

Vancouver School of Theology

SAH-L 500: Say What?

Practicing Evangelism in a Post-Christendom World

Thursdays 9 am to 12 pm

“Evangelism is that dimension and activity of the church’s mission which seeks to offer every person, everywhere, a valid opportunity to be directly challenged by the gospel of explicit faith in Jesus Christ, with a view to embracing him as Saviour, becoming a living member of his community, and being enlisted in his service of reconciliation, peace and justice on earth.”

David Bosch

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Purpose:

In her classic book on evangelism *Out of the Saltshaker* Rebecca Pippert confesses a time when, “there was a part of me that secretly felt evangelism was something you shouldn’t do to your dog, let alone a friend.” On the surface many kind-hearted Christians in Canada today would agree that the “E word” has become an embarrassing practice within the broader Christian movement. While reading Scripture on Sunday mornings in church is fine, speaking to others about their deep faith in Jesus where they live, work or play the rest of the week seems daunting to some and unseemly to others. While sanctuaries encourage people to flex their doxological muscles, the wider world can be a place where many Christians experience regular “liturgical laryngitis.” And yet, the Triune God calls us to witness in the world. Like women running from the empty tomb to proclaim the resurrection to others locked away in fear, we are sent Sunday by Sunday into the world with good news to share. How we best practice that sharing of good news in the world that feels authentic and sensitive in a post-Christendom, pluralistic, multi-faith world is at the heart of this course. Together, we will explore how to reclaim a “playful urgency” in sharing the gospel in partnership with the on going reconciliation and redemption of the Holy Spirit in the world.

Competence Objectives: This course aims to help students:

1. Discern the challenges and opportunities in proclaiming the gospel through word and action in a post-Christendom western context.
2. Develop an ability to articulate the essence of, and the urgency in, sharing the gospel as a means of participating in God's reconciling mission in Christ to mend this broken world.
3. Revive a deep awareness of the missional pitfalls and fateful errors of evangelism linked with Empire in our Christendom past, including the residential schools legacy with Indigenous peoples.
4. Engage an awareness of how future evangelization models must be built on the conversion of the "Holy Spirit" and not human coercion, where the evangelist is just as open to the Spirit's converting power as the dialogue partner.
5. Examine and evaluate various techniques that engage the critical question of the intersection of gospel and culture for the sake of Christian witness in a fallen world.
6. Articulate critical theological questions at stake in our attempt to build worshipping and witnessing communities of Christian faith in the world today.

This course aims to increase a student's skills in:

1. Contextualizing and clarifying "What is the gospel?" in this time and place.
2. Equipping and empowering leaders and congregations to articulate and disseminate a vision of the good news that is compelling and life-giving.
3. Exploring the link between a healthy prayer life and the practice of sharing the Christian faith.
4. Discovering and discerning appropriate evangelistic programs and practices that are entrepreneurial and effective in post-Christendom Canada
5. Identifying stages of faith development and the critical role of conversion in the Christian faith
6. Gracefully developing the ability to offer and receive peer review

Format & Content: Our time together will normally include a lecture on the theme of the day, discussion on the theme/readings and an opportunity to practice and reflect on assigned "E-Challenges" throughout the course.

Assignments:

1. Class Participation and Expectations

Consistent and timely attendance is required. If a student is unable to attend a class the Instructor is to be informed by email. Smart Phones can be disruptive to the learning experience of other students. Please set all phones to silent or turn them off during class. Exceptions can always be made for medical or family issues that require being in constant contact. Laptops may be used during class but for note taking only. Surfing the internet is not permitted while class is in session unless it is part of a small group activity. Sending texts and emails will be limited to break time.

2. E-Challenges

Students are expected to engage and reflect upon the challenges given to them weekly as part of the course. Whether they succeed or fail in the challenges is irrelevant. The student's ability to theologically reflect on the practice is critical for learning.

3. Reflection Paper

Students will submit a personal non-research reflection paper of 2,000 words in which they share what they understand evangelism to mean in the church and how they see themselves engaged in a evangelizing ministry. Included in this paper should be:

- A personal philosophy of evangelism (2 pages suggested)
- How evangelism would be incorporated into the student's future ministry (2 pages suggested)
- An assessment of personal strengths and weaknesses that the student brings to the evangelism (2 pages suggested)
- A plan that the student might employ to continue to develop his or her skills in this area (1 page)
- The area in evangelization that the student will most need to work on in the first five years of ministry (1 page)

DUE DATE: March 8 at the end of class.

