

DRAFT v1
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syllabus available in Canvas
January 7, 2026.

Loyola Institute for Ministry
Loyola University New Orleans

Digital Media and Ministry

LIM-G826-Y1G0E

Spring 2026

Important! You will be notified by email to your Loyola email address when your course web site is available (normally the week before class begins). Please reply to the instructor's email when you receive it to confirm that you are ready to begin the course.

Course Description

This course explores the question of ministry in a digital culture. Churches, religious communities and people of faith grapple with this question as social communication evolves toward a more participatory digital medium. Connection, communication, community, and communion are different places along the trajectory of encounter, and one of the greatest gifts and challenges for people of faith today is discerning where the voice of faith is on this trajectory and how it can move toward a more authentic encounter in and through the digital realm.

As its objective, this course invites learners to explore faith and digital culture in dialogue toward effective ministerial praxis. Through focusing on key topics of faith and digital culture in dialogue, this course seeks to enable learners to approach the task of communicating faith with confidence and clarity about both the potential and the limits of digital media for expressing, forming and experiencing faith. This course also seeks to enhance basic digital media literacy skills for ministry, primarily focusing on the potential of social and digital media for sharing and communicating faith with a special emphasis on the concept of presence.

Key Learning Outcomes

As a result of this course, you will gain:

- an understanding of the possibilities and challenges for faith in the digital culture.
- an overview of Catholic approaches to communicating faith in a digital age.
- an overview of topics highlighted by digital culture especially relevant for faith and its expression in ministry.
- digital media literacy skills for online ministry.

Required Texts

Please order the required text as soon as possible from the Loyola Bookstore or another bookstore of your choice.

Campbell, Heidi A., and Stephen Garner. *Networked Theology: Negotiating Faith in Digital Culture*. Baker Academic, 2016. ISBN: 978-0801049149 List price \$26.00

Gorrell, Angela. *Always On: Practicing Faith in a New Media Landscape*. Baker Academic. 2019. ISBN: 978-1540960092 List price \$27.00

Dicastery for Communication. *Towards Full Presence: A Pastoral Reflection on Engagement with social media*, 2023. [PDF available online](#).

Additional readings and media as included in the Canvas course.

Evaluation and Course Requirements

Sequence of Topics/Calendar of Assignments

Weekly sessions in this course run from Tuesday–Monday. Please note that all assignments must be completed by Midnight on Monday, the last day of the weekly session, except for Week 1; you must complete your personal introduction by Sunday, 1/18 by 11:59pm Central Time, or risk being administratively dropped from the course and your discussion questions by Tuesday, 1/20, due to the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday on 1/19.

Week	Topic	Assignments
Week 1 1/12 – 1/19	Welcome, Introductions, and Class Overview 1/19 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Holiday	Complete readings, media, and personal introduction
Week 2 1/20 – 1/26	Theological Foundations of Communication	Complete readings, media, discussion questions
Week 3 1/27 – 2/2	Digital Media Foundations	Complete readings, media, discussion questions or attend synchronous course meeting (optional)
Week 4 2/3 – 2/9	Social Network Foundations	Complete readings, media, discussion questions
Week 5 2/10 – 2/16	Speaking to Tweeting: Evolutions in Communicating Faith	Complete readings, media, discussion questions
Week 6 2/17 – 2/23	Mardi Gras Holiday (Feb. 16-20, no class)	
Week 7 2/24 – 3/2	Catholic Social Communication Tradition and Social Media Practice	Complete readings, media, discussion questions
Week 8 3/3 – 3/9	Media as Ministry	Complete readings, media, discussion; submit Spiritual Formation synthesis #1 due 3/9, 11:59 pm CT
Week 9 3/10 – 3/16	Negotiating Face-to-Face and Online in Ministry	Complete readings, media, discussion question or attend synchronous course meeting (optional); begin final project

		(graduate students)
Week 10 3/17 – 3/23	Authority, Participatory Culture, and the Church	Complete readings, media, discussion questions
Week 11 3/24 – 3/30	Mobile Media and the Internet of Things	Complete readings, media, discussion questions, or attend
Week 12 3/31 – 4/6	Holy Week and Easter Holiday (no class)	
Week 13 4/7 – 4/13	Being Church in a Digital Age	Complete readings, media, discussion questions
Week 14 4/14 – 4/20	Presence: What is it?	Complete readings, media, discussion questions; Spiritual Formation synthesis #2 due by 11:59 pm CT.
Week 15 4/21 – 4/27	Topic defined by Free-Form Synchronous Seminars	Complete readings, media, discussion questions
Week 16 4/28 – 5/2	Final Assignment and Course Evaluation	Submit final project

Monday, May 11: due date for posting final grades.

