**SFTS DM6055**
**Gospel and Global Media Cultures**
**June 8-12, 2015**
**REVISED VERSION / 7 June 2015**

**Description**
This course explores the emerging discussion at the intersection of biblical studies, cultural studies, public theology and digital media environments. Students explore how Christian faith informs the narrative identities and practices of missional congregations as they engage their communities and the world. Students use at least two digital tools to create their own interpretation and confession of Christian witness.

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**Essential question**
What consequences does interpreting and confessing the Trinitarian relationality of God have for how we -- as individual persons of faith and as leaders of Christian communities -- participate in public spaces in global civil society through different kinds of media?

**Goals**
- Develop a working vocabulary and set of tools from biblical studies, theology, leadership theory, cultural studies and media studies for Christian public leadership that responds to the needs of contemporary religious communities as they arise within their wider environments.
- Develop a familiarity with the ideas and concerns that cluster around the issue of "gospel and cultures," particularly as related to public theology, critical cultural studies and congregational leadership in society.
- Use that familiarity to develop a public voice in interpreting and confessing Christ's presence, and in supporting congregational mission.
- Collaborate with colleagues on learning how to communicate and teach using emerging digital tools (blogs, podcasts, digital storytelling, wikis, virtual communities, and so on).

**Required texts**

Chapters 1-3 of Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals: Weaving Together the Human and the Divine,* Jossey-Bass, 2011.
Heidi Campbell: "Understanding the relationship between religion online and offline in a networked society," in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, pp. 1–30, doi:10.1093/jaarel/lfr074. (essay on reserve)
Elizabeth Drescher: *Click2Save: The Digital Ministry Bible.* Morehouse Publishing, 2012.
Willie James Jennings: *The Christian Imagination.* Yale University Press, 2010.
Jane McGonigal, *Reality is Broken: Why Games Make us Better and How They Can Change the World*, Penguin, 2011.

**Calendar and themes**

**June 8 Monday**                     **Introductions and orientation**

2:00 pm to ….                         introductions, orientation to the class, stories and
                                      storying faith
                                      *break*
… to 5:00 pm                          media myths, wonder

homework: Watch the Jennings video (https://vimeo.com/39627157) and start your blog

**June 9 Tuesday**                    **Aesthetics, ethics, and engaging media**

8:30 to 9:00 am                       *morning prayer*
9:00 to 10:30                         Jennings' ideas about theology and culture
10:30 to 11:00                        *morning break with everyone*
11:00 to 12:30 pm                     shifts provoked/evoked in media cultures
12:30 to 2:00 pm                      *lunch break*
2:00 pm to 3:30 pm                    shifts: maker culture and the social Trinity
3:30 pm to 5:00 pm                    an exercise in defining Gospel… (the game of 3's)
                                      playing with tackk.com

homework: Read/review Anderson/Foley and blog

**June 10 Wednesday**                 **Christian imagination/theological reflection**

8:30 to 9:00 am                       *morning prayer*
9:00 to 10:30                         stories and storylistening
10:30 to 11:00                        *break*
11:00 to 12:30 pm                     story circle exercise
12:30 to 2:00 pm                      *lunch break*
2:00 pm to 3:30 pm                    young people, media cultures and storying
                                      theological reflection exercise with commercials
3:30 pm to 5:00 pm                    a scavenger hunt for meaning in media, religion and
                                      culture

homework: Review McGonigal (or at least watch her first TED talk), comment on your
colleagues' blogs

**June 11 Thursday**                  **Games and a game-ful world**

8:30 to 9:00 am                       *morning prayer*
9:00 to 10:30                         games and adaptive change
                                      what is theological about games?
10:30 to 11:00                        *break*

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|---|---|
| 11:00 to 12:30 pm | Remnants: A World Without Churches |
| 12:30 to 2:00 pm | *lunch break* |
| 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm | how does any of this align with what we've been doing? |
| 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm | learning a new tool: animoto |

homework: Review Campbell, blog/comment on blogs

**June 12 Friday**                              **Trinitarian relationality**

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|---|---|
| 8:30 to 9:00 am | morning prayer |
| 9:00 to 10:30 | networked religion and shifting ecclesiologies |
| 10:30 to 11:00 | *break* |
| 11:00 to 12:30 pm | shifting ecclesiology, continued |
| 12:30 to 2:00 pm | *lunch break* |
| 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm | leftovers and loose ends |
| 3:30 pm to 5:00 pm | closing rituals |

**Other required assignments:**

Write at least one blog post (250 words or so, and at least one active link) on each of the readings, and respond as prompted in class to other questions in your blog. Blogging must be completed by **June 12<sup>th</sup>**.

