Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary – Charlotte

Course Syllabus

The Christian Communicator (MC585)

Dr. Steven Klipowicz, Professor
Dr. Rodney Cooper, Professor

2014 Web-Enhanced Version:

May 19 – August 23, 2014

Charlotte Residency Dates (Mandatory):

July 14 – 9 AM-5 p.m.
July 15 – 9 AM-8 p.m.
July 16 – 9 AM-12 p.m.

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Web-Enhanced Version

This course will be conducted in a Web-enhanced format. Students will be required to attend a three day residency on July 14-16, 2014. Beginning May 19, 2014 web-based modules will guide student learning and interaction with other students, the instructors, and teaching assistant.

A significant part of this course will be conducted on the SAKAI platform at https://sakai.gcts.edu/xsl-portal/. Lesson modules, course documents, resources, calendar and other support will be provided on the SAKAI learning management platform. Students enrolled in the class should be able to access this site by using their student GCTS username and password. Further help can be obtained from the Hybrid Programs Staff (see contact information above).

Course Description:

The Christian Communicator is a survey course designed to equip persons to serve as effective and authentic communicators in the contemporary church, related Christian ministries and in daily secular life. The course includes a comprehensive and holistic overview of factors inherent to the communication process on the interpersonal and congregational levels. Researched based theories and models of communications will be presented, discussed and evaluated from biblical-theological and cultural perspectives.

MC585 includes a significant developmental and practical component to enable participants to enhance their abilities to communicate through personal conversations, oral presentations, and public communications.

Gordon-Conwell Mission:

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary seeks to train and encourage students in cooperation with the Church to become skilled in ministry. The Church and the Seminary share the goal of seeing relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes integrated into the person who leads and ministers. MC585 focuses upon achieving learning outcomes to further this process.

Relationship to Curriculum:

As a course in the Division of Practical Theology, MC585 is required as a part of the ministry concentration for the Master of Arts in Religion hybrid program’s Christian Ministry Concentration (MAR-CM) and the Master of Arts in Christian Ministries degree program (MACM). This course can also serve as a ministry option in the Master of Arts in Christian Counseling program and as a ministry elective in the Master of Divinity degree. It can serve as a general elective in all other degree programs. Students in the counseling program can arrange with the professor to develop a bibliography and projects that will correspond with the counseling degree.
Course Objectives:

The goal of this course is to develop a broad foundation for effective personal and organizational communications for students serving in various ministries in the church or other callings that require proficiency in a variety of communicative roles. After adequate completion of online assignments, projects, readings, and class activities students will be able to demonstrate the following learning outcomes.

1. Clearly explain the basic elements and dynamics inherent in the communications process and apply this understanding to various forms of inter-personal and public discourse.
2. Formulate a biblical and theological framework for understanding the communications process and provide a normative framework to evaluate ethical dimensions of this process.
3. Apply principles of personal reflection to promote self-awareness to enhance the authenticity and power of their communications and presentations.
4. Articulate key principles for effective interpersonal communications and demonstrate their use through engaging in a “fierce” conversation in a real-life context.
5. Identify foundational concepts underlying the nature of constructive conversations and the practices that promote dialogue. Students will demonstrate understanding by conducting and evaluate a dialogue session.
6. Demonstrate their understanding of and skill in public speaking by composing and delivering a public message or presentation that effectively and faithfully communicates in a particular context a biblical truth, lesson or concept.
7. Develop a strategy for effectively communicating key information and ideas on a congregational level and to the public using relevant media, technology and relationships.

Course Requirements:

Achievements of this course objectives will be measured through a variety of assignments and activities as described below. The successful completion of these activities will require student will spend approximately 134 hours devoted to coursework, both in the residency, online and out of class. The following chart suggests how these hours are distributed across the various course requirements. Descriptions of the assignments are listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Assignments</th>
<th>Expected Time Commitment (hrs.)</th>
<th>Student’s Actual Time on Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course Readings</td>
<td>40 hrs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residency Time</td>
<td>24 hrs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Presentation</td>
<td>15 hrs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Communications Strategy</td>
<td>10 hrs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fierce Conversation</td>
<td>5 hrs.</td>
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<td>--------------------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Modules</td>
<td>40 hrs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>134 hrs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since some of the project work will be completed online in the various modules, the actual composite time for the some of these assignments will be more that what is expected above.

