COMMON COURSE SYLLABUS
PW518; PW519

Preaching the Parables

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
August, 2015

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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:
The Seminar helps pastors and students gain competence in exegetical and homiletical methods that aid in preaching the parables of Jesus. Insights related to interpreting these “narrative metaphors” (Amos Wilder) will be explored along with a critique of the “main idea” model of interpretation. Members of the Seminar will then turn to narrative homiletical plots as evocative approaches to shaping the worlds of the parables for the listeners.

II. TEXTBOOKS:

Required Reading:
Walter Brueggemann Finally Comes the Poet: Daring Speech for Proclamation
ISBN# 978-0-8006-2394-4

Eugene Lowry The Sermon: Dancing the Edge of Mystery
ISBN# 978-0-687-01543-6

Recommended Reading:
Richard Eslinger, The Web of Preaching,
ISBN# 0-687-01297-X

III. GOALS:
Preaching the Parables is an elective course in homiletics that is designed to build upon the foundation of the required course, Preparing to Preach. This seminar focuses more specifically upon the New Testament Synoptic parables of Jesus and how to preach these texts in ways that honor their formative power for Early Christianity as well as the church today. The particular lens through which the parables will be interpreted will be that of Walter Brueggemann’s perspective on the poetics of biblical narratives. Two Student Learning Outcomes are primarily addressed within this course:
A. Student’s work demonstrates an understanding of Scripture’s foundational role in the formation of Christian identity and Christian Witness. Addressing this SLO, the course will engage in critical analysis of key New Testament texts within the genre of biblical apocalyptic.

B. Student demonstrates competence in the skills and perspectives necessary for leadership in the formation of disciples through preaching. During the course of the seminar, the interpretation of various New Testament pericopes will be followed by an exploration of the strategies by which the text may be preached. Various homiletical methods will be employed through the successive sessions of the seminar.

IV. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:

- Growth in exegetical skills relevant for any biblical text.
- Awareness of particular gifts and challenges in preaching from the parables.
- Development of skills particular to the rhetorical and social criticism of selected New Testament apocalyptic pericopes.
- Sensitivity to the role various contexts play in the interpretation of Scripture, particularly considering the role that these texts play in Christian traditions.
- Practical knowledge in various recent narrative homiletical methods that allow the structure and movement of the text to inform the homiletical plot.
- Practice in applying explicitly theological lenses both to the study of the text and construction of the sermon.
- Practice in imaging the sequences within the sermon plot out of the lived experience of the listeners.
- Practice offering and receiving caring and frank feedback.

V. TEACHING STRATEGIES:

The course is designed as a seminar also structured to deepen the spiritual formation of the members through daily liturgical life and common meals. The seven major sessions of the Seminar will involve lecture presentations by the two instructors (Dr. Eugene Lowry and Dr. Richard Eslinger) and conversations within plenary and small group gatherings. The various liturgies, and especially the Closing Eucharist, will model the interpretive insights of the presenters.

VI. CALENDAR OF TOPICS AND SESSIONS:

Schedule

Tuesday, Aug. 12

10:00 – 11:45 Registration
(Corl Lounge)
Noon – 1:30       Midday Meal with
                 Welcome and Overview

1:30 – 3:00       Session 1
                 Introduction: Preaching as Event in Time

3:15 – 4:45       Session 2
                 The Parabolic Mind

5:00 – 5:30       Evening Prayer

7:00 – 8:30       Session 3
                 The Primacy of Orality and Lectionary Impediments

**Wednesday, Aug. 13**

9:00 – 9:30       Morning Prayer

9:45 – 10:45       Session 4
                 Preparing the Sermon

11:00 – Noon.     Session 5
                 Walking the Tightropes: Dangers and Temptations

3:15 – 4:45       Session 6
                 Group Sermon Preparation

5:00 – 5:30       Evening Prayer

7:00 – 8:30 p.m.  Session 7
                 The Aristotle Blues
                 *(An evening with Dr. Lowry at the piano.)*

**Thursday, Aug. 14**

9:00 – 9:30       Morning Prayer

9:45 – 10:45       Closing Session
                 Summary Improvisation

11:00 – Noon      Wrap-up and Evaluations followed by Closing Eucharist

**VII: SEMINARY STANDARDS:**

**A. Inclusive language**

Adopted by MSC Mar 2007; Revised Sep 2008; Revised Aug 2010
United Theological Seminary has an official policy regarding the use of Inclusive Language. The policy may be found in the Seminary Catalog and further explained in the Student Handbook. If you have specific questions, please see the instructor.

B. Academic Integrity
Student integrity regarding all work assigned in this class is a basic expectation of the Seminary community. A detailed policy regarding what constitutes a violation of academic integrity can be found in the Student Handbook.

C. Online Confidentiality
One of the highlights of the online classroom is that students can draw from the experiences shared during class discussions and in written work. However, it is imperative that students do not share information that is confidential, privileged, or proprietary in nature. In addition, students are expected to honor the privacy and confidentiality of their classmates by not disclosing online conversations with those outside of the classroom.

VIII: USING ONLINE RESOURCES:
For information about how to access Online United and where to find help if you need it may be found on the seminary website at http://online.united.edu. Live support and help guides are available once you have logged into the United Online site in the upper right corner.
To get online help with the Student Portal, United mail, or any other system on campus, email: onlinehelp@united.edu.

IX. EVALUATION:
A. Assignments (One academic credit)
1. Pre-Work: Please read the Brueggemann and Lowry texts.
2. “Full, conscious, and active” participation in the Seminar
3. One sermon on a pericope covered in the seminar. Please include 2-3 pages of exegetical notes. (Due by 8/31 in the course web site Drop Box.)
4.

B. Assignments (Three academic credits)
1. Pre-Work: Please read the Brueggemann and Lowry texts.
2. “Full, conscious, and active” participation in the Seminar.
   An eight to ten page reflection on the readings for the course addressing the following two questions:

   On what grounds and for what purpose would Walter Brueggemann choose the term “poet” to speak of the preacher?

   What are the values and liabilities of two current models of interpreting the parables for preaching—The “Big Idea” or “Main Idea of the Parable” and a “Narrative Hermeneutic that Shapes a Narrative Homiletical Plot”?

   Please devote approximately 50% of your Reflection Paper to responses to each question.
(Due in course Drop Box by August 31.)

4. Two sermons on the parables of Jesus, each with 2-3 pages of exegetical notes. The sermons are due by August 31 and will be submitted in the course site Drop Box.

C. Method of Determining Grade:

1. One-credit course

   Participation in Seminar 70%
   Sermon with exegesis 30%

2. Three-credit course

   Participation in Seminar 25%
   Reflection Paper 35%
   Sermon 1 with exegesis 20%
   Sermon 2 with exegesis 20%

   Total: 100%

X. STUDENT COURSE EVALUATIONS:

It is very important for students to submit a course evaluation toward the end of the semester. Instructors do not see the student evaluations at all until after the instructors have submitted the students’ final official grades. Students should feel free to evaluate the course without any negative ramifications.

XI. References:

A bibliography of resources on homiletics and parable interpretation will be distributed the first session of the seminar.