Course Assessment

Each student's final grade will include the following parts:

		Percentage of Grade	
		Graduate	CEU
1	Substantive participation in weekly discussions	50 %	90%
2	Spiritual Formation	10 %	10 %
3	Final Project, 12–15-page paper	40 %	—

1) Participation in Weekly Canvas Discussions (50% graduate, 90% CEU)

Each week of this course includes assignments for reading, audio segments (where applicable), videos, and discussion questions. These are provided in the weekly modules in Canvas. In addition to reading all the materials assigned and watching assigned videos, all students will also be expected to participate in the class discussions.

This course also offers a combination of the traditional asynchronous online course and synchronous webinars using Zoom. The majority of interaction will take place through threaded

discussion, with a number of occasions for live webinars for all students over the course of the semester. Several times throughout the course, you will be invited to enter into a video class discussion in lieu of the written discussion board postings. Note: participation in the whole class video discussions are optional. You are also asked to participate in two required small group sessions, which is part of the participation grade.

Directions for Weekly Posting in Discussions

Please note: All times are Central Time.

For each Discussion assignment, students are required to make three (3) posts: a major post of 200-400 words in which they respond to the question posted, and two (2) minor posts of no more than 150-200 words each in which they respond to two (2) of the major posts made by their fellow students. In weeks where there are two discussion board questions, students are required to make one major post and two minor posts for each question (totaling 2 major, 4 minor posts). Our weekly sessions will run from Tuesday to Monday.

Beginning Each Tuesday

- Read the overview for the week's work and begin individual work for the week. Questions that arise about the material may be addressed to the professor in the Question Board or via email.
- Contributions to Discussions should reflect critical engagement with both the required readings as well as any other assigned material and should demonstrate itself as such.

By Thursday, 11:59pm CT.

- When there is an assigned group leader, beginning several weeks into the semester, the first major post to the weekly discussion question is due by Thursday night for group leaders and by Saturday night for everyone else. Some weeks require students to answer more than one question as a major post.
- Groups will be created and assigned several weeks into the semester. When this occurs, the group discussion leader posts a response to the discussion question by Thursday night. This initial post by the group discussion leader should also raise a question for the group to consider and be between 200- 400 words (Major post).

By Saturday, 11:59pm CT.

- Other members of the group respond to the discussion question by the end of Saturday night with a major post between 200-400 words. Either this initial post or a subsequent minor post should also address the group leader's question.

By Monday, 11:59pm CT.

- All students respond to two other member's posts in 150-200 words by Monday night (Minor posts).
- All members should have a total of three discussion posts by Monday night (one Major, two Minor) for each discussion board question.

Contents of Discussion Post

To earn full credit, you should do the following things:

- post and respond by the deadline;
- adhere to word length requirements;
- refrain from inappropriate posts (words/tones that diminish the character and community of the course) Practice using "I-statements," avoid generalizations by qualifying your words;
- provide content of substance based on the course material—that is, not comments such as “I agree wholeheartedly,” but rather content that offers an original and informed contribution to the discussion, either as an opening or as a response, and reference course material;
- integrate (reference/cite) what you have read, how you understand the material, your experience, the remarks of your colleagues, and the course material;
- posting fully addresses the weekly questions and stimulates substantial follow-up postings;
- write in accessible prose—that is, not necessarily formal academic prose, but prose that is as clear and correct as you can make it, citing material not your own, and avoiding “text-speak” (using complete sentences rather than abbreviations and emoji to make your point, for example).

Small Group Meetings (required)

During our class you will be organized into smaller groups to host your own virtual learning sessions in weeks 8 and 12. This is a wonderful way to help build community and contextualize our discussions. You will meet within the same small group two different times during the semester. Small group assignments will be announced during Week 3 and also posted in Week 3 on the groups and discussions page.

You should plan to meet for at least one hour with other members of your group to discuss this week’s assigned material in light of the discussion questions on Canvas. Once you have met, you should complete the Small Virtual Group Assignment and submit it by Monday night of the weekly session.

Synchronous Virtual Classes (optional)

There will be **three** optional opportunities to meet synchronously as a whole class through Zoom, available through Canvas during the course of the semester. These will be scheduled in weeks 2, 7, and 13. Plan for each session to last 1 ½ hours. In a page in the week one module you are invited to fill out an availability survey so that we can find times that work for the majority of the class. After the surveys are complete, I will send out an announcement to share the exact dates and times for these sessions.