4. Research Paper/Presentation

The final assignment due at the end of the course is a 3,000 word evangelistic “talk” for a fictitious setting selected in consultation with the Instructor (Sunday Sermon, Campus event, Youth Group Meeting, etc). The student’s response to this scenario will draw on learning from lecture, small group conversations and course readings. .

DUE DATE: April 10

Required Texts:

Bauckham, Richard. *Bible and Mission: Christian Witness in a Postmodern World*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003.

Bowen, John. *Evangelism for “Normal” People: Good News for Those Looking for a Fresh Approach*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002.

Guder, Darrell. *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.

Long, Thomas G. *Testimony: Talking Ourselves into Being Christian*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.

Lockhart, Ross. *Lessons from Laodicea: Missional Leadership in a Culture of Affluence*. Eugene: Cascade Books, 2016.

Rah, Soong-Chang. *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity*. Downer’s Grove: Intervarsity, 2009.

Stone, Bryan. *Evangelism after Christendom: the theology and practice of Christian Witness*.
Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007.

Texts are NOT on order at the UBC Bookstore. Instead, students should order the required reading online as ebooks or hardcopy using sites like Amazon, etc or check with the Regent College Bookstore.

Course Schedule:

Thursday, January 18

Shouting Stones – the Biblical roots of Evangelism

Please read *Evangelism After Christendom*, pp. 1-110.

Please read *Bible and Mission*, pp. 1-112.

Thursday, January 25

Celtic Evangelism – Lessons from St. Patrick's leadership for today

Please read *Evangelism for Normal People*, pp. 76 to 124.

Thursday, February 1

Saved to be Sent – How Evangelism reverses the reductionism of Constantine's gospel

Please read *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*, pp. 1-72.

Please read *Evangelism after Christendom*, pp. 111-170.

Please read *Lessons from Laodicea*, pp. ix to 33.

Thursday, February 8

Jesus *therefore* Justice – (re)discovering the roots of Evangelism and Social Justice

Please read *Continuing Conversion of the Church*, pp. 73 to 144.

Please read *The Next Evangelicalism*, pp. 11-90.

Thursday, February 15

It's all about ~~You~~...God – Evangelism as a correction of the Unholy Trinity of Me, Myself, and I

Please read *Testimony: Talking Ourselves into Being Christian*, pp. 1-68.

Please read *Lessons from Laodicea*, pp. 34-52.

Please read *The Next Evangelicalism*, pp. 91-142.

Thursday, February 22

Gotta Serve Somebody – Evangelism in a world converted by consumerism

Please read, *Continuing Conversion of the Church*, pp. 145 to 204.

Please read *The Next Evangelicalism*, pp. 143-208.

Reading Week: February 26 to March 2

Thursday, March 8

Peek a Boo Jesus: Seeing Christ in the ruins of Christendom

Reflection Paper Due at the end of Class

Please read *Evangelism after Christendom*, pp.171-276.

Please read *Lessons from Laodicea*, pp. 55-102.

Thursday, March 15

For All the Saints – Building and leading Evangelistic teams within congregations

Please read *Evangelism for Normal People*, pp. 125 to 163.

Please read *Lessons from Laodicea*, pp. 103 to 162.

Thursday, March 22

Preaching to Itchy Ears – Evangelistic preaching in a mainline context

Please read *Evangelism for Normal People*, pp. 164-210.

Thursday, March 29

Taste and See – Evangelistic opportunities through the Sacraments

Please read, *Evangelism for Normal People*, pp. 39 to 75.

Thursday, April 5

Can I get a witness? A pilgrimage from Tongue Tied to Testimony

Please read *Testimony: Talking Ourselves into being Christian*, pp. 67 to 158.

Selected Bibliography

Barrett, Lois, ed. *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns of Missional Faithfulness*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.

Bass, Dorothy, Ed. *Practicing our Faith: A Way of Life for Searching People*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.

Bowen, John, Ed. *Green Shoots out of Dry Ground: Growing a New Future for the Church in Canada*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2013.

