

## **Gospel and Global Media Cultures**

Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry

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[http://www2.luthersem.edu/mhess/web/Seattle\\_Course.html](http://www2.luthersem.edu/mhess/web/Seattle_Course.html)

July 8 – 12, 2013 / 9 am to 4 pm each day

What consequences does interpreting and confessing the Trinitarian relationality of God have for how pastoral leaders inhabit public spaces in global civil society through different kinds of media?

### **Goals:**

- (1) Demonstrate an awareness of various landscapes of digital media culture with an emphasis on active engagement in creation within those landscapes
- (2) Demonstrate a capacity for healthy pastoral presence and boundaries in the midst of digital cultural spaces
- (3) Demonstrate a capacity for theological reflection and spiritual formation within digital culture
- (4) Use that capacity to develop a public voice in interpreting and confessing Christ's presence, and in supporting congregational mission
- (5) Collaborate with colleagues on learning how to communicate and teach using emerging digital tools (facebook, twitter, blogs, digital storytelling, and so on).

This course will consist of one week during which you will work intensively on campus in class sessions, as well as off campus in writing/planning every evening. **Please plan your schedule to allow for full participation during this intense week.** You will also need some kind of electronic device with net access that will allow you to keep and write a blog, and to work with digital photos and music (iPads and similar devices would be appropriate, as well as standard computers with iPhoto, iMovie, Moviemaker, or similar software).

### **Required texts:**

Elizabeth Drescher, *Click2Save: Digital Ministry Bible* (Morehouse Publishing, 2012)

Howard Rheingold, *NetSmart: How to Thrive Online* (MIT Press, 2012)

Clay Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations* (Penguin Press, 2008)

Assorted readings in a readings packet (Hess, Campbell, Hoyt)

Your colleagues' blogs as the week progresses

I assume that you will come to class having already completed the reading for that session as noted on the syllabus. I would highly recommend that you complete all of the reading in advance of our intensive week, so that you can use our shared time to engage the ideas under consideration.

**July 8**  
**Morning**

**Introductions: ourselves, blogging, and the God question**

Orientation to the class, “how to blog,” how to use an RSS newsreader

How does confessing the Trinitarian relationality of God bring communities of faith into existence? What do our own media landscapes look like?

Start your personal blog, and make sure to send your blog’s URL to Mary so that it can go on the website

Reading: Drescher, pp. 1- 14, pp. 53-59, pp. 93-103

Reading: Packet / Hess, pp. ix-20.

**July 8th**

**Afternoon**

**The contexts we are living in**

“An anthropological introduction to YouTube” and other tasty tidbits of digital context

Question: how do we understand “participatory knowing” in communities of faith? In what ways might theological reflection help us to see more, to explore and critique, “context collapse”? what is “embodied” about social media? How are we defining “culture” and what standpoints are we approaching it from?

Reading: the rest of Drescher

Reading: Packet / Hess, pp. 79-93, Campbell “Networked religion”

**July 9**

**Morning**

**Practicing hospitality in social media**

What are “social media”? How are social media such as Facebook changing the cultural contours of our communities of faith? How do you figure out the “rules” of such a space, to wit: what are the acceptable bargain, appropriate tools and plausible promise of a given space? What might we plausibly say about pastoral “presence” and “boundaries” in Facebook? What are important etiquette/rules for engagement in such a space?

To do: become a “novice,” if you’re new to Facebook, or try moving into an “oblate” or a “superior” role using Drescher’s categories

Reading: *Here Comes Everybody*, Shirky

Review: Drescher, chap. 2, 3.1

**July 9**

**Afternoon**

**Supporting theological reflection in daily life**

Moving theological reflection into digital environments. Television commercial exercise, and steps in theological reflection. Practicing attention in digital culture spaces.

How can we do thoughtful theological reflection in/with/through/amidst secular media?

Reading: Rheingold, pp. 1 - 110

**July 10**

**Morning**

**Witness/testimony**

How do we engage viral communication in ways that promote thoughtful Christian engagement? What is 'testimony' in these spaces? How can pastoral leaders help people to exercise their communication muscles in ways that lead to healthy witness, rather than destructive dynamics? (Including: how do we build practices that help us to have healthy boundaries for time management)

Read: Packet / Thomas Hoyt on "testimony," pp. 89-101

**July 10**

**Afternoon**

**Community care, lay mutual ministry**

Can pastoral care ever happen in digital environments? What could/does it look like there? In what ways can pastoral leaders invite deeper relational accountability in digital spaces?

