Gospel and Global Media Cultures

Spring Term 2023 | CD1643 | Asynchronous Online
There is a Friday morning zoom precept at 8 am central
There is a flipgrid alternative if you cannot attend the zoom
Final version of this syllabus (February 25, 2023)

Professor: Mary E. Hess   **Office:** BH 104b
E-mail: mhess@luthersem.edu   **Phone**: 651-641-3232
Website: meh.religioused.org   **Pronouns**: She, her, hers

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Gospel and Global Media Cultures

This course explores the emerging discussion at the intersection of biblical studies, cultural studies, public theology and media environments. Students study how interpreting and confessing the Gospel informs the narrative identities and practices of missional congregations as they engage their communities and the world as public companions with God in **global civil society**. Students use at least two digital tools to create their own interpretation and confession of Christian witness. *Full course (1.0)*

Learning Objectives:

- Students will 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.
- Students will develop a familiarity with the ideas and concerns that cluster around the issue of "gospel and cultures," particularly as related to public theology and congregational leadership in civil society.
- Students will use that familiarity to develop a public voice in interpreting and confessing Christ's presence, and in supporting congregational mission.
- Students will collaborate with colleagues on learning how to communicate and teach using emerging digital tools (blogs, podcasts, digital storytelling, social media, and so on).

Program Objectives:

- MDIV: Graduates will testify to their baptismal callings that nurture the ongoing life of faith, hope, and love

- MA in LIM: Graduates will demonstrate the development of their own gifts for leadership in particular ministry contexts and within a critical understanding of leadership
- MA in CYF: Graduates will demonstrate the development of their own gifts for leadership   in particular ministry contexts and within a critical understanding of leadership
- MA in CM: Graduates, within a diversity of contexts, will confess the character, identity, and work of the Triune God in the world
- MA Academic: Graduates will clearly communicate faithful and constructive insights on biblical, historical, and theological topics to diverse audiences
- MA in Lutheran ministries: Graduates will reflect critically and constructively on the relationship of Lutheran theology to community life, worship and public witness

Reading (required):

C. Ross and S. Bevans, eds. *Mission on the Road to Emmaus* (Orbis Books, 2015) [Please note: this reading is used in other classes, so I have not put it on the calendar in any specific way. I will refer to various parts of this book throughout the semester].
B. Kristian, *Untrustworthy* (Brazos Press, 2022)
WACC, *Digital Justice: A Study and Action Guide* (WACC, 2022) (available online for free: [WACC | Workshop and study guide to help people navigate justice issues online (waccglobal.org)](waccglobal.org))
Various issues of the journal *Media Development* (linked within moodle)
Digital Defense Playbook, Our Data Bodies Project (available online for free: [ODB_DDP_HighRes_Single.pdf (odbproject.org)](odbproject.org))
K. Ott, *Christian Ethics for a Digital Society* (Rowman&Littlefield, 2019)
E. Weinstein and C. James, *Behind Their Screens* (MIT Press, 2022)

Additional essays and blogposts, videos and other resources will be curated in each week through our moodle site.

REQUIRED ASSIGNMENTS

Igniting your curiosity through reading

A basic assumption is that you will do all of the reading in this course. I realize that most of you have to triage how and when you will do assigned reading, but in this case – as an asynchronous online course – I have chosen resources very carefully, and we will be engaging them each week in the Friday morning zoom times. If you cannot come to the Friday morning zooms (8 am central time), then there will be a flipgrid option that you can utilize each week.

Curating resources

During our time together I will be sharing a variety of resources in our moodle site. I ask that you contribute at least one resource every week to be added to a section of the course. This resource could connect to the topic of the week, it could connect to the lectionary text for the

week, or it could be something you've come across in the rest of your life but has some resonance (a Netflix show, a song you've heard, and so on). Here's the challenge: these must be unique, so email to me your resource as soon as you can because if someone else posts what you want to post you'll have to find something else to share.

Developing a practice

Living into a life following Jesus requires attentiveness to practice. Let me be clear: I am not saying that you can "earn" your way into heaven. What I AM saying is that our attention practices matter, and so I ask that you pick up one intentional practice for shaping your attention and pursue it throughout the course. It might be a daily time of meditation, it might be centering prayer, it might be visio divina, and so on. I'll ask you to name that practice in the second week of the course (by March 10th), and make a commitment to it. As a final assignment I will ask you to create some kind of reflection on that practice. That could be a short paper (3-5 pages), that could be a blog post, a drawing, a video of you doing am embodied practice, etc. Talk with me if you have ideas you want to consider! This final reflection is due May 12th, unless you are a graduating senior, in which case I need it by May 7th.

