Reforming Religious Media: Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation
GRMN 22312/32312
(crosslisted as RLST 22312, RLVC 32312, MAAD 16312, SIGN 20051)

Spring Quarter 2019
Time: Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:30–10:50
Location: Harper Memorial 130 & Meetings at Special Collections Research Center
(Rgenstein Library 133): April 11, 18, 25, May 2, 9, 23

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Course Description

The Protestant Reformation began with a carefully orchestrated media event, when Martin Luther posted his 95 theses on the door of a church in Wittenberg. Concurrently, he resorted to the still new medium of print to disseminate more widely his scathing critique of the Catholic Church’s use of indulgences to communicate God’s grace. This was only the beginning of Luther’s sweeping attack on the Church’s role as the sole mediator of salvation. No religious medium or communicational practice remained unquestioned, resulting in their comprehensive reform. Soon other reformers joined in, pushing the critique even further by questioning the need and validity of all religious mediation. Approaching the Protestant Reformation as a reform of religious media, this research course will give particular attention to the congenial alliance between Martin Luther’s religious message and the emerging technology of the printing press, the role of Scripture in legitimating Protestant theologies of communication, controversies around particular religious media, like images or the eucharist, and the role of direct inspiration in radical reformers.

This research course will combine lecture and discussion and will culminate in a web exhibition to which all students will contribute with their assignments. Under the guidance of the instructors and assisted by student research associates, the students will collaboratively plan and organize a web exhibition. Students will work with rare books and archival materials in Special Collections of Regenstein Library; find, research, catalog, and describe showpieces, design a virtual ‘room,’ write exhibit labels, biographical blurbs, and catalog essays. All students will be credited for their research and contributions to the exhibition. If there is sufficient interest, the online exhibition could be expanded into an physical exhibition in the Special Collections Research Center of Regenstein Library.

Learning Objectives

The course will help students…

- gain an overview of the emergence of the Protestant Reformation and its early historical development;
- understand basic concepts of media theory and the history of premodern media as well as the emergence of print;
- analyze the functioning and impact of media;
practice close reading and critical thinking;
learn the basic techniques of archival research and historical inquiry;
practice several genres of writing for a general audience (exhibition texts, keyword entries, Wikipedia articles, etc.);
learn to use the web publishing platform Omeka and to create a media-rich online exhibition.

ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

Due to the unusual nature of the assignments in this class, I have detailed the required assignments and their assessment in a separate document, which is also available on the Canvas Course website.

- Reading & Participation: 20%
- Selection & Description of Five Showpieces: 20%
- Group Proposal for Showcase: 5%
- Peer Critique for Two Other Showcases: 5%
- Final Showcase: 30%
- Keyword Entry: 20%
- For Extra Credit: Contribution to Wikipedia Page

COURSE MATERIALS

With the exception of the Biblical passages (marked with an asterisk* in the Course Schedule), all readings are available on the Course Canvas site.

Since you are interested in the Reformation and history of Christianity, I recommend that you purchase a copy of the Old and New Testament (if you do not already own one). Most appropriate for this course, if you read German, would be an edition based on Martin Luther’s translation (preferably in the “Textrevision von 1912,” which is closer to the sixteenth-century original and was formative for the literary language of German Modernists). I will be using a copy of the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) in class. I am happy to talk in class about the history of Bible translations and editions – and their utility as research tools.

RESOURCES

- Keywords of Media Theory on the Chicago School of Media Theory Website: https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/mediatheory/keywords/
- The Bible Gateway is a searchable website that gives you access to dozens of translations and editions, including the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV): https://www.biblegateway.com/ Easiest to read online is the NRSV here: https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/
• Oxford Bibliographies Online: Renaissance and Reformation [accessible via UChicago Proxy]
• Table of Content of Luther’s Works as well as the Weimar edition of Luther’s works in the German original: https://therebelgod.com/Luther/
• Catherine Uecker, Head of Research and Instruction at Regenstein’s Special Collections Resource Center (SCRC), can help you navigate special collections. You can reach her via email: cuecker@uchicago.edu
• Nancy Spiegel, Regenstein’s Bibliographer for History, has to put together a research guide for our course and is able to help you more general research questions. You can reach her via email: nspiegel@uchicago.edu. Also check out her web page: http://guides.lib.uchicago.edu/prf.php?account_id=41676
• Nora Mattern, a Scholarly Communications Librarian in Information Technology & Digital Scholarship at Regenstein, can help you in all matters related to Omeka. She holds weekly office hours on Mondays 2–5pm at the TechBar on the first floor of Regenstein. You can also reach her via email: mattern@uchicago.edu
• Ella Wilhelm (wilhelme@uchicago.edu), Serena Strecker (strecker@uchicago.edu), and Sam Mellins (sam.s.mellins@gmail.com).

