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**The Dynamic Preacher: Using Sacred Word and Stories to Transform, Liberate, and Connect to People ISP-HOMX500 [Preaching/Homiletics]
July 6-10, 2026, 9am-12spm (Summer Institute)**

PURPOSE: Preaching is an act of sacred storytelling that carries the power to liberate, connect, and transform. This experiential, hands-on, course is designed to empower preachers to step into their calling with courage, creativity, and compassion. At its best, preaching is both a deeply spiritual *and* socially relevant act. This course invites participants to explore how they can share the sacred stories of their communities, while breaking open the Gospel for their listeners, in order to create change and transformation.

Participants will explore various preaching styles: manuscript, notes, in the round, and without notes. The course delves into sermon preparation, focusing on biblical interpretation, exegesis, and critical approaches, while equipping preachers with tools like how to use metaphors, illustrations, storytelling, and mind mapping to enrich their messages. This course will cover both lectionary-based preaching and situational preaching, preparing students to preach effectively in diverse contexts, from weddings to funerals, and addressing urgent themes relevant to their communities.

This course challenges preachers to embrace the sacred responsibility of preaching with bravery and authenticity. By cultivating both theological depth and emotional resonance, you will learn to create sermons that don't just inform but transform. Create sermons that break down walls, build up hope, and inspire communities to live out God's justice, love, and liberation.

PREREQUISITES: None

COMPETENCE OBJECTIVES:

- Comment on video sermons by noted preachers, with particular attention to their use of scripture, the structure or flow of the sermon and the preachers' communication skills
- Accomplish a basic exegesis of an assigned Biblical text with particular attention to those aspects of exegesis that affect sermon preparation
- Demonstrate the ability to exegete biblical texts responsibly, integrating theological insight and sensitivity to diverse cultural contexts
- Describe how to link the assigned text to a specified preaching situation in the student's own culture using Theological Reflection
- Describe one or more methods of organizing sermon thoughts into a coherent outline
- Practice correct methods of voice production, pacing, and preaching presence that is emotionally honest, grounded in personal faith, and attentive to the needs of listeners
- Practice storytelling technique, relating that technique to the student's own cultural storytelling tradition
- Compose, deliver and review with the instructor 3 sermons (observed live or video recorded) on an assigned text to the preaching situation using 3 different preaching methods (manuscript, notes, no notes, in-the-round, etc.)

- Employ personal, communal, and biblical stories to engage listeners emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually
- Embed themes of liberation, justice, and reconciliation within sermons
- Demonstrate openness to peer/instructor critique and apply it to improve preaching craft and theological clarity

FORMAT AND CONTENT:

This is a one-week summer institute course. This course is taught experientially, meaning that most of the learning happens as you participate and experience the activities. The best learning happens when you are actively involved in it. It is imperative that each student attend class, participate, engage in discussions, and ask questions. This course will work best when all students share from their lived experiences. Come with an open mind, open heart and be prepared to share and receive feedback. Students will be expected to share their own experiences and sermons. For on-campus and virtual students, work in the course consists of classes, including some lecture, discussions, as well as individual and group exercises. Additional note: some voices have historically been silenced or ignored by our Church and in academia. Please notice the verbal space you are taking up and your privilege; allow more space for voices that aren't typically heard.

TEXTS:

- Various Authors, The Holy Bible (New Revised Standard Version or New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition)
- Patricia O'Connell Killen and John de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection*
- Leah D. Schade, *Preaching and Social Issues: Tools and Tactics for Empowering Your Prophetic Voice*
- Jennifer L. Ackerman, *Preaching the Gospel of Justice: Good News in Community*
- Gregory Heille, Maurice J. Nutt, and Deborah L. Wilhelm (eds), *Preaching Racial Justice**
- Kenyatta R. Gilbert, *Exodus Preaching: Crafting Sermon About Justice and Hope**
*these texts are recommended but not required

RESERVES:

- Kenyatta R. Gilbert, *Exodus Preaching: Crafting Sermon About Justice and Hope* (Chapter 3 *Confronting Human Tragedy and Communal Despair*)

COURSE POLICIES

1. **Attendance** For a weekly course, VST requires at least 80% attendance. For an intensive course, VST requires 100% attendance. This means attending class on-time and synchronously (for virtual learners) with no more than one excused absence.
2. **Reading and assignments** Students are expected to read or watch all required assignments before class and to complete all assignments as outlined in the syllabus within the specified dates of the course and term.
3. **Academic honesty** Students are expected to adhere to VST's requirements for academic honesty as published in the Student Handbook.
4. **Inclusive language** In speaking and writing, inclusive language is expected when making reference to humans and a variety of metaphors are anticipated when making reference to God.

5. Assignment and Course Evaluation

- Course evaluations at VST combine a letter grade system (A+ to B-; course failure is “Not Approved”) including narrative comments based on the competencies of the course. No number grades or weights of assignments are calculated, nor are final grades given numerical equivalents.
- Individual assignments within a course are given narrative evaluations, that is, APP (Approved) or INC (Incomplete) with narrative comments, based on the competencies and expectations set for that assignment. One re-write is allowed on any assignment that is INC. 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.

6. 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. 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.

7. Limitation on use of social media

Ordinarily, the use of electronic devices in the contexts of classrooms or meetings will be to support the learning, formation, or agenda at hand. Because listening and providing feedback are an integral part of storytelling, being fully present without a screen is imperative when listening to someone’s story, unless you are a virtual learner and the screen is how you are connecting to the classroom.

