

# DICKERSON-GREEN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

## I. CMS 753 Ministry in the Virtual World

## II. Professor/Instructor

Dickerson-Green Theological  
Seminary – Waverly Building

## III. Course Name and Description

### CMS 753 Ministry in the Virtual World

This course provides an exploration into the burgeoning field of virtual ministry, addressing the unique challenges and opportunities presented by digital spaces. This course is crafted for ministry leaders, pastoral staff, and religious educators seeking to understand and engage with congregations in the online realm. It combines theological reflection, digital communication theory, and practical tools for cultivating a vibrant virtual ministry that complements and enhances traditional church functions.

### Course Policies

#### Class Attendance

Attendance for an online course is measured by participation in, completion of and submission of online course assignments as assigned/outlined in the course syllabus, schedule and on the course online page. Absence from this online course is determined by the lack of discussion forum post and assignment submissions. Absence from 1 week of an online course is considered excessive, whether excused or unexcused. Please note that merely logging onto the online learning platform (eLearning) is not synonymous with participation. If you do not participate in discussion forums and submit weekly assignments, you will be counted as absent from the course. For absences that are considered excessive, your instructor may contact the Vice President of Student Affairs, who will research the reasons for said absences and will move forward with scheduling a meeting with you and the appropriate unit head. In some instances, excessive absences will be addressed as combined effort between Vice President of Student Affairs, the Vice President of Academic Affairs, the Division Dean and/or the Department Chair.

Other pertinent policies that affect class attendance, conduct and academic performance can be found in the university's Student Handbook at <http://www.allenuniversity.edu/student-handbook/>

- Class Attendance and Excused Absences-p. 10
- Plagiarism-p. 38
- Student Conduct to include disruptive behavior-p. 36-39
- Dress Code- p. 9
- Satisfactory Academic Progress- p.16-17
- Provisions for Disabled or Special Need Students-p. 19-20

**Electronic Usage Policy:** Students are required to have access to a computer in order to complete the requirements of this course. It is the student's responsibility to obtain and maintain computer access throughout the course.

**Online Late Assignment Policy:** Due to the nature of online course design and setup, students are provided assignments and instructions in advance of due dates. This eliminates the need for makeups. However, should a student have circumstances that prohibits the completion of their online coursework, students have up to 2 days beyond the due date to present that late work. The late submission will be

subjected to a 10 percent deduction for each week it is late. This policy is to provide for fair grading and allow for instructor feedback for all assignments. NO assignments will be graded beyond one week late and subsequently a grade of 0 will be recorded.

## VI. Course Units

### Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will:

- examine the theological implications of virtual ministry
- identify the characteristics and needs of online congregations
- develop strategies for creating an engaging and interactive virtual church experience
- understand the use of social media, websites, and other digital platforms for ministry
- explore pastoral care and discipleship in digital contexts

### Methodology

The course employs a mix of didactic lectures, interactive discussions, and practical workshops. Students will participate in role-playing exercises, contemplative/reflective exercises, group projects to create virtual ministry initiatives, and reviews of existing online ministry models.

### Course Schedule

Week	Module	Readings and Viewings	Assessment
1	Biblical Foundations for Virtual Ministry	- Scripture passages on community and connection	Reflection paper on virtual ministry
2	Theological Reflection on Digital Community	- Essays on ecclesiology in the digital age	Online discussion participation
3	Digital Communication for Ministry	- Texts on principles of digital communication	Quiz on communication principles
4	Multimedia in Virtual Settings	- Case studies on multimedia use in ministry	Multimedia project proposal
5	Creating Virtual Community	- Strategies for online community building	Virtual community building exercise
6	Engaging Diverse Populations	- Research on diversity in virtual platforms	Short essay on diversity engagement
7	Worship and Liturgy Online	- Articles on adapting worship for online platforms	Plan a virtual worship service
8	Sacraments and Rites in Digital Ministry	- Discussions on sacraments in digital contexts	Forum post on sacraments online
9	Pastoral Care in the Digital Space	- Guidelines for online pastoral care	Case study analysis

