

**Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary – Hamilton Campus  
Preaching Difficult Texts, Topics, and Times – PR 744**

**Dr. Bryan Wilkerson**

**July 22-26, 2019**

**Monday, Tuesday, Thursday @ 8:30am – 4:30pm**

**Wednesday @ 8:30am – 4:00pm; 7:00-9:00pm**

**Friday @ 8:30am – 12:30pm**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course gives students exposure to and practice in the interpretation and exposition of biblical texts, controversial topics, and painful life situations that are especially challenging to both preachers and listeners. Students will understand and demonstrate ways they can homiletically address these themes with biblical integrity, cultural resonance, pastoral presence, and redemptive impact.

This course assumes a foundational understanding of homiletical theory and practice, and will focus on applying those foundational principles to these more challenging situations and themes.

Class sessions will include lecture and discussion drawing on the professor's content, reading assignments, and the students' experiences. There will also be opportunity to work in small groups on particular texts/topics/times, and to practice preaching in a workshop format.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

By the completion of the course, students will:

1. Strengthen their overall proficiency in studying and interpreting difficult texts and themes in a sound manner that promotes clear, relevant, and transformative preaching.
2. Expand their exegetical skills by researching a particular difficult text or topic, and crafting a sermon addressing that text or topic.
3. Sharpen their preaching skills by presenting in class a 9-minute message or portion of a message addressing a difficult text, topic, or time. (Students may work with a previously preached message.)
4. Broaden their understanding of the various approaches to preaching available to the pastor, including the professor's concept of Visionary Preaching, and their application of these approaches to difficult texts, topics, and times.
5. Gain confidence in speaking pastorally and redemptively into the challenging times and life-situations in which people find themselves today.

## **REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS**

Chapell, Bryan. *The Hardest Sermons You'll Ever Have to Preach: Help from Trusted Preachers for Tragic Times*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011

Lamb, David T. *God Behaving Badly: Is the God of the Old Testament Angry, Sexist, and Racist?* Downers Grove: IVP, 2011

Webb, William J. *Slaves, Women, and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2001

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

### **Pre-Classroom Work**

Students will read all of Webb and Lamb, and write a 1-2 page (single-spaced) reflection paper on *each* book, including a one-paragraph summary of the author's big idea; three bulleted insights or concepts you found most helpful, and a question or criticism you might offer.

Students will read the Introduction and at least 3 self-selected chapters from Chapell, and write a 1-2 page (single-spaced) reflection paper interacting with the content and approach of one of the selected sermons.

Students will submit 3-5 pages of exegetical notes, interpretive insights, and homiletical ideas on a difficult text selected from the list below. (This can be a working document, not a polished paper. Please let the professor know your selected text in advance. (You can email him at [bryan@grace.org](mailto:bryan@grace.org)) single-spaced

Students will read or review Robinson and have a working knowledge of the Big Idea method and the ten stages of expository preaching.

### **In-Classroom Work**

Students will participate in class discussions and small group assignments.

Students will present in class a 3-5 minute sermon **introduction** to a difficult text, topic, or time of their choosing. This could be the introduction to your final sermon project.

### **Post-Classroom Work**

Students will write a complete sermon manuscript (5-7 pages single-spaced) on any of the texts or topics from the list below, or text or topic approved by the professor. Students may work with the text or topic previously selected for the pre-work exegetical notes.

Upload your work to CANVAS and email a copy to Professor Wilkerson at [bryan@grace.org](mailto:bryan@grace.org)

### Suggested Difficult Texts

|                   |                               |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| Genesis 3:1-24    | The Fall of Adam and Eve      |
| 1 Samuel 15:1-35  | The Lord Rejects Saul as King |
| Job 1:1-22        | Job's Affliction              |
| Amos 9:1-10       | Israel's Judgment             |
| <br>              |                               |
| Luke 16:19-31     | The Rich Man and Lazarus      |
| Romans 1:18-32    | God's Wrath Against Humankind |
| 1 Timothy 2:8-15  | Women and Teaching            |
| Hebrews 5:11-6:12 | Warning Against Falling Away  |

Students are free to choose other texts, with approval from the professor. The selected passage will most likely serve as the text for the final project, but not necessarily. Please inform the professor of your selection in advance.

### STUDENT EVALUATION

| <b>Pre-Class Assignments 30% total</b>  | Percentage of Report Card Grade |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Two-page reflection on Webb             | 5%                              |
| Two page reflection on Lamb             | 5%                              |
| One page paper on Chapell               | 5%                              |
| Exegetical paper                        | 15%                             |
|   |                                 |
| <b>In-Class Assignments 40% total</b>   |                                 |
| Participation                           | 20%                             |
| Presentation                            | 20%                             |
|   |                                 |
| <b>Post-Class Assignments 30% total</b> |                                 |
| Sermon manuscript                       | 30%                             |
|   |                                 |

### COURSE SCHEDULE

| <b>Date</b>   | <b>Topic, activities</b>   | <b>Work Due</b>   |
|---------------|--|---|
| July 22<br>AM | Course intro<br>5 Modes of Preaching   | Two-page reading reports (2)<br>Exegesis notes on difficult passage |
| July 22<br>PM | The Perils, Possibilities, and Principles of Preaching Difficult Texts, Topics, and Times      |   |
| July 23<br>AM | Exegeting a Difficult Text:<br>Lecture and Case Study  |   |
| July 23<br>PM | Exegeting a Difficult Topic<br>How, and, Why, to Preach a Topical Sermon<br>Money<br>Sexuality |   |
| July 24       | A Case for Visionary Preaching:  |   |

|               |   |                                 |
|---------------|---|---------------------------------|
| AM            | What, Why, and How?   |                                 |
| July 24<br>PM | Exegeting Difficult Topics (continued)<br>Politics<br>Social Justice<br><br>The Preaching Life, with Bryan & Karen,<br>Retreat House, 7-9PM |                                 |
| July 25<br>AM | Tour Grace Chapel Lexington<br>Exegeting Difficult Times  | 3-5 minute sermon introductions |
| July 25<br>PM | Planning a Strategic Preaching Calendar   | 3-5 minute sermon introductions |
| July 26<br>AM | Preaching through the Preacher's Difficult<br>Times   |                                 |
|               |   |                                 |
|               |   |                                 |
|               |   |                                 |