

Exegesis of Congregations for Effective Preaching

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

Fall 2008

Studio One

Tuesday 3-5:50 p.m.

Instructor: Debra J. Mumford

Office: Schelgel Hall 203

This online syllabus should be used to gain a better understanding of the content and focus of a course. The syllabus given out in the class may differ from this online version and its content supersedes that of the online syllabus.

In any preaching moment, there exist the preacher and the hearers with all of their inherent complexities. The greater the preacher's knowledge of the hearers and their contexts, the more effective can be the preaching moment.

This course highlights the importance of culture for preaching by teaching students to begin sermon preparation process with exegesis of the congregation. Exegesis of the congregation is the process of analyzing the culture of the congregation by understanding congregational rituals, symbols, events, activities, worldviews, values and demographics. This knowledge of the congregation can then be used to more effectively engage biblical exegesis, theology and homiletic strategies. In this course, students will engage homiletic readings from various cultural contexts and perspectives.

Each student is required to present findings from their exegesis and implications for preaching at the end of the course.

Required texts:

1. Tisdale, Leonora Tubbs. *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art*. Fortress Resources for Preaching. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997.
2. Ammerman, Nancy Tatom. *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.
3. Childers, Jana. *Purposes of Preaching*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004.

All other readings will be posted on the Blackboard course site.

Course Objectives:

1. Students will understand the importance of culture for sermon development and delivery
2. Students will understand how to conduct congregational exegesis
3. Students will broaden their understandings of culture to appreciate the range of cultural perspectives that exist in every congregation

Course Requirements:

1. Students are required to attend every class session and actively participate in class discussions. **(12 points)**
2. Each student will submit assignments at the end of the class session in which they are due. Written assignments are due for every class session. Late assignments will be penalized (see "late policy"). **(20 points)**

3. Each student will submit a 7-10 page narrative summary of interviews and direct observations. **Due October 21. (10 points)**
4. Each student will submit a 7-10 page narrative summary of archival materials/rituals/events and activities. **Due November 4. (10 points)**
5. Each student will submit a 20-25 page congregational exegetical paper on a preaching context of her/his choice. See other assignments for further clarification. **Due on Friday, November 21 by 6:00 p.m. (30 points)**
6. Each student will make a 25-30 minute classroom presentation of their findings and implications for preaching. Presentations will be made on **November 25 or December 4. (18 points)**

September 9, 2008

- **Introductions**
- **Review of syllabus and assignments**
- **Defining culture**
- **Assignment:** Read Chapter 1, 2 and 3 of Tisdale, “The Culture Shock of Preaching.”
- ✓ Respond to the following questions. Responses will be collected at the end of class:
 1. Tisdale shares her and her husband’s experiences of working with congregations over the years and the types of culture shock she experienced (pp. 1-10). Which of the experiences resonated with you the most and why?
 2. On page 23, under the rubric, “Preaching Courses and Textbooks,” Tisdale lists three errors that students and pastors tend to commit in preaching. Have you committed one or more of these errors in the past? If so, which? If not, how have you managed to avoid them?
 3. After reading this chapter, do you agree with Tisdale about the need for training of pastors in exegeting the congregation? Why or why not? Have you had preaching experiences that have highlighted the need for congregational exegesis? If so, share them.
 4. List three of the stumbling blocks Tisdale writes about on pp. 34-35 that impedes effective communication on the part of the preacher. Is there one stumbling block with which you relate or understand most? If so, which one? If not, pick one that you feel can affect communication most and explain why you believe that to be so.
 5. List at least one other act of communication that Tisdale does not mention that you feel could be a stumbling block. Why do you think this act to be a stumbling block?
 6. What does Tisdale mean when she writes that preachers are local theologians (pp. 38-40)? Do you agree? Why or why not?
 7. How does exegesis of the congregation relate to biblical exegesis, theology, and homiletics? Though Tisdale writes about the connections on p. 48, please add your own thoughts when responding to this question.

September 16, 2008 – Cultural Analysis and Ethnographic Methodology

Assignment:

Read Ammerman, Nancy Tatom. *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998. 78-104, 196-239

- ✓ **Bring to class a video tape of a worship service and a bulletin.** Answer questions listed under #3 “The Event” on page 200 in narrative format. Be prepared to discuss findings in class. Responses will be collected at the end of class.

