

## **PHILLIPS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY SYLLABUS DISCLAIMER**

The following syllabus is the teaching and learning guide for the last time this course was taught. It will give you a good idea of the descriptions of the course, how it was taught, the reading, the papers and other assignments, the intended outcomes, and the workload. By examining this syllabus and others, you will be able to form an impression of what graduate theological education at Phillips Theological Seminary requires of students.

Due to periodic curriculum revisions, course names and/or numbers may be different on this syllabus than what the name and/or number of the current offered course may be.

This syllabus is provided for your information only. The faculty reserves the right to revise the curriculum, and each professor reserves the right to decide how best to meet the learning goals of the curriculum. Therefore, the following syllabus is an historical artifact rather than a promise of how the course will be taught in the future, or that the course will be taught again.

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**Social Media and the Life of the Church**  
**CC 679.13**  
**Sarah Morice-Brubaker**  
**Spring 2013**

**I. Overview**

**Course at a glance:**

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- Important Due Dates:
  - **March 7** – First book review due
  - **April 25** – Second book review due
  - **May 9** – Social media action plan due (share w/ class as your posting)
- Class week: At the time of this writing week runs **Thursday 9AM to Thursday 9AM**. This is subject to change, at the instructor's prerogative, for the good of the class.
- Posting on the reading:
  - Required 2 posts/week on the reading, each post between 250-500 words.
  - One of those posts must be a reply to someone else.
  - Optional additional post of up to 500 words.
  - No more than 3 posts/week.
  - There will be special posting instructions for the final week of class.
- Weekly challenges: Every week students will complete a task to help build their ministerial/professional social media presence. There will be a place to post your completed challenge and to ask for help, but this is not counted in the required weekly postings.
- Enrichment opportunities: There may be opportunities to attend online or face-to-face events pertinent to the course topic. If so, these will carry extra credit, but only if a student has a total grade percentage of 75% without extra credit.
- Required readings: Four books to be read in their entirety (see below).

**Course goals**

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This course is designed to:

- Acquaint students with accessible, thoughtful literature about social media and its potential use in ministry.
- Give beginning students the skills for building a social media presence for their own professional use; and enhance the skills of students who already have such a presence.
- Equip students to use social media thoughtfully, reflectively, and in a critically aware manner.

**Course outcomes**

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If this course is successful, a majority of students will come out of the course having:

- Gained practical competency in using social media for ministry and other professional endeavors.
- Developed greater sensitivity to appropriate boundaries when using social media.
- Acquired knowledge about social media that they can use with those they encounter in their ministry/professional life.

## II. Assignments

### Required Readings

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*Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations*

Clay Shirky

Penguin Press, 2008

ISBN-13: 9781594201530

*The Church of Facebook: How the Hyperconnected are Redefining Community*

Jesse Rice

David C. Cook Publishing, 2009

ISBN-10: 1434765342

*Tweet if You ♥ Jesus: Practicing Church in the Digital Reformation.*

Elizabeth Drescher.

Morehouse Publishing, 2011.

ISBN-13: 978-0819224231.

*Click 2 Save: The Digital Ministry Bible*

Elizabeth Drescher and Keith Anderson

Morehouse Publishing, 2012

ISBN-13: 978-0819227744

Two online blog posts. Unless they're taken down before April 25, they will be:

- "Social Media and the Church – A Critique," by David Cloake:  
<http://vernacularcurate.blogspot.co.uk/2011/06/social-media-and-church-critique.html>
- "Learning to Speak," by Amey Victoria Adkins in *Faith and Leadership*:  
<http://www.faithandleadership.com/content/learning-speak>

### Book Reviews Rubric – Due March 7 and April 25

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The goal of the book review assignment is to get students conversant in the literature their colleagues/congregants might be willing to read, and to ensure that students have something thoughtful to say about that literature.

There are two assigned book reviews in this course – the first due March 7 and the second due April 25. Each 10-12 pp. review will focus on one of the assigned books for the course, and will intelligently mention others. Students should make sure they refer to each of the assigned books at some point over the course of their two reviews.