Read your colleagues' blogs, and comment on each of them at least once during our week together (comments must be completed by **June 11<sup>th</sup>**. (No this is not a mistake, you need to comment on your classmates' blogs before our week together is over.)

Write a short essay – roughly 1500 words – which picks up on one of Jennings' themes (displacement, translation, intimacy) and considers that theme in light of our work on media culture. This essay should draw on at least one of the "additional resources" included in this syllabus, and make clear how your particular theological stance and faith community participation shapes your response to Jennings' ideas. This review is due on or before **June 25<sup>th</sup>**.

Create a final digital story that communicates at least one fundamental conviction you have concerning the Gospel and global media cultures. This piece should be no longer than three minutes, and available in a format that everyone in the class can access. You can use animoto, or other tools we discuss in class, or other media with which you are familiar, but the piece should include images, music and words. This project is due on or before **June 25<sup>th</sup>**.

**Additional advice:**

**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is any act that represents someone else's work as your own. It is an offense against academic honesty, and as such, subject to disciplinary action. Various steps may be taken in response, and these are detailed in the student policies available online (http://www.sfts.edu/students/policy-statements/). If you have any questions at all about how to handle a particular resource (including digital resources such as pictures or music), please ask me. I'm happy to help you ensure that your work has academic integrity.

**Notes about blogging**

Keep in mind that while the genre of "weblog" is still evolving, there are some elements that are beginning to emerge as fairly common. Weblog posts should be relatively short, most often no more than 250 words.

You can use whatever blogging software you would like, but I recommend trying Wordpress (https://en.wordpress.com/). There are numerous videos and other pages available online to help you get going. The book *Click2Save*, by Drescher and Anderson, will be your partner in this endeavor.

In general almost all weblog entries have at least one link embedded in them to some other thing on the web – a newspaper article, another post in a different weblog, an image, a petition, a video, etc. **You should aim for this as a minimum requirement.**

More and more blogs are read through RSS using newsreaders, so the title and (if you use one) excerpt of your post is important. Choose something concise and evocative.

Blogging is a conversation of some kind with someone(s) – even if the someone is only an invented audience – which means that weblog entries will pose questions and/or invite action of some sort. They will do something that allows the reader to *do something*.

Most weblogs connect with the author(s) passion in some way. Do not be afraid to take a stand on something, express joy or lament, point people to events happening off the web, and so on.

**Notes on blogging on the required readings**

Here what I am interested in are your reflections on the readings and course discussion. These posts do not have to be lengthy or formal, but they should make clear that you've read the assigned texts, and your reflections should not be simply "verbal bouquets" or critiques without substance. Try picking out a sentence that you really resonated with, and exploring its further implications. Or choose an idea that you disagree with, and point out why. Make sure that you create a hyperlink in your blog post to the book itself (you can do this most easily via google.books, the author's webpage, or if all else fails, one of

the online bookstores). Remember that blogging is a form of public communication, so do not get lots in the weeds of too much abstract language.

**When you're looking for other topics to blog about, you might consider "glimpses of grace":**

What's going on in the news today? How might you "pray" with something that you've encountered there?

Find an interesting piece of music, video or poster meme that pertains in some way to grace, and point people to it with a comment as to why they should visit it.

Write an entry that takes an idea or website or something else that a colleague pointed to in their blog, and develop it further, link it to other relevant websites, etc.

Ponder the lectionary texts for a specific day. How would you make them "come alive" in the context of popular culture? How might God be trying to "say something" in the context of pop culture that connects with the lectionary texts?