September 23, 2008 – Direct Observation

Assignment:

Review Ammerman, 200-201. Write narrative of observations of each of the following categories. Complete demographic survey. Observations and survey will be collected in class. Observations must include each of the following categories:

- Demographics
- Physical Setting
- Rituals/Events
- Interactional Patterns
- Verbal and Written Content

September 30, 2008 – Interviews

Assignment:

Review Ammerman, 203-208

Think about the purpose of your interviews.

- ✓ Then create list of interview questions for each of them. Use questions in Ammerman Appendix A & B as guidelines. Questions will be collected at the end of class. Set up interviews (dates, times, locations).

October 7, 2008 - Architecture and Visual Arts

Assignment:

Read

Wind, James P. *Places of Worship: Exploring Their History* American Association for State and Local History Book Series. Walnut Creek, CA. AltaMira Press, 1997. Pp 58-63.

Buggeln, Gretchen Townsend, "Sacred Spaces: Designing America's Churches." *Christian Century* 121 no 12 Je 15 2004, p 20-23, 25.

Yates, Wilson, "The Creation of a Chapel." *ARTS* 16 no 1 2004, p 4-13.

Joby, Christopher. "Histories and landscapes: two categories of artwork suitable for Reformed churches." *Reformation & Renaissance Review* 7 no 2-3 Ag-D 2005, p 207-222.

- ✓ **Bring photographs** of church edifice (3) and worship space (3) and artwork. Write narrative of insights about the meaning of architecture and visual arts. Insights will be collected in class.

October 14, 2008 – Research and Study Week

October 21, 2008 – Archival Materials/Rituals/Events and Activities

Assignment:

- ✓ Submit Summary of Interviews and Direct Observation in narrative format
- ✓ Bring documentation of events, archival materials and rituals to class. Be prepared to discuss meaning.
Documentation must include:

- Regular church/faith community bulletin (outline of regular worship) – 1
- Special church/faith community bulletin (outline of special worship service such as Christmas or Easter service) -1
- Church budget, newsletter, minutes of meeting, annual report, newspaper articles - 2
- Events and activities such as fellowship breakfasts and lunches, church anniversary – 2

October 28 – Theology/Christology

Assignment:

Read

Cooper, Burton Z., and John S. McClure. *Claiming Theology in the Pulpit*. 1st ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003. 1-72, Appendix A & B.

- ✓ Complete as much of the theological profile as possible (Appendix B). Profiles will be collected in class.

November 4, 2008 – Demographics/Ethnic Identity

Assignment:

- ✓ **Submit summary of Archival Materials/Rituals/Events and Activities in narrative format**

Lecture on Ethnic identity in congregations

Reference:

Huges, Dewi. *Castrating Culture*. Waynesboro, GA: Patermoster Press, 2001. 20-45.

Thomas, Emil, and Henry H. Mitchell. *Preaching for Black Self-Esteem*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994. 15-58.

Ammerman, Appendix B

November 11, 2008 – Implications of Congregational Exegesis for preaching.

Assignment:

Read “The Action Potential of Preaching” by Teresa Fry Brown 49-65

“Seeing Jesus: Preaching as an Incarnational Act,” by Jana Childers 39-47

“Resisting the Powers” by Charles Campbell 23-38

Above articles in

Childers, Jana. *Purposes of Preaching*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004.

- ✓ Write 2-3 pages about how the congregational exegesis you have done so far impacts preaching as it relates to articles above.

November 18, 2008 – Implications of Congregational Exegesis for Preaching

Read “Disrupting a Ruptured World” by Mary Donovan Turner 131-140

“Keeping in Touch with God” by Thomas H. Troeger 113-130

“Hospitality, De-Centering, Re-memembering, and Right Relations” by Christine Smith 91-112

- ✓ Write 2-3 pages about how the congregational exegesis you have done so far impacts preaching as it relates to articles above.