Reading: Rheingold, pp. 147-238

Reading: Deanna Thompson, "top 5 challenges of using caringbridge"

(<http://hopingformoreblog.blogspot.com/2012/09/top-5-challenges-of-using-caringbridge.html>), and "top 10 reasons to use caringbridge"

(<http://hopingformoreblog.blogspot.com/2012/09/the-top-ten-reasons-to-use-caringbridge.html>)

Review: Drescher's chapter 2

**July 11th**  
**Morning**

**Praying in public**

What do we need to think about with prayer in public when any public space might be recorded at any time? What are the parameters you want to keep in mind for your own practice as a public leader amidst digital media? How can “context collapse” be mitigated or addressed?

**July 11**  
**Afternoon**

**Solidarity, collegiality, collaboration**

How is digital storytelling a form of faith formation? In what ways can we support people in learning the tools of digital storytelling, and what resources are available for sharing such stories? Copyright issues, fair use, finding free sound, video, etc. creative commons licenses, etc.

Explore: [Storyingfaith.org](http://Storyingfaith.org)  
Reading: Rheingold, pp. 199-252

**July 12**  
**Morning**

**Collaborative lab time**

Time to work with each other on final project stories, using a digital storytelling circle process.

**July 12th**  
**Afternoon**

**What does this all mean theologically?**

Sharing projects with each other, and closing rituals for the class.

**Required Assignments:**

(30%) Every day: do the assigned readings and keep a running commentary going in a personal blog on the readings and your responses to the course (one blog post a day, minimum, more information below)

(30%) Every day: read your colleagues’ blogs and comment on at least one of them (try to post at least one comment on each of your colleagues’ blogs by the end of our week together, more information below). Participate fully in the class discussions that occur in person.

(40%) Due July 12 (or a later date, with permission): complete a final project, a digital story which merges at least pictures and music (but you could also use video), in a short format digital story (no more than 5 minutes), and which shares at least a snapshot of something which conveys God’s relational presence to/for you (more information below)

## **Academic Honesty:**

The School of Theology and Ministry strictly adheres to the Academic Policy concerning Academic Honesty as published in the Seattle University Student Handbook. (see the Seattle University website).

## **Students with disabilities:**

If you have, or think you may have, a disability (including an “invisible disability” such as a learning disability, a chronic health problem, or a mental health condition) that interferes with your performance as a student in this class, you are encouraged to discuss your needs and arrange support services and/ or accommodations through Disabilities Services staff in the Learning Center, Loyola 100, (206) 296-5740.

## **Assignment Notes: 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. Brevity is preferred (although it can be difficult to achieve).

You can use whatever blogging software you would like, but if you have never set up a blog you might want to try Wordpress software, which is a platform that is free and easy to use (<http://wordpress.com/>). Whatever software you choose to use, make sure that it contains the ability for people to use RSS to subscribe to it. In general almost all weblog entries should 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.**

**You should also reflect on each book we’ve read at least once.**

Most blogs are updated regularly, which is why I am asking you to post every weekday that we meet. More and more blogs are read using a newsreader and RSS, so the title and (if you use one) the excerpt of your post is important. Choose something concise and evocative.

Blogging is a conversation of some kind with someone(s) – even if that someone is only an invented audience – which means that weblog entries will pose questions and/or invite action of some sort. They will invite 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. Blog posts do *not* have to be definitive – feel free to “think out loud” and to change your mind in later posts.

Also, note that some of your classmates may be using blogs that they've begun in other settings – so not everything in your blog has to be directly connected to this class.

### **Some ideas for potential blog posts:**

Reflect on the readings, reflect on ideas that emerged for you in class sessions

What's going on in the news today? How might you pray with something that you've encountered there?

Find an interesting website or weblog that pertains in some way to your understanding of God's activity in the world, and point people to it with a comment as to why they should care about 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 popular culture that has no explicitly religious elements to it, and make an argument as to why it is in fact *deeply* theological.

Trace a theological question or theme that is beginning to emerge in a television or YouTube series that you're watching. How would identify that theme? Can you link to the specific episodes that contain the theme?

Find an example of an effective use of the web (or other digital media) for missional outreach; point to it, and explain why you believe it's so effective

### **Notes on commenting on your colleague's posts**

Here what I am interested in are your reflections on your colleagues' posts. These do not have to be lengthy or formal, but your reflection should make clear that you've read and considered the post, and you should write something that is not simply a “verbal bouquet” or a critique without substance. Try picking out a sentence from your colleague's post that you really resonated with, and exploring its further implications. Or choose an idea that you disagree with, and point out why.

Choose an RSS reader and subscribe to your colleague's blogs using that reader. A reader will make it much easier to know when one of your colleague's blogs has been updated (many blogs will also allow you to subscribe to comments).

