



MNST 5120: Gospel Communication in Context
North Park Theological Seminary
Spring 2025, Thursday 7:30 pm, 3 credit hours

Room:

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION:

Michelle S. Dodson: Nyval Hall #206

msdodson@northpark.edu

773-244-5206

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Gracious and effective communication of the good news of the Christian gospel involves the complex interplay of many factors. Drawing from studies in communication, evangelism, and contemporary culture, participants in this course will engage in an exegesis of culture, an exploration of the mandate and means of evangelism, and the development of skills in listening and speaking.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this course, participants should be able to:

1. Effectively communicate the gospel message in a way that is biblical, holistic, and contextual.
2. Formulate a personal biblical theology of Christian communication through the study of scripture, analysis of case studies, personal reflection, and group interaction.
3. Lead the church in bearing witness to the gospel in ways that honor their own cultural and contextual particularities.

We will work towards the Seminary Learning Outcomes of:

- Communicate the whole gospel of Jesus Christ in contextually appropriate and effective ways.
- Interpret scripture with historical and theological integrity for diverse churches, communities, and contexts.
- Engage diversity and exhibit growth towards inter-cultural competence for ministry reflective of God's global redemptive work.

REQUIRED TEXTS:



BOOKS

- Downing, Crystal. 2012. *Changing Signs of Truth*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic
- Cardoza-Orlandi, Carlos and Justo Gonzalez. 2013. *To All Nations from All Nations*
Nashville, TN: Abingdon.
- Maggay, Melba. *Global Kingdom, Global People* (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Langham Global, 2017).
- Reeder, Caryn. 2022. *The Samaritan Woman's Story: Reconsidering John 4 After #ChurchToo*.
Downers Grove, IL IVP Academic
- Leong, David P. 2017. *Race and Place: How Urban Geography Shapes the Journey to Reconciliation*. Downers Grove, IL. IVP
- Swanson, David. 2024. *Plundered* Downers Grove, IL: IVP

ASSIGNMENTS: (Numbers represent total possible points)

Reading Log (15)

Each week you will log how much of the reading you did. Your Reading Log is due at the end of the semester. However, several times during the semester I will be doing pop Reading Log checks where I ask you to upload your current log to Canvas. This is to help encourage you to keep up with your logging.

Weekly Response Paper (15): Each week there is a weekly paper assigned. You are required to submit at least five (5) papers over the course of the semester. You have the option to submit a sixth, which will count as extra credit.

Response papers should include the following components: 1) a brief summary of the reading (this should be no more than one paragraph); 2) a critical reflection on the key concepts from the reading (this will make up the bulk of the paper); and 3) a conclusion where you briefly discuss practical applications from the reading (no more than one paragraph. Can be a single sentence).

The purpose of this paper is two fold. First, it is meant to demonstrate your understanding of the reading. Second, it is meant to be a primer for the class discussion. Papers are to be no more than TWO pages, typed, double spaced. Your papers should be submitted through Canvas **PRIOR** to the start of class. You may wish to bring a hard copy with you to class for reference during the class discussions.

NOTE: On weeks where there are multiple readings your paper should engage with the readings in ONE paper.

Grading scale for Weekly Papers:

3 = **Superior work**. This mark applies to exceptional work, the quality achieved through excellence of performance, not merely the fulfillment of the course requirements.



2 = **Above average.** This mark applies to meritorious work, definitely above average, applied to more than the fulfillment of the requirement.

1 = Requirement met

Syllabus Quiz (5)

This quiz serves as proof that you have read and understood the syllabus. You should review the syllabus ahead of the first class and come prepared to ask any questions you may have. The quiz will be posted after the first class and should be completed before our second meeting.

Presentation (25) “What does the Gospel have to say about _____?”: For this assignment you will choose a current event and present a biblical response that is appropriate for your contexts. This assignment will require you to construct a response that is not aimed at being right but at witnessing Jesus to a specific audience and with a specific place (context) in mind.

