

Preparing the Higher Education Space for Gen Z

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Hershey, PA: IGI Global, 2019 (xvii + 253 pages, ISBN 9781522577638, \$140.00)

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Members of the next generation, “Generation Z” (Gen Z), are now entering college. Some of them will decide to pursue graduate theological education. Gen Z students are unique in that they have grown up in an online connected world. There has not been a time when they did not have access to the Internet or smartphones. Social media and online collaboration are the norm. How are educators to ready themselves for this eventuality in the classroom and their pedagogy? The era of students sitting in a classroom listening to their professor

while taking notes is becoming a relic of the past. Teaching Gen Z students is an opportunity to change, adapt, and connect with students using technology.

Preparing the Higher Education Space for Gen Z includes nine chapters on how Gen Z students communicate, learn, and engage with each other. The main forms of communication for Gen Z students are through social media, online learning, and collaboration. Each chapter includes the benefits and challenges of using various technologies, such as: social media, cloud computing, technology for teaching students with disabilities, the classroom experience for Gen Z students, and lastly texting to communicate with Gen Z students.

Each chapter articulates the given topic clearly and with suitable examples. All types of educators across all disciplines will find this textbook a useful resource to prepare for teaching Gen Z students. The book offers a reasoned approach to the benefits and challenges of using tools like social media and texting. While these forms of communication are second nature to Gen Z students, they are often not utilized in the classroom. Yet, studies show that many faculty have personal social media accounts (6). The issue is not that faculty do not know how to use social media; the primary question is how educators can integrate these tools into the classroom in ways that are helpful for a student’s learning experience. Several authors offer personal examples of how they have used social media, texting, and cloud computing in the classroom. Also, each chapter includes benefits and challenges; the authors are not so naïve as to think that such tools are not without their problems. Last, each chapter concludes with a bibliography of resources.

Preparing the Higher Education Space for Gen Z is a welcome addition to the growing discussion on how to teach Gen Z students. The book offers useful advice on how to use the online tools these students are familiar with in ways that the previous generation was not. Although different chapters repeat some definitions, theological educators will enjoy this textbook on how to prepare to teach Gen Z students. Traditional forms of teaching might overlook how to use new methods of communication and learning in the classroom. In chapter 2, Melissa Martin, Rachel Hugues, and Alison Puliatte highlight that “Generation Z students are inherently different than previous generations. These students may need adapted forms of instruction in order to match their learning styles” (32). This book offers beneficial tools and discussions on how to teach, build community, and communicate with Gen Z students with integrity and professionalism in meaningful ways.