

HM 765

Auto/biographies for Preaching

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Office hours: Please make appointments

But I am on campus most Wednesdays (9-4) and Thursday mornings

Tuesdays, 8:30 am – 10 am

Gault Hall: G145 & Chapel/Classroom

CONSULT YOUR SYLLABUS REGULARLY

SIGNIFICANT FIRST NOTE: *This syllabus is the first iteration of your course schedule for this fall. As with all written documents, it is subject to revision. Revision is a part of the human enterprise and indicates that I am not perfect, as none of us is. IF you receive a revised addition, immediately discard the first version OR, write, “invalid” on each page of the first one so that you will not be confused about the requirements for the course.*

This course seeks to introduce students to reading biographies/autobiographies by or about preachers in order to help them reflect on their formation as a preacher; and to help them learn best practices for using story and person story preaching. 3 credit hours. Prerequisite: HM600.

WHY THIS COURSE: I want you to know what was in my mind when I decided to teach this course. I know that self-reflection, self-discovery, and self-knowledge are all critical for a sustained and deep ministry. We do not slow down enough to reflect on what actually the “back stories” of our preaching life are. The authors I chose are not haphazard, but we will discuss that more. In the meantime, I hope you will appreciate that we are going “deeper” instead of “wider.”

Course Goal

This course seeks to help students learn and engage interpretive and homiletical strategies for preaching story with the bible. By the completion of this course, students should:

- Spend time in deep reflection to examine one’s own and others’ motives for and in preaching and to be connected with one’s personal spiritual resources for preaching
- Have a strategy for preaching Good News from biblical texts that honors the rich tradition of observing life as a locus for God’s activity in the world, using personal story

Required Text Books:

- 1) Brown Taylor, Barbara. *The Preaching Life*. Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 1993.
- 2) Claypool, John. *Tracks of a Fellow Struggler: Living and Growing through Grief*. Morehouse Publishing, 2004.

- 3) Mitchell, Ella P. and Henry H. *Together for Good: Lessons from Fifty-Five Years of Marriage*. Kansas City: Andrews McMeel Publishing, 1999.
- 4) Weems, Renita. *Listening for God: A Minister's Journey Through Silence and Doubt*. Touchstone, 1999.

NOTE: I am indebted to Dr. Greg Carey, New Testament Professor at Lancaster Seminary, for the section "Things You Can Do to Foster Your Success." Modified and used with his permission.

Things You Can Do to Foster Your Success

1. Remember that this is your theological education and take ownership of it. The Seminary and the instructor are here to guide and assist your learning, but ultimately your education is what you make of it with the help of the Holy Spirit. Take account of your education in your prayer life. Your instructors do.
2. Prepare for class. Do the assigned readings in preparation for each class session. When you cannot read everything, take a few minutes to scan through the readings. Identify the major topics and lines of argument. The assigned readings will prepare you to benefit from class discussions. Use the helps provided in the Syllabus to guide your reading. Take advantage of the study helps provided by Powell, both in the book and online. An active learner learns more than a passive learner does.
3. Take a few minutes after each class session to reflect. What were the major discussion points of this class session? Usually there are only a few – see if you can identify them. Perhaps discuss these points with a friend. Always ask: what is the big picture here?
4. Plan your writing before you write. Statistically speaking, students who finish assignments with time to spare do better than students who rush at the last minute. When you're preparing a short essay, be thinking about your topic during every class session. Organize your thoughts before you begin to write. Sketch out your ideas and line of thought before you write a single word. Make sure you are ready to provide credit to the sources from which you glean ideas and information. Once you've completed a first draft, review it – and consider whether your work meets the criteria of assessment spelled out in the Syllabus.
5. Your success on written assignments is all about clarity, logic, and detail. This is a masters-level course, and it provides preparation for religious leadership: superficial engagement will not do. Make sure you engage the primary texts directly and specifically. Make sure you engage the assigned readings where they can be helpful. Make sure you provide a clear thesis (or claim) and a clear line of thought. Think about it from your instructor's point of view: if you could have written this same assignment without having taken this class, something is wrong.
6. On rare occasions it is necessary to ask for an extension of a particular assignment. Be aware that students tend to do much, much better when they stay on schedule.

