SYLLABUS
DIGITAL CATECHESIS FOR PASTORAL LEADERS (Online)

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The Digital Catechesis course provides a new social landscape for imagining faith formation and religious education today. The course’s main contention is that the clarion call for New Evangelization, espoused by Pope Francis, and the unprecedented development of the New Media present a unique, convergent opportunity to meet head on the current ‘crises of catechesis’ and thereby, approach catechesis more fittingly, more engagingly and more meaningfully in the Catholic world today. This course offers ways to explore and call into question traditional assumptions and understanding of catechesis as it engages with new cultural and technological contexts. These assumptions pertain to catechetical method, language, agency, authority, leadership and modes of communication. Participants will critically explore the potentials and potholes of such engagement, and make relevant evaluations and recommendations to address the current crises. With some working prototypes as samples, the Course moves the question from simply seeing digital catechesis as an innovative development emerging in the multimedia world to viewing digital catechesis as a vital expression of the truly catechetical in contemporary religious context.

Course Resources:
• Required Readings:
  o General Directory for Catechesis (selected sections)
  o Pope Francis, *Communication at the Service of An Authentic Culture of Encounter*. Address during the 48th World Communications Day. 1 June 2014.
  o Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* Apostolic Exhortation (selected sections)
• Additional readings will be posted on the Blackboard site for the Course
• The experiences and insights of the professor
• The experiences and insights of the students
• Writing resources

Course Learning Goals:
1. The student who finishes this course will demonstrate a critical appropriation of digital media for the advancement of the catechetical field.
2. The student who finishes this course will show capacity to critically analyze shifts in the hermeneutical fusion between the digital and the catechetical.
3. The student who finishes this course will map out potential avenues of collaboration that will forge the future of digital catechesis.

Course Learning Outcome:
1. Students will demonstrate an ability to relate effectively the core theories, approaches, and other domain knowledge within the academic field of religious education to their own ministerial and life contexts. They will do so by demonstrating:
   o a grasp of core concepts, hidden assumptions, approaches in creating digital catechesis. (eg. Final Paper/Project)
   o a deep understanding of the shifts in pedagogical approaches - from traditional, classroom teaching to a new style of learning within networked, online world. (eg. Postings)
   o the ability to draw on audiovisual sources to engage students and to reinforce the importance of multi-sensory approaches to catechesis (eg. Final Project or Module)
   o the capacity to formulate concrete prototypes and models of digital catechesis (e.g. Research Paper)
2. Students will communicate competently the Christian story and make it accessible by creating a digital catechesis Project or module.
3. Students who will do research paper (and preferably those in the post-graduate and doctoral programs) will demonstrate facility with methods of research in religious education, especially pertaining to field of digital catechesis.

Curriculum Syllabus:

Module 1: Pope Francis on New Evangelization and New Media (Week 1)
Both new evangelization and new media are central themes in Pope Francis’ papacy, as evidenced in his many writings nowadays. The level of evaluation, however, varies for each of them. While ‘new evangelization’ is elevated as a central agenda in his papacy, the ‘new media’ is often
referred to as an ambivalent tool. While ‘new evangelization’ is endorsed with passionate rigor, ‘new media’ is approached with cautious endorsement. Module One deals with these issues, bearing in mind that while Francis advances stringent critiques of the technological project (new media), the alternatives he proposes (such as ‘new evangelization’) draw upon the achievements and methods of that very project. Module One focuses on exploring the core theories and approaches that will contribute in the development of digital catechesis.

- Required Readings and Viewing:
  - Weekly Course Notes 1
  - Barron, Robert. *Pope Francis and the New Evangelization* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0h6IYb1Z3I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0h6IYb1Z3I) (Access: August 8, 2015)

- Recommended Reading

**Module 2: Unpacking the World of Catechesis (Week 2)**

This module attempts to re-discover the two resources in catechesis that are least tapped by the current catechetical materials, namely, its narrative aspect rooted in new evangelization, and the mediation of language viewed from Chauvet’s lecture on the ‘symbolic order’. Such lack impoverishes the richness of catechesis, left to dry didacticism and unmindful of its symbolic mediations. This module insists that evangelization and catechesis are not just transmitted via particular media. The forms of mediation are actually an integral part in the ‘passing on’ of faith (Knut). The force of this insight redefines agency and allows movement from passive recipients of faith to active participants in the task of evangelization and catechesis. Module Two focuses on an aspect of the ‘crises in catechesis’ pervasive in the Catholic world today, and explore how the ‘digital component’ proposes an alternative solution to the problem.

- Required Readings and Viewing:
  - Weekly Course Notes 2
Module 3: Revisiting the World of the Digital (Week 3)

This module revisits the world of new media – its early provenance, its apologists and critics and the markers that define its potentials and dangers. This module also attempts to register how the new media negotiates with the construction of a meaningful world today. Module Three focuses on exploring the potentials, potholes and contributions of the digital field in the area of Christian life.

