

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
PTH 932: Effective Communication Through Narrative

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COURSE SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Meeting at the crossroads of God's stories with our stories, this course will require critical theological reflection on both the content and form of narrative preaching. Varied forms of narrative preaching will be studied to enhance homiletic options and to build the students' abilities in narrative prophetic witness. Elements of the historical and sociological dynamics of narration, effective communication through story, preaching to biblical narrative accounts, cultural connectedness through narrative techniques, and the psychological/sociological/ethnic dynamics of narration will be studied and applied. Students will be encouraged to go beyond methodology and technique to answer important questions about their own narrative theology of proclamation.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this course the student will be able to:

1. Explain the benefits of narrative preaching and story as related to our postmodern society
2. Express the importance of narrative communication historically, cross-culturally, psychologically, and sociologically.
3. Classify and create the elements of good story
4. Identify, design and deliver at least four different types of narrative preaching
5. Recognize narrative form in scripture and know how to extract appropriate content
6. Develop sermons from passages in narrative literature, adeptly utilizing the elements of plot, character, conflict and resolution, and other literary forms.
7. Demonstrate competency in methodology and technique in narrative preaching
8. Prepare and preach narrative messages that are true to the biblical text, clear and well organized, interesting to listen to, and relevant to the listeners' needs.

PRE-SESSION READING LIST

You must read at least 1700 pages total from the Required Reading List that follows. A suggested order has been provided at the end of each work cited; it need not be followed explicitly. Furthermore, the higher numbered books are not necessarily the ones to drop out. The lower numbers tend to be broader and provide philosophical perspective and

support regarding the importance of narrative preaching in regards to our changing society. The higher numbers tend to be more explicit as to how to actually do narrative preaching. I have starred several that I am definitely requiring.

Reading List (Read 1700 pages with the starred items being required):

***Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. New York: Basic Books, Perseus Books Group, 1981. (189 pages) (A Jewish perspective) #15

Ayers, James. *Finding the Story: Hard Texts, Homiletical Narratives, and Hearing God's Voice*. Lima, OH: CSS Publishing Co., 2007. (226 pages) #11

Bartholomew, Craig and Michael W. Goheen. *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004. (213 pages) #13

***Boomershine, Thomas E. *Story Journey: An Invitation to the Gospel as Storytelling*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1988. (203 pages) #12

Edwards, Kent J. *Effective First-person Biblical Preaching: The Steps from Text to Narrative Sermon* (with CD-ROM). Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005. (181 pages) #8

***Frymire, Jeffry W. *Preaching the Story: How to Communicate the Word Through Narrative Sermons*. Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 2006. (154 pages) #10

Green, Joel B. and Michael Pasquarello III. *Narrative Reading, Narrative Preaching: Reuniting New Testament Interpretation and Proclamation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003. (193 pages) #6

***Jensen, Richard L. *Thinking in Story: Preaching in a Post-Literate Age*. Morneo Valley: CCS Publishing Co., 1993. (145 pages) #7

***Lowry, Eugene L. *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form*. (expanded edition). Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001. (131 pages) #2

Miller, Calvin. *Preaching: The Art of Narrative Exposition*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006. (284 pages) #3

Miller, Mark. *Experiential Storytelling: (Re)Discovering Narrative to Communicate God's Message*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003. (153 pages) #1

Robinson, Haddon and Torrey W. Robinson. *It's All in How You Tell It*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003. (136 pages) #9

***Robinson, Wayne Bradley, ed. *Journeys Toward Narrative Preaching*. (Contributors are Hughes, Lowry, Robinson, Rose, Thulin and Williams). Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007. (134 pages) #4

Standing, Roger. *Finding the Plot: Preaching in Narrative Style*. Bletchley, UK: Paternoster Press, 2004. (238 pages) #5

***Tennant, Carolyn. Unpublished work in process. Get free by e-mailing carolyn.tennant@northcentral.edu. She will send it digitally. (About 150 pages) #16

Thulin, Richard. *Autobiography in the Pulpit: The "I" of the Sermon*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1989. (93 pages) #14

Texts of Choice (for replacement purposes):