COVENANT PRINCIPLES FOR SHARED LEARNING:

1. Attendance and active participation in class: I expect students to be in class by 8:30 a.m., prepared to fully participate by contributing to the conversation and discussing the readings, their responses, and questions that arise in this inquiry. **“Habitually coming in late conveys unintended disrespect to the community of co-creators and can be disruptive”** (Dr. Margaret Aymer, ITC, Womanist Biblical Interpretation syllabus). See the Student Handbook for the seminary’s policy on absences from class. Students are responsible for any work missed when absent. I will not provide written copies of lectures/discussion sessions.
2. Style of pedagogy and class format: I do not lecture as much as lead discussions and small groups. I hope the creative components will fire your imagination. **This style requires that you have read and are ready to lead the discussion if called upon.** I am presuming shared responsibility as in any master’s level course, just as in a seminar style. As such, students will help lead discussions; we will have debates; we will use media, etc.
3. Read all assigned materials. As a master’s level students, I expect that each co-learner will help guide the discussion by his or her thoughtful, informed conversation. Pedagogues note that **for every hour in class, students should expect to study (read/reflect) three hours.** I have designed this course with the expectation that you will not be able to read “at the last minute” and that you will lean closer to that 9-hour study than not.
4. All papers must be typed, double-spaced, one-inch margins on all sides, and 12-point font (either Times New Roman, Arial, or Book Antiqua—no other font, please). No italics or bold fonts. Papers must be properly documented with its sources. The seminary’s official document sourcing style is the Chicago Manual Style (Turabian) and MLA. Please get the latest addition or use the online version (for a fee). Proofread your work.
5. You do not have to turn off your cell phone; however, please be sure that your cell is on vibration/silent and leave the room to answer any calls.
6. You may use computers in my classroom but please limit Internet surfing, etc. Use the computer for the class itself.
7. As a part of our time together, I expect students to use respectful, inclusive/expansive language regarding the deity and humans. Contrary to what people have been told, this statement does not mean that you may never say “father god,” but it does mean that you are challenged to stretch further in your metaphoric language. It DOES mean you may not use “man” as a “generic term,” or “mankind” when you intend to include all people. There are plenty of alternative words. “The language we use represents who we are and for what we stand as theologians and ministers” (Yee, syllabus). The following statement, “The Language of Community,” is the statement given for this course when taught by a former colleague, Dr. Steven Parrish. I could not have said it better.

From its opening chapter, the bible affirms the worth of community. Both male and female in the human community bear the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). The bible values children as a part of human community (Exodus 12:26; Deut. 6:20; Luke 9:46-48). The oppressed are given special consideration by the Bible; e.g., strangers, orphans, and widow are important people in God’s community (Deut. 24:17, 19, 21). Further, Jonah discovered that even those he regarded as

enemies are cherished by God and are important individuals in the world community. The faith of the Bible is an inclusive faith.

Further, the biblical language about God is also far more expansive and inclusive than we have often recognized. Exodus 3 maintains that God is essentially unnamable and free to remain who God wants to be. First Samuel 4-6 and 2 Samuel 6 testify to God's unwillingness to be "boxed in" by human formulations of what God "ought" to be. The metaphorical language of the bible is diverse indeed, describing God by images that range from the battlefield (e.g., Psalm 18, 24) to images that depict God as the one who gives birth to the mountains Psalm 90:2 and the ice (Job 38:29). One of the aims of this course is to grow in the ways we think and speak of one another and of God.

Grading Rubric:

25% Spiritual Biography: Choose a preacher (about whom you are able to find resources in the library and online) and write a 5-to-7-page biography for them. Think about what you deem important for someone to know about what shaped them as a preacher. **DUE: October 20**

25% Personal Spiritual Biography: Write a 5-to-7-page spiritual biography based on what you believe is the most significant happenings to date to affect and have an impact on your preaching and your formation as a preacher. This essay should be thoughtful and substantive. You are welcome to use any of the resources for this class as resource for your writing. Though it is a "personal reflection," it should be informed by resource. **DUE November 10**

25% On-Line Reflections & Responses: You have 4 assigned responses to do online. Together they comprise this grade. These reflections should be thoughtful, well-crafted, and substantive. **DUE THROUGHOUT. CONSULT ONLINE INSTRUCTIONS>**

25% Sermon: You will research, write, and preach a sermon that will reflect exegetical integrity and personal authenticity. This sermon should be between 10-15 minutes. A copy of the sermon, with resources, typed, doubled spaced, with your name on it, will be uploaded to Populi. **DUE November 17**

August 25, 2015

No in-class meeting

September 1, 2015:

IN PERSON: Introductions/expectations/setting assignments

ON-LINE: WATCH "The Danger of a Single Story"

Read "Writing Autobiography"

- 1) Write a 1-page (maximum) reflection on "Danger of Single Story" and what she provoked about your own story. You should quote Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie @ least 4 times (to demonstrate that you actually listened to the Ted Talk).
- 2) Post your reflection online under September 1 discussion.

