

Communication I Syllabus
Reformed Theological Seminary
Spring, 2015

Instructor: Dr. Bruce H. McRae

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My Background...

- An ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church in America since 1986
- Educational Background
 - BA from Washington University in St. Louis
 - M Div from Westminster Theological Seminary
 - D Min from Fuller Theological Seminary, Los Angeles, California
 - MBA from Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA
- Ministry History
 - 1986-1988 -- Assistant Pastor, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, Doraville, GA
 - 1988-1994 -- Senior Pastor, Cornerstone Community Church (PCA), Los Angeles, CA
 - 1994-200 – Senior Pastor, Brookwood Presbyterian Church, Snellville, GA
 - 2000-2002 – Associate Director and Professor of Practical Theology, Atlanta Seminary for Ministry and Theology, Atlanta, GA
 - 2002-2003 – Executive Pastor, North Park Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, PA
 - 2003-2007 – Executive Pastor, PCA Church of the Redeemer, Atlanta, GA
 - 2005-2007 – Marketing Manager, UPS, Atlanta, GA
 - 2008-2013 – Director of Church Relations, Great Commission Publications
 - 2003 and current – Teacher of practical theology, Reformed Theological Seminary, Atlanta, GA
 - 2008 and current – Adjunct Professor of Practical Theology, Covenant Theological Seminary
 - 2013 and current – Development Officer for Ministerial Relief, PCA Retirement & Benefits, Inc.

Course Purpose

The purpose of this course is to teach students how to effectively prepare to communicate the word of God through both teaching and preaching. We will focus particularly on preparing sermons, but the course is not limited to “sermon preparation” in the narrow sense. Rather, we will look at the essential principles for preparing messages that are intended to effectively and practically proclaim and teach the gospel of Christ and the Word of God – in whatever context the message is given. The principles we discuss will apply to any kind of public presentation of the Word of God that you will be called upon to give.

Course Objectives

At the conclusion of this course, I would like each student to...

1. Understand preaching and teaching in the context of ministry – particularly how effective preaching and teaching can only flow out of a person who is living out the gospel
2. Understand the place and importance of expository preaching in the church
3. Be able to preach and teach in way that is purpose-driven – that is, be able to explain and apply the main idea and purpose of a biblical text in a way that will help bring about the change that God desires to see in peoples’ lives
4. Be able to go through the whole process of sermon/message preparation from the initial stages through the actual delivery of the message
5. Preach and teach in a way that takes sin seriously, and is Christ-centered in its focus

Course Textbooks

There are two textbooks for this course.

Preaching with Purpose, by Jay Adams

A very helpful short book, with great emphasis on the importance of preaching that is driven by the purpose of seeing life-change in your hearers.

Biblical Preaching, by Haddon Robinson

A book by a master preacher describing the entire process of preparing sermons from picking to the text to determining the conclusion

Course Articles (downloadable off the course website)

The Book of James in parallel translations

“The Fair to Middling Preacher” by Mark J. Galli

“Application” by John F. Bettler.

“Confessions of a Reformed Bore” by Philip Campbell

“The Call to Study” and “Preparing Sermons” by John Stott

“Sermon Structure and Flow” by Glenn Knecht

“The Oral Manuscript” by Clyde Fant

Course Outline

Good preaching, as everything else in life, is characterized by simplicity. There are a few simple principles to which you will come back again and again. I will be discussing and illustrating these basic principles. Here is the course outline:

- I. Preparing Yourself for Preaching and Teaching
- II. The Place of Preaching and Teaching in Ministry
- III. Purpose-Centered Preaching and Teaching
- IV. The Process of Preparing Messages
 1. Select the Passage
 2. Study the Passage
 3. Find the Big Idea and the Purpose
 4. Outline the Passage Around the Purpose and the Big Idea
 5. Pray through the passage
 6. Study the World into which the Passage is Spoken
 7. Illustrate the passage
 8. Apply the passage
 9. Introduce the sermon
 10. Conclude the sermon
- V. The Priority of Christ in Preaching and Teaching
- VI. The Delivery of Messages

