

Course Syllabus

KNP3356HF – Decolonizing Preaching: A Postcolonial Approach to Sermons
Knox College
Toronto School of Theology
Summer 2017

Instructor Information

Instructor: The Rev. Dr. Sarah Travis B.A. (hons), M.Div, D.Th.
E-mail: sarah.travis@utoronto.ca
Office Hours: by appointment

Course Identification

Course Number: KNP3356HF
Course Format: *In-class*
Course Name: Decolonizing Preaching: A Postcolonial Approach to Sermons
Course Location: Knox College
Class Times: 9:30am – 12:30pm / May 9, 16, 23, 30 & June 6, 13, 20, 27
Prerequisites: An introductory preaching course

Course Description

Preachers and listeners gather for worship in postcolonial spaces, carrying with them the memory and present experience of colonialism and imperialism. This course approaches the task of preaching from the perspective of postcolonial theories and theologies. It will consider the significance of empire as broad context for preaching, and introduce resources for the homiletical exploration of issues including race, ethnicity, gender, cultural difference and global development. The focus will be the Canadian context, and Canada=s unique postcolonial status. Students will learn to evaluate materials for sermon preparation from a postcolonial perspective, consider postcolonial reading strategies for biblical texts, reflect deeply on number of historical and contemporary concerns, and develop sermons that seek to adequately address the reality of Canada=s contemporary context.

Course Resources

Required Course Texts/Bibliography

Books: (available at Crux or online)

- Ronald J. Allen. *Preaching and the Other: Studies of Postmodern Insights*. St. Louis: Chalice Press.
- Sarah A.N. Travis. *Decolonizing Preaching: The Pulpit as Postcolonial Space*. Eugene: OR, Wipf & Stock, 2014.

Articles (available on blackboard/online):

- United Church of Canada. "Living in the Midst of Empire." Report to the 39th General Council, 2006. <http://www.united-church.ca/economic/globalization/report>.
- Musa Dube, "Toward a Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible." *Semeia*, 78, 1997. pp 11-17.
- Luke Powery, "Postcolonial Criticism" in *New Interpreter's Handbook of Preaching*, Paul S. Wilson, (ed). Nashville: Abingdon, 2008.

Course Website(s)

- Blackboard <https://weblogin.utoronto.ca/>

This course uses Blackboard for its course website. To access it, go to the UofT portal login page at <http://portal.utoronto.ca> and login using your UTORid and password. Once you have logged in to the portal using your UTORid and password, look for the **My Courses** module, where you'll find the link to the website for all your Blackboard-based courses. (Your course registration with ROSI gives you access to the course website at Blackboard.) Note also the information at <http://www.portalinfo.utoronto.ca/content/information-students>. Students who have trouble accessing Blackboard should ask [xxx] for further help.]

Course Learning Objectives/Outcomes

By the end of the course students will be able to:

- Construct and preach sermons that take seriously colonial, imperial and postcolonial themes, and assess sermons in light of postcolonial homiletic principles.
- Identify a variety of theoretical and theological postcolonial perspectives as they relate to preaching, the Bible, theology and ecclesiology. This includes the development of postcolonial theories and theologies within Western academy and colonial locations. This will be assessed by informed participation and by the writing of a research/reflection paper.
- Critically engage with postcolonial perspectives and summarize benefits and limitations of these perspectives.
- Demonstrate knowledge of postcolonial biblical interpretation and employ a postcolonial hermeneutic through deep engagement with a biblical text in preparation of a written exegetical paper.
- Apply postcolonial theories and theologies to contemporary Canadian church and society, and develop a postcolonial 'lens' for viewing historical and contemporary realities. This will be achieved through critical engagement with written materials, class discussion and personal reflection, linked to the local and global context.
- Articulate the relevance of postcolonial theories and theologies for their own contexts of ministry.

Evaluation

Requirements

The final grade for the course will be based on evaluations in four areas. THE FULL DESCRIPTION, INSTRUCTIONS AND EVALUATIVE CRITERIA FOR EACH ASSIGNMENT ARE FOUND ON SUBSEQUENT PAGES

1. Biblical Interpretation exercise 25%
2. Sermon and evaluation 30%
3. Attendance and Participation 20%
4. Reflection paper 25%

1. Biblical Interpretation Exercise 25%

Due: End of Week 3

Purpose: To facilitate the process of moving from text to sermon. This assignment provides some of the foundational work for the sermon you will present in class, including biblical and contextual exegesis.

Procedure:

- a) Choose a biblical text for your sermon. Read the assigned/chosen biblical text for general understanding. Pay attention to the biblical context and surrounding chapters. Read the questions below *carefully*.
- b) Consult your usual commentaries (or use library/internet resources) to gain a deeper understanding of the text.
- c) During the first weeks of this course, you will learn a great deal about postcolonial perspectives, including postcolonial biblical interpretation. As your understanding grows, attempt to answer these questions:

- 1) What is the colonial/imperial context of the text's author, audience, and characters? Is there any direct reference to the empire in this text? Identify your own context, and the context of your listeners, relating to colonialism/imperialism.
- 2) What is the history of interpretation of this text? Has this text been used to justify colonial