Blomberg, Craig L. *Preaching the Parables: From Responsible Interpretation to Powerful Proclamation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004. (219 pages)

Bradt, Kevin M., S.J., *Story as a Way of Knowing*. Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1997. (240 pages) (A Catholic perspective)

Childers, Jana. *Performing the Word: Preaching as Theatre*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998. (145 pages)

Ellingsen, Mark. *The Integrity of Biblical Narrative: Story in Theology and Proclamation*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publisher, 2002. (128 pages)

Hunt, Arthur W. III. *The Vanishing Word: The Veneration of Visual Image in the Postmodern World*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2003. (248 pages)

Lange, Larry. *ReTelling the Story: Creatively Developing Biblical Story Sermons*. Lima, OH: CSS Publishing Co., 2005. (120 pages)

Larsen, David. *Telling the Old, Old Story: The Art of Narrative Preaching*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1995. (284 pages)

METHODOLOGY

1. The course will utilize readings and written assignments.
2. It will contain lectures and class discussion of various narrative methods.
3. Part of the course will be workshop-oriented with small group work, exercises, and interaction.
4. There will be presentations of narrative preaching styles by the students and others with critique and discussion.
5. After the classroom experiences, students will develop and present sermons and have them critiqued by several parishioners.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Pre-session Reading and Assignments

a. Read at least 1700 pages of the textbooks on the Required Reading List. (100 points)

All books should be new reads for the student. It is a violation of academic policy to claim credit for books read prior to the course. If the student has previously read many of the required texts and still needs pages to read for this requirement, then alternate books should be selected from the Texts of Choice list.

On the first day of class, students should be ready to turn in the accompanying certification sheet indicating that they have read the required texts.

b. Write a 10-page Self-evaluation and Critical Analysis paper containing two parts for a total of 100 points:

Part 1) Provide a self-evaluation in which you summarize your present preaching style in relation to the narrative techniques presented in the readings. How has the reading changed your outlook on narrative preaching? Where do you want to go from here?

Part 2) Provide a Critical Analysis that interacts with the reading. This should not be a rehashing of what was read but rather evidence your critical thought regarding the topics. What did these books tell you about narrative preaching? Which ones did you find most useful and why? Did you agree with the various philosophical perspectives? Which technique-oriented books do you believe offered preaching options which you would like to use? What was not helpful? These are the sorts of questions which you may consider in this part of your paper.

Be prepared to turn in the paper during the first day of class and also to share your paper analysis verbally with others in the class.

c. Finally, prepare a 15 minute sermon utilizing one of the narrative preaching approaches you learned about from your reading. Bring your outline to the first day of class with 17 copies to pass out. State on the outline what form of narrative preaching you are attempting in this sermon. Be prepared to preach the short sermon in class and to critique it along with other students' sermons. At this point, it is more for a base of discussion, interaction, and learning than it is for the purpose of a "perfected" narrative sermon. Try to have fun, and be creative and experimental. (50 points)

2. Session

a. Attendance at all class sessions is required to receive credit for the course, PTH 932, June 7-11, 2010.

b. Active contribution must be given to the peer learning environment, including discussion, integration of pre-reading, class exercises, and relationship-building.

3. Post-Session Papers and Projects (750 points)

Writing Assignments – Choose any combination from below to equal 750 points. (This means that you will choose three of the six possibilities.) Be prepared to share during the last day of class which three you will choose.

The three writing assignments are due July 23, 2010. Send to my home along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope in which everything can be returned to you.

- a. **Narrative Topic Paper.** Write an 8-10 page paper that further explores areas of narrative preaching topics covered in class such as Hasidic storytelling, black preaching styles, developing story, oral communication/storytelling history and techniques, dramatic preaching, other narrative preaching types, etc. Topic should be cleared with the professor who is open to creativity. (250 points)