## **Assignment notes: Final Digital Project**

The goal for the final project is to find a way to practice what we've been learning in the class – conceptually, pragmatically, theologically and creatively. Generally the most direct way to do this is to put together a short piece (no more than 5 minutes!) that combines music and images in theological reflection. You could use a website like *animoto.com* (which makes the process very easy), or a tool like iPhoto, iMovie or Windows Moviemaker (which will allow you to put music and images together easily and then export the resulting piece to a video format).

Throughout our week together we'll be talking about some of the issues involved in putting something together (both technically and theologically), but you can also use your blogging as a way to try out ideas and get input from your colleagues. There are also a lot of resources available at [www.storyingfaith.org](http://www.storyingfaith.org).

Rubrics for evaluation of student work in this class are appended to the end of this syllabus.

## Overall Descriptive Report

**Summer 2013**

**Student:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Grade:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Course Objectives</b>	<b>Failure</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Superior</b>
Demonstrate an awareness of landscapes of media culture with an emphasis on active engagement in creation				
Demonstrate a capacity for healthy pastoral presence and boundaries in the midst of digital cultural spaces				
Demonstrate a capacity for theological reflection and spiritual formation within digital culture				
Use that capacity 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				

<b>Rubric for Assessing Class Participation</b>	<b>Superior</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Sufficient</b>	<b>Failure</b>
<b>Reasoning</b>	Raises thoughtful questions which emerge from the assigned reading and presentations; is charitable to others in discussing issues.	Most positions are supported by evidence in the readings; comments and ideas generally contribute to class understanding of the material and concepts; is charitable to others.	Class contributions most often are based on personal opinion/anecdotes or fuzzy thinking. Comments suggest difficulty in following complex lines of argument; student's arguments are convoluted and hard to follow.	Frequently resorts to extraneous comments which fail to connect in any recognizable way to the reading or lecture; illogical comments without substantiation are frequent; not charitable to others.
<b>Listening</b>	Deepens the discussion by drawing on other readings, or comments from others; Offers in depth analysis of complicated theological terms and ideas that aid in understanding.	Usually listens well to others as evidenced by clarifying questions, making connections to earlier readings and lectures; responds to comments of others in ways that open and deepen conversation	Has difficulty consistently listening well as evidenced by repetition of questions asked earlier or extraneous comments unrelated to the topic. Is occasionally distracted by personal electronic media.	Frequently appears distracted; distracted by computer or cell phone; shows no evidence of listening or understanding the comments of others
<b>Reading</b>	Student has carefully read and understood the readings, followed up on footnotes and outside sources and comes to class prepared with questions and critiques.	Student has read and understood all assigned material as evidenced by prepared questions. Contributes regularly and well.	Student has read most of the material but comments demonstrate little thought or misunderstanding some main points. Work demonstrates inconsistent preparation. Contributions are infrequent & inconsistent.	Unable to understand basic concepts and is frequently unprepared as evidenced by inability to respond to foundational questions or contribute. Consistently does not contribute.

<b>Rubric for Assessing Project</b>	<b>Superior</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Sufficient</b>	<b>Failure</b>
<b>Authenticity of theological reflection</b>	Argument is clear, well-founded, creative, compelling and elegant. Viewers/readers respond very well to it.	There is a clear theological statement in the project. Viewers/readers or other people engaging the project respond well to it.	Theological reflection is present but must be discovered, and is only somewhat relevant. Viewers/readers/ or other people engaging the project cannot tell if it is authentic.	There is no coherent theological reflection. The project has no clear organizational pattern. Readers/viewers/ or other people engaging the piece feel manipulated.
<b>Authoritative engagement with resources</b>	Authority is built using a wide range of sources. Student draws on not explicitly discussed in class.	Authority is built using several sources, but the student relies heavily on only one genre (biblical, traditional, etc.). Effort has been made to go beyond material presented in class.	The student relies on personal authority to carry the argument of the project. If outside sources are used, they are primarily print-based.	Poor use of sources in general; only minimally uses sources provided by instructor, and/or relies exclusively on personal assertion.
<b>Creative agency</b>	The project is compelling, multi-sensory, and layered in approach. Care has been given with regards to editing and there is an openness to interpretation which invites participatory meaning-making.	The project is interesting, and can withstand more than one viewing/read/engagement. The student respects the genre of the project, and has clearly taken care in production.	The project is complete, makes a coherent point and some care has been expended in producing it.	The project appears sloppy and incoherent. It appears to function on one level only, constraining meaning rather than opening it up.