Final learning project

At the close of the semester I ask that you develop and turn in a final learning project which takes up some issue in this class that you find compelling, and makes it accessible through a learning event in a specific context. More details will be forthcoming. This final project is due May 12th, unless you are a graduating senior, in which case I need it by May 7th.

GRADING

Grades will be determined by the following percentages:

Friday zoom or flipgrid participation	20%
Curation of resources	20%
Reflection on practice	20%
Final learning project	40%

I use the following general rubric for assessing specific work in the course (eg. you will see these numbers appear on the learning unit rubric). **Please note: students MUST request an incomplete prior to the last day of the course. If you do not do so, I will evaluate your work based on what you have handed in to date.** This has always been Luther's policy, but it is only now being carefully enforced.

Marginal/Passing -- Level 4 – C-
A good general understanding of the required knowledge, attitudes, and skills, plus the ability to apply them effectively in normal situations. There is some evidence of the skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The student fulfills all of the requirements of the lesson.

Passing -- Level 5 – C+
A consistent and thorough understanding of the required knowledge, attitudes and skills, and the ability to apply them in a variety of situations. The student generally shows evidence of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation where appropriate and occasionally demonstrates originality and insight. The student produces work of consistent quality and works independently.

High Passing -- Level 6 -- B
A consistent and thorough understanding of the required knowledge, attitudes and skills, and the ability to apply them in a wide variety of situations. There is consistent evidence of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation where appropriate. The student generally demonstrates insight, produces work of quality, meets the expectations of the lesson at a high level, and shows some evidence of originality.

Superior work -- Level 7 – A
A consistent and thorough understanding of the required knowledge and skills, and the ability to apply them almost faultlessly in a wide variety of situations. There is consistent evidence of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation where appropriate. The student consistently demonstrates originality and insight and always produces work of high quality. The student is able to teach necessary skills to another student. The student works beyond the expectations of the lesson, and uses original ideas and concepts.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Pre-semester (available February 1st)		Assignment
		The reading list, assignments, and flipgrid prompts for the first week are available at moodle. It would be lovely if you were able to get ahead of things a bit.
February 28		**Assignment**
What is gospel? What are digital media?		Read *Untrustworthy* by Bonnie Kristian
March 6		**Assignment**
What is digital justice?		Read the introduction to Digital justice in the WACC guide (through p. 12) Read the entire issue of *Media Development* Vol. LXVIII (https://indd.adobe.com/view/2e816c58-da10-4319-aebd-eb297b059e96), and *Media Development* Vol. LXIV (https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/Digital-futures%282017%29.pdf)

		Take a digital justice short quiz: https://waccglobal.org/resources/digital-justice/digital-justice-campaign/quiz/
March 13		**Assignment**
Digital divides in a global society		Read Chapter One of the study guide (pp. 13-18) Read *Media Development* Vol. LXV (https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/Wanted-SDG-18%282019%29.pdf) Read "Democratizing the public sphere" (https://waccglobal.org/democratizing-the-public-sphere/)
March 20		**Assignment**
Accessing digital spaces		Read "Accessing digital spaces" in the study guide (pp. 19-24) Read the entire issue of Media Development Vol. LXII (https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/Enabling-peoples-voices-to-be%20heard%282015%29.pdf)
March 27		**Assignment**
Weaponization of digital resources		Read "Weaponization of digital resources" in the study guide (pp. 25-30) Read "Breaking down the social media divides" (http://www.wacceurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/00_WACC_Breaking_Down_Social_Media_Divides_Full.pdf)
April 3		**Easter Break**
April 10		**Assignment**
Surveillance, censorship and privacy		Read "Surveillance, censorship, and privacy" in the study guide (pp. 31-37) Read the "Digital Defense Playbook" (also available in Spanish if you'd like) (https://www.odbproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/ODB_DDP_HighRes_Single.pdf)

April 17		Assignment
Digitality and marginalized peoples		Read "Digitality and marginalized peoples" in the study guide (pp. 38-44) Read "Who makes the news?" global monitoring report (also available in other languages) (https://whomakesthenews.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/GMMP2020.ENG_.FINAL_.pdf) Read "Delivering together for inclusive development" available through UNESCO (https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000369088)
April 24		Assignment
Digital ethics		Read *Christian Ethics for a Digital Society* by Kate Ott
May 1		Assignment
Engaging with and learning from young people		Read *Behind Their Screens* by Emily Weinstein and Carrie James
May 8		Assignment
Resources from our theological imagination (liturgy, learning, love)		We will use this week to share reflections on the curated resources, any remaining questions, and perhaps some of your learning projects.
Concluding the course (due May 12th)		Assignment
		Short reflection on the practice you adopted, and your final learning project are due May 12th (unless you are a graduating senior, in which case these are due May 7th).