- Brueggemann, Walter. *Biblical Perspectives on Evangelism: Living in a Three-Storeyed Universe*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993.
- Florence, Anna Carter *Preaching as Testimony*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007.
- Green, Michael. *Evangelism in the Early Church*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970.
- Goheen, Michael, ed. *Reading the Bible Missionally*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016.
- Guder, Darrell. *The Incarnation and the Church's Witness*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2005.
- Guder, Darrell, ed. *Missional Church: A Vision of the Sending of the Church in North America*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- Hastings, Ross. *Missional God, Missional Church: Hope for Re-Evangelizing the West*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2012.
- Holtom, Jamie & Debbie Johnson, *Bullseye: Aiming to Follow Jesus*. Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 2015.
- Honeycutt, Frank G. *Preaching for Adult Conversion and Commitment*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003.
- Kallenberg, Brad J. *Live to Tell: Evangelism for a Postmodern Age*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2002.
- Lockhart, Ross & Robert Fennell, ed. *Three Ways of Grace: Drawing Closer to the Trinity*. Toronto: United Church Press, 2010.
- Lockhart, Ross. *Gen X, Y Faith? Getting Real with God*. Kelowna: Wood Lake Books, 2003.
- Long, Thomas G. *Testimony: Talking Ourselves into Being Christian*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.
- McNeal, Reggie. *The Future Present: Six Tough Questions for the Church*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009.

Newbigin, Lesslie. *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986.

Newbigin, Lesslie. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.

Newbigin, Lesslie. *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*.

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.

Pathak, Jay and Dave Runyon. *Art of Neighboring, The: Small Steps to Building Genuine*

Relationships Right Outside Your Door. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 2012.

Pagitt, Doug. *Preaching Re-Imagined: The Role of the Sermon in Communities of Faith*

Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.

Pentland, John. *Fishing Tips: How Curiosity Transformed a Community of Faith*.

Toronto: Edge, 2015.

Richardson, Rick. *Evangelism Outside the Box: New Ways to Help People Experience*

the Good News. Downer's Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2000.

Rollins, Peter. *How (Not) to Speak of God*. Brewster: Paraclete Press, 2006.

Roxburgh, Allan J. *Introducing the Missional Church: What it is, Why it Matters, How*

to Become One. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009.

---. *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011.

---. *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World*. San

Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011.

---. *Missional Mapmaking: Skills for Leading in a Time of Transition*. San Francisco:

Jossey-Bass, 2009.

Sanneh, Lamin. *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*.

Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002.

Saunders, Stanley and Charles Campbell. *The Word on the Street: Performing the Scriptures in an Urban Context*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000.

Stone, Bryan. *Evangelism after Christendom: the theology and practice of Christian Witness*.

Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006.

Website Resources

<http://www.evangelismconnections.org>

<http://Presbyterian.ca/resources/resources-ef/> (Equipping for Evangelism and Mission)

<http://institute.wycliffecollege.ca>

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/>

Attendance

Attendance is specified by VST requirements, which requires at least 80% attendance for this course. This means attending class on time with no more than 2 allowable absences for any reason.

For ***on-campus students***, this means attending class on time with no more than 2 allowable absences for any reason. For ***distance students***, this means listening to all the recorded lectures and participating in all of the online forums/discussion groups, with no more than two allowable absences from the online forums/discussion groups.

Assignment and Course Evaluation

Course evaluations at VST combine a letter grade system with a competence model of assessment. Individual assignments within a course are given narrative evaluations, that is, APP (Approved) or INC (Incomplete) or NAPP (Not Approved) with narrative comments, based on the competencies and expectations set for that assignment. No number or letter grades or weights of assignments are calculated for assignments. One re-write is allowed on any assignment which is INC or NAPP within a course. The re-written assignment is due two weeks after the work is returned. The final evaluation for an assignment can be APP or NAPP after a re-write.

In all cases, all work for the course, including any re-writes, is due by the last day of term unless an extension for medical reasons is granted by the Dean.

The final grade for a course is reported both as a letter grade and as a narrative evaluation on the basis of a student's overall fulfillment of the competencies and expectations of the course, which are stated in the course syllabus. No number grades are assigned. Final grade designations are: A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, NAPP. No re-writes are allowed to improve a letter grade given as a final grade for a course.

Policy on Late assignments

Submission of assignments on time is a part of academic, professional and pastoral competence and a part of every course at VST. All assignments in courses are due on the dates specified in the syllabus for each course. Failure to submit an assignment on time will be noted in the narrative evaluation of an assignment. Repeated failure to submit assignments on time may affect the final grade for the course.

Five written assignments are due this term on the dates specified. If three or more assignments for the course are submitted late, the final grade will be reduced by one mark (a B+ becomes a B). In any case where two or more assignments are more than one week late, additional reductions may be taken in the final grade.