Book reviews account for 60 of the total possible points for the course. Please see the rubric below:

Choose one of the assigned class books to review, and begin your review by providing the full publication data.	2 points
Introduce the author and the book, putting them in context for the reader.	4 points
Summarize the author's argument.	5 points
Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the argument: What does the author do a good job of accounting for? What does s/he fail to adequately consider? Does s/he get anything wrong? Is there a different interpretation that does a better job of accounting for the evidence?	5 points
Compare and contrast the book to others in the field – specifically including at least one other book assigned for the course.	5 points
Discuss who might find these books useful, and for what purpose(s).	4 points
<b>Subtotal:</b>	<b>25 points per review = 50 points</b>
Discuss all the assigned books at least once over the course of your two book reviews.	10 points
<b>Total points possible for book reviews:</b>	<b>60 points</b>

**Book review 1:** Due March 7

**Book review 2:** Due April 25

### Weekly Postings

In this course, you are required to post twice per week on the reading, and one post must be in reply to someone else's post. Posts may not run longer than 500 words. You only get credit for the first two posts in a week, and you may not post more than three times. The discussion thread about the weekly challenge is not included in your posting requirement.

A truly excellent discussion post accomplishes the following:

- Gives a single interpretive claim about the reading\*, or about the post you're replying to.
- Supports that claim with sound argument and specific cited/quoted evidence from the text under discussion.
- Refrains from having a personal anecdote, feeling, memory, conviction, belief, or story – rather than the assigned reading -- be the main subject of the post.\*\*
- Refrains from using "the Bible says," or otherwise invoking biblical material in a way that contradicts the principles of thoughtful and historically-informed biblical interpretation taught in the Bible classes at PTS.
- Maintains a professional, appropriate, cordial tone that advances the conversation.
- Avoids popular catchphrases (e.g. "It's all about relationship") and instead makes careful, specific points bolstered by evidence from the reading.
- Use comprehensible spelling, word choice, and grammar.

\*An interpretive claim does not begin with "I was really struck by how..." or "This reading reminded me of the time when I..." Those are personal reflections, not claims. For a substantive post, you need to come

up with an actual claim about something outside your own mind, about which other people can form thoughtful opinions. Then you need to state it clearly, and support it using evidence..

\*\*I suggest you challenge yourself not to use the phrase “I believe” in a discussion post, because it’s either unnecessary or off-topic. If you’re arguing in favor of a claim, your reader already knows you *believe* it, and is simply waiting for you give him/her good reasons to believe it as well. On the other hand, if you’re just engaging in personal sharing about what you find personally meaningful, that’s not really the point of a discussion post.

Below is the grading rubric for posts:

For the week specified, both posts were entirely missing at the time they were due. <b>(This is also counted as an absence from class.)</b>	0 points
One or both posts was/were incomplete and/or incorrectly done in ways that showed lack of attention to the instructions given in the syllabus; or which showed lack of attention to an ongoing problem that the instructor has previously brought to the student’s attention.	1 point
The student produced two posts on time, generally complete, and within the stated word limits. The student shows evidence of having read and tried to understand the instructions in the syllabus.  However, the analysis contained in one or both posts was somewhat superficial, rushed, and/or contained too much sharing of personal reflections and not enough argumentation. Quotations from the reading appear to have been chosen haphazardly, for the sole purpose of getting a quotation somewhere in the post.  Engagement of colleagues’ posts was likewise superficial and did not particularly advance the discussion or show evidence of deepened insight.	2 points
The student produced two posts on time, complete, and within the stated word limits.  In both posts the student argued seriously for a claim, using evidence from the readings. Specific passages from the reading were chosen with care and related directly to the topic of discussion. Engagement of colleagues’ posts was both serious and charitable, and advanced the class discussion.	3 points
<b>Total points possible for posts on the readings:</b>	3 points x 12 weeks = <b>36 points.</b>

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**Weekly Challenge**

Every week, students will be given a challenge to complete, intended to build practical competency in using social media. Students are expected to complete these challenges in their assigned weeks, and may not submit anything they've set up previously.