ATTENDANCE AND ACCOMMODATION POLICY

‘Life happens,’ and I am well aware that you are juggling multiple curricular and co-curricular commitments. If you need to miss class, I expect of you to notify me beforehand, do the readings, and get the notes from another student or meet with me. You may not have more than two such excused absences, unless there is a serious reason (e.g. health, family emergency, etc.). However, any unexcused absence will count against your participation grade.

I am committed to making this class as accessible and inclusive as possible. If you have a documented disability (or think you may have a disability) and need a reasonable accommodation to participate in this class, please contact Student Disability Services (SDS) as soon as possible. To receive reasonable accommodations, you must follow the SDS procedures and follow up with me to discuss your access needs in this course in a timely manner. SDS is located at 5501 S. Ellis. Contact information: phone: 773-702-6000 email: disabilities@uchicago.edu

PERSONAL ELECTRONICS IN THE CLASSROOM

If you need a laptop, tablet, or any other device for taking notes or otherwise participating in class, that’s fine. However, please do not use a personal device for any purpose unrelated to our class. All devices should be silenced. Cell phones should be put away, except in the rare instance that I ask you to use them for an activity. I recommend that you power them down. If there is a serious need to leave your cell phone on, such as a family emergency, please put it on vibrate and let me know. If you leave the classroom to take a call, I’ll understand why. I routinely reduce participation grades for cell phone use unrelated to class.

ACADEMIC HONESTY AND PLAGIARISM

Please note that an important element of academic integrity is fully and correctly attributing any materials taken from the work of others. Feel free to consult with me before completing
assignments if you have concerns about the correct way to reference the work of others. More generally, please familiarize yourself with the University’s policy on academic honesty, which applies to this course. Of course, I do not anticipate any problems with academic integrity. In the unlikely event that any concerns do arise regarding this matter, I will forward all related materials to the Office of the Provost for further review and action.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**April 2: Religious Communication and the Question of Mediality**

**Questions & Topics**
- Religion as a problem of communication? What distinguishes religious communication from other forms of communication? What defines religious media?
- What is a “medium” and what/how does “it” “mediate” or communicate?
- How do media differ from signs, apparatuses, or tools?
- What is communication and how does it work (or fail)?
- What is the relation of communication and media?
- What are media before the advent of technological media? How do we conceptualize premodern media?
- How do things become media?

**Readings & Materials**
- Fritz Heider, “Thing and Medium” [33]

**April 4: The Media History of Christianity**

**Questions & Topics**
- How does Scripture conceive of communication and media?
- What stories does the Bible tell about communication?
- How does God communicate with man and which media/mediators does He use? How does man communicate with God?
- How did communication work in Garden Eden and what where the medial consequences of the Fall?
- How do the Old and New Testament differ in regard to the modes and media of communication? How are sacredness and salvation communicated in the Old and the New Testament?
- How does the incarnation change the communication between God and man? How does the Christian notion of incarnation mediate?
- What is the status of Scripture?
- How does Christianity understand and structure time and history? What is the history of salvation?
Readings & Materials:
- Genesis 28.12-22 (Jacob’s dream)*
- Exodus 3–4, 19–20, 24, 33–34 (Moses and Institution of Religion)*
- Isaiah 6; Jeremiah 1; Ezekiel 1–3 (Prophecy)*
- John 1.1–41 (Advent of the Messiah & Incarnation)*
- Matthew 13; Mark 4.1–33; Luke 8.1–8 (Parable of the Sower)*
- Acts 1.1–2.47 (Christ’s departure & Holy Spirit)*
- Niklas Luhmann, “The Improbability of Communication” [10]