Week	Module	Readings and Viewings	Assessment
10	Ethical Considerations Online	- Readings on confidentiality and ethics online	Ethics in digital ministry essay
11	Discipleship and Education	- Examples of online platforms for spiritual formation	Design an online discipleship program
12	Digital Content for Learning Styles	- Studies on learning styles and digital content creation	Create digital learning materials
13	Outreach and Evangelism	- Techniques for digital outreach and evangelism	Develop a digital evangelism strategy
14	Virtual Ministry Tools	- Tools and technologies for online ministry	Technology tools presentation
15	Managing Virtual Ministry Operations	- Best practices for the administration of virtual churches	Final project: Virtual ministry plan

## Final Assessment and Course Grading Scale

### Part 1: Final Reflection Paper

Total Points: 70

Objective: To assess the student's integration of course concepts with personal insights and proposed applications in the context of digital ministry.

Compose a comprehensive reflection on the integration of theology with digital ministry practices. In your paper, address the following topics, correlating them with the weekly modules of the course:

- Discuss the biblical foundations for virtual ministry and how they inform current practices.
- Provide a theological reflection on the concept of church and community within the digital age.
- Critique the principles of digital communication and their effectiveness in ministry settings.
- Analyze strategies for creating community online, specifically how they can engage diverse populations.
- Evaluate how worship and liturgy can be adapted for virtual environments, including sacraments and rites.
- Consider the challenges of providing pastoral care in the digital space and maintaining confidentiality and ethical standards.
- Assess the use of online platforms for discipleship and education, with an emphasis on catering to diverse learning styles.
- Examine the methods of outreach and evangelism in a digital context and their potential reach and impact.
- Conclude with an evaluation of the administrative aspects of virtual ministry, including legal and financial considerations.

## Format and Guidelines:

Length: 2000-2500 words

Structure: Introduction, Body (with sections for each module topic), Conclusion

References: Cite specific examples from course readings, viewings, and external sources.

Submission: Due by the specified date on the course management system.

## Scoring Rubric:

Content and Depth of Analysis (40 points)

Coherence and Flow (10 points)

Writing Mechanics and Grammar (10 points)

Application of Theoretical Concepts (10 points)

## Part 2: Test

Total Points: 30

Objective: To gauge the student's knowledge and understanding of the key concepts presented throughout the course.

## Format:

Multiple Choice Questions (15 questions, 1 point each)

Short Answer Questions (3 questions, 5 points each)

## Topics Covered:

Scriptural insights on virtual ministry.

Theological considerations for digital community.

Principles and effectiveness of digital communication.

Building and engaging virtual communities.

Adapting worship and liturgy for digital participation.

Providing pastoral care and maintaining ethics online.

Discipleship and educational strategies in the digital realm.

Digital outreach and evangelism techniques.

Operations management in virtual ministry settings.

## Scoring Rubric:

Correctness and Comprehension (20 points)

Depth of Response in Short Answers (10 points)

## Instructions:

Duration: 60 minutes

Closed book: No notes or books allowed.

Complete all questions within the given time frame.

The reflection paper is a substantial part of the assessment, encouraging students to reflect deeply on the entire course content and its application to real-world ministry. The test complements the paper by assessing the retention of knowledge and the understanding of concepts that are crucial for effective ministry in the digital age.

Grading Scale:

A: 90-100 Points

B: 80-89 Points

C: 70-79 Points

D: 60-69 Points

F: Below 60 Points

### **Course Textbook**

Course Textbook with instructions on chapter readings are sent in a separate email.

## **VII. Course Reading, Listening, and/or Videos**

Additional course content is provided by the instructor. These supplemental resources will be posted on eLearning. It is the responsibility of students to keep up with any readings that they miss. It is imperative that students complete work outside of the class. Students are expected to follow the syllabus and to begin the required readings before class. Readings for the week should be completed by the end of that week. Lecture and reading material supplement one another.

Students are responsible for all material covered in the required readings. Please refer to course schedule unless otherwise stated.