

## ***PREACHING IN A POSTMODERN WORLD***

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### **Learning Goals**

This elective encourages a deeper look at the postmodern condition and its implications for preaching. We will think together about what demands postmodernity makes upon, and what opportunities it affords, preachers. Our aims include

- 1) to sketch the broad philosophical contours that describe the postmodern world;
- 2) to note the ways such an outlook manifests itself in our cultural and congregational settings;
- 3) to consider the demands postmodernity makes upon preachers wishing to communicate effectively within the framework of this world view;
- 4) to apprehend the opportunities to reclaim a vibrant, dynamic understand of Christianity that the postmodern world affords; and
- 5) to discern concrete strategies for effective and faithful preaching in our postmodern setting.

### **Procedure**

The course will meet for sixteen ninety-minute sessions over five days; the topics governing each day are listed below. Class time will incorporate *presentations* by the instructor, *discussion* of these presentations and the assigned material, and *homiletical exercises* led by student participants (see “Required Work” #3). Note that coursework is not completed until the required sermon and accompanying materials have been submitted to the instructor!

### **Schedule**

June 20	Postmodernity: The End of the World as We Know It? 2:00 – 5:00 p.m.
June 21	Truth and Reality in a Postmodern World. 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.; 1:30 – 5:00 p.m.
June 22	Narrative, Imagination, and the Postmodern Hearer. 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.; 1:30 – 5:00 p.m.
June 23	The Postmodern Bible and Questions of Meaning and Authority. 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.; 1:30 – 5:00 p.m.
June 24	Confessing Christ and Postmodern Preaching. 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

## Required Work

Including the periods before, during, and after the week of class meetings, this course requires the following five kinds of work:

1. Read and view all required material *prior* to the first class session.
2. Attendance at and participation in all class sessions which reflects comprehension and use of required material.
3. Leading a 25-30 minute homiletical exercise involving either a sermon or significant exegetical work toward a sermon. In these exercises, the presenter receives significant critical feedback on a sermon and peers receive practice in critical reflection on the task of preaching. These exercises should be compromised of *one* of the following activities, shared with the other participants *during* the week of class meetings, and scheduled at the first class session (participant presentations begin on Tuesday afternoon):
  - Videotape of a sermon (or portion thereof) from the student-participant's congregation that addresses the issues germane to this course;
  - Sermon or a "work in progress" preached in class that addresses issues germane to this course;
  - Report and discussion of exegetical proposal for a future sermon that seeks to incorporate and/or demonstrate central issues of the course.
  - Review of one of the recommended books in relation to an actual sermon recently preached or one currently "in the works."
  - Review of a current movie, book, play (or other "cultural element") that gets at issues germane to the course in relation to an actual sermon recently preached or one currently "in the works."

*Please note!* Participants should be completely prepared to present at the *start* of the week. *Last-minute decisions reflect poor planning and lead to weak presentations.*
4. One sermon to be preached and video-taped on September 19.
5. A 1-2 page exegetical report, and 3-5 page reflection paper, on the sermon mentioned in #4, following the guidelines for such papers to be supplied during class.

## **Bibliography**

***Required Materials*** (Note: all books should be “new” for you in this course.)

**A. Read three or more of the following (consider the rest “highly recommended”):**

Adam, A.K.M. *What Is Postmodern Biblical Criticism?* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.

Allen, Ronald J, Barbara Shires Blaisdell and Scott Black Johnston. *Theology for Preaching: Authority, Truth, and Knowledge of God in a Postmodern Ethos*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997.

Brandt, Kevin J. *Story as a Way of Knowing*. Sheed & Ward, 1997.

Brueggemann, Walter. *Cadences of Home: Preaching Among Exiles*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1997.

Campbell, Charles. *Preaching Jesus: New Directions for Homiletics in Hans Frei’s Postliberal Theology*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997.

Lose, David. *Confessing Jesus Christ: Preaching in a Postmodern World*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.

Rose, Lucy. *Sharing the Word: Preaching in the Roundtable Church*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1997.

**B. View three or more of the following films (consider the rest “highly recommended”):**

*The Apostle, Dogma, The Matrix, Pulp Fiction, The Truman Show*

## ***Recommended Materials***

Cheney, Emily. *She Can Read: Feminist Reading Strategies for Biblical Narratives*. Trinity Press International, 1996.

Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Doubleday, 1966.

Gonzalez, Justo and Catherine Gonzalez. *The Liberating Pulpit*. Abingdon Press, 1994.

Lindbeck, George A. *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984.

Liotard, Jean François. *The Postmodern Condition*. Translated by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

Mitchell, Henry H. *Celebration and Experience in Preaching*. Abingdon Press, 1990.

Ong, Walter J. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. Methuen, 1992.