Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary – Hamilton  
*The Preaching of Martin Luther King, Jr. – PR 730*  

Syllabus – Spring 2009

Conley Hughes, Jr., Instructor  
Wednesdays - 1:15p.m. – 4:15 p.m.  
January 23-April 24, 2009

I. Course Description

This course will help students gain insights into the Biblical-narrative preaching approach of Martin Luther King, Jr. Students will learn how to identify the balance between the theological foundation of the sermon and its implication for social and moral application.

II. Course Objectives

The course will help students understand the efficacy and impact of King’s preaching for the Christian faith, and for redemption of the social order.

III. Goals

This course has several pertinent goals:

1. To help students identify the nature, structure, composition and a motif of King’s preaching; to discern its roots within both the African American and broader evangelical cultures;

2. To familiarize students with the philosophical principles and the Biblical-Theological content within the structure of King’s sermons;

3. To acquaint students with both the exegetical and hermeneutical approach of King in the preparation and presentation of his preaching;

4. To understand the relevancy of narrative preaching during King’s era; to examine the implications and challenges of this mode of preaching for communicating the Biblical-Gospel message in the 21st Century;

5. To understanding the importance of prayer as a core spiritual discipline for King in addressing the moral and social issues of his era through preaching; and,

6. To observe and listen to Dr. King’s preaching and public orations to gain a perspective of his preaching milieu.
IV. Course Textbooks

Required:

Coretta Scott King *My Life with Martin Luther King, Jr.* (1969)
Scott Gibson, ed., *Preaching to a Shifting Culture: 12 Perspectives on Communicating that Connects* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004)

Recommended (For class discussion as assigned):

Samuel D. Proctor and Gardner Taylor with Gary V. Simpson *We Have This Ministry: The Heart of the Pastor’s Vocation* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1996)
Howard Thurman *Jesus and the Disinherited* (1948)
Mervyn A. Warren, *King Came Preaching: The Pulpit Power of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

V. General Course Requirements

1. Attendance is required. All assignments should be submitted on schedule.
2. Class participation and discussion are required.
3. Attendance at media (audio, DVD etc.) presentations is required.
4. 500-700 word summaries of reading materials must be typed legibly with appropriate references to the text.

VI. Assignments

A. Reading Summaries

Each student will be required to submit a 500-700 word summary of assigned reading materials. The papers will reflect the particular insights each student has gained in examining the salient aspects of Dr. King’s preaching (Biblical,
theological, exegetical, and hermeneutical) and the implications for the preaching task.

B. Short Paper

Each student will prepare a 5 page paper that will examine Dr. King’s Christian faith journey as discerned through his biography and will focus on some of the seminal influences that shaped his preaching. (Students will have the option of referring to one of several biographies on Dr. King).

C. Oral Text Presentation

Each student will select a scriptural text that has relevancy to post-modern social and moral issues. The text will be developed in a 1 page outline format, and will be presented orally to the class. Each presentation will be no more than 5 minutes. The outline will be presented to the instructor at least a week before the presentation.

D. Final Paper

Each student will submit a well written10-12 paper on some aspect of Dr. King’s preaching; it’s influence on Americans and a global culture. The paper also should critique King’s method of preaching and examine both its limitations and contributions to the 21st century. The paper should be the student’s original perspective on the topic, using appropriate references. This paper will serve as a final exam for the class.

VI. Course Administration

A. Attendance Policy – attendance is required for all classes.

B. Due Dates – Refer to calendar in seminary bulletin; the instructor’s dates will correspond to the official record.

C. Assistance – I am available to meet with you if you have questions beyond the class time.

VII. Grading

Grading protocol will be consistent with the standards of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Grading composition for this class is as follows:

A. Reading Summaries 15%
B. Short Paper 25%
C. Class Participation 10%
D. Oral text Presentation 10%
E. Final Paper 40%

100%
The Course Calendar will be made available prior to the commencement of the class.