- b. **First-person Narrative Sermon Project and Paper.** Prepare an 8-10 page paper which shows how you utilized all of the steps presented in Edwards' book *Effective First-person Biblical Preaching*. Preach the sermon and include some form of critique. This may be a self-critique and/or critique by parishioners. If you choose the latter, then develop a critique sheet for them to use which fits with the most important elements of the first-person narrative sermon. Tape the sermon and turn it in with your assignment, along with the critique(s). (250 points)
- c. **Other Type of Narrative Preaching and Paper.** Choose another type of narrative preaching other than first-person narrative. Prepare an 8-10 page manuscript of that sermon which reads like a sermon and not like an academic research paper. As a different option for this paper, you may show the steps you used in preparation and then include a full-sentence outline of the sermon. Preach the sermon and provide an appropriate form of critique. This may be a self-critique and/or critique by parishioners. If you choose the latter, then prepare a critique sheet for them to use which fits with the most important criteria for your selected narrative format. Tape the sermon and turn it in with your assignment, along with the critique(s). (250 points)
- d. **Self-improvement Project and Paper.** Write an 8-10 page paper presenting a plan for continuous self-improvement in narrative preaching. Consider your pre-session self-evaluation and what you have learned through the class and the readings. Then design a specific plan for expanding your narrative preaching expertise. Determine specific styles of narrative preaching that you wish to incorporate and fit them into your preaching schedule for at least a six month period. Determine what specific Biblical stories you will use for each. For the first one on your schedule, do the preparation for it, including this in your paper. Present specific steps for capitalizing on your strengths and overcoming your weaknesses and limitations. This might include taping, critiques, video-taping feedback, evaluation, further research, etc. What specific resources will you use to implement your plan and to support you in your continued growth and development in this area of preaching? This assignment should be applied to your particular communication responsibilities whether that be teaching, preaching, missionary presentations, or similar formats. (250 points)
- e. **Exploring Narrative Paper.** Read *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* by H. Porter Abbott. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. This book discusses narrative in general: what it is, how it is transmitted, and how it changes when the medium or cultural context changes. Write a 8-10 page paper on how the insights of this book apply to narrative preaching. When you have determined various applications, utilize several of these in at least two sermons. Include in the paper a critique of those narrative approaches you utilized in preaching. What worked? What didn't? What would you do differently next time? (250 points)
- f. **Exercises and Sermon Prep Paper.** In various books that we read for class, the authors suggested a wide variety of exercises that would work

toward the preparation of a narrative sermon. Choose any four to six of these exercises. State the page(s)/book/author for that exercise, and then write them out as prompted. This paper should end up being 8-10 pages. You should have four to six potential narrative sermon ideas planned out through this assignment. (250 points)

GRADING PROCEDURE

1. Preaching is both artistic and technical. Therefore when the preaching is done in class or selected as a project, evaluation is partly empirical but also partly subjective. The "sermon" grade will be based on the professor's subjective evaluation of the artistic side and the level achieved in successfully preparing for and presenting a narrative sermon. The critiques will also be considered. The grade will not be based upon total success. The professor enjoys creativity and what is learned, even if the sermon does not come off perfectly. The sermon will also be considered in relation to interest and relevance. Additionally it will be evaluated based upon how well the narrative techniques have been considered and integrated.

2. Post-session Paper/Project grading:

- a. Successful incorporation of all aspects of the described assignment or project (30%)
- b. Clear and cogent presentation of ideas (This includes organization, proper grammar and form, as well as cogent assertions and conclusions.) (20%)
- c. Analysis and reflection (10%)
- d. Communication (Proper use of language that is compelling and professional) (10%)
- e. Creativity and originality (10%)
- f. Utility of project/assignment to the participant including learning and growth from the project (10%)
- g. Style conforms to the Turabian manual (10%)

COURSE WRITING STANDARDS

1. *Editing*: Editorial help is available at an hourly rate. Contact the D.Min. office for the names of editors familiar with the program.

2. *Style Manual*: All written work is to be formatted according to the *Turabian* style manual, latest edition.

http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0226816273/qid=1025032200/sr=1-1/ref=sr_1_1/103-8003118-1534215

3. *Expectations*: All papers are to represent original, high-quality, graduate-level work. Writing from previous courses may not be utilized.

4. *Title Page*: All papers should include a cover sheet with title, course information, student name, address, phone, and e-mail address in *Turabian* format.