Course Schedule of Topics and Reading/Written Assignments

Class Date	Topic	Reading Assignment Due	Written Assignment Due
Jan 30	The Place of Preaching		
Jan 31	Preparing Yourself for Preaching Preaching with Purpose		
Feb 20	The Process of Sermon Preparation	Galli, "The Fair to Middling Preacher"	
Feb 21	The Process of Sermon Preparation	Adams, Chapters 1-11 Robinson, Chapters 1-5 Stott, "A Call to Study" and "Preparing Sermons" Knecht, "Sermon Structure and Flow"	
Mar 13	The Process of Sermon Preparation	Bettler, "Application" Campbell, "Confessions of a Reformed Bore"	
Mar 14	Christ-Centered Preaching	Adams, Chapters 12-22 Robinson, Chapters 6-10 Fant, "The Oral Manuscript"	Three sermon reviews due via email
Mar 21			Book Reviews Due via email
Mar 28			Final Written Sermon Due, with Outline, via email

Course Assignments and Grade Structure

Points	Percentage	Assignment
150	30%	Evaluations of Three sermons you have listened to
100	20%	Book Reviews
250	50%	Your final written sermon manuscript and summary outline
500	100%	Total

RTS Grading Scale

A 97-100

A- 94-96

B+ 91-93

B 88-90

B- 86-87

C+ 83-85

C 80-82

C- 78-79

D+ 75-77

D 72-74

D- 70-71

Below 70 is an F

Assignment Descriptions

Sermon Reviews

Listen to three sermons, either of a well-known preacher or not so well known. Write up a no more than one page evaluation of the sermon. How effective was the presentation? How was the content? Was it biblical or not? Was the purpose of the sermon clear? What is Christ-centered? Evaluate the sermon based on concepts discussed in the course, and be very honest in critiquing the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the sermon. At this point, it is up to you to choose the three sermons you will listen to. However, I may decide to assign one or more sermons for you to listen to. If I do, you will know what sermons they are by the first day of class.

Book Reviews

On the course website there is a sheet called “Book and Article Critique Format.” There are two books which are listed on the schedule on this course syllabus. For each of these books and articles, I would like you to use this format to write down your reflections on your reading. Note that on the “Book and Article Critique Format,” you are told exactly what you need to do, and on the second page there is an example of this process used on a book called Leading Across Cultures (a book which is NOT assigned for this course!). Keep your critique to ONE PAGE. So, when this assignment is due, you will be emailing me TWO pages of book reflection and critique. And please note: DO NOT SEND ME TWO SEPARATE DOCUMENTS. Also note that this is an assignment that is best done while you read the book throughout the semester. Don’t procrastinate and find yourself quickly writing all the critiques the night before the assignment is due!

Written Sermon

The final assignment is one written sermon manuscript to be turned in at the conclusion of the course. It must be written out as a manuscript, but I would also like you to turn in a summary outline of your sermon. In other words, if you were going to preach your sermon just from an outline and not from a manuscript, turn in on one or two pages what the outline of your sermon would look like. I will be assigning you the sermon text on the first day of class from the book of James. Make sure that you seek to incorporate all of the principles discussed in the course – purpose, biblically focused, use of illustrations, practical, and Christ-centered. Your final sermon manuscript should be no longer than 10 pages double-spaced.

