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Course Outline

PT5/736: Crossing the Generation Gap: Exploring the Faith of Emerging Generations
Vancouver School of Theology, July 12-16 2021 (9am – 12pm PST)

Purpose:

As the numbers of young adults attending church in the Western world hits an all time low it is imperative that we engage seriously with why, and what the future of Christian mission and ministry to them might look like. Considering global patterns but focussing on the West, this course will explore the historical, cultural, and sociological shifts that have taken place, and examine recent findings on what causes faith to flourish or fail during youth and young adulthood.

Objectives:

To understand contemporary:

- Patterns of religiosity among the young
- Models of identity and faith formation
- Experiences of conversion and maturing faith as well as faith loss and abandonment of religious identity and community.
- Examples of thriving young adult ministry and possibilities for spiritual engagement.

For students to be able to reflect on their own context and consider how to develop and strengthen their mission and ministry in that.

Primary Bibliography: **Please pre-read prior to course beginning**

Arnett, Jeffrey Jensen, *Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties*, *American Psychologist* 55.5 (2000) 469-80

Barna & World Vision, *The Connected Generation Report; How Christian Leaders around the world can strengthen faith and wellbeing among 18-35 year olds* (2019)

<http://www.theconnectedgeneration.com>

Emery White, James, *Meet Generation Z; Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2017)

Perrin, Ruth, H. *Changing Shape; The Faith lives of Millennials* (London: SCM, 2020)

For Advanced Degree

Root, Andrew, *Faith formation in A Secular Age* (Grand Rapids; Baker Academic, 2017)

Assignments:

Certificate (Continuing Education):

Written Assignment: (4-6 pages of writing for 1.5 credits)

Despite the current patterns of declining religious adherence among young adults in the Western world, the Barna 'Connected Generation' and Church Army 'Mission with Young Adults' reports present possibilities for effective ministry with this demographic. With reference to their findings, and wider literature, how might effective ministries be developed in your context?

Basic Degree (Diplomas, MA, M.Div):

Option A: Written Assignment. (1500-2000 words)

Perrin argues that in a British context, experience of the numinous, cognitive coherence of the gospel, authentic faith community and a vision for their life are what cause young adult faith to thrive. Critique this summary and explore how far this pattern matches the Canadian context with reference to the wider literature around young adult religiosity.

Option B: Ministerial Reflective Report (2000 words)

Reflecting on your current church/ministerial context and the un-churched emerging adult communities in your locale, describe how you might go about developing an effective ministry that encourages spiritual engagement and connects younger generations to the Christian gospel in a meaningful way.

You should demonstrate:

- An understanding of the challenges and opportunities of your current context.
- A critique of current practises and ability to reflect on their efficacy.
- An awareness of the theological and cultural points of resonance and disconnect from the Christian gospel which emerging generations in your setting experience.
- Creative imagining of how you might initiate/develop and sustain such a ministry.
- A use of appropriate research and secondary literature to support your thinking.

Advanced Degree (Graduate Diploma; Th.M):

Written Assignment including Research Proposal (4000 words for 1.5 credits)

Focussing on 'Changing Shape' (Perrin) and two additional published research projects of your choice, critique both the contributions and limitations of these works, including the methodologies they adopt to explore emerging adult faith formation. Given the wider field and your own context, describe how you might further explore the topic including rationale, proposed outcomes and the methodology you would utilise.

You should demonstrate:

- Thorough knowledge of the three publications and justification for their selection.
- Ability to constructively critique them, with particular regards to the methodologies selected by the authors.
- An awareness of the wider literature and 'gaps' within the field.

- In light of those, and your personal context, a consideration of what further research might look like, including your rationale and designing a methodology appropriate for achieving that.

Secondary Bibliography/ Further Reading:

Arnett, Jeffrey Jensen, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

Bielo, James, S. *Emerging Evangelicals. Faith, Modernity and the Desire for Authenticity* (New York, New York University Press, 2011)

Bullivant, Stephen, *Europe's Young Adults and Religion: Report 2018*,
<https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/centres/benedict-xvi/docs/2018-mar-europe-young-people-report-eng.pdf>

Christersen, R & B. Florey, *The Rise of Network Christianity; How Independent Leaders are changing the Religious Landscape* (Oxford: OUP, 2017)

The Church Army, "Not as difficult as you think"; *Mission with young Adults*, (2018 Report)
https://www.churcharmy.org/Groups/295770/Church_Army/ms/Young_Adults_research/Young_Adults_research.aspx

Fowler, James, *The Stages of Faith; The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco; Harper Collins, 1981)

Gitau, Wanjiru, M. *Megachurch Christianity reconsidered; Millennials and social change in African Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2018)

Guest, M. et al, *Christianity and the University Experience; Understanding Student Faith* (London, Bloomsbury, 2013)

Ipsos MORI (UK) <http://www.Generation Z – Beyond Binary: new insights into the next generation | Ipsos MORI>

Kinnaman, D. *You Lost Me; Why Young Christians are Leaving Church...and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids; Baker Books, 2011)

Lawrence, James, 'Engaging Gen Y; Leading well across the Generations' *Grove Leadership Series, L8* (Cambridge: Grove, 2012)

McNamara Barry, C & Mona M. Abo-Zena; *Emerging Adults' Religiousness and Spirituality* (Oxford: OUP, 2017)

Osgood, D.W. *et al*, Six Paths to Adulthood; Fast Starters, Parents without Careers, Educated Partners, Educated singles, Working singles and Slow starters, in R.A. Settersten *et al* (eds.), *On the Frontier of Adulthood; Theory, Research and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005)

Seemiller, Corey & Megan Grace, *Generation Z; A Century in the Making* (London: Routledge, 2019)

Setran, David P. & Chris A. Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood; A Practical Theology for College and Young Adult Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013)

Smith, C & Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition; the Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (Oxford, OUP 2009)

Zuckermann, Phil, *Faith no More; Why People Reject Religion* (Oxford: OUP, 2012)

Woodhead, Linda, The Rise of No Religion in Britain; The Emergence of a New Cultural Majority, *Journal of the British Academy*, 2016 (4), 245-61