

HOM 500 Course Outline  
Fall 2016

Vancouver School of Theology  
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Meetings: Thursdays 9 AM-12 noon

## **Purpose**

Every week and often more the preacher stands to address the congregation. What does the preacher say? How? On what sources do we draw—whether ancient or contemporary, sacred or secular, communal or personal? What's the goal here? How do we tell if the preacher has done well and how we might improve?

Once in parish or other leadership positions, these questions are difficult to answer. The Sabbath seems to come back around every three days. There is little time or space for critical reflection. This course and seminary in general are gifts. They provide the critical space and time necessary to reflect on the task and practice and internal goods of preaching. Some academic courses are narrow: you dive deeply into a very specific set of tasks and materials. Homiletics is broader than that. Here you draw on all you have learned in your seminary education and set a trajectory for yourself—a learning agenda—for years to come. The goal is not just one's own erudition. It is the church's edification.

## **Competence Objectives**

1-To seed a lifelong love of preaching. The value of this course can only rightly be assessed as you look back on decades of preaching at the end of your life.

2-To engage the church's historical wisdom on preaching. How do we speak for God? How do we tell when others have done it well? How do we identify areas for improvement? We will do this through lectures, discussion, watching others' sermons and dissecting them, and reading and dialoguing homiletics resources and yet more sermons.

3-To grow into your own voice as a preacher. I assume that God has gifted you in unique ways for the church's edification and the world's blessing. This course will help you find that unique gifting in the years ahead. This course will pursue this end by having us preach to one another twice and write sermons to turn in three times.

4-To host well. We will receive a number of guests to class who will teach us from their experience of homiletics. We need to be especially well prepared those days to learn all we can from these folks.

5-To learn the techniques and practices appropriate to your entering into objectives 1-3. Technique is not of primary importance, but it is important, and we each have to find our own rhythm as preachers.

**Required Reading** Tom Long *The Witness of Preaching* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2005)

Barbara Brown Taylor *The Preaching Life* (Cowley 1993).

A number of articles available on Moodle.

## Assignments

A homiletical autobiography: submit 800 words describing your experience with preaching. What worries you about trying to preach? Delights you? Who has exemplified preaching in a way that makes you want to do likewise? Who has shown you what you don't want to be as a preacher? No need to cover all this—the purpose is to give me a sense of your sense of yourself and the preaching life as you see it right now. Due September 23.<sup>1</sup>

Three sermons, preached in class, with a manuscript and textual notes turned in to the instructor. One will be preached on an Old Testament text of your choosing, another will be preached on the lectionary-assigned gospel reading for the week of your preaching, and the third will be preached on an epistle that you choose from among those listed by instructor.

A theology of preaching: submit 2000 words on the theology and practice of preaching based on your work in this class. This is not a research paper or a book report but an opportunity to articulate your central theological convictions on the task of participating in God's address of the church. Due December 16.

## Bibliography

Ronald Allen, *Patterns of Preaching* (St. Louis: Chalice, 1998).

St. Augustine *On Christian Teaching*. Trans. R.H.P. Green (Oxford World Classics, 2008). This was the primary teaching text on homiletics in the western church for a millennium. Concentrate especially on his description of biblical interpretation as with a goal of love in Book I and the early portions of Book IV.

David Buttrick, "Designing Moves," in *The Company of Preachers*, ed. Richard Lischer (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

"Performing the Scriptures," "What Authority Has Our Past," and "What Might Martyrdom Mean" in *Theology on the Way to Emmaus* by Nicholas Lash (Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock, 2005). Catholic theologian and former priest on how to read scripture with the help of tradition for the sake of the community's flourishing now.

Essays on "Exegesis," "Style" and "Form" in Richard Lischer & William H. Willimon, eds. *Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1995).

Introduction to *And God Spoke to Abraham: Preaching from the Old Testament*, by Fleming Rutledge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011). Anglican priest from Virginia now in New York on drawing on the OT critically and faithfully.

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<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Professor Michael Pasquarello of Fuller Theological Seminary for the wording of this assignment and also for the theology of preaching assignment.