**MC585 Required Readings:**


Students should attempt to read each of these books in their entirety. The reading list will be submitted online on the SAKAI site under Assignments. The amount of points will be pro-rated based upon the percent of the readings completed (Total pages or 40 hours). If a student does not complete all the readings and reads less than 40 hours, a statement stating the exact number of pages will be required.

**Online Course Schedule**

Students are expected to keep current with their online work and provide timely feedback to students in their online study groups. The following provides a schedule of the key lessons and scheduled dates for online work. Online work that is submitted late will lose grade points

**Lesson One: What are Communications?** 5/26 – 6/1

**Lesson Two: Theological Perspectives on Communications** 6/2 – 6/8

**Lesson Three: The Person of the Communicator** 6/9 – 6/15

**Lesson Four: Effective Personal Communications** 6/16 – 6/22
Lesson Five: Effective Public Speaking  6/23 – 6/29

Lesson Six: Organizational Communications  6/30 – 7/14

Charlotte Residency (Mandatory)  7/14 – 7/16

Residency Sessions

- Promoting Organizational Communications
- Communications and Culture
- Dialogue Encounters
- Public Speaking Sessions

Post-Residency

Students will have the month after the residency to complete their readings, papers, and other assignments. All work will be due on August 23, 2014. Any extensions beyond this date must be determined and approved by the Registrar who will consult with the professor.

Class Assignments:

Grading for this course will be based upon the following assignments. Students will complete the following projects and exercises and submit them to the professor by uploading them online by the identified due dates. Grades will be determined by the extent and quality of the work completed. The descriptions of these assignments and grading criteria can be found at the end of this syllabus Further explanations of each project will be provided within specific online modules and during the three-day residency.

1. Public Speaking Project

2. Organizational Communications Strategy

3. My Fierce Conversation

4. Online Module Assignments

5. Completion of Course Readings

Grading:

Grades for the course will be determined by performance on the above exercises and projects. Students can achieve a total of 400 points from course assignments with the following grade scale and assignment weighting:
Public Speaking Project 100 points
Organizational Communications Strategy 100 points
My Fierce Conversation 50 points
Online Participation and Assignments 125 points
Completion of required reading 25 points
Total 400 points

Scoring Scale

360 – 400 points A-/A+
320 – 359 points B-/B+
280 – 319 points C-/C+
240 – 279 points D-/D+

Online Projects and Assignments

Throughout the course, various online assignments will be required to promote deeper thinking on a topic or help prepare students specific elements for the completion of the larger class assignments. Points will be given based upon completion and quality of the online assignments. Each online lesson will be worth various points with a total for the seven lessons of 120 points.

Attendance Policy:

All students must attend the three-day residency in Charlotte, NC on July 14-16, 2014. In addition, students are required to complete all online sessions of the course. Incomplete modules will result in a loss of grade points. If for reason of illness or family death or emergency, please contact Dr. Klipowicz, Dr. Cooper or the Teaching Assistant regarding these events to determine appropriate make-up activities. For additional information concerning attendance, consult the Student Handbook requirements and guidelines.

Major Course Assignments

The following a description of the three major class assignments which are due at the completion of the course (August 23, 2014). In addition to these assignments, smaller projects and activities will be included in the online segment of the course.