5. *Communication and due date*: A **hardcopy** of the edited Post-Session papers/projects must be mailed to Dr. Carolyn Tennant, 16463 Grenoble Ave., Lakeville, MN 50044. *Do not use e-mail*. To be on time, the paper must be post-marked no later than the due date. It is important to enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope in which the papers, tapes, etc. can

be mailed back to you. This assures the likelihood that you will successfully receive your paper back.

LATE WORK

After the deadline passes for post-session work (July 23, 2010), the maximum grade for these projects will decline by one letter grade for each week beyond the due date. To be on time, the paper must be post-marked no later than the due date.

COURSE GRADING

Expectations are high. An "A" indicates excellent work, a "B" rewards good effort, a "C" is marginal, etc. Grading is a composite of points earned in each phase of the course:

Pre-session Reading: 100 points

Pre-session Self-evaluation and Critical Analysis Paper: 100 points

Pre-session Preparation of Narrative Sermon and Class Presentation: 50 points

Post-Session Projects---Three projects of 250 points each for a total of 750 points

TOTAL: 1000 points

All grades will be awarded using the AGTS Grading Scale:

Publishable = A+

1000 - 940 = A

939 - 900 = A-

899 - 870 = B+

869 - 840 = B

839 - 800 = B-

799 - 770 = C+

769 - 740 = C

739 - 700 = C-

699 - 670 = D+

669 - 640 = D

639 - 600 = D-

599-0 = F

SPECIFIC DATA

Prepared by Dr. Carolyn Tennant for the course PT932 Effective Communication Through Narrative June 7-11, 2008.

Bibliography

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Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. New York: Basic Books, Perseus Books Group, 1981.

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Baker, Augusta and Ellin Greene. *Storytelling: Art and Technique*. New York: Bowker, 1977.

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Bartholomew, Craig and Michael W. Goheen. *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.

Bausch, William J. *Storytelling: Imagination and Faith*. Mystic, Conn.: Twenty-Third Publications, 1984.

Blomberg, Craig L. *Preaching the Parables: From Responsible Interpretation to Powerful Proclamation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.

Bond, L. Susan. *Contemporary African American Preaching: Diversity in Theory and Style*. Chalice Press, 2003.

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Brown, David M. *Transformational Preaching*. Virtualbookworm.com Publishing, 2003.

Buber, Martin. *Tales of the Hasidim*. New York: Schocken Books, 1948.

Buechner, Frederick. *Telling the Truth: The Gospel as Tragedy, Comedy and Fairy Tale*. San Francisco: Harper & Row 1977.

Buttrick, David. *Homiletic: Moves and Structures*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987.

Chappell, Bryan. *Using Illustrations to Preach with Power*. rev. ed. Crossway Books, 2001.

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Cobley, Paul. *Narrative*. London: Routledge, 2001.

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- Graves, Mike. *What's the Matter with Preaching Today?* Westminster John Knox, 2004.
- _____. *The Sermon as Symphony: Preaching the Literary forms of the New Testament*. Judson Press, 1997.
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- Postman, Neil. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. New York: Penguin, 1985.
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- Richardson, Brian (ed.). *Narrative Dynamics: Essays on Time, Plot, Closure, and Frames*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2002.
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Wiesel, Elie. *Souls on Fire*. New York: Harper & Row, 1972.

Wright, John W. *Telling God's Story: Narrative Preaching for Christian Formation*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2007.

Yandell, Keith E., ed. *Faith and Narrative*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Preaching Resource Websites and Link Lists:

The Evangelical Homiletics Society. <www.evangelicalhomiletics.com>

Homiletics Journal. <www.homileticonline.com>

The North American Academy of Homiletics. <www.wlu.cal~wwwsem/ah>

Preaching Magazine. <www.preaching.com>

Online Pulpit. <www.gospelcom.net/ivpress/churchlink/onlinepulpit/>

Leonard Sweet. <www.preachingplus.com>

Preaching Today <www.preachingtoday.com>

Rick Warren and Saddleback Church. <www.pastor.com>

Sermon Central. <www.sermoncentral.com>

The Africa American Pulpit. <www.judsonpress.com/taap>