Other Highly Recommended Books on Preaching

Christ-Centered Preaching by Bryan Chapell. *Absolutely the best and most important book on preaching there is. A modern classic that should be the staple of any first year preaching course. We did not use it in this course because I am assuming that you have already used this for another preaching course at RTS. If you have NOT, get it and read it!*

Using Illustrations to Preach with Power, by Bryan Chapell. *Since illustrations are such a critical part of preaching and communication, it is wise to study them further. This is an excellent book further exploring how to use illustrations in preaching.*

Preaching by Fred Craddock. *Craddock comes out of a more liberal theological tradition, and he is a primary proponent of the narrative school of preaching. He is a master communicator, and his book contains great insight about connecting with people.*

The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text, by Sydney Greidanus *A fairly academic treatment of biblical preaching, but it synthesizes a great deal of material from other books. It also gives helpful information about how to approach the different kinds of biblical genre from a preaching point of view.*

Inductive Preaching, by Ralph L. Lewis with Gregg Lewis

A very good “one-point” book on the topic of inductive preaching – that is, preaching to help people listen. The basic point is that preaching is most effective when you start with where people actually are, and then work them back into the biblical text.

Preaching and Preachers, by Martin Lloyd-Jones. *A classic from a great preacher on his view of the essence of preaching.*

The Preacher and Preaching, edited by Samuel T. Logan (Puritan and Reformed).

A collection of 17 articles on preaching, all from a Reformed perspective, ranging from the theology of preaching to the practical preparation of sermons. Since it is a collection of articles by 17 different authors, it is a veritable goldmine of insight on preaching.

12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching by Wayne McDill

Another great textbook on the basic methods and skills of preaching, which covers similar ground to Bryan Chapell’s and Haddon Robinson’s books on preaching.

A Primer for Preachers and Preaching: A Kind of Folly by Ian Pitt-Watson. *Two short but insightful books on preaching by an excellent English preacher.*

The Four Pages of the Sermon: A Guide to Biblical Preaching by Paul Scott

A book out of the mainline, narrative school of preaching, but with a helpful paradigm: that a sermon should have one focus with four “pages” – trouble in the Bible, trouble in the world, grace in the Bible, and grace in the world.

Between Two Worlds, by John Stott

Stott covers the whole gamut of preaching, from the challenge of preaching to the theology of preaching to the study for preaching to the preparation of sermons – as always, synthesizing vast amounts of information and summarizing it clearly and concisely.

Extension Policy

All assignments and exams are to be completed by the deadlines announced in this syllabus or in class.

Extensions for assignments and exams due within the normal duration of the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. Extensions of two weeks or less beyond the date of the last deadline for the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. A grade penalty may be assessed.

Extensions of greater than two weeks but not more than six weeks beyond the last deadline for the course may be granted in extenuating circumstances (i.e. illness, family emergency). For an extension of more than two weeks the student must request an Extension Request Form from the Student Services Office. The request must be approved by the Professor and the Academic Dean. A grade penalty may be assessed. (RTS Catalog p. 42 and RTS Atlanta Student Handbook p. 14)

Any incompletes not cleared six weeks after the last published due date for course work will be converted to a failing grade. Professors may have the failing grade changed to a passing grade by request. (RTS Catalog p. 42)

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course:
 Professor:
 Campus:
 Date:

<u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u>		<u>Rubric</u>	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
<p><i>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.</i></p> <p><i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None 	
Articulation (oral & written)	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.	Strong	Students must, as part of their assignments, do clearly written presentations on proclaiming the Word of God
Scripture	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	Strong	The class will show the importance of knowing the original meaning of Scripture, in order to properly apply and interpret these Scriptures to a modern audience in a way relevant to their lives and to culture
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	The course will give a Reformed theology of the proclamation of the Word of God: that it does not depend on human wisdom, etc.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Strong	One of the major course themes is that preaching has no authenticity without a holy life
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Strong	The very purpose of preaching is to conform one's life to the Word of God in every way
Winsomely Reformed	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	Strong	Preaching must be winsomely Reformed, Reformed by applicable to and understandable by people who might not be reformed
Preach	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Strong	This is EXACTLY one of the main points of the course, the clarity and passion of preaching
Worship	Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.	Minimal	There is not much emphasis on worship per se in this course
Shepherd	Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide.	Moderate	Emphasis on the fact that effective preaching can only come out of shepherding the lives of people
Church/World	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Minimal	The course on Christian Ed does not significantly deal with these issues