

Preaching the Psalms and Prophets
Luther Seminary
June 2005

Instructor:

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Course Description:

This course explores the promise, problems and possibilities of Christian proclamation of the prophets and psalms. Attention is given to strategies for preaching the major literary genres of the prophets and psalms as well as theological lenses through which to approach this task.

Goals:

1. To be able to articulate a theological rationale for preaching the psalms and prophets in and for the church.
2. To gain skill at interpreting texts from the psalms and prophets for the sake of Christian preaching and teaching.
3. To gain new tools for interpreting Old Testament texts theologically and homiletically based on insights from contemporary scholarship.
4. To develop practical strategies for preaching the major literary genres of the psalms and prophets.
5. To develop creativity about the use and function of the psalms and prophets as Scripture within the Christian liturgy.

Schedule:

June 20	1:00 - 5:00 p.m.
June 21	8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
June 22	8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
June 23	8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
June 24	8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Note: Schedule of daily course topics to be distributed on June 20.

Course Requirements:

1. Prior to arriving in June, students will write a 4-5 page position paper on the value of Christian preaching of the prophets and psalms. As background for this assignment, students will read:

Patrick D. Miller, *Interpreting the Psalms*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1986 [if you have already read this book, contact the professor at rjacobso@luthersem.edu to arrange a different volume], and

Walter Brueggemann, *Finally Comes the Poet: Daring Speech for Proclamation*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989 [if you have already read this book, contact the professor at rjacobso@luthersem.edu to arrange a different volume], and

Adele Berlin, "Introduction to Hebrew Poetry," in *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1996, pp. 301-16.

2. Students are asked to bring their two most recent sermons based on either a psalm or a prophetic passage for hermeneutical and homiletical analysis.
3. Attendance at all class sessions and timely completion of all assignments is expected. Participation in class discussions should reflect engagement with materials assigned for the course.
4. On either Wednesday or Thursday, students will make a presentation introducing classmates to theological, hermeneutical, and homiletical issues involved with preaching one of the major genres of the psalms or prophets. Presentations should include a discussion of the literary character, rhetorical function, and theological issues, strategies for preaching texts of this genre. **These will be assigned by email after registration for this class closes.**

These genres include:

1. Psalms of Lament/Prayers for Help
 2. Psalms of Praise/Thanksgiving
 3. Wisdom/Instructional Psalms
 4. Historical Psalms
 5. Prophetic messages of judgment
 6. Prophetic messages of deliverance
 7. Prophetic messages against the nations and critiques of idols
3. Students will prepare and preach one sermon that reflects their learning in the course. The sermon should be based on a text representing a genre *other than* that which the student presented on in class. All sermons will be preached (and video-taped for evaluation) during a Sunday morning worship service in early to mid November—before Advent starts! A video tape of this sermon must be made.
 4. A 2-4 page reflection paper that accompanies the final sermon. The paper should describe the preacher's hermeneutical approach to the text, and the strategy(s) used to preach the text according to the features and function of its particular genre. The video tape of this sermon and accompanying materials must be submitted by December 1.

Recommended Psalms Commentaries:

Good Commentaries for Preaching and Teaching:

James Limburg, *Psalms* (Westminster Bible Companion Series)

James Luther Mays, *Psalms* (Interpretation Series)

Craig Broyles, *Psalms* (NIBC vol 11)

The New Interpreter's Bible Vol IV (includes "Psalms" by J Clinton McCann)

Richard Clifford, *Psalms 1-72*

Richard Clifford, *Psalms 73-150*

Good Commentaries, but with a more scholarly approach:

Peter Craigie, *Psalms 1-50* (Word Series vol 19)

Marvin Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, (Word vol 20)

Leslie Allen, *Psalms 101-150* (Word vol 21)

Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59* (Continental Commentary Series)

Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150* (Continental Commentary Series)

Recommended Literature on the Prophets:

Two good introductions are Abraham Heschel, *The Prophets* (two volumes in one, published by Perennial Classics) and Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* volume 2.

The New Interpreter's Bible Volumes 6 and 7 cover the prophetic material. Buying these two volumes would be a solid way to cover all of the books.

Here are some other selected commentaries that are good:

Isaiah 1-39 Walter Brueggemann (Westminster Bible Companion)

Isaiah 40-66 Walter Brueggemann (Westminster Bible Companion)

Isaiah 40-66 Claus Westermann (Old Testament Library)

Hosea James Luther Mays (Old Testament Library)

Hans Walter Wolff (Hermeneia)

Hosea-Micah James Limburg (Interpretation)

Joel and Amos Hans Walter Wolff (Hermeneia)

Amos James Luther Mays (Old Testament Library)

Jonah James Limburg (Old Testament Library)

Phyllis Trible (entitled *Rhetorical Criticism*)

Micah James Luther Mays (Old Testament Library)

Hans Walter Wolff (Continental)

Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah J J M Roberts (Old Testament Library)

Nahum-Malachi Elizabeth Achtemeier (Interpretation)