

MP537: INTERNET EVANGELISM AND CYBERMISSIONS (4 units)

Ryan Bolger, Assistant Professor of Church in Contemporary Culture;

Online facilitation by John A. Edmiston, Adjunct Instructor in Contemporary Culture

DESCRIPTION

The Internet is the place the world finds its information and does its private enquiry and thinking. As such, it has become a powerful communication medium for evangelism and missions with one billion plus people online - including an estimated 400 million "religion surfers" who regularly seek religious information. This course will address questions such as:

1. What is an appropriate theology and missiology of Cyberspace?
2. Can genuine Christian community take place in cyberspace? If so, how can we facilitate such community?
3. What are the most practical and effective methods for Internet evangelism and cybermissions?
4. What online strategies are appropriate for different groups such as postmodern Westerners, Hindus, Chinese Communists, Buddhists, and Muslims?

(NB: This is not a computer skills course. The focus is online evangelistic strategy and mission)

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course the students will be able to:

- Articulate a missiological approach appropriate for Cyberspace.
- Think critically about the Internet as a communications tool in the service of the Kingdom of God.
- Design a culturally aware and missional online outreach that incorporates the above insights.

COURSE FORMAT:

The class will be conducted on the Internet using a 10-week lesson program aligned with Fuller's academic calendar. Each week, students and the instructor will interact with the material and each other through journaling, threaded discussions, and web-based research.

REQUIRED READING: A minimum of 1200 pages of reading from the following books,

- Dawson, Lorne L. (ed.) Cowan, Douglas E. (ed) 2004. *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet* New York, Routledge
- Jewell John P. 2004. *Wired for Ministry: How the Internet, Visual Media, and Other New Technologies Can Serve Your Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press (Div. of Baker)
- Renninger, K Ann. (Ed.) 2002. *Building Virtual Communities: Learning and Change in Cyberspace (Learning in Doing: Social, Cognitive & Computational Perspectives)* Cambridge UK, Cambridge University Press
- Rheingold, Howard. 2000. *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier, revised edition*. Boston: MIT Press
- Shenk, Wilbert. 1999. *Changing Frontiers of Mission*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis
- Zukowski, Angela Ann; Babin Pierre. 2002 . *The Gospel in Cyberspace: Nurturing Faith in the Internet Age* Chicago: Loyola Press

IN ADDITION, required reading of:

- 35 key online articles listed in the course
- 100 key websites listed in the course
- Key websites: Web Evangelism Guide. – <http://guide.gospelcom.net/> , Cybermissions: <http://www.cybermissions.org/>

RECOMMENDED READING:

- Careaga, Andrew. 2001. *E-Ministry: Connecting with the Net Generation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications
- Engel, James F., Dyrness William A. 2000 *Changing the Mind of Missions: Where Have We Gone Wrong?* Downers Grove, IL IVP
- Herman, Andrew (ed.). Swiss, Thomas 9ed.) 2000. *The World Wide Web and Contemporary Cultural Theory: Magic, Metaphor, Power*. New York/London: Routledge
- McLuhan, Marshall; Fiore, Quentin. 2001. *War and Peace In The Global Village*. Ginko Press
- Preece, Jennifer. 2000. *Online Communities: Designing Usability and Supporting Sociability* Chichester, England, John Wiley & Sons
- Stephenson, Mark. M. 2006. *Web-Empower Your Church* Nashville: Abingdon Press
- Sweet, Leonard. 2003. *Church in Emerging Culture: Five Perspectives*. El Cajon, CA: EmergentYS books published by Zondervan
- Wilson, Walter P. 2004. *The Internet Church*. Nashville, TN: W. Publishing Group (Div. of Thomas Nelson)

ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Weekly threaded discussions, journaling, and Web research. (20%)
2. A reflection paper on participation an in online outreach - ten hours in a chat room, MUD, MOO, egroup, online forum, or other Internet venue. (1500 words) (20%)
3. A 2000-word paper that draws on the required readings and articulates either the student's
a) Theology and sociology of cyberspace, OR, b) his/her evangelistic and or missiological approach to Cyberspace. (25%)
4. A 3000-word paper that develops the practical applications and potential for ministry of Internet evangelism and cybermissions (a particular aspect thereof) (35%)

PREREQUISITES: None.

RELATIONSHIP TO CURRICULUM: Elective.

FINAL EXAMINATION: None.