- 3) Read at least one of your colleague's reflections and offer her/him a response (beyond "that's was good" or "I liked that"). Your response should demonstrate that you actually read the response and offer your colleague insight or questions to pursue.

PREPARE FOR SEPTEMBER 8:

READ Tracks of a Fellow Struggler; READ John 11:1-44

Prepare to think about: Loss and its impact on our lives, our relationships, and our preaching

September 8, 2015

IN PERSON: Discuss Claypool's vulnerability; discuss loss and its impact on our lives, our relationships, and our preaching. Use John 11:1-44 as a biblical starting point. Think about what counts as "autobiography."

ON LINE (MUST BE COMPLETED BY FRIDAY EACH WEEK):

- 1) Watch Barbara Brown's "Sacred Downtime" (including the Q & A time)
- 2) Write a 1 page (maximum) reflection on "Sacred Downtime" and what she provoked about your own story. Think about how busy you are and how it affects your ministry and preaching. Quote Brown in a way that let's us know you actually watched/listened to the presentation.
- 3) Post online.
- 4) Read at least one of your colleague's reflection and offer her/him a response (beyond "that's was good" or "I liked that"). Your response should demonstrate that you actually read the response and offer your colleague insight or questions to pursue.

PREPARE FOR SEPTEMBER 15

We will have guest panelists to talk about the way telling one's story affects others and our ministries. Be prepared to be hospitable.

September 15, 2015

IN CLASS: Engage guest panelists around telling our stories and preaching

ON LINE: Do the 20-minute exercise of being still or walking and doing NOTHING else (no talking on the phone or walking the dog, for example). Set a timer so that you know what 20 minutes is.

Watch the Frank Thomas video on "The Choice."

Reflect on both the 20-minute "nothing" exercise and "The Choice" video. Read Psalm 139.

Write a brief reflection that takes all these into consideration. Post it. Respond to at least one of your colleague's reflections

PREPARE FOR SEPTEMBER 22:

Read pages 15-107 of Renita Weem's *Listening for God*
Read Mark 9:14-29
Read "The Invitation" (link provided)

September 22, 2015

IN CLASS: Discuss Weem's *Listening for God*, pp. 15-107 and "The Invitation"
Work on possible sermon for Mark 9:14-29

ONLINE: Post your first pieces of your sermon. Interact with your partner about both of your sermons. This interaction should in fact be at least 45-50 minutes by the end of Friday.

Watch Flunder's "Authenticity" and Winner's "Personal Stories." Use these as you think about how you use story in your sermon. We will return to both videos in the next class

PREPARE FOR SEPTEMBER 29

Read Weem's *Listening for God*, pp. 107-204

September 29, 2015

IN CLASS: Discuss Weems, pp. 107-204

ON LINE: Watch Gina Stewart interview. Think about structuring sermons as she describes it and how it affects her ministry.

1) Write a 1-page (maximum) reflection on "Gina Stewart Interview" and what she provoked about your own story. You should quote Stewart @ least 4 times (to demonstrate that you actually listened to the interview). 2) Post your reflection online under September 29 discussion. 3) Read at least one of your colleague's reflections and offer her/him a response (beyond "that's was good" or "I liked that"). Your response should demonstrate that you actually read the response and offer your colleague insight or questions to pursue.

PREPARE FOR OCTOBER 6

Read Barbara Brown Taylor, *The Preaching Life*, pp. 3-86

October 6

IN CLASS: Discuss Brown's *Preaching Life*, 3-86, AND work on sermons (Bridgeman lecture on sermon preparation)

ON LINE: Watch all the Craddock videos.

1) Write a 1-page (maximum) reflection on Craddock (taking all the videos into account) and what he provoked about your own story. You should quote Craddock @ least 5 times (to demonstrate that you actually listened to the interview).

- 2) Post your reflection online under October 6 discussion.
- 3) Read at least one of your colleague's reflections and offer her/him a response (beyond "that's was good" or "I liked that"). Your response should demonstrate that you actually read the response and offer your colleague insight or questions to pursue.

PREPARE FOR OCTOBER 20: Read Brown's 89-174 (12 sermons)

October 13: FALL BREAK

October 20

NOTE: This session will help us think about how art can help us connect with our interior life and story.