If you attend the synchronous virtual class, you do not have to write your weekly major/minor posts on discussion board. Attendance and active participation in the virtual class will count for your weekly participation grade.

2) Spiritual Formation (10% both graduate and CEU)

You will write two brief 250–500-word syntheses of your experience, one at the midpoint of the course and one at the end. You do not have to turn in your ongoing record of reflections. The two

postings are worth 10% of your grade and should demonstrate some engagement with the passages of *Towards Full Presence*. Complete directions are found on Canvas.

3) Final Project/Paper: Contribute to Fully Present (40% graduate)

Graduate students will contribute to *Towards Full Presence* by selecting one of three options described by the Dicastery for Communication on their [Fully Present website](#). The final paper will be 12-15 pages. Times New Roman font, 12-point size, double spaced, and one-inch margins. Follow the word processing specifications in the *LIM Guide to Written Theological Reflection* found in Canvas under Resources » Writing Assistance. Complete directions are found on Canvas.

Grading Scale

A	93-100	B-	80-82.9	D+	67-69.9
A-	90-92.9	C+	77-79.9	D	60-66.9
B+	87-89.9	C	73-76.9	F	0-59.9
B	83-86.9	C-	70-72.9		

Overall Grading Scale

Please note that the LIM grading scale uses B as the standard for graduate-quality work. A and B+ indicate graduate work done with distinction, with B- and below signifying levels below graduate standards.

Letter Grade	Quality Points	Characteristics of Student Work
A	4.0	Work done with distinction. An outstanding use of all four evaluation criteria as a catalyst for critical reflection.
A-	3.7	Work done with distinction, with a few minor corrections needed.
B+	3.3	Work of very good quality. The assignment is addressed in an exceptional manner with a good balance of personal insight and academic documentation.
B	3.0	The standard for the master's degree. The assignment is adequately addressed in a clear and concise manner with appropriate documentation. If subsequent work meets this standard of quality, the degree will be awarded.
B-	2.7	The work is slightly below the standard for master's level work. The assignment is addressed, but a number of corrections is needed to address the assignment in a clear and concise manner. If subsequent work continues at this level, the student may not continue in the degree program.
C+	2.3	Substandard graduate work. Evaluation criteria are not adequately met in the assignment. Moderate improvement is needed. If subsequent work continues at this level, the student may not continue in the degree program.
C	2	Less than graduate-level work. Evaluation criteria are not met. If subsequent work continues at this level, the student may not continue in the degree program.
C-	1.7	Below average, grade does not count towards graduation.
D+	1.3	Minimally passing, grade does not count towards graduation.
D	1	Minimally passing, grade does not count towards graduation.
F	0	Assignment not addressed at all, incomplete assignment, or not submitted on time.

Course Policies

Incomplete Grade Policy

Students are subject to the university policy regarding incomplete grades with the following additions to university policy. Grades of Incomplete are given at the instructor's discretion. Students must complete LIM's Incomplete Grade Request Form found in the Resources » Policies, Forms, & Services section of their Canvas course. Students should first inquire of their instructor whether or not they are eligible for an incomplete; this must occur with sufficient time to complete the process explained here. To be eligible, students may not have received an Incomplete in the previous semester, must have completed at least 75% of the course work to date, and must have at least a C or above in the course. After the instructor makes an initial assessment of eligibility, including checking with the LIM Office to ensure there was no Incomplete in the previous semester and finds the student eligible, by the due date of the course's final assignment, a student must complete and obtain all signatures for LIM's Incomplete Grade Request Form found in the Resources section of their Canvas course and submit it to their instructor, who will forward a copy to the LIM Director. LIM graduate students may not receive Incompletes in LIM courses in consecutive semesters.

Attendance & Participation

Students are subject to the university policy regarding attendance found online in the Bulletin. Students in online courses communicate their presence by active participation in weekly discussions. Each course's instructor sets requirements for how many times students must post on the Discussion Board in Canvas. Failing to post during the first week of class may result in removal from the course. If you foresee that you will be unable to post in a given week, please contact the instructor ahead of time. Extensions for posting are given at the instructor's discretion and for a valid reason may be granted if arranged ahead of time. In extraordinary circumstances, students may arrange with their instructor to post up to two weeks after a deadline, though this may entail a grade reduction. Posts and other assignments submitted more than two weeks late may be subject to a grade of zero. If students do not post in a given week, they are considered absent. Absence for more than one week without contacting the instructor may result in removal from and failure of the course.

University Policies

Please read Part 2 of the syllabus (located on LORA and in Canvas) for university policies on plagiarism, accessible education, and more.