Take a piece of pop culture that has no explicitly religious elements to it, and make an argument as to why it is in fact *deeply* theological.

**Additional resources**

As I mentioned in class, "books are my friends!" I wish that we had the time and space together to encounter more of the wonderful work that is emerging at the intersection of media, religion and culture. While we cannot do that together, here are some resources you might return to in the future.

Yochai Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks,* Yale, 2007.

danah boyds' general publications site at http://www.danah.org/papers/ (especially "Enhancing child safety and online technologies," found online at http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/sites/cyber.law.harvard.edu/files/ISTTF_Final_Report.pdf)

Lynn Schofield Clark, *From Angels to Aliens: Teenagers, the Media and the Supernatural,* Oxford University Press, 2005.

Lynn Schofield Clark, *The Parent App: Understanding Families in the Digital Age.* Oxford University Press, 2013.

Scott Cormode, *Making Spiritual Sense*, Abingdon, 2006.

Scott Cormode "Multi-layered leadership: The Christian leader as builder, shepherd, gardener," found online at http://arl-jrl.org/Volumes/CormodeFA02.pdf

Elizabeth Drescher. *Tweet if you [heart] Jesus.* Morehouse Publishing, 2011.

Meredith Gould, *Social Media Gospel: Sharing the Good News in New Ways*. Liturgical Press, 2013.

Mary Hess, ed. *Belief in Media: Cultural Perspectives on Media and Christianity,* Ashgate, 2004.

Mary Hess, *Engaging Technology in Theological Education.* Rowman & Littlefield, 2008.

Renee Hobbs, "Digital and media literacy: A plan of action," found online at http://www.knightcomm.org/digital-and-media-literacy/

Stewart Hoover, *Religion in the Media Age,* Routledge, 2006.

Stewart Hoover and Monica Emerich, *Media, Spiritualities and Social Change*. Continuum, 2011.

Stewart Hoover, ed. *Media, Home and Family*, Routledge, 2003.

Henry Jenkins, "Confronting the challenges of participatory culture," found online at http://tinyurl.com/3y553d.

Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green. *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*. New York University Press, 2013.

Elizabeth Kandel Englander, *Bullying and Cyberbullying: What Every Educator Needs to Know* (Harvard Education Press, 2013).

Patricia O'Connell Killen, *The Art of Theological Reflection,* Crossroad, 1994.

*Love to Share* found online at http://www.feautor.org/id/12060144352

Julie Lytle, *Faith Formation 4.0: Introducing an Ecology of Faith in a Digital Age*, Morehouse, 2013.

Jeffrey Mahan, *Media, Religion and Culture*. Routledge, 2014.

John McClure, *Mashup Religion: Pop Music and Theological Invention,* Baylor University Press, 2011.

David Morgan, *Visual Piety: A History and Theory of Popular Religion Images*, University of California Press, 1999.

MIT Press free series on Digital Media and Learning, found online at
http://www.mitpressjournals.org/toc/dmal/-/1

Lee Rainie and Barry Wellman, *Networked: The New Social Operating System.*
Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2012.

Frank Rogers, *Finding God in the Graffiti*, Pilgrim Press, 2011.

Douglas Rushkoff, *Program or Be Programmed*. Or Books, 2010.

Christian Scharen, *Faith as a Way of Life,* Eerdmans, 2008.

Scharer and Hilberath, *Communicative Theology,* Crossroad, 2008.

Antonio Spadaro, *Cybertheology: Thinking Christianity in the Era of the Internet*,
Fordham University Press, 2014.

Jolyon Mitchell, *Media Violence and Christian Ethics,* Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Clay Shirky, *Cognitive Surplus: Creativity and Generosity in a Connected Age,* Penguin,
2011.

WACC No Nonsense Guides, found online at:
http://www.waccglobal.org/resources/no-nonsense-guides

David Weinberger, *Small Pieces Loosely Joined*, Basic Books, 2003.

David Weinberger, *Everything is Miscellaneous,* Holt, 2008.

David Weinberger. *Too Big to Know.* Basic Books, 2012.