8. VST is committed to creating safe space and an inclusive learning environment. If you have a diagnosed or suspected learning disability, chronic condition, mental health concern, or physical requirement which you anticipate may impact your participation in this class, you are encouraged to discuss your needs with the instructor and the Dean within the first week of classes.

CALENDAR

July 6

Introductions
 Community Expectations
 Focused Conversation on Preaching
 What is preaching
 Why social justice matters discussion
 Hermeneutic approaches
 HOMEWORK: 1) Watch the sermon *'When the Verdict Hurts'* along with two additional sermons. For each one, evaluate the use of Scripture, overall structure and flow, metaphors, hermeneutical approach, sermon illustrations, and the preacher’s communication skills in writing. 2) Create a preaching philosophy that guides your sermon preparation and delivery.

July 7

Exegesis
 Exegeting a congregation
 Last Minute Preaching
 HOMEWORK: 1) In groups, exegete Luke 1:26-38 (Advent 4B), 2) On your own exegete Matthew 14:13-21 (Proper 13A), 3) Exegete your congregation (what would someone coming to preach need to know)

July 8

Theological Reflection
 Storytelling

- July 9** Homework: 1) Do a Theological Reflection on one of the lectionary readings you were given, 2) Do a Theological Reflection from a situation Sermon Resources/Tools Sermon Preparation Homework: 1) Create a sermon outline (with your opening and closing), from the lectionary you were given, as though you were going to preach it in your context, 2) Create a <10 min sermon to preach in class and get feedback
- July 10** **Last day of Class**
Situational Preaching
Cultural Considerations
Listening to each other's sermons

EXPECTATIONS, ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

1. Class participation: Students are expected to participate in class discussions, share their stories, provide strength-based feedback, and do adequate preparation for in-class sharing. Evaluative criteria: comments and questions show healthy curiosity, providing feedback in a way that is constructive and empowering, and a willingness to share stories from your life.
2. Homework: Students are expected to complete the homework and in class activities. Evaluative criteria: completing the assignments, and incorporating the feedback given.
3. Preaching: Students are expected to compose, deliver, and video record (if not done in-person) three sermons, using the lectionary readings. Each sermon should use a different preaching method (manuscript, notes, no notes, in-the-round, etc.). The student will have listeners fill out evaluations and fill out a self-evaluation. Evaluative criteria: clear form (what) and function (so what); evident exegetical work; presence of God's liberative, loving, life-giving, or transforming message; sermon illustrations and/or metaphor use; video; and completed feedback forms. DUE:

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Patricia O'Connell Killen and John de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection*
- Leah D. Schade, *Preaching and Social Issues: Tools and Tactics for Empowering Your Prophetic Voice*
- Jennifer L. Ackerman, *Preaching the Gospel of Justice: Good News in Community*
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SERMONS TO WATCH (first two are required watching)

- https://youtu.be/1kn29caEv9s?si=F46c7_h2Q_q8iY_8 This is a 5-ish minute conversation with Pastor Howard-John Wesley about his writing of the sermon "When the Verdict Hurts"
- https://youtu.be/hqhOe85_vA8?si=jHEscQaNy5vjt8zj Pastor Howard-John Wesley preaching "When the Verdict Hurts." He preached this sermon after George Zimmerman, the man who fatally shot Trayvon Martin, was acquitted.
- <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/its-all-about-love/?wchannelid=9z8f80ls12&wmediaid=y3cq3m279> Indigenous Mennonite Sarah Augustine preaching at "It's All About Love."*

- <https://youtu.be/rGjKcyrFs1g?t=29m> The Second Sunday of Lent, 2016. Barbera Brown Taylor preaching. The video is cued to begin with the scripture readings at minute 29.
- <https://youtu.be/bqP0P2YffVQ> The Rev. Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr., "Preaching with Power" sermon at Preaching with Power, The Urban Theological Institute of The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, March 7, 2011
- https://youtu.be/qQ7QIKG70LE?si=s-a_7Hbk19a8VHmf Valerie Kaur speaking at the National Moral Revival Watch Night Service
- https://youtu.be/GGnBZ_0gVAc Sunshine Cathedral MCC Sermon: "Turn That Mutha Out" by Rev Wil Gafney, PhD www.SunshineCathedral.org
- <https://youtu.be/eWG8i0XtVCw> This is a classic Otis Moss sermon. He uses these tropes with some frequency.
- <https://youtu.be/OhV0PL49d3Y> Michael Curry's royal wedding sermon
- <https://youtu.be/qb6WtfygVPk> Guest Preacher, The Rev. Traci deVon Blackmon's Sermon on Isaiah 9:2-7 and John 1:1-5 from December 21, 2014, the Fourth Sunday in Advent. Rev. Blackmon is the Pastor of Christ the King United Church of Christ in Florissant, Missouri.
- https://youtu.be/0fPp_M6i5Ks Audio recording of a sermon by Bishop Steven Charleston*
- <https://youtu.be/3ZoQTniXUkM> Dr Diana Butler Bass, lecturer and author of 'Grounded: Finding God in the World' and 'Christianity After Religion', gives the sermon for the Eucharist service held at St Paul's Cathedral on Sunday 3rd April 2016.
- https://youtu.be/tVBE_bCEZZ4 Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis sermon "the Rainbow Connection"
- https://youtu.be/sBhlmLm2N_I Shaneequa preaching at Native American day and Pride in Atlanta*
- <https://www.youtube.com/live/c63PPviPX8A?si=PoWkGlREPLXnV3Mm&t=4653> Shaneequa preaching at Easter Vigil 2025.*

*Indigenous Preacher