As an example, think about the question “mandatory vaccinations?” Speaking to an evangelical group in downstate IL that sees such mandates as infringing on a one’s rights will require a different response than if one were addressing a progressive Christian organization in Chicago that is dismissive of “anti-vaxers.” To the first group one might choose to link vaccine mandates to love of neighbor. To the second group one might choose to emphasize our oneness in Christ and scriptures call to preserve the unity of the Church.

The form of your presentation can vary depending on your context. You may choose to preach a sermon, lead a topical bible study you have created, give a traditional powerpoint presentation or something else entirely! You will be graded based on how well you are able to communicate a biblically based and contextually relevant response to your topic. You will have 10 minutes to present followed by 5 minutes of questions and comments.

Class participation (10): Hybrid courses include both synchronous (1.5 hours) and asynchronous (1.5 hours) instruction weekly. Students should additionally plan to devote 3 hours each week per credit for coursework outside of instructional hours. Your full participation is integral to the success of this class. To that end, both your online and in class participation will be graded.

Each week you should come to class prepared to thoughtfully engage with both the reading and the content posted on Canvas for that week.

Final Paper (30) : The research paper gives you the opportunity to probe deeper into an aspect of contextual gospel communication that has particularly intrigued you. The paper should be typed, double-spaced, 5-7 pages in length, and it needs to reflect interaction with *at least* 5

GRADING SCALE AND RATIONALE:



Grades will be issued shortly after the conclusion of the term and posted on WebAdvisor. You will be able to access grades through your personal account after grades have been submitted. The grading scale is as follows (cf Academic Handbook):

<u>Total Points Earned:</u>	<u>Final Grade:</u>
95-100	A
93-94	A-
91-92	B+
88-90	B
86-87	B-
84-85	C+
80-83	C
78-79	C-
76-77	D+
72-75	D
70-71	D-
69 and below	F

A: Superior work (A = 95–100; A- = 93–94)

This grade applies to exceptional work, the quality achieved through excellence of performance, not merely the fulfillment of the course requirements.

B: Above average (B+ = 91-92; B = 88-90; B- = 86-87)

This grade applies to meritorious work, definitely above average, applied to more than the fulfillment of requirements.

C: Average (C+ = 84-85; C = 80-83; C – = 78-79)

This grade applies to average work that still fulfills the course requirements.

D: Unsatisfactory (D+ = 76-77; D = 72-75; D – = 70-71)

This grade, while indicating the student has completed a course, is to be understood as reflecting below average work. Course work receiving this grade will not be counted toward a degree.

F: Failure (69 and below)

FACULTY EXPECTATIONS: GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

Guidelines for Written Work: All written work must be typed, double spaced, and in a sans-serif font (e.g., Arial, Calibri, Carlito). All written work must be submitted on time on Canvas. For weekly papers you may wish to have your paper available during class to help with the class discussion.

Writing Quality Policy: If in the process of grading your written work I have to make 10 or more grammatical corrections (this includes typos) on a single page, I will automatically deduct 1-5 points. So it is very important that you submit a reviewed, edited version of all written assignments. I strongly encourage you to have someone else proofread your written work before you submit it.



Lastly, I encourage you to read the seminary's inclusive language policy that can be found in the [Student Writing Handbook](#).

Late Work Policy:

Late assignments will not be accepted unless you have communicated with me **in advance** and I have given you an extension. Requests for an extension must be made no less than **24 hours** before an assignment is due. Except in the case of extremely extenuating circumstances, there will be no extensions given for the Weekly Papers.