Further Reading
- Warren Weaver, “Recent Contributions to the Mathematical Theory of Communication” [28]

April 9: Apocalypse: The End of World as the Ultimate Media Spectacle I

Questions & Topics
- How does Scripture imagine the end of the world? How do we explain the excessive visuality of visions of the end? Why are the images so enigmatic?
- How is the apocalypse communicated to the reader? What role do media play in the prophecy the end of time?
- What role do media play in the events at the end of time? What is the role of media in processing the end time?
- What signs herald the coming of the end?

Readings & Materials
- The Book of Daniel 7–12*
- The Revelation of John*
- Bernard McGinn, “Revelation” [17]

April 11: Apocalypse: The End of World as the Ultimate Media Spectacle II

Questions & Topics
- What were the predominant medieval views of eschatology, i.e. of the end of the world?
- How do the Protestant Reformers situate themselves within the Christian view of history?
- How did Martin Luther interpret the apocalypses of Daniel and John?
- How did Luther view world history? How close was the end?
- What was the historical place of the Reformation for him? What is the role of the Catholic Church?
- What was the view of other Reformers (Zwingli, Karlstadt, Müntzer, Calvin etc.) in regard to salvational history and the apocalypse?
- How to do research in Special Collections? (Catherine Uecker & Nancy Spiegel)
April 16: Late Medieval Crisis of Religious Mediation

Questions & Topics
• What was the state of Western Christianity in the Late Medieval Ages?
• How did late medieval believers understand their place in salvational history?
• What are the defining features of the media ecology of Late Medieval Christendom?
• How did the late medieval Church communicate salvation? How did it control sacred space and time?
• What was the relation of supernatural and the natural? By which means or media did the two realms interact?
• Building a Showcase on Omeka? (Nora Mattern)

Readings & Materials
• Carlos Eire, “Religion in Late Medieval Christendom” [21]

April 18 & 23: Sola Fide: Martin Luther’s Critique of the Catholic Media

Questions & Topics
• What does Martin Luther criticize about the Catholic media ecosystem?
• What was Luther’s understanding of the communicaton of salvation?
• How did he understand the communication between God and man, man and God?
• Biblical models? How did Luther justify his critique?
• How does God communicate faith?
• What is the medial function of faith? Is faith work?
• April 18: How to catalog and describe an item using Dublin Core (Catherine Uecker)

Readings & Materials
• Southern, R. W, Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages, pp. 136–143.
• Marcus Sandl, “‘Here I stand’: Face-to-face Communication and Print Media in the Early Reformation” [12]
• Lucas Cranach, Law & Gospel (images)

April 25 & 30: The First Technological Medium: The Printing Press

Questions & Topics
• How did the early printing process work?
• What was innovative about Gutenberg’s “work of books”?
• What are the defining features of the typographic medium?
• How did the emergence of print change the late medieval media ecology? How did it affect oral and written communication?

Readings & Materials
• Trithemius, In Praise of Scribes [35]
• Nicole Howard, The Book: The Life Story of a Technology, pp. 27–53 [22]
• Andrew Pettegree, “Publishing in Print: Technology and Trade” [25]
• Albrecht Dürer, Portrait of Erasmus of Rotterdam (image)

April 30 & May 2: The First Mass Medium and Martin Luther as Evangelical PR Master

Questions & Topics
• What are the defining features of early modern pamphlets and broadsides?
• What was their role in the Reformation?
• What was Martin Luther’s communication strategy? How did it differ from his opponents?
• What made him so successful?
• How does Luther understand his role in the reformed media ecosystem?
• How does Luther conceive of his writings? What textual formats and genres does he use?

