



Unit Descriptor

SPECIFICATION

Unit Title	Digital Theology: Theological Reflection on Digital Culture	
Unit Code	710	
Credit Rating	30	
Study hours	300	
FHEQ Level	7	
Unit Leader	Jonas Kurlberg	
ECTS value CATS value	15	
Programme eligibility	<i>Pathway type/name</i> MA in Digital Theology	<i>Compulsory or optional</i> Compulsory
Pre-requisites; co-requisites and barred combinations	None	

SYNOPSIS

Digital theology is an exercise in contextual or constructive theological reflection on the emerging cultural condition in which we find ourselves. Beyond utilitarian uses of digital tools and artefacts, late modern societies are undergoing radical cultural shifts in the wake of the digitalisation of all spheres of life. Digital theology is the exploration of the relationship of the divine to this emerging online world. It involves creative and reflexive conversation between Christian scriptures, doctrines and ideas on the one hand, and digital discourses and culture on the other.

This unit, then, engages the students in exploring this new frontier of theological enquiry, inviting them to examine scriptures and tradition afresh in this new cultural condition. It involves asking questions such as: Where is God online? What is sacramental in digital spaces? What does it mean to be human in a digital age? How is missiological enquiry shaped by digitality? What theological resources can theologians bring to debates on the ethics of digital technology? What is eschatology in a digital future?

AIMS

The aims of the unit are:

- To enable students to reflect critically on the theological implications of digitality, focussing especially on theological anthropology, theological ethics, and philosophical accounts of technology and digital culture.
- To provide students with an in depth understanding of relevant theological and philosophical voices on technology and digital culture.
- To enable students to critically evaluate theological reflection on digitality, offering a critique of current theological practice and publication.
- To enable students to reflect theologically on their personal experience of digital culture and that of their local church/community, and to relate this experience to the learning from the module.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Knowledge and Understanding

By the end of this unit students will be able to:

- critically examine a range of knowledge across one or more specialised areas of theology, mission and ministry as they relate to digital theology, on the basis of a wide ranging evaluation of the relevant literature
- understand key concepts in digital theology, which enable the absorption and evaluation of a complex literature and body of research results in this field of enquiry. This will include the recognition of the apparent contradictions and ambiguities in the fields of practical, contextual and digital theology and the identification of areas in which further research is necessary.
- critically evaluate theological and philosophical approaches to digital culture and technology including the practice of Christianity in an online context at personal, ecclesial and societal levels.
- undertake in-depth, systematic study of the key methods in offering digitally cogent responses to major themes within systematic theology, contextual theology and theological ethics.

Subject-specific and Intellectual Skills

Upon successful completion of the unit the students will be able to:

- critique existing theory and practice in digital theology and plan for the appropriate, wise and imaginative development of mission and ministry in complex and unpredictable contexts, in church and society.
- evaluate and synthesise research findings in the field of digital theology, practical theology, mission and ministry and identify areas for further research.
- reflect critically on the role of technology in the contemporary world and the theological questions raised by digitality. This will include a comprehensive and critical account of various approaches to the practice of Christianity in an online context at the personal, ecclesial and societal levels.
- reflect critically in a sophisticated, critical and rigorous manner on some key theological questions raised by the emergence of digitality.

Generic Skills

Upon successful completion of the unit, students will be able to:

- acquire and synthesise information through reading and research and present it clearly and effectively in written format.
- engage in advanced level research through the acquisition of new study skills.
- effectively communicate complex theological and ethical ideas, and evaluate practice in a clear, concise and engaging manner.
- engage in effective autonomous study by developing their time and personal management skills and working collaboratively with staff colleagues and peers.

TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS

Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lectures provide content, a conceptual framework and a survey of approaches within Digital Theology that enable students to locate their learning in a wider context, to make connections with other disciplines, and to evaluate and apply their learning to different contexts. • Seminars offer students an opportunity to present, evaluate and apply their knowledge to specific reading contexts, and to engage with teaching staff and peers in debate and reflection. • Guided reading in conjunction with lectures and seminars encourages independent learning and underpins the knowledge and understanding gained in lectures and seminars. 	
Resources provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library • Various e-resources, such as e-books and scholarly articles, accessed through ATLA, Ebsco, etc. • Unit-specific lecture notes, core texts and various other learning resources will be available to students via Moodle 	
Breakdown	Activity	Allotted Study Hours
	Lecture	10
	Seminar/tutorial	20
	Completion of assessment task	180
	Preparation for scheduled sessions	90
	Wider reading	0
	Practical or placement	0
	Revision/ Examinations	0
	Follow-up work	0
	Total study time	300

ASSESSMENT METHODS

Task	Details (e.g., length)	Percentage weighting
<i>Formative</i> Collaborative Book Review and Presentation	A 1000-word (max.) collaborative book review suitable to be posted on Goodreads, and a 10-minute presentation outlining the group's assessment to the class	0%
<i>Summative</i> Assessment Essay	A 6000-word (max.) essay	100%

FEEDBACK METHODS

Written feedback on formative and summative submissions supported by individual tutorials

RESIT/ REFERRAL METHODS

A new summative essay title will be set

RECOMMENDED READING

Bennett, Jana Marguerite. *Aquinas on the Web? Doing Theology in an Internet Age*. London & New York: T & T Clark, 2012.

Berger, Teresa, @Worship: Liturgical Practices in Digital Worlds, New York: Routledge, 2017

Bevans, Stephen. *Models of Contextual Theology*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002.

Borgmann, Albert. *Power Failure: Christianity in the Culture of Technology*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2003.

Byers, Andrew. *Theomedia: The Media of God and the Digital Age*. Eugene: Cascade, 2013.

Campbell, Heidi and Garner, Steven. *Networked Theology: Negotiating Faith in Digital Culture*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016.

Cole-Turner, Ronald. *Transhumanism and Transcendence: Christian Hope in an Age of Technological Enhancement*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011.

Cortez, Marc. *Theological Anthropology: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: T&T Clark, 2010.

Gould, Meredith. *The Social Media Gospel*. St Paul: Liturgical Press, 2015.

Graham, Elaine L. *Representations of the Post/Human: Monsters, Aliens and Others in Popular Culture*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002.

Herzfeld, Noreen L. *In Our Image: Artificial Intelligence and the Human Spirit*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002.

Horsfield, Peter. *From Jesus to the Internet*. Hoboken: Wiley, 2015

Midson, S.A. *Cyborg Theology: Humans, Technology and God*, London: IBTauris, *forthcoming*.

Opas, Minna and Haapalainen, Anna. *Christianity and the Limits of Materiality*. London: Bloomsbury, 2017

Schnekloth, Clint. *Mediating Faith: Faith Formation in a Transmedia Era*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014.

Smith, Pam. *Online Mission and Ministry*. London: SPCK, 2015.

Spadaro, Antonio. *Cybertheology: Thinking Christianity in the Era of the Internet*. Translated by Maria Way. New York: Fordham University Press, 2014.

Thomas, Adam. *Digital Disciple: Real Christianity in a Virtual World*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2011.

Thompson, Deanna. *The Virtual Body of Christ in a Suffering World*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2016.

Thweatt-Bates, Jeanine. *Cyborg Selves: A Theological Anthropology of the Posthuman*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2012

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Provisional Curriculum:

1. Introduction to Digital Theology
2. Doing Theology in a Digital Age
3. Theology and Technology
4. Digital Divinity
5. Creation, Co-creation and Incarnation
6. Theological Anthropology and Transhumanism
7. Christ the Cyborg?
8. Salvation in a Digital Culture
9. Ecclesiology and Digitality
10. The Cyberworld as a Sacred Space? Online Sacramental Theology
11. Digital destinations
12. Missiology in a Digital Age
13. The Politics of Tech: Prophetic Engagement in a Digital Age
14. Finding a Public Voice in a Digital Age
15. Student Presentations

APPROVAL

Date approved by UGC	
Valid from Date (Publishing Date)	