1. Public Speaking Project:
The ability to communicate clearly and persuasively to a group is a critical skill for a Christian leader, minister, teacher and other engaged members. The following project will provide the opportunity for students to thoughtfully develop an oral presentation of their choice and present it to the class during the residency. **The message should be a biblically-based presentation.** In addition to demonstrating competencies in public speaking, the project will enable students to show their understanding of various aspects of the speaking process such as audience analysis, content development, personal preparation and strategic planning of the presentation itself. The project is worth a total of 100 points based upon the oral presentation and written report. **The oral presentation will be given at the class residency** (July 14-16) and the final written project paper will be due **August 23, 2014.**

The project should focus on the development and presentation of one of these three public speaking alternatives:

- A short sermon
- A speech or testimony in a Christian setting such as a banquet or seminar
- A lecture section of a teaching event or class in the Bible

Using the framework provided in *Public Speaking* by Duane Litfin plus other notes and resources from the class, the written project will provide a detailed rationale, support, and analytical discussion of the public speech covering the following points:

2. An analysis of your audience and how this shaped the message  
3. Reflections on your personal relationship to the topic of the presentation  
4. A review of the communications process using the *Transactional Communications* model (See Lesson Module One)  
5. Reflections on how you would enhance your presence and expressiveness in the speech (cf. Halpern and Lubar)  
6. Identifying the big idea of your message  
7. How you organized your message in terms of introduction, the body of your message and its conclusion  
8. An analysis of your planned methods of delivery in terms of energy, emotion, proxemics, kinesics, posture, facial expressions and other factors  
9. A final personal evaluation statement regarding the actual presentation and ways to improve on it.

The written project will be at **8 - 10** pages in length. **This does not include the message text. The message text can be submitted as an appendix to the body of the report.**

The oral presentation should be a least 15 minutes will be no longer than **20 minutes.** Students can use props, costumes, and visual aids if needed. Use of these should be discussed in the written paper. A set of guidelines and an evaluation format will be provided in the course materials. The presentation will be worth 50 points and the written report an additional 50 points.
This written section of this project a **maximum of 50 points** (50 out of 100) and will be assessed on the following criteria:

- Clarity, logical coherence and quality of writing
- Ability to support statements and planned actions with appropriate citations and references from course and other materials
- Quality and depth of the personal and audience analysis
- Ability to demonstrate a clear understanding of the theoretical, theological, and personal dimensions principles underlying a communications plan for public speaking.

2. Organizational Communications Assessment

Effective communications in a church, para-church ministry or other organizations require a systematic and intentional effort to coordinate various communication messages and media in a coherent and compelling manner. In this project, students will act as a **communication consultant** and provide a systematic assessment of the communication strategies and practices of a local church or other non-profit Christian organization of their choice. The project will require some access to congregational or organizational documents and personnel (interviews) to complete. Using the *Church Communications Handbook* and other resources, the student will develop a strategy and use it to investigate, describe and evaluate the communications strategy and effectiveness of the target organization with **final recommendations** for improvements. The final paper should be at least **10 pages long**. The Assessment will be worth **100 points** and be due on **August 23, 2014**.

The assessment should attempt a comprehensive assessment of the target group and address the following as well as other aspects of organizational communications.

- Provide a short introduction to the history and purpose of the organization. Include the church or organization’s size, budget and its form of governance or leadership.
- What are the expressed vision, mission, and values of the congregation or organization? In what ways are these communicated? How well is this expressed and communicated to the organization, its stakeholders and its publics?
- Does the church or organization have an overall communications plan? Who is responsible for planning and implementing it?
- Who does the church or organization identify as its internal and external audiences? How does this influence its communications strategy?
• Who is the church’s or the organization’s primary spokesperson? How effectively does this person present needed communications to the various stakeholders and publics? What avenues or media does this person use to communicate needed information?

• What types of printed communications are produced? How well are they utilized in the plan. What are the quality and effectiveness of these items? Can you obtain samples of these materials?

• What unspoken messages are the church or organization inadvertently communicating?

• How is the church using digital communications such as the Internet and social media? How effectively is this done?

• To what degree does the church or organization use video and other projected images to communicate? What are the quality and impact of these means?

• How does the church or organization obtain feedback to ascertain whether its communications efforts are effective?

• How does the church or organization use public media and the press to communicate to its publics?

• How does the church or organization use paid advertisement to communicate its message?

• Can the church or organization provide a recent example of a major communications effort and how it conducted it?

This project will be worth a maximum of 100 points and assessment will be based upon the following criteria:

• Clarity, logical coherence and quality of writing
• Ability to support statements, evaluations and suggested actions with appropriate citations and references from course and other materials
• Quality, comprehensiveness, and depth of the actual assessment
• Ability to demonstrate a clear understanding of the theoretical and organizational principles underlying a communications plan for organizational communications.

3. My Fierce Conversation

The ability to effectively engage others in authentic interpersonal communications, especially regarding important or critical issues, is a key proficiency for Christian leaders.
This project will focus on the student’s ability to identify, prepare and engage in a “fierce conversation” with a significant person (cf. *Fierce Conversations*, Susan Scott). The process will be presented and discussed as a final case study analysis of the actual conversation. The final report will be worth 50 points and be submitted on **August 24, 2014**. The report should be at least 7-8 pages long including the summary of the conversation.

The project will involve the following aspects:

1. Prayerfully choose someone to engage in a *fierce conversation*. This is not necessarily a confrontational talk but one in which you desire to deepen the quality and authenticity of the relationship. The conversation could be with a family member, someone in your church, workplace, or neighborhood. Set up a time to talk one-on-one, in which there will be little chance of disturbance. This conversation would be best conducted face-to-face rather than on a phone call or through e-mail.

2. Use the framework of *Mineral Rights* as a model to help you prepare and engage in the conversation. (Scott, Chapter 2 -3).

3. After the conversation, make careful, detailed notes of the event. Using these notes, write out a short case study or verbatim of the event. This should provide a brief background description of the situation, why you choose this person, what you hoped to achieve and a reconstruction or sufficient summary of the conversation. This should be no longer than 3-4 pages.

4. Analyze the conversation as contained in the above description using the Seven Principles of a Fierce Conversation and other concepts, theories, and models you have learned through this class and its reading (for instance materials from *Leadership Presence* and *Dialogue*). Conclude your analysis with a summary statement of what you learned about yourself, the communications process and engaging in direct conversations.

This assignment will be **worth a maximum of 50 points** and will be assessed on the following criteria:

- Clarity, logical coherence, completeness and quality of writing
- Ability to support statements and insights with appropriate citations and references
- Quality and depth of insight and analysis

**Limited Auxiliary Reading List:**


Littlejohn, Stephen W., *Theories of Human Communication.* (Columbus, Ohio: Bell and Howell, 1978).


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**Syllabus Addendum**

**Academic Standards**

Cheating and plagiarism are considered serious breaches of personal and academic integrity. Cheating involves, but is not necessarily limited to, the use of unauthorized sources of information during an examination or the submission of the same (or substantially same) work for credit in two or more courses without the knowledge and consent of the instructors. Plagiarism involves the use of another person’s distinctive ideas or words, whether published or unpublished, and representing them as one’s own instead of giving proper credit to the source. Plagiarism can also involve over dependence on other source material for the scope and substance of one’s writing. Such
breaches in academic standards often result in a failing grade as well as other corrective measures. For more information, please consult the Student Handbook.

**ADA Policy**

The seminary complies with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. A student with a qualifying and authenticated disability who is in need of accommodations, should petition the seminary in accordance with the stated guidelines in the Student Handbook.

**Extension Policy**

Arrangements for submission of late work at a date on or before the “last day to submit written work,” as noted on the seminary’s Academic Calendar, are made between the student and professor. Formal petition to the Registration Office is not required at this time. This includes arrangements for the rescheduling of final exams.

However, course work (reading and written) to be submitted after the publicized calendar due date, must be approved by the Registration Office. An extension form, available online, must be submitted to the Registration Office prior to the “last day to submit written work.” Requests received after this date will either be denied or incur additional penalty. For a full discussion of this policy, please consult the Student Handbook.

**Grades**

Faculty have six weeks from the course work due date to submit a final grade. Grades are posted on-line within twenty-four hours of receipt from the professor. Students are expected to check their CAMS student portal in order to access posted grades (unless instructed otherwise). Those individuals who need an official grade report issued to a third party should put their request in writing to the Registration Office.