This class may contain a range of comfort and experience levels with online tools. The rubric is intended to incentivize skill building for students who are novices with social media, as well as for students who are experienced power users. As a general guideline:

- Students with minimal experience using social media should expect to spend up to two hours per challenge. If, at that point, it is still not completed, they should stop, and report to the class what they tried and what obstacles they encountered.
- Students who are already well-versed in social media should complete their own challenge first, and then be available assist other students with less background in online tools. Again, students should spend no more than two hours per challenge – including advising other students.

There will be an online discussion related to the weekly challenge. This is where you'll post the link to your completed challenge, ask for help, offer help, and/or else summarize the difficulties you encountered. **This discussion does not count toward your weekly required postings on the reading.**

Each challenge carries a possible 3 points, and will be graded according to the following rubric:

At the time it was due, the assignment was entirely missing.	0 points
Although the student turned in something by the due date, large parts of the assignment were incomplete and/or incorrectly done for reasons apparently having to do with student haste/lack of attention to the instructions.	1 point
Beginning students encountered legitimate difficulties understanding and/or completing the assignment correctly, but did not appear to spend close to two hours trying to overcome those difficulties. Advanced students spent the minimum time necessary to complete the challenge, but did not try to push themselves to deepen their existing skills, nor did they engage with or offer advice to anyone else.	2 points
Beginning students either completed the challenge correctly; or else they encountered legitimate difficulties but appeared to spend around hours trying to overcome those difficulties. Advanced students completed their own challenges conscientiously and completely, and offered help to anyone else in the class who might be struggling, while successfully limiting this availability to 2 hours.	3 points
<b>Total points possible for weekly challenges:</b>	3 points x 12 challenges = <b>36 points.</b>

### Social Media Action Plan (Due May 9)

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This is the portfolio assignment, and is meant to build on the work done all semester – the readings, the class discussions, and the weekly challenges. You will share it with the class, for their feedback, on May 9.

For the paper, please write a 10-12 page essay about social media’s role in the context for which you hope your seminary education prepares you. For most students that context will probably be congregational ministry, but the assignment does not require it.

Specifically, this paper should:

Envision a viable, coherent, compelling social media presence that would enhance/improve what you’ve already created in the course of the challenges.	10 points
Give theological support for this vision, citing both: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Specific features of your own context (<i>5 points</i>)</li><li>• Theoretical discussions from the readings (<i>5 points</i>)</li></ul>	10 points
Address issues of professional boundaries with those you encounter in an online setting.	10 points
Identify next steps and makes a plan for implementing them.	5 points
Identify obstacles – including, specifically, areas where your own skills will need further development -- and make a plan for how to address them.	5 points
Be written in a confident, poised, careful style that is accessible to the intelligent nonspecialist.	5 points
Be free of grammatical and lexical errors, show evidence of editing, and adhere to the PTS style guide.	5 points
<b>Total points possible for Social Media Action Plan:</b>	<b>50 points</b>

#### Point summary:

Book review 1 = 25 possible points

Book review 2 = 25 possible points

Intelligently discussing all the assigned course books over the course of two book reviews = 10 possible points

Weekly postings on the reading = 36 possible points

Weekly challenge = 36 possible points

Social media action plan = 50 points

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**TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE: 182**

### III. Course Calendar

Jan 31 – Feb. 7

- **Read and discuss** Shirky, chapters 1-5 (p. 1-142)
- **Challenge** (see video for instructions): Get a Wordpress ID and set up a free Wordpress blog with a free Wordpress theme that you've chosen. It should be under your real/professional name. If this poses a difficulty, please drop me an email and let me know your situation. For now, set it to private. You will need one that has both Facebook and Twitter widgets.

Feb. 7 – Feb. 14

- **Read and discuss** Shirky, chapters 6-11 (p. 143-292)
- **Challenge:** Set up a YouTube account and record a brief and professional welcome video. Set it to private, so that only people with the URL can access it. If your computer doesn't have a webcam, you can get a cheap one for \$15 or less at Staples. Email me if you encounter difficulty.

Feb. 14 – Feb. 21

- **Read and discuss** Rice, ch. 1-4 (p. 1-152)
- **Challenge:** Embed the YouTube video you recorded last week on your Wordpress blog.

Feb. 21 – Feb. 28

- **Read and discuss** remainder of Rice (p. 153-216)
- **Challenge:** Write a "welcome!" post on your Wordpress blog. Try to convey something about your tone, personality, and ministry/professional setting, as well as what you expect to use the site for. Remember you will be setting a tone for your readers as well.

Feb. 28 – March 7

- **Turn in** Book Review #1 by March 7 at midnight Tulsa time, by email.
- **Read and discuss** Drescher, *Tweet if You Heart Jesus*, Introduction and parts I and II (p. 1-94)
- **Challenge:** Use PollDaddy to embed a poll on your Wordpress blog.

March 7 – April 4, excluding Concentrated Course Weeks and Holy Week Recess

- **Read and discuss** Drescher, *Tweet...*, parts III -V (p. 95-182)
- **Challenge:** Set up a Twitter account and profile for your ministry, a part/program of your ministry, or another aspect of your professional persona. Put a Twitter widget on your Wordpress blog. Send two tweets. Find and follow Elizabeth Drescher on Twitter.

April 4- April 11

- **Read and discuss** Drescher and Anderson, *Click 2 Save*, chapters 1 and 2
- **Challenge:** Set up a Facebook page for the ministry, program, or professional activity/persona for which you've already set up a Wordpress blog. Come up with a comments policy for the Facebook page and post it in the "About" section.

April 11 – April 18

- **Read and discuss** Drescher and Anderson, *Click 2 Save*, chapter 3
- **Challenge:** Link your Facebook page to your Wordpress blog using a Facebook widget.

April 18 – April 25

- **Read and discuss** Drescher and Anderson, *Click 2 Save*, chapter 4.
- **Challenge:** Create a page on your Wordpress blog to include a comment/conduct policy. Make that page, and the others on your site, show up in a page menu.

April 25 – May 2



- **Turn in** Book review #2 by April 25 at midnight Tulsa time, by email.
- **Read** two short online essays -- probably the ones listed above in the readings, unless they're taken down. In any case, I shall post the links on Moodle.
- **Challenge:** Talk to someone(s) whose opinion you respect about how you could use your developing web presence to enhance your ministry. It can be another student in the class. Show them what you have so far and ask them for their initial thoughts and impressions. Write up very brief summary of this conversation (about a paragraph; bullet points are fine). Remember not to spend more than 2 hours total.

May 2 – May 9

- **In lieu of assigned reading,** please scour the web and find two examples – ones with which you were previously unfamiliar -- of social media being used effectively for ministry, according to the “LACE” principles outlined in Drescher and Anderson. This is your text for the week. Write a post that includes the links to the examples and a thoughtful discussion of why they are effective.
- **Challenge:** The challenge for this week is to create your own challenge. Based on what you've learned this semester, identify one tool/app/site edit/etc. that could enhance your developing social media presence. Then implement it.

May 9 – May 16

- **Turn in** social media action plan by posting it to the discussion forum by midnight your time (not Tulsa time) on May 9.
- **Read and offer charitable and helpful feedback** on at least two other students' plans. Try to look for students whose plans haven't received a lot of feedback already.

## IV. Policies

### 1. Grading

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The assessment instruments are designed in the hope that they will yield a bell curve grade distribution that reflects student achievement of the stated course goals. If this is not the result, the instructor reserves the right to curve the grades, setting the median grade at either B or B+.