IN CLASS: Discuss Brown's sermons and work on your own

ON LINE: Listen to Oliver interview, the poem, and the song. They are not inherently connected, but you are asked to reflect on them and they way the affect how you perceive your own story.

1) Write a 1-page (maximum) reflection on Oliver (taking all the videos into account) and what she provoked about your own story. You should quote Oliver @ least 5 times (to demonstrate that you actually listened to the interview). 2) Post your reflection online under October 20 discussion. 3) Read at least one of your colleague's reflections and offer her/him a response (beyond "that's was good" or "I liked that"). Your response should demonstrate that you actually read the response and offer your colleague insight or questions to pursue.

PREPARE FOR OCTOBER 27: Read Mitchell & Mitchell, 1-85

October 27

IN CLASS: Together for Good, 1-85

ON LINE: Watch the Walker videos and Sarah Kay's poem

Write your own artistic response and post it. No responses are necessary

PREPARE FOR NOVEMBER 3: Read Mitchell & Mitchell, 86-179

November 3

IN CLASS: Discuss Together for Good, 86-179 and the art from the on-line portion of October 27 class.

ON LINE: Listen to Mali's poem. Write a "What Preacher's Make" based on Mali's poem. Post it. Interact with your colleagues to make a group "What Preacher's Make"

poem (or litany or prayer). Watch the "Future of the Church" conversation. Think about what you agree or disagree about what is

PREPARE FOR NOVEMBER 10: Read Mitchell & Mitchell, 180-276

November 10

IN CLASS: Together for Good, 180-276

ON LINE: Lecture will be posted

November 17

IN CLASS: Preaching

ON LINE: Lecture will be posted

November 24: THANKSGIVING BREAK

December 1

IN CLASS: Preaching

ON LINE: Lecture will be posted

December 8

IN CLASS: Last Things

ON LINE: Lecture will be posted

ADA—MTSO seeks to remove barriers to inclusion in its learning communities. Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs at the beginning of the semester. Please contact the Director of Student Services to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Any accommodation must be agreed upon prior to the due date of the affected course requirement.

Class attendance—Regular attendance is expected in all classes. During unavoidable absences, students are responsible for missed work. An excessive number of absences may result in grade reduction or course failure, despite successful completion of all assigned work. In most cases, a student will not be allowed credit for a course if he or she is absent for 25% of the class sessions. As it relates to blended courses, students may not be allowed credit if they are absent for 25% of class meetings or if 25% of online course work is not completed. Use of Skype or similar technology is not a substitute for attendance in class.

Electronic Devices—Turn mobile devices off or “vibrate only” during class. Browsing the Internet or engaging in email or social network conversations during class is discouraged. Instructors have the right to impose grading penalties for disruptions due to electronic devices.

Human Subjects Research—Research by MTSO faculty, students, or affiliated personnel that collects non-public information from and/or about living individuals or contemporary organizations/groups for purposes of publication or public presentation (including class assignments) must be approved by the Human Subjects Research Committee. MTSO faculty,

students, or affiliated personnel should err on the side of caution and apply for committee approval of any activity that may fit this description.

Inclusive Language—In accordance with MTSO’s policy on inclusive language, all students are expected to use gender inclusive or gender neutral language in their writing and in the classroom discussions when referring to human beings.

Incompletes—To receive a course grade of Incomplete, students must submit the petition form from the Registrar with all signatures to the Dean’s Office before the last day of regularly scheduled classes. See Student Handbook for intensive term deadlines. Any petition submitted without a due date for outstanding work will be denied. If work is not complete by the due date the Registrar will record the grade of F for the course.

Pass/Fail—The decision to exercise this option must be made before the end of the second week of the course by completing the appropriate form available through the Registrar. To receive a grade of "pass" the student must do at least the equivalent of C minus work in the course.

Plagiarism—Plagiarism is a serious matter of academic, professional, and personal integrity. All students at the masters’ level are expected to understand the requirement to provide attribution when the work of others is used. Students are also expected to be familiar with and understand the school’s policy on Academic Misconduct found in the Student Handbook. If students have questions about attribution, citation, and how to avoid plagiarism they should consult the course instructor, the school’s writing instructor, or library staff. When in doubt it is better to provide attribution even if one is uncertain about the proper citation form. Plagiarism is a form of academic misconduct that results in disciplinary actions per the Student Handbook that may range from failing an assignment or course to expulsion.

Updated 8/13/14