Above articles in

November 25, 2008

Exegetical Paper Presentations

December 4, 2008

Exegetical Paper Presentations

Narrative Format

For our purposes, narratives are descriptions of data collected from congregational exegesis that are presented in paragraph form (not bulleted or in charts). Narratives are not meant to capture every detail of an interview or piece of statistical data (though some raw data may be included). Rather the narrative is meant to make connections between various points of view and themes with the ultimate goal of unveiling the identity of the congregation. For example, the fact that more than half of a congregation is under the age of fifty may provide insight into the prominent role of technology and contemporary music in worship. The amount of money designated to various ministries in the budget can provide tremendous insight into the priorities of the congregation. Refer to Ammerman (pages 235-236) for more detail/guidelines.

Summary of Interviews and Direct Observation in narrative format (10 points)

Narrative of direct observations should include the categories of:

- Demographics
- Physical Setting
- Rituals/Events
- Interactional Patterns
- Verbal and Written Content

Narrative summary of interviews should include:

- Names of persons interviewed
- Role in the congregation/faith community
- Purpose of the interview
- Information gathered
- Insights into congregational life gleaned from interviews

Summary of Archival Materials/Rituals/Events & Activities in narrative format (10 points)

Narrative should have four sections:

History (not directly addressed in readings)

- When was the congregation/faith community founded?
- What role has the congregation played in the life of members? The surrounding community?
- What periods in the congregation's history have shaped the congregations identity?
- Are there world events that have greatly impacted the identity of the congregation?
- Have there been radical changes in the congregation over the years? (such as demographic shifts, geographical relocations, attrition, membership surges)

Archival materials

Rituals

Events/Activities

Final Exegetical Paper (30 points)

The final exegetical paper should include narrative of all the data collected from: Direct observation, interviews, theological profile, archival materials, rituals, events and activities. In addition, the paper should also include a section entitled, "Implications of Congregational Exegesis for Preaching." In this section, the student will provide narrative describing how the identity of the congregation informs the preaching purposes and approaches that will be most effective in the community. More information about implications for preaching will be addressed in class on November 11th and 18th.

Exegetical Paper Presentation (18 points)

Each student will make a 25-30 minute presentation in class. The presentations should communicate the highlights of the data collected and implications for preaching. Students will be graded on four elements of presentation:

- **Creativity** – students are encouraged find imaginative and innovative ways to present their data and implications to the group. Pictures, videos, copies of archival materials can be used to enhance presentations.
- **Structure** – students should carefully consider how information can be effectively conveyed to their hearers. Hearers should come away with clear understanding of the congregation's identity and implications for preaching.
- **Content** – students must select what information to convey that they feel is most important to the formation of the congregation's identity and implications of this information for preaching.
- **Delivery/Engagement** – ability to get and maintain the attention of the hearers.

Grading Scale

End of semester grades will be conferred in accordance with the scale below:

100-97	A	84-81	B-
96-93	A-	80-78	C+
92-89	B+	77-75	C
88-85	B	74-71	C-

Mutual Respect

During class, each person is required to respect her/his classmates and the instructor by arriving to class on time, listening attentively to the thoughts and opinions of others, providing constructive feedback when appropriate, and turning off cell phones before class begins.

Late Policy

All assignments are to be turned in at the end of the class session on the day they are due. Assignments submitted after the class session has ended (even if submitted on the same day) will be considered late. Assignments submitted late will be penalized twenty-five percent (of the total possible points for the assignment) per day. For example, if a student submits her **summary of interviews and direct observation** one day late, the maximum grade she can earn will be 7.5 points rather 10 points when submitted on time. Presentation dates will be selected and negotiated in class. Once a date is set, do not expect to change it. Except in the event of a family/medical emergency or catastrophe, failure to present on the assigned date is subject to a grade of "zero" for the presentation.

Inclusive Language

In accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities.

Plagiarism

It is expected that students will perform all written and oral assignments with complete academic integrity by only submitting papers and preaching/submitting sermons with their own original thoughts and ideas. When using thoughts and idea of others, students are to properly attribute credit in footnotes. Any instances of plagiarism discovered will be reported to the Dean's office. Two reports of plagiarism constitute grounds for dismissal from LPTS.

Bibliography

Ammerman, Nancy Tatom. *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.

Buggeln, Gretchen Townsend, "Sacred Spaces: Designing America's Churches." *Christian Century* 121 no 12 Je 15 2004, p 20-23, 25.

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