Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary—Hamilton
PR917-HA Cultural Exegesis for Preaching
Syllabus: Fall 2014
Tuesday 2:00-5:00pm

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I. Course Description

This course trains students to exegete various types of listeners in today’s culturally-changing church context for the purpose of effective sermon construction and delivery. Students will obtain theoretical and practical methods to begin exploring a number of sub-cultures that exist within congregations and to learn how to preach biblically and culturally-informed sermons to listeners who come from diverse cultural backgrounds and life situations. PR601 is a pre-requisite for the course.

II. Course Relationship to the Curriculum

This course is an elective that advances the principles already learned and applied in PR601. Lectures and class exercises will provide instruction on how students can exegete both biblical texts and cultural contexts. The aim of the course is to help students better understanding the various listeners to whom he/she communicates God’s truth. Students will preach one 25-minute sermon and receive feedback from the professor.

III. Course Objectives

As a result of this course students will be equipped to engage in the study of congregational sub-cultures and to deliver a culturally-relevant sermon derived from the biblical text. In order to accomplish this, the student will: (1) construct a working definition of cultural exegesis for the task of preaching, (2) learn basic methods and skills to exegete various cultures in today’s congregations, (3) watch and listen to sermons in class and discuss what makes an effective culturally-exegeted sermon, (4) give a 25-minute presentation on one specific cultural context of the student’s choosing; (5) write a cultural exegesis paper for a specific cultural context, (6) apply one’s findings
from the cultural exegesis paper and other class exercises into a 25-minute sermon that will be preached and evaluated.

IV. Course Textbooks

Required:


Recommended:


V. Course Requirements and Grading

1. Attend all lectures and exercises. Students are expected to be on time for class. You will be expected to participate in all class discussions and exercises. Your attendance and class participation will factor into 20% of your final grade.

2. Choose one specific cultural context and write a cultural exegesis paper on that group (i.e., 6-8 pages single-spaced; please double-space between paragraphs). This paper will help you understand your context as you prepare a culturally-relevant sermon for this audience at the end of the semester. In preparation for this paper, please interview one pastor and/or church member in this cultural context (i.e., approximately 20 minutes each) and interact with course readings and discussions. In this paper, you should answer the following questions:

   A) What is the specific cultural context you’ve chosen to explore? Why are you interested in this context?
   B) What do you hope to learn about this context (please give specific examples and elaborate)?
   C) What are the cultural values that are most important to members of this context? How do these values support or conflict with biblical values?
   D) Preacher– what are the challenges of preaching to this context? Listener– what challenges exist as you listen to and interpret sermons in this context?
   E) Preacher– how does a preacher prepare to construct a sermon for this audience? Listener– what do you wish preachers did more effectively in preaching to this context?
   F) Preacher– what is unique about delivering sermons for these listeners? Listener– how could preachers more effectively deliver the sermon for this audience?

NOTE: As an elevated course, the cultural exegesis paper is optional for all M.Div. students. If he/she chooses not to submit the cultural exegesis paper, then the presentation and sermon will be weighted at 40% each toward the final grade.

3. Select one cultural context to research and give a 25-minute presentation on that group. The student will decide how best to communicate his/her findings in the presentation. After the presentation, the student will lead the class in a time of Q&A.
4. Preach a 25-minute sermon. The sermon will be delivered with one specific cultural context in mind. The sermon will be evaluated based on Section VIII of the syllabus.

VI. Course Administration

A. Attendance Policy

Attendance is required for every class. If a difficulty arises, please see the instructor. Please make every effort to be at class on time.

B. Due Dates

See the course calendar. Late work will not be accepted.

C. Assistance

Please see me during office hours with any questions and concerns.