Once curved, the final course grades will be assigned letters as follows:

- A 95.00-100%** (since there is no available grade of A+)
- A- 90.00-94.99%** (since there is no available grade of A+)
- B+ 86.67-89.99%**
- B 83.33-86.66%**
- B- 80.0-83.32%**
- C+ 76.67-79.99%**
- C 73.33-76.66%**
- C- 70.00-73.32%**
- D+ 66.67-69.99%**
- D 63.33-66.66%**
- D- 60.0-63.32%**
- Below 60% = F**

### 2. Extensions, late work and partial credit

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Posts on the reading cannot be accepted late for partial credit, since they constitute your participation in the class discussion. However, if you have a compelling reason for missing a week's discussion, please let me know. If there are extenuating circumstances, I can choose to count it as an absence only, and drop it from your final grade calculation. (In that instance you would have fewer total points possible for the course.)

For the other assignments – the two book reviews and the social media action plan -- please contact me as soon as you anticipate a problem turning your work in on time. I will consider giving extensions for illness and other unforeseen events.

Otherwise, the book reviews and the social media action plan may be turned in late, with a modest grade penalty: I will deduct 5% of the total points possible for the assignment for every calendar day the assignment is turned in late. The first partial day will be rounded up. Thereafter, a half day or less will be rounded down, and more than a half day will be rounded up.

### 3. Definition of a Credit Hour

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In accordance with regulations announced by the United States Department of Education in October 2010, the PTS faculty defines one semester-hour of academic credit as that which may be granted for successfully completing over the course of a semester a set of required learning activities representing approximately forty-five clock hours of graduate-level study. The workload/credit calculations related to the documentation of student learning are based on projections of the minimum time that a typical PTS student should anticipate spending in each course in direct instruction by the instructor(s), recommended

reading and library research, synchronous and asynchronous online discussion, creative theological reflection and writing, content review and testing procedures, and other appropriate educational assignments designed by the instructor to ensure that students achieve the learning objectives of the course as published in the course syllabus.

#### **4. Attendance**

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At PTS, class attendance and engaged participation are very important. Every member of the faculty and student community is, in fact, both teacher and learner. Therefore, a class absence means more than merely a missed delivery of educational content. It also means the irrecoverable loss of a unique dialogical ‘learning-through-teaching’ opportunity for oneself and others. In view of this understanding, PTS has an established Attendance Policy that states: Any student who misses 20% or more of the class contact hours for a course, for any reason, cannot pass or successfully audit that course. The intention of the policy is not to be punitive, but to recognize that students should retake courses for credit if they miss a significant number of the class contact hours. The 20% rule holds for online classes as well. In an online class, the instructor will set forth in the syllabus the requirements for what constitutes class attendance. The standard may change from week to week depending on the assignment. Typically, attendance is measured by the number of quality posts-per-week on the discussion board or other activities. The instructor sets the minimum number of posts-per-week required for a student to be considered present. If a student fails to make that minimum number of posts-per-week, s/he will be considered absent for the week. If a student is absent for 20% or more of the semester, s/he cannot pass the course.

#### **5. Academic Integrity**

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Do not commit plagiarism. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to:

- Failing to give appropriate credit for someone else’s words.
- Not citing where you got information, even if it doesn’t appear in a direct quote.
- Copying and pasting something you’ve previously written, without also giving a footnote indicating where the material originally came from.

If you are unsure what else plagiarism consists of, please take the necessary steps to find out, beginning with the PTS Student Handbook. Students found to have committed plagiarism will receive a grade of 0 on the assignment in question.

#### **6. Gendered language**

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Please use gender-inclusive language for humanity in all your communications related to the course. If, in your own writing and speaking, you opt to use male pronouns to denote the Divine, please footnote your use and provide a theological rationale which thoughtfully addresses the widespread criticisms of this practice.

#### **7. Students with Disabilities**

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Phillips Theological Seminary is committed to providing equal access to its programs of graduate professional education for all qualified students with learning, physical, medical, or psychological disabilities. The Seminary aims to provide reasonable accommodation for qualified individuals with a disability (based on clinical documentation) to ensure their access and participation in the Seminary programs. For details, see “Disabilities Policies and Procedures” in the Student Handbook. Please contact the Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Services for consultation.