drafted by your peers, from time to time you will be presented with the Pledge for your signature on
Assignments in this course are graded in terms of percentages. This scale is used for each individual assignment, as well as for the final grade. A grade of “C” is considered average, and indicates that the minimum requirements of the project/course have been met [see below]. It is your responsibility to keep a record of your graded assignments until the end of the term. At the end of the term, your percentage will be compiled, and a grade assigned using the following grading scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90-100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87.5-89.99%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80-87.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77.5-79.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70-77.49%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-69.99%</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>less than 60%</td>
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To earn an “A” on a written assignment (excellent work), students must meet the criteria for a “B” assignment as well as:
1. Demonstrate exceptional skill in using the elements of written communication to create understanding and acceptance of the assignment;
2. demonstrate a clear understanding of components that constitute communication competence; and
3. demonstrate a level of clarity, vividness, and succinctness that shows remarkable command of writing.

To earn a “B” on a written assignment (above average work), students must meet the criteria for a “C” assignment as well as:
1. Demonstrate insight into the relationship between the course concepts and application;
2. demonstrate skillful use of transitions, internal summaries, and evidence to communicate your viewpoint or argument; and
3. provide detailed information that exceeds the basic requirements of the assignment.

To earn a “C” on a written assignment (average work), students must meet the following criteria:
1. Meet the purpose of the assignment;
2. include an introduction, body, and a conclusion;
3. include transitionary elements between main points;
4. include supporting evidence and detail that meets the purpose of the assignment; and
5. meet accepted standards for spelling, grammar, clarity, sentence structure, and source citation (APA 5).

To earn a “D” on a written assignment (below average work), one or more of the following problems are evident:
1. the use of generalizations without sufficient explicit supporting materials so that the assignment is based solely on opinion;
2. incomplete development of ideas;
3. a lack of organization;
4. the use of language that is more appropriate for an oral assignment than for a written assignment;
5. a lack of sufficient detail which does not enable the reader to make an informed decision; and/or
6. the gross violation of accepted standards for spelling, grammar, clarity, sentence structure, and source citation.

To obtain an “F” on a written assignment (unacceptable and therefore failing work), one or more of the following problems are evident:
1. a majority (or all) of the problems of a “D” assignment;
2. a lack of specific, timely, or relevant supporting material;
3. fabricated supporting material;
4. the deliberate distortion of supporting material; and/or
5. plagiarized and/or stolen materials.
### COURSE TOPICS AND SCHEDULE:

All course readings will be posted to BlueLine.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>READING/ACTIVITY/ASSIGNMENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Course introduction. Review syllabus. Initial statement of a Theological Vision of Communication. Read: “Communion and Progress” (a Post Vatican II document). Assignment: A one-page paper reacting to “Communication and Progress.” <em>(This paper will be the “draft” that is then weighted at 1%; it will be graded before the second paper is due).</em></td>
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<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Ignatius Loyola’s “Principle and Foundation” (P&amp;F) and Interpersonal communication (IP), Organizational Communication (OC), and Mass Communication (MC). Assignment: One-page paper describing how taking Ignatius’s P&amp;F into consideration might have a positive effect on IP, OC, or MC. Read:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Communication and the mystery of evil: IP, OC, and MC and their potential to deal with injustices, human suffering, and the abuses of money, position (social/political rank), and power. Assignment: One-page paper on a related issue of the student’s choice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Communication and the mystery of Creation (T/Lecture. Th/Discussion based on one-page paper on a related issue of the student’s choice.)</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Communication, Sacred Scripture, and Salvation History: Part I (T/Lecture. Th/Discussion based on one-page paper on a related issue of the student’s choice.)</td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Communication, Sacred Scripture, and Salvation History: Part II (T/Lecture. Th/Discussion based on one-page paper on a related issue of the student’s choice.)</td>
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<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Communication and the Mystery of the Incarnation. (T/Lecture. Th/Discussion based on one-page paper on a related issue of the student’s choice.)</td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Communication and the Pascal Mystery: passion, death, and resurrection of Christ. (T/Lecture. Th/Discussion based on one-page paper on a related issue of the student’s choice.)</td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Communication and Bernard Lonergan’s Transcendental Precepts (T/Lecture. Th/Discussion based on one-page paper on a related issue of the student’s choice.)</td>
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<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Communication and aspects of the Theology of Karl Rahner (T/Lecture. Th/Discussion based on one-page paper on a related issue of the student’s choice.)</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Communication and St. Paul’s theology of the Mystical Body of Christ. (T/Lecture. Th/Discussion based on one-page paper on a related issue of the student’s choice.)</td>
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<td>Week 13</td>
<td>Communication and a theology of relationships -- issues of mutual respect, intimacy, and the sacrament of marriage. (T/Lecture. Th/Discussion based on one-page paper on a related issue of the student’s choice.)</td>
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<td>Week 14</td>
<td>Communication and the transcendentals: Truth, Goodness, Beauty, and Life (T/Lecture. Th/Discussion based on one-page paper on a related issue of the student’s choice.)</td>
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<td>Week 15</td>
<td>Conclusion and review of the semester (T/Th lecture, questions, discussion.)</td>
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<td>Week 16</td>
<td>Review for Final Exam (T/Th lecture, questions, discussion.)</td>
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