POLICIES

Brave Spaces

This course requires students to enter a shared "brave space." Some topics may be difficult for some learners, so this class requires entering a brave space. Theology should ask us to wrestle with the depth of human experience. I cannot promise you won't be triggered. I can't promise you will feel safe at all times. I can promise that, to the best of my ability, everyone will be treated with respect, every voice will be valued, and everyone's humanity will be embraced.

Expansive Language

Students are asked to honor the pronouns presented by their colleagues. On Zoom and Moodle, please be sure your display name is set to the name by which you would like to be called.

In order to cultivate an environment of inclusion and non-discrimination and to ensure clarity in written communication, students should use non-gendered pronouns and nouns when referring to mixed-gender groups (e.g., "humanity" rather than "man" or "mankind") or when the gender of a subject is unknown. Visit https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/gender- inclusive-language/ for a helpful guide on employing gender-sensitive language in your writing.

All language is insufficient to describe God. Moreover, Scripture uses metaphors from across the gender spectrum to explain God's relationship with God's creation. Students are encouraged to avoid using gender-specific pronouns for God or to use multiple pronouns interchangeably. If the use of gender-specific pronouns in a written assignment is necessary to make an argument about a particular biblical text, that usage should be acknowledged in a footnote.

Learning Disabilities

It is Luther Seminary's policy to ensure that no qualified student with a disability is denied the benefits of, excluded from participation in or subjected to discrimination in any seminary program, service or activity. The seminary provides reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities.

If students wish to request accommodations, please contact the Disability Services Liaison for documentation and information about available reasonable accommodations at 651-641-3465 or psusag001@luthersem.edu.

Academic Honesty

Members of the Luther Seminary community are expected to conduct themselves responsibly and honestly in academic matters. Cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses against this expectation and are subject to disciplinary action.

Plagiarism

"Plagiarism is the dishonest act of presenting the words or thoughts of another writer as if they were your own.... If you quote from anything at all...you must put quotation marks around it, or set it off from your text. If you summarize or paraphrase an author's words, you must clearly indicate where the summary or paraphrase begins and ends.... In every instance you must

formally acknowledge the written source from which you took the material." [Quoted from James A. W. Heffernan and John E. Lincoln, Writing: A College Handbook (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982), p.457.]

Some examples of plagiarism could include:
- Copying from a source text (whether online or offline) without proper acknowledgment.
- Turning in another student's work with or without that student's knowledge.
- Copying materials word-for-word from a source text, supplying proper documentation, but leaving out quotation marks.
- Paraphrasing materials from a source text without appropriate documentation.
- Turning in a paper copied from a website.
- Recycling your own work from a previous assignment, without permission of the instructor or proper citation

If instances of cheating or plagiarism are detected, one of the disciplinary actions shall follow: either the instructor records a failure for the assignment or examination, or the instructor records a failure for the course. In either case, the instructor shall bring the matter to the Office of the Academic Dean and the Office of the Dean of Students, and the question whether further disciplinary action should be considered will be determined in consultation with the instructor, the Office of the Academic Dean, and the Office of the Dean of Students. See the current Student Handbook for more details on this matter.

Title IX Statement

Luther Seminary is committed to fostering a safe, productive learning environment. Title IX and Luther policy prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. Sexual misconduct — including harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking — is also prohibited at Luther.

Luther Seminary encourages anyone experiencing sexual misconduct to talk to someone about what happened, so they can get the support they need and we can respond appropriately. If you wish to speak confidentially about an incident of sexual misconduct, want more information about filing a report, or have questions about school policies and procedures, please contact our Title IX Coordinator, Peter Susag, who can be found on our school's website.

Luther Seminary is legally obligated to investigate reports of sexual misconduct, and therefore it cannot guarantee the confidentiality of a report, but it will consider a request for confidentiality and respect it to the extent possible.

As a teacher, I am also required by Luther Seminary to report incidents of sexual misconduct and thus cannot guarantee confidentiality. I must provide our Title IX coordinator with relevant details such as the names of those involved in the incident.