

Digital/Spiritual Literacy: Finding the Sacred in Virtual Space

Description

Digital media and web technologies have already changed the way many congregations do church, leading some observers to ask: “At what cost?” In this one-week intensive course we will examine the potential for these new media and technologies to diminish or strengthen human relationships, with special attention given to ways congregations can use digital media and web technologies to nurture individual spiritual growth and facilitate interpersonal relationships. We will also consider how ministers can responsibly use online resources such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and more as integral, authentic, and spiritually-fulfilling components of their ministry.

Goals

- Increase our understanding of the ways digital media and web technologies can augment the spiritual growth and faith development of individuals within a congregation
- Familiarize ourselves with the latest online and mobile resources currently being used by congregations to reach spiritual seekers beyond their walls
- Engage in the mindful use of digital media and web technologies to increase the effectiveness of our individual ministries, while honoring the primacy of the face-to-face connections in our lives.

Instructor

A 2002 graduate of Meadville/Lombard, the Rev. Phillip Lund serves as the Director of Faith Development and Congregational Growth for the Prairie Star District of the UUA. He has been blogging at "Phil's Little Blog on the Prairie" since April of 2004.

Reading List

Books

Personal Connections in the Digital Age, by Nancy Baym, Digital Media and Society

Tweet If You Love Jesus: Practicing Church in the Digital Reformation, by Elizabeth Drescher, Morehouse Publishing

Faith Formation 2020: Designing the Future of Faith Formation, by John Roberto, Vibrant Faith Ministries (available online at <http://faithformation2020.net>)

Online Articles

“Is Google Making Us Stupid,” by Nicholas Carr
<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/07/is-google-making-us-stupid/6868/>

“Why Abundance Is Good,” by Clay Shirky
<http://www.britannica.com/blogs/2008/07/why-abundance-is-good-a-reply-to-nick-carr/>

“Theology and the Church After Google,” by Philip Clayton
<http://tpcmagazine.org/article/theology-and-church-after-google>

“Ten Mindful Ways to Use Social Media,” by Lori Deschene
<http://www.tricycle.com/feature/ten-mindful-ways-use-social-media>

“25 Reasons Why Twitter Is Spiritual,” by Frederic Brussats
<http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/practices/features.php?id=19088>

“The Networked Congregation: Embracing the Spirit of Experimentation,” by Andrea Useem
<http://congregationalresources.org/networked-congregation-embracing-spirit-experimentation>

“The World Wide Web and the ‘Web of Life’,” by Tim Berners-Lee
<http://www.w3.org/People/Berners-Lee/UU.html>

“Growing Your Religion Through Social Media,” by Carol Cole-Lewis
<http://c-cole-lewis.com/2009/05/growing-your-religion-through-social-media/>

Web Resources

The Table Project, <http://tableproject.org>

Monvee, <http://www.monvee.com>

The City, <http://www.onthecity.org>

Paratweet, <http://paratweet.com>

Practicing Our Faith, <http://www.practicingourfaith.org>

Spirituality and Practice, <http://spiritualityandpractice.com>

Agile Alliance, <http://www.agilealliance.org>

Requirements and Course Structure

Before Class:

By October 21, post a one page introduction of yourself, and your learning goals for the course.

Complete readings; write and post three short (500 word) reflections in response to questions about each of the three books; post brief, thoughtful comments in response to your fellow students' reflections. Successful completion: 1/3 of Passing Grade.

Students will be divided into groups of three or four and be responsible for reading and reflecting on the posts from the other students in their group.

- First post due: Wednesday, October 26, 2011
- First response due: Wednesday, November 2, 2011
- Second post due: Wednesday, November 9, 2011
- Second response due: Wednesday, November 16, 2011
- Third post due: Wednesday, November 23, 2011
- Third response due: Wednesday, November 30, 2011

During Class: Actively engage in class discussions; give a short (15 minute) presentation introducing the class to a new digital medium or web technology that congregations may find useful; try out new web and mobile technologies to augment in-class experience.

Successful completion: 1/3 of Passing Grade.

- Deadline for submitting proposals for in-class presentations is Wednesday, December 14, 2011.
- Proposals will be approved by Monday, December 19, 2011.

After Class: Using the web platform of your choice (Google Sites, WordPress, etc.), develop a sample congregational website that offers multiple opportunities to augment face-to-face faith development activities with online learning, as well as online activities that could bring spiritual seekers to church for face-to-face interaction. Write and post a brief summary of how your sample website fulfills the above objectives; post a brief comment in reply to each of your fellow students' summaries. Successful completion: 1/3 of Passing Grade.

- Sample congregational websites and commentaries are due on Wednesday, February 29, 2011.
- Responses to sample congregational websites and commentaries are due by Wednesday, March 14, 2011.

The daily schedule of our week together will look something like this: we'll spend our mornings discussing the readings and considering some of the various moral, spiritual, social, theological, and philosophical issues around the use of digital technology and social media in a congregational setting; afternoons will be spent sharing presentations on new digital media, experimenting (i.e., playing) with some of the latest web technologies available, and engaging in conversations (via the internet) with ministers, media consultants, and others who are successfully using digital technology and social media in their ministry and work.

Grading

This course will be graded pass/fail