- **Required Readings:**
  - Weekly Course Notes 3

- **Recommended for Additional Reading and/or Viewing:**
Module 4: Hermeneutical Fusion of the Catechetical and the Digital (Week 4)

This module attempts to create a space for the interplay between catechesis and the new media. Digital catechesis becomes a window into two possible worlds – the world of contemporary digital technologies and the world of age-old catechesis. It acknowledges the unique role that the digital world plays in shaping catechetical content and practices. At the same time, it recognizes how catechesis seek to acculturate new media environments with established catechetical artifacts and traditional core stories of evangelization. It further investigates the implications of digital media for entrenched religious notion such as subjectivity, authority and leadership. Module Four taps on the hermeneutic value of (a) digitalizing the catechetical and (b) catechizing the digital.

- Required Readings and Viewing:
  - Weekly Course Notes 4

- Recommended for Additional Readings
Module 5: Spotlights on Variant Approaches of Digital Catechesis (Week 5)
This module explores concrete attempts at the digitalization of catechesis in the catechetical field within U.S. today. A cursory glance and survey will be taken from the works of John Roberto of NACMP as well as programs from My Catholic Faith Delivered and the FFF Program from Presentation Church, NJ. These innovative approaches help trigger the study of digital catechesis. The cursory tour into the various platforms may hopefully generate a better understanding of their underlying philosophies in dealing with digital media as well as gain for us valuable tips on how to deal with the digital challenges that leaders commonly meet in their ministry.

- Required Readings and Viewing:
  - Weekly Course Notes 5
  - Overview of My Catholic Faith Delivered http://www.mycatholicfaithdelivered.com/

- Recommended Reading:

Module 6: Highlighting God’s Park App at Work (Week 6)
God’s Park is a digitally interactive, game-immersive, curricular-based, supplemental app for faith formation, adaptable for grade-level kids. It is conceptualized and created by Dr. Lope Lesigues. It is in the production mode. God’s Park moves from simply exploring the digitalization of catechesis (which considers how first-adaper religious leaders replicate the traditional catechetical content or structure in the online context and use digital elements in formulating catechetical frameworks) to considering at the deeper level the actual contribution the ‘digital’ is making to the ‘religious’. In other words, digital catechesis via God’s Park is faith formation that is constituted in new ways through the digital language, culture and ethos of the ‘digital natives’. It highlights three major components that are key to the program: language mediation, gamefication and the interplay between progression and kenotic loop. This module is a hands-on tour into the frameworks and actual navigation of God’s Park program and app. Module Six explores how the digital-catechetical
space can become a democratic space where the marginalized, the voiceless and the little ones find a voice.

- **Required Readings and Viewing:**
  - Weekly Course Notes 6

**Module 7: Pastoral Implications of Digital Catechesis (Week 7)**

This module lays out the pastoral challenges of digital catechesis. It explores how the Vatican openness and/or ambivalence to new media impact pastorally. Some qualities of a good digital evangelizer and an effective networked leader are explored. There are some benchmarks every Christian leader must know about digital catechesis. Also, the leadership qualities of Pope Francis and Steve Jobs are brought to the open for further deliberation and discussion. Module Seven explores the practical implications and applications of the merging of two powerful communication channels, namely, the ‘New Evangelization’ and the New Media.

- **Required Readings and Viewing:**
  - Week 7 Course Notes

- **Additional Resources:**
Module 8: Creating and Designing a Prototype for a Parish Digital Catechesis (Week 8)

This module creates the space for visually and creatively designing the students’ own prototype project or research paper of digital catechesis. The project or research paper demonstrates the student’s grasp of the subject matter and leadership qualities in bringing the project to fruition. It must be noted as well that the Project (of module creation) can be a task for masteral students while the Research Paper (for course creation) can be a task specific to doctoral students although, upon consultation with the professor, such assignation is not mutually exclusive. The format of delivery may be written (research paper) or illustrative (project), for so long as the processes in the preceding Weeks are faithfully implemented and integrated. Note: Each prior Weeks contain deliberate and specific steps that contribute towards the build-up and final implementation of the Module 8 project or research paper. This project stands for the final exam requirement of the Course.

- Required Reading:
  - Week 8 Course Notes

- Additional Recommended Resources:

* Distinction Between Doctoral and Masteral Work: A doctoral work displays competence in designing and analyzing methods of research in the field of digital catechesis. A masteral work shows the capacity to introduce practical skills and basic frameworks for understanding issues that surround the field of digital catechesis. While the doctoral student is a deep researcher, the masteral student is mainly a practitioner in the field, and could advance to the doctoral program in due time.