

Churchy Uses of Social Media  
[EL] CMLE 767/867  
Fall 2010  
Instructor: Tony Jones  
Syllabus

**Course Description:** Over the past century or so, churches have had to decide if and how to implement and large and ever-expanding list of innovative technologies: electric lights, microphones, telephones, and video. The latest challenge in this vein is how to use the wildly popular social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. While in the past, the high costs of new media has lessened their application in church, social media are *free!* But, there is a steep learning curve when investing in them, and many church professionals find them intimidating to point of outright fear (and even hostility). The aim of this course is to open the world of social media to clergy and other church professionals, to begin to use some of these media platforms, and to understand how the social nature of the internet is changing leadership structures.

**Course Goals:** At the conclusion of the course students will:

- 1) be familiar with a host of social media platforms and be competent in their use of three of them;
- 2) be familiar with the both the dangers and opportunities for church in the social media world;
- 3) be familiar with the changes that social media are making in the way that people in our culture connect and in what they expect from leaders.

**Basic Information:** The semester is twelve weeks long. The first day of e-learning classes is Monday, September 13. The last day of e-learning classes is Friday, December 10. We're on fall break the week of November 22. For the purposes of this course, each week begins on Monday (see below).

Each week I will post questions for class discussion on the Discussion Board no later than 8:00 AM on Monday. You should complete the week's reading by the Tuesday of that week so that you can fully participate in that week's discussion. In order to insure that you are aware of all assignments and material, check the following sections in Blackboard on a regular basis: Assignments, Course Information, Course Documents, and Discussion Board.

**Grading Policies:** To fulfill the course requirements you will be expected to:

- 1) Participate actively in the on-line discussion every week (33% of final grade).
- 2) Submit a 5-page "blog archaeology" essay, due October 22 (16.5% of final grade).
- 3) Submit a 5-page book review essay of one of the assigned books (or another book approved by me), due November 24 (16.5% of final grade).
- 4) Submit a final project, due December 17 (33% of final grade).

**Regarding the Essays:** I don't want papers. I have enough paper. I want you to write an essay, which is your thoughts on a particular idea. I do not want a report of what you

found on the blogs, since I read them already, but an essay on what you think about what you found. And I don't want you to regurgitate what you've read in a book, but to argue with one of the main theses in the book. No footnotes, no block quotes. I want *your thoughts*.

I will comment on them and return them to you as e-mail attachments. Essays should be submitted by 5:00 PM on the due date. Reasonable extensions will be granted if the request is made prior to the due date.

**The Blog Archaeology Essay:** Put on your headphones, open your web browser, and spend two to three hours cruising the blogosphere. Start with a blog search engine like Technorati or Google Blog Search and look up the something that interests you: postmodern Christianity, Presbyterianism, "How to get yourself elected bishop," or a book or author from this course that you find particularly provocative. Then follow links and comment strings to other sites and blogs. Simply go where the most interesting links take you. After your time in the blogosphere, write a 5-page essay on what you found and what you thought. I suggest you write the essay immediately after your research rather than a few days later. *Due October 22.*

**The Book Review Essay:** Maybe you're familiar with book reviews in publications like the *New York Review of Books* or the *New York Times Book Review*. In these publications, the reviewer may briefly summarize the content of the book under review, but the body of the review is a thoughtful interaction with the book's main thesis. Choose a book from the assigned reading list—or another book approved by the instructor—and write a 5-pages in this vein. *Due November 24.*

**The Final Project:** For your final project in the class, I'd like you to show me what you've accomplished in the world of social media. If you are able, submit the final project as a Powerpoint or Keynote slideshow, with recorded narration (it's a lot easier than you'd think). Even better, use an online collaboration tool like Google Wave or Slideshare. If all of this is still beyond your grasp by the beginning of December, you can submit a more traditional essay on MS Word, but it will need to be full of hyperlinks to take me to your sites.

For the project, take me on a tour of your Facebook page, your church's website, etc. Show me what you've learned and how you are (and hope to) use social media in your ministry. I will schedule a phone call with each student to talk through each of your ideas for the final project. *Due December 17.*

**Texts:**

Charlene Li, *Open Leadership*

Seth Godin, *Tribes*

Clay Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody*

Doug Pagitt, *Church in the Inventive Age*

*Please Note: While the reading for each week is listed below, there will be additional assignments each week—online videos to watch, blog posts to read, etc. They will be posted on Blackboard at the beginning of each week.*

**Week 1 (September 13) – Course Introduction**

No reading assigned. We'll spend the week discussing why we chose this course, what are our contexts of ministry, what do we already know about social media, and what do we hope to gain from this course.

**Week 2 (September 20) – An Introduction to Social Media**

Read: *Here Comes Everybody*, chapters 1-3

**Week 3 (September 27) – Facebook I: Your Profile**

Read: *Here Comes Everybody*, chapters 4-6

**Week 4 (October 4) – Facebook II: Your Church's Page**

Read: *Here Comes Everybody*, chapters 7-11

**Week 5 (October 11) – Twitter**

Read: *Tribes*, pages 1-80

**Week 6 (October 18) – The Power of Google**

Read: *Tribes*, pages 81-160

***Blog Archaeology Essay due Friday, October 22.***

**Week 7 (October 25) – Blogging**

Read: *Open Leadership*, chapters 1-3

**Week 8 (November 1) – Podcasting and Audio**

Read: *Open Leadership*, chapters 4-6

**Week 9 (November 8) – YouTube, Ustream, and Video**

Read: *Open Leadership*, chapters 7-11

**Week 10 (November 15) – Social Leadership I**

Read: *Church in the Inventive Age*, chapters 1-5

***Book Review Essay due November 24***

**November 22 – Fall Break – No Class**

**Week 11 (November 29) – Social Leadership II**

Read: *Church in the Inventive Age*, chapters 6-11

**Week 12 (December 6) – Sharing Resources**

Final project due December 17 at 5:00 PM

## Course Requirements

1. Because important information will be covered on the course's web site and in the on-line discussion group, active participation is essential. I expect everyone to make at least three substantive postings on the course web site each week. A substantive post is one that is 150-200 words in length and refers specifically to the assigned reading. Each student should post a reply to someone else's discussion or start a new discussion thread on at least three separate days of each week. These two requirements are independent of each other. You may, for example, post all three substantive posts on one day and then participate in the discussion on two additional days. More participation is encouraged, but each student should post something on the course web site at least three days each week. For most weeks there will be two forums related to the content reading and one forum in which you can share your more personal reflections on the readings.
2. I expect everyone to complete the assigned readings for each week.
3. I expect everyone to complete both written assignments on time.
4. The concluding assignment is a final project related to one of the major issues of the course. The project is intended to facilitate additional study and thought on one aspect of the course work. See "Final Project" in Course Information for more details.