

**Reformed Theological Seminary  
Advanced Expository Preaching**

**Syllabus**

**I. Course information**

Dates                   September 6, 20  
                              October 4  
                              November 1, 15, 29

Time                    Tuesday, 2pm-4pm

Instructor             Dr Chad B. Van Dixhoorn

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                              Vienna VA 22180

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Email:                 cbv20@cam.ac.uk

Office hours           I am happy to meet with students. Please email for an appointment time.

Dinner: Each term my wife, Emily, hosts a class dinner. If it works with your schedules, we may be able to set a date where we have class and dinner at our home (spouses and fiancés are welcome).

**II. Course overview**

**A. Aims**

This course intends to help students and preachers to create Christ-centered sermons which are firmly rooted in the Scriptures. Its secondary goal is to make sermons both clear and engaging for listeners.

**B. Format**

The majority of class hours will be spent in guided discussion. This is a practical course which addresses the content rather than the delivery of sermons. We will focus on writing sermons and sermon outlines, and studying and critiquing sermons – including sermons written by students. The instructor will descend into the details of word-choices, sentence and paragraph structures, and sermon flow. For that reason, students must be willing to submit their work for class discussion and positive critique. It is my belief that a willingness to see one's work critiqued is a valuable skill to be learned as soon as possible, and to be promoted as much as possible among one's elders and peers. To that end, this class will seek to model an encouraging environment of robust discussion – and we will pray that God will help us all to live humbly before him, and to speak the truth (or our opinions!) with grace and in love.

In these twelve class hours we will talk about how sermons can address textual problems, translation challenges, or interpretational options. We will think together about ways of summarizing a context, structuring a sermon, preaching Christ in different genres, and the merits of preaching Christ in the

textual and the theological traditions. We will also look at the challenges and advantages of preaching long and short passages, ‘unpreachable’ passages, and the use of exegetical sermons for special occasions.

### III. Initial pre-class assignment

*Prior to the first class*, students are asked to (1) divide Paul’s letter to Titus into preaching pericopes (or literary chunks); (2) create a one-page outline of a sermon on Titus 1:5-9; (3) bring this division and this outline to the first class.

### IV. Reading

#### A. Primary

Students will read commentaries as part of their class assignments.

#### B. Secondary

C. B. Van Dixhoorn, ‘Preaching Christ in post-Reformation Britain’, in *The hope fulfilled: Essays in honor of O. Palmer Robertson*. Ed. R. L. Penny (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2008), pp. 361-389 (By way of apology, I do not normally assign my own material to be read in class. But I attempt to make a point here that has not, to my knowledge, been addressed elsewhere. You need not purchase the *festschrift* – I will distribute the chapter by PDF).

### V. Assessment and grading

#### A. Assignments

Students will write one sermon and provide five sermon outlines for this course. These assignments will comprise 100% of the course grade.

#### B. RTS Grading Scale

The seminary uses the following grading system:

|           |            |                            |
|-----------|------------|----------------------------|
| <b>A</b>  | (97-100)   | <b>4.00 quality points</b> |
| <b>A-</b> | (94-96)    | <b>3.66</b>                |
| <b>B+</b> | (91-93)    | <b>3.33</b>                |
| <b>B</b>  | (88-90)    | <b>3.00</b>                |
| <b>B-</b> | (86-87)    | <b>2.66</b>                |
| <b>C+</b> | (83-85)    | <b>2.33</b>                |
| <b>C</b>  | (80-82)    | <b>2.00</b>                |
| <b>C-</b> | (78-79)    | <b>1.66</b>                |
| <b>D+</b> | (75-77)    | <b>1.33</b>                |
| <b>D</b>  | (72-74)    | <b>1.00</b>                |
| <b>D-</b> | (70-71)    | <b>0.66</b>                |
| <b>F</b>  | (below 70) | <b>0.00</b>                |

|             |                                 |             |
|-------------|---------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>I</b>    | (incomplete)                    | <b>0.00</b> |
| <b>W,WP</b> | (withdraw,<br>withdraw passing) | <b>0.00</b> |
| <b>S</b>    | (satisfactory)                  | <b>0.00</b> |

The grade "I" indicates that the work required for the course was not completed. It is given only when special, extenuating circumstances (such as illness) prevent the student from completing the work or taking the examination. A written request for an extension must be submitted prior to the due date of the work concerned. If the request is granted, it remains the responsibility of the student to complete all work for the course as soon as possible. In any case, an "I" grade must be removed within the extension time granted; otherwise it will be changed to "F."

### **VI. Class advice**

1. I recognize that many of you work long days and experience challenging commutes. Please leave sufficient time to battle adverse traffic so that you can arrive on time.
2. Please come to each class prepared, with readings and reading reports completed. From the first class, I will call on students to discuss assigned material. It is a courtesy to teacher and fellow students alike if your class contributions are informed by prior study. There are no reading reports due for the first class.
3. Take notes of these discussions. These exchanges are a vehicle for learning and you will be expected to retain the material that we discuss.
4. Please ask questions in class. When necessary, I will establish the boundaries and let you know when I need to press on in delivering information and when we should to stop to enjoy a discussion. But in this course the majority of class time is dedicated to discussion and I would be disappointed if we did not pack it with useful comments and queries.
5. Give some thought to your questions. There is no question too simple to ask (although there are many that are too difficult to answer). But please do not stop the class to regale it with stories, ride hobby-horses, play teacher to your fellow students, or ask to have a word spelled.
6. Please turn off your cell phones. Checking your mobile phone in a class discussion or lecture is as thoughtless as checking it while holding a conversation with another person.
7. Please refrain from online chatting, and the use of email in class.
8. You may quietly snack and drink and stretch in class, or pace about the back of the room if it helps you stay alert.