VII. Course Calendar (Topics and Due Dates are Subject to Change based on Enrollment)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading/Assignments</th>
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| Sept. 9  | Introduction to each other and the Course Culture and Cultural Exegesis Hermeneutics in Context | Read: Lane, pp. 11-31; 47-116  
            |                                                             | Read: Richards, pp. 9-51                                 |
| Sept. 16 | Exegete Yourself and Your Context                          | Read: Lane, pp. 32-46  
            |                                                             | Read: Richards, pp. 95-217  
            |                                                             | Read: Nieman, preface-pp. 21;  
<pre><code>        |                                                             | and pp. 139-157.                                                   |
</code></pre>
<p>| Sept. 23 | Gender                                                     | Read: Jeter, pp. 79-102                                   |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 30</td>
<td>Locations and Socio-Economic Conditions</td>
<td>Read: Jeter, pp. 129-148 Nieman, pp. 55-72; 84-111</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 7</td>
<td>Life Stages and Generations</td>
<td>Read: Jeter, pp. 21-48 Due: Cultural Exegesis Paper by 2pm (paper copy).</td>
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<td>Oct. 14</td>
<td>Reading Week – No Class</td>
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<td>Oct. 21</td>
<td>Student Presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 28</td>
<td>Student Presentations</td>
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<td>Nov. 4</td>
<td>World Religions and Protestant Traditions (time permitting)</td>
<td>Read: Nieman, pp. 112-138</td>
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<td>Nov. 11</td>
<td>Reading Week – No Class</td>
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<td>Nov. 18</td>
<td>Race and Ethnicity</td>
<td>Read: Jeter, pp. 103-128 Read: Lane, pp. 117-173 Read: Richards, pp. 52-90 Read: Nieman, pp. 22-54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 25</td>
<td>Student Sermons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec. 2</td>
<td>Student Sermons</td>
<td>Due: Page 8 of the syllabus (paper copy)</td>
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VIII. Your sermon/presentation will be evaluated based on the following:

NOTE: There will be a 30-second grace period. After those 30 seconds, there will be a 1/3 letter grade penalty for every 30 seconds over the time limit.

A. Content

1. Is the sermon/presentation clear? Is it well organized? Does it flow easily? Does the audience understand you?
2. Does the sermon/presentation have effective content? Is it based on sound biblical and cultural exegesis?
3. Does it have good supporting material and relevant illustrations for your specific cultural context? Does it have strong application?

B. Delivery

1. Does your delivery sound as though you really want to communicate? Does your voice have variety? Are you enthusiastic?
2. Does your body support what you are saying? Do you have eye contact that is direct and personal? Do you use gestures?
3. Do you want to be heard? Do you demonstrate conviction and sincerity?
4. Does your delivery fit the specific cultural context to which you’re preaching?

IX. Grading

The percentage categories on the back sheet of the syllabus equal 100. As for all written assignments, I am looking for good use of grammar, interaction with the material, spelling, etc. The Student Handbook spells out the rigorous call for excellence in all grading assignments, which will be followed in the course. See below.

The Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary Student Handbook states:

Grade A is given for meeting with conspicuous excellence the demands which can fairly be made in relation to the requirements of the course. These demands would normally include unusual accuracy in fact, completeness in detail, perfection in form of work, independence of method, grasp of the subject as a whole and constructive imagination.

Grade B is given for exceeding the minimum satisfactory attainment and for meeting certain aspects of the course with excellence.
Grade C is given for attaining satisfactory familiarity with the course and for demonstrating at least some ability to use this knowledge in a satisfactory manner.

Grade D is a passing mark but indicates unsatisfactory control over the material.

Grade F declares that the course has been failed.

X. Questions to Consider for Sermon Discussion

1. What is the main idea or concept the preacher was trying to get across? State it in one sentence.
2. How did the introduction raise a need or capture interest?
3. Did he/she illustrate? If so, what did he/she do? — to explain, prove or apply? Please provide specific examples of how the preacher explained, proved, or applied the text.
4. Do you think the conclusion drove home the main idea of the sermon in a way that caused you to want to respond?
5. How did the preacher take his/her specific cultural context into consideration in the sermon? Give specific examples from his/her sermon construction and delivery.
6. Do you think the delivery helped or hindered the presentation? What were its strengths? What about weaknesses?
7. Do you think that the sermon grew out of the biblical text? Or was it imposed on it?
How many class sessions did you attend? _______________ (check if) all,

or

_______________ (give number).

Attendance and Participation _______________ (grade). 20%

Paper _______________ (grade). 20%

Presentation _______________ (grade). 20/40%

Sermon _______________ (grade). 40%

Course Grade _______________