DRAFT Syllabus

Reformed Theological Seminary
PT522 Communications II
Syllabus

Dates: February 3 – May 5, 2015
Reading Week: March 16-20, 2015
Time: Tuesdays, 2:30pm-4:30pm
Credit hours: 2
Instructor: Dr Chad Van Dixhoorn
Contact address: 1651 Old Meadow Rd, Suite 300
McLean VA 22102
Phone: 703.448.3393
Email: cvandixhoorn@rts.edu
Office hours: Tuesday and Wednesday, 10:00am-12:00pm, or by appointment

I. Academic Catalog Information

Course Description: A continuation of Communication I. This course continues to develop the skills required for interpreting and communicating the Bible. Special emphasis is given to sermon composition, including its constituent parts, as well as to the different ecclesial contexts of sermon delivery (e.g., weddings, funerals).

Prerequisite: PT510 (Communications I) is a prerequisite to PT522 (Communications II). It “introduces the theological framework and basic skills required for interpreting and communicating the Bible within the context of the church’s ministry (both formal and informal). Dr David Silvernail teaches this course at RTS DC.

Timing: Communications II is designed to be taken in a student’s senior year, with the assumption that both Hebrew and Greek have been mastered. Students hoping to receive maximum benefit from Communications II should complete the majority of their biblical and systematic courses prior to this class.

Preaching Laboratory II: Comm. II is usually taken in conjunction with PT524 (Preaching Lab II). The catalog description for PT524 states that “Students will preach multiple sermons. Women and other non-ministerial candidates will substitute additional elective course hours for all Preaching Labs.” Although these two courses are usually packaged together, I welcome all students to take PT522 (Comm. II) for credit, whether or not they are able or interested in taking PT524 (Preaching Lab II). I should also mention that the RTS DC registrar will assist non-ministerial candidates in finding an alternative course or independent study suited to replace PT524.
II. Course overview

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.

Format: The majority of class hours will be spent in lecture and in guided discussion. This is a practical course which addresses the content of sermons only. We will focus on writing (and critiquing) outlines, and reading (and critiquing) printed or audio sermons.

Unusually, the first 30 minutes of every class will begin with worship – our class begins at the same time as the chapel service: 12:30pm. Students are expected to arrive a few minutes early so as to respect the speaker and the seminary’s schedule, and to submit their papers. We’ll then sing, pray, and hear a minister preach (12:30-1:00pm), and interview the preacher (1:05-1:15pm). Class will then take a five minute break, and we will ‘re-resume’ at 1:20pm.

To participate in this course, 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 twenty-six class hours we will talk about how sermons can address textual problems, translation challenges, and 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 sermons for special occasions.

III. Initial pre-class assignment

Prior to the first class, students are asked to read the Acts of the Apostles, and consider the main point of each surviving sermon summary found recorded in the book.

IV. Reading

A. Primary

Students will read biblical passages, biblical commentaries, and sermons as part of their class assignments.

B. Secondary (619 pp total)


Sinclair Ferguson,  PDF

Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (2000), all. (256 pp)

Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (1972 or after), chs 5-6, 9-11, 15 (116 pp)


Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Lectures to my Students (any edition) chs 1, 3, 9, 22, 24 (71 pp)

V. Assignments

**Digests:** Students will complete a dozen reading digests, three of them long, and nine short. The digests will summarize, in good prose, the main points made by the assigned author(s). These digests will let me know if you have understood the material. They will also serve you later in your ministry as reading notes for books to which you may find yourself referring. The pagination on the assignment chart (e.g., “Digest in 1 page”) indicates the minimum number of pages for each digest; students may write longer digests if they wish. All digests should be double-spaced in 12 pt. Times New Roman. Please number your pages, and staple them. They will be due at the beginning of class.

**Outlines:** Students will produce nine sermon outlines, each on a different part of Scripture. All outlines should be double-spaced in 12 pt. Times New Roman, and 1-5 pages in length, and will be shared with the class. Please name and number your pages and do NOT staple them. They will be due at the beginning of class.

**Optional exam:** Students may sit a final exam, covering material discussed in the readings, lectures, and discussions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Comm. 2 Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Comm. 2 Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Proclaiming God’s Word</td>
<td>All “sermons” in Acts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The preacher and his audience</td>
<td>Piper; Lloyd-Jones 6, 9, 10, 15; Spurgeon 1, 3, 22</td>
<td>Digest in 5 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Preaching the text – clearly!</td>
<td>Spurgeon 9, 24; Lloyd-Jones, 5, 11; Greidanus 3-5, 7</td>
<td>Digest in 7-10 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Preaching Christ</td>
<td>Ferguson; Clowney; Goldsworthy 1-9</td>
<td>Digest in 7-10 pages, Outline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Preaching OT History</td>
<td>Goldsworthy 10</td>
<td>Digest in 1 page; Outline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Preaching OT Law</td>
<td>Goldsworthy 11</td>
<td>Digest in 1 page; Outline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Preaching OT Poets</td>
<td>Goldsworthy 14</td>
<td>Digest in 1 page; Outline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Preaching OT Wisdom</td>
<td>Goldsworthy 13</td>
<td>Digest in 1 page</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Preaching OT Exilic books**
Goldsworthy 12
Digest in 1 page; Outline

**Preaching OT Apocalyptic**
Goldsworthy 15
Digest in 1 page; Outline

**Preaching Gospels**
Goldsworthy 16
Digest in 1 page; Outline

**Preaching Acts**
Goldsworthy 17
Digest in 1 page; Outline

**Preaching Epistles**
Goldsworthy 18
Digest in 1 page; Outline

Exam
All readings and lectures

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**VI. Assessment and grading**

**Assessment:** Digests will account for 50% of the course grade, outlines for 30%, and the final exam 20%; OR Digests will account for 50% of the course grade, outlines for 50%.

**Due dates:** All assignments must be submitted prior to the beginning of class. Thus students arriving to class late will receive a late grade for their paper (e.g., a B will be marked B-; an C+ will be marked C, and so on).

Papers submitted after the due date will be docked one letter grade for each day that it is late. Thus a paper three days late, graded A-, will receive the grade D-. But no grade lower than a high F (60-70%) will be assigned for completed work. Incomplete assignments will receive a 0% grade.

Please inform me in advance if for some reason your schedule will require you to be late for a class, or if you need to ask for an extension for an assignment.

**RTS Grading Scale:** The seminary uses the following grading system:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>97-100</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>94-96</td>
<td>3.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>91-93</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>88-90</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>86-87</td>
<td>2.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>83-85</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>80-82</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>78-79</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>75-77</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>72-74</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>70-71</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>(below 70)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>(incomplete)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.”

Late work is docked by one third grade point (A to A-, etc.) if it is submitted late on the day of class, or one day late, and then by a similar degree for each day that the work is delayed, as the following chart illustrates. Remember that work not submitted earns a grade of 0. An F earns a grade as high as 70. Better to hand in a paper late than never.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Grade</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Low F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On time</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Low F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 day late</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>D-</td>
<td>Low F</td>
<td>Low F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 days late</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>F+</td>
<td>Low F</td>
<td>Low F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 days late</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Low F</td>
<td>Low F</td>
<td>Low F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 days late</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>D-</td>
<td>Low F</td>
<td>Low F</td>
<td>Low F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

**VII. Class advice**

1. I recognize that many of you work long days and have awkward 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 (and be tested on) 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 a certain amount of class time is set aside each week for 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 do not use web access for web-surfing, chatting, and emailing.

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.

9. Feel free to email me with questions. If you are unsure how best to communicate about an academic matter via email and would be more comfortable seeing some examples, see http://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor.