



Unit Descriptor

SPECIFICATION

Unit Title	Digitally Mediated Christianity	
Unit Code	711	
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

Whether websites, prayer apps, live-streamed services, social media memes or religious video games, churches, para-church organisations and individual Christians are increasingly using digital technology for worship, discipleship and mission.

A basic premise of the unit is that technological artefacts are tools but they are not neutral. Rather, they shape our actions, thoughts and conversations in certain ways. This course reflects on the implications of different forms of digitally-mediated Christianity. It can as such broadly be situated within practical theology.

Drawing upon the latest research within media studies, digital humanities and digital religion, the students attain tools, theoretical frameworks and resources to analyse how technology is used by religious communities in contemporary society. Beyond the mere descriptive analysis of social sciences, the course engages theologically with the issues at stake in order to discuss how the church could navigate the digital world.

AIMS

This unit aims:

- To reflect critically on contemporary expressions of Christianity online or digitally-mediated Christianity, on the impact of digital culture on the practice of Christianity within the digital context and the theological implications of this expression.
- To enable students to undertake critical study of context-based analysis of expressions of Christianity online across a breadth of cultural contexts, methodologies and ideologies.
- To provide students with an in-depth understanding of contemporary expressions of Christianity online and their impact on the wider Christian context, to critically evaluate the impact of digitality on Christian expression and practice.
- To nurture students' ability to read, analyse and critically evaluate theological reflection on digitality in context, offering a critique of current theological practice and publication.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Knowledge and Understanding

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

- undertake an in-depth and wide-ranging study of digitally-mediated Christianity across the specialised areas of theology, mission and ministry
- engage in a critical study of the relevant literature, informed by research at the current limits of understanding.
- assimilate and evaluate a complex literature and body of research results. This will include the recognition of the apparent contradictions and ambiguities in the field of Christianity on-line and the wider context of Digital Technology and of areas in which further research is necessary.
- explore and critically evaluate the reciprocal relationship between digital culture and Christian practice within that context.
- offer a comprehensive and critical account of various approaches to the practice of Christianity in an online context at the personal, ecclesial and societal levels and the role of digitality in personal identity and experience.

Subject-specific and Intellectual Skills

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

- critique existing theory and practice in digitally mediated Christianity and plan for the appropriate, wise and imaginative development of mission and ministry in complex and unpredictable contexts, in church and society. This will involve the application of both knowledge and understanding to investigate contextual theology, Digital Humanities, digital culture and contemporary society, reaching valid conclusions, some of which may be original, and report these findings effectively within academic conventions.
- evaluate and synthesise research findings in the field of Christianity on-line and the wider context of digital technology and identify areas for further research.
- reflect theologically in a sophisticated, critical and rigorous manner, exercising sound judgement when engaging systematically and creatively with complex and ambiguous realities in both contemporary church and digital culture.

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.
- carry out systematic and creative research into complex issues and communicate their findings with clarity, sensitivity, fairness and imagination.
- 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 and digital religion 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
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<p><i>Formative</i></p> <p>Assessment Portfolio Outline</p>	<p>The students will give a 15 minutes classroom presentation of an annotated outline of their portfolio, indicating the main arguments, structure and sources used.</p>	<p>0%</p>
<p><i>Summative</i></p> <p>Assessment Portfolio</p>	<p>A 6000-word (max.) portfolio consisting of a theological assessment of 3-4 digital artefacts such as websites, blogs, podcasts, apps, etc.</p>	<p>100%</p>

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

Baron, Naomi. *Words Onscreen: The Fate of Reading in a Digital World*. London: OUP, 2015
<https://www.perlego.com/book/77398> £14.99 9/words-on-screen-pdf

Bennett, Jana Marguerite. *Aquinas on the Web? Doing Theology in an Internet Age*. London & New York: T & T Clark, 2012. <https://www.perlego.com/book/804105>/aquinas-on-the-web-doing-theology-in-an-internet-age-pdf

Byers, Andrew. *Theomedia: The Media of God and the Digital Age*. Eugene: Cascade, 2013.
<https://www.perlego.com/book/87826> 5/theomedia-the-media-of-god-and- the-digital-age-pdf

Campbell, Heidi. *When Religion Meets New Media*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2010.
<https://www.perlego.com/book/16158> 07/when-religion-meets-new-media-pdf

Campbell, Heidi. *Digital Religion*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2013.

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

<https://www.perlego.com/book/1285239/networked-theology-engaging-culture-negotiating-faith-in-digital-culture-pdf>

Cheong, Pauline et al. (eds). *Digital Religion, Social Media and Culture*. New York: Peter Lang (2012)

Cheruvallil-Contractor, Sariyya and Shakkour, Suha (eds.) *Digital Methodologies in the Sociology of Religion*. London: Bloomsbury, 2015 <https://www.perlego.com/book/807546/digital-methodologies-in-the-sociology-of-religion-pdf>

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

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

<https://www.perlego.com/book/999478/from-jesus-to-the-internet-a-history-of-christianity-and-media-pdf>

Hutchings, Tim. *Creating Church Online: Ritual Community and New Media*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2017 <https://www.perlego.com/book/1485837/creating-church-online-ritual-community-and-new-media-pdf>

Mahan, Jeffrey. *Media, Religion and Culture: An Introduction*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2014.

<https://www.perlego.com/book/1561512/media-religion-and-culture-an-introduction-pdf>

Opas, Minna and Haapalainen, Anna. *Christianity and the Limits of Materiality*. London: Bloomsbury, 2017 <https://www.perlego.com/book/808766/christianity-and-the-limits-of-materiality-pdf>

Reed, T. V. *Digitized Lives: Culture, Power and Social Change in the Internet Era*. New York & London: Routledge, 2014.

Schnekloth, Clint. *Mediating Faith: Faith Formation in a Transmedia Era*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014. <https://www.perlego.com/book/1619082/digitized-lives-culture-power-and-social-change-in-the-internet-era-pdf>

Siker, Jeffrey S. *Liquid Scripture: The Bible in a Digital World*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017

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

<https://www.perlego.com/book/1469864/online-mission-and-ministry-a-theological-and-practical-guide-pdf>

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

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Provisional Curriculum:

1. Introduction to Digital Religion
2. Digital Research Methods
3. Key Theories in Digital Religion
4. New Media, Religion and Celebrity Culture
5. Using New Media Wisely
6. Reading the Bible Digitally
7. Contemporary Biblical Literacy
8. Authority and Leadership in Digital Culture
9. Sacraments Online
10. Online Church and Church Online
11. Online Spiritual Formation and Identity
12. Digital Pedagogics in Church
13. Student Presentations
14. Religious Gaming
15. Digital Evangelism

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APPROVAL

Date approved by UGC	
Valid from Date (Publishing Date)	