Readings & Materials
• Martin Luther, “To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation…” (sel.), “Treatise on Good Works,” including some other pamphlets in SCRC
• Examples of Early Modern Pamphlets
• Ulinka Rublack, “Disseminating Luther’s Reformation” [29]
• Andrew Pettegree, Brand Luther, Part 2: The Eye of the Storm

May 7–9: Sola Scriptura: Translating and Printing the Divine Word

Questions & Topics
• How does Luther conceive of God’s Word? How does he understand the message from God?
What role does Scripture play in Luther’s reform of religious media?
How does Luther mediate access to God’s Word?
What are the defining features of Luther’s translation and edition of the Bible? What is its medial status?
How does Luther’s Bible differ from previous translations and editions?
What is Luther’s concept of translation?
How does Luther conceive of reading the Bible?
How does Luther guide the correct understanding of the Bible?

Readings & Materials
- *September Testament* (1522) & *Biblia: Die gantze heilige Schrifft* (1534)

May 14: Luther’s Reform of the Church’s Salvational Media

Questions & Topics
- What are the defining features of Luther’s reform of religious media?
- How does Luther reform the Catholic Church’s ensemble of media practices and technologies?
- Which of the Catholic Church’s religious media does he abolish and why?
- What are the defining features of the Lutheran media ecosystem?
- What is a sacrament? Is it a medium?
- How does Luther understand the mass?

Readings & Materials
- Martin Luther, “A Treatise on the New Testament, that is, the Holy Mass,” *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (sel.)
- “Difference between the True Religion of Christ and the False Idolatrous Doctrine of Antichrist” (image)
- Susan Karant-Nunn, “Liturgical Rites: The Medium, the Message, the Messenger, and the Misunderstanding” [17]

May 16: Communication without Media(tion): Thomas Müntzer and Other Spiritualists

Questions & Topics
- How did radical reformers like Thomas Müntzer and Sebastian Frank conceive of the communication between God and man? How can immediacy be facilitated?
- What is the role of the Holy Spirit? How does it work?
- What is the status of Scripture?
How did Müntzer and Franck understand their own roles? What is their view of salvational history? What is their place

Readings & Materials
- John 14.15–31, 16.1–12; 1 Corinthian 12–14*
- Thomas Müntzer, “Sermon to the Princes” [21], “Highly Provoked Defense” [21]
- Sebastian Frank, “Letter to Campanus” [16]
- Helmut Puff, “Mediated Immediacies in Thomas Müntzer’s Theology” [16]


Questions & Topics
- What is Zwingli’s and Calvin’s view of salvational history? What is the role of their doctrines of predestination in their eschatology or lack thereof?
- What were the defining features of Zwingli’s and Calvin’s theology of media and communication?
- How do they define “true religion” vis-à-vis false religion or idolatry?

Readings & Materials
- Ulrich Zwingli, Commentary on True and False Religion (sel.)
- John Calvin, “The Necessity of Reforming the Church,” “Articles Concerning Predestination,” and Institutes of the Christian Religion (sel.)

May 28: “This is my body”: Reformation Controversies over the Materiality of Media

Questions & Topics
- How do bread and wine become religious media? What are the defining features of their mediality? What do they communicate?
- How do different Reformers understand the sacramentality of the Eucharist? How do their interpretations differ from Catholic dogma?
- What divides various Reformers in their interpretation of the Eucharist?

Readings & Materials
- 1 Cor 11.17–34; Mark 14.1–26; Matthew 26.17–29; Luke 22.1–30; John 6.26–63*
- Martin Luther, “The sacrament of the body and blood of Christ - Against thefanatics”
- Andreas Karlstadt, “Exegesis of this Word of Christ…”
- Ulrich Zwingli, “On the Lord’s Supper” (sel.)

May 30: Destroying Images: Idolatry and the Fear of Demonic Media

Questions & Topics
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- Why did iconoclasts destroy images? What they fear or abhor about images?
- How did they conceive of the mediality of religious images?
- How did the removal of images affect the sacred space of churches?
- On what grounds did Martin Luther and the Lutheran Church permit the use of images?

Readings & Materials
- Martin Luther, “Against the heavenly prophets in the matter of images and sacraments” (sel.)
- Carlos Eire, “The Reformation Critique of the Image” [17]

June 4: Our Web Exhibition (Hopefully) Goes Live!