**SFTS DM6055**

**Gospel and Global Media Cultures**

**June 10-21, 2013**

**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.

**Mary Hess**

Office hours by appointment

mhess@luthersem.edu

**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**

Yochai Benkler: *The Penguin and the Leviathan.* Crown Business, 2011.

Heidi Campbell: “Networked religion” (essay on reserve)

Elizabeth Drescher: *Click2Save: The Digital Ministry Bible.* Morehouse Publishing, 2012. Willie James Jennings: *The Christian Imagination.* Yale University Press, 2010.

Howard Rheingold: *Net Smart: How to Thrive Online.* The MIT Press, 2012.

Clay Shirky: *Here Comes Everybody.* Penguin Press, 2009.

**Calendar and themes**

**June 10 Monday** Introductions and orientation

2:00 pm to 3:45 pm Introductions, learning goals

3:45 pm to 4:00 pm break

4:30 to 5:00 pm brief films and discussion

homework: Read Drescher and read the conclusion to Jennings

**June 11 Tuesday** Context collapse, embodied community

8:30 to 9:00 am morning prayer

9:00 to 10:30 class: anthropology of YouTube

10:30 to 11:00 break

11:00 to 12:30 pm class: blogging practicum

homework: read Shirky, start reading assigned chapters of Jennings, blog

**June 12 Wednesday** Christian imagination/theological reflection

8:30 to 9:00 am morning prayer

9:00 to 10:30 class: theological reflection in media culture – what is “Gospel”?

10:30 to 11:00 break

11:00 to 12:30 pm class: theological reflection, part 2

homework: keep reading Jennings, work with your small group to prepare presentation, blog

**June 13 Thursday** Witness/testimony

8:30 to 9:00 am morning prayer

9:00 to 10:30 Gilliam/Bethke – Christology, anthropology, ecclesiology in media cultures

10:30 to 11:00 break

11:00 to 12:30 pm what is spreadable culture? (Tackk, Animoto)

homework: keep reading Jennings, work with your small group to prepare presentation, blog

**June 14 Friday** Trinitarian relationality

8:30 to 9:00 am morning prayer

9:00 to 10:30 Parts one and two of Jennings

10:30 to 11:00 break

11:00 to 12:30 pm Part three of Jennings

**Weekend break / June 15-16**

Homework: read Benkler, read Campbell essay (at Moodle) and start reading Rheingold.

Put together a brief proposal for your final project and email it to me by Sunday at noon.

**June 17 Monday** Gospel, world, story

8:30 to 9:00 am morning prayer

9:00 to 10:30 Biblical engagement/sustainable practices

10:30 to 11:00 break

11:00 to 12:30 pm Networked individualism, networked religion

homework: start working on Rheingold presentation, work on final projects

**June 18 Tuesday** Solidarity, collegiality, collaboration

8:30 to 9:00 am morning prayer

9:00 to 10:30 Bandwidth issues, Benkler

10:30 to 11:00 break

11:00 to 12:30 pm fair use / copyright / creative commons

homework: keep working on Rheingold, work on final projects

**June 19 Wednesday** Public challenges: Economic injustice

8:30 to 9:00 am morning prayer

9:00 to 10:30 Benkler and Wilkinson, digital divide, Crawford

10:30 to 11:00 break

11:00 to 12:30 pm fair use/love to share/creative commons/etc

homework: keep working on Rheingold

**June 20 Thursday** Public challenges: Criminal justice

8:30 to 9:00 am morning prayer

9:00 to 10:30 Alexander interview/Jennings reprised

10:30 to 11:00 break

11:00 to 12:30 pm class: TBA (we’ll see where we are at this point on final projects)

homework: keep working on Rheingold

**June 21 Friday** Sharing projects

8:30 to 9:00 am morning prayer

9:00 to 10:30 Rheingold presentations

10:30 to 11:00 break

11:00 to 12:30 pm Rheingold presentations

**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.

Read your colleagues’ blogs, and comment on each of them at least once during our two weeks.

Work in a small group to present Jennings, and to present Rheingold for your classmates.

Create a final project that in some way helps you integrate your learning goals for the class with the class materials, and at least two forms of media. I would enjoy meeting with each of you separately to explore a project that would best fit your learning goals.

**Additional notes:**

**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 handbook. 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. I will introduce this software in class, and work with you to get started.

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 boyd, “White flight in networked publics?” found online at <http://www.danah.org/papers/2009/WhiteFlightDraft3.pdf>

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>)

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.

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.

 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, 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.

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

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

 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.

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://archive.waccglobal.org/publications/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.