Attendance & Lateness Policy: Your attendance is key and therefore required for all scheduled sessions. Frequent lateness (3 or more) and early departures (3 or more) will add an absence and will go against your participation grade. **Three absences will automatically result in 0 points for the participation part of your grade; Six absences will automatically result in a drop in letter grade. Each absence after the sixth will result in a half drop in letter grade.**

Email Policy:

During the school year I will make every effort to respond to emails within 24 hours. There is one exception to this rule: I stop checking email at 7:00 pm on Thursday and do not resume my regular email schedule until 7:00 am on Monday. **If you send me an email during this period you should not expect a response until Tuesday at the latest.**

ACADEMIC HONESTY

In keeping with our Christian heritage and commitment, North Park University is committed to the highest possible ethical and moral standards. Just as we will constantly strive to live up to these high standards, we expect our students to do the same. To that end, cheating of any sort will not be tolerated. Students who are discovered cheating will receive a failing grade on the assignment and are subject to discipline up to and including failure of a course and expulsion. Our definition of cheating includes but is not limited to:

1. Plagiarism – the use of another's work as one's own without giving credit to the individual. This includes using materials from the internet.
2. Copying another's answers on an examination.
3. Deliberately allowing another to copy one's answers or work.
4. Signing an attendance roster for another who is not present.

For additional information, see the [Seminary Academic Catalog](#), pp. 25–27.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Your experience in this class is important to me. North Park is committed to creating inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law. If you have already established your accommodations, please share your accommodation letter with me so we can discuss how your accommodations will be implemented in this course. If you have not yet established services and have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations, please email the Disability Access Specialist or contact by phone



(773-244-5737). Student Engagement facilitates the interactive process that establishes reasonable accommodations.

TITLE IX

Students who believe they have been harassed, discriminated against, or involved in sexual violence should contact the Title IX Coordinator (773-244-6276 or TitleIX@northpark.edu) for information about reporting, campus resources and support services, including confidential counseling services.

As members of the North Park faculty, we are concerned about the well-being and development of our students, and are available to discuss any concerns. Faculty are legally obligated to share information with the University’s Title IX coordinator in certain situations to help ensure that the student’s safety and welfare is being addressed, consistent with the requirements of the law. These disclosures include but are not limited to reports of sexual assault, relational/domestic violence, and stalking.

Please refer to North Park’s [Safe Community](#) site for reporting, contact information and further details.

INCOMPLETE GRADES

If, due to extenuating circumstances (specifically, pregnancy, illness, personal and family issues, military assignment, etc.), a student anticipates they will be unable to complete course work within the allotted time, that student may request a grade of incomplete from the course instructor before the last week of class clearly stating the reason(s) for this request. Overscheduling and/or lack of self-discipline are not considered extenuating circumstances. If the request is timely and meets the criteria, student and instructor will submit the incomplete grade form and the grade for that class will be listed as “I” until the last day of the following semester. If coursework is not submitted by the last day of the following semester the listing of “I” will automatically be changed to “F.” For the full policy, see page 15 of the [Seminary Academic Catalog](#).

COURSE SCHEDULE

Calendar of Due Date	Reading (Date below is when reading should be completed)	Media	Assignments to Turn In
Week 1			
1/16	Introductions, Syllabus Review and Class Pres. Sign Up		
Week 2			



Calendar of Due Date	Reading (Date below is when reading should be completed)	Media	Assignments to Turn In
No Class	Midwinter		
Week 3			
1/30	Downing (Preface, Introduction, Part 1)	Video (Semiology)	Weekly Paper 1 Syllabus Quiz
Week 4			
2/6	Downing (Part 2)	Video	Weekly Paper 2
Week 5			
2/13	Downing (Part 4); Cardoza- Orlandi and Gonzalez (Ch. 1-2)	Sample Sermon 1	Weekly Paper 3 Start of Class Presentations
Week 6			
2/20	Cardoza- Orlandi and Gonzalez (Ch. 5 and 11)	Video (Gonzalez)	Weekly Paper 4
Week 7			
2/27	Maggay (Ch. 1-6)	Case Study 1	Weekly Paper 5
Week 8			
3/6	Maggay (Ch. 7-12),	Sample Sermon 2	Weekly Paper 6
Week 9			
3/13 No Class	Reading Week		
Week 10			
3/20	Leong (Part 1)	Video	Weekly Paper 7
Week 11			
3/27	Leong (Part 2)	Case Study 2	Weekly Paper 8
Week 12			
4/3	Leong (Part 3)	Video (Leong)	Weekly Paper 9
Week 13			
4/10	Swanson (ch. 1-3)	Video	Weekly Paper 10



Calendar of Due Date	Reading (Date below is when reading should be completed)	Media	Assignments to Turn In
Week 14			
4/17	Swanson (ch. 4-7)	Sample Sermon 3	Weekly Paper 11
Week 15			
4/24	Reeder Part 1	Video	Weekly Paper 12
Week 16			
5/8	Reeder Part 2	Case Study 3	Weekly Paper 13

**Rubric For Final Paper: MNST 5120
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Assignment Overview

The research paper gives you the opportunity to probe deeper into an aspect of contextual gospel communication that has particularly intrigued you.

There are two ways that you may approach this paper. The first is to write about the larger topic of contextual gospel communication. For example, what does it mean to faithfully communicate the tenants of our faith in an increasingly secular and cynical world? The other approach is topical. Here you would select a specific topic and delve deeper into the



implications of that topic for the church. You could, for example, use the topic that you presented on go deeper. Some questions to explore here might be: why is this topic important for the Church? What are the barriers to communication in the broader Church? What are the barriers to communication in your specific context? What might effective communication around this topic look like?

Your paper will have two components. **The bulk of the paper** should be a **research paper** where you draw on course readings and outside sources to flesh out your topic. After having done so, in the second part of your paper you should tie this together with your specific ministry context. In other words; how does what you discuss in the first half of the paper shape the way you think about and approach your own ministry? Some questions to consider here are: how might you apply what you have presented in your current or future ministry? What are the challenges?

Length and Format:

The paper should be 7-10 pages in length, typed, double-spaced, 12 point, san serif font (e.g. Ariel, Calibri, Cartilo). You must cite at least five (5) sources: three (3) course readings and two (2) outside sources.

Note: If you choose to write a topical paper you may need to have two (2) of your sources be course readings and three (3) be outside sources. You should meet with me to discuss this if you feel this is the case.

I will be looking for the following:

- Does the student cite at least three (3) appropriate **course readings** to support her/his assertions
- Does the student cite at least two (2) appropriate **outside sources** to support her/his assertions
- Does the student cite appropriate biblical texts to support his/her assertions
- Does the student articulate a clear understanding of the larger themes of the course
- Does the student clearly articulate his/her ministry context (current, or future)
- Is there are clear connection between the research portion of the paper and the students reflection on their ministry context

Grading Sheet

General Requirements:

◦ **Part 1**

Student clearly articulates an understanding of the larger topic of contextual gospel communication.

Or

Student clearly articulates a deep understanding of a specific topic as it relates to contextual gospel communication.



◦ **Part 2**

Student clearly articulates how part 1 is connected to their now ministry context (current or future).

Rubric

- Paper is 10-12 pages in length and is formatted appropriately.
- Student cites at least three (3) appropriate **course readings** to support her/his assertions (two if topical)
- Student cites at least two (2) appropriate **outside sources** to support her/his assertions (three if topical)
- Student cite appropriate biblical texts to support his/her assertions
- Student articulates a clear understanding of the larger themes of the course
- Student clearly articulate his/her ministry context (current, or future)
- There are clear connection between the research portion of the paper and the students reflection on their ministry context

Key

X **Superior work.** This mark applies to exceptional work, the quality achieved through excellence of performance, not merely the fulfillment of the course requirements.

/ **Above average.** This mark applies to meritorious work, definitely above average, applied to more than the fulfillment of the requirement.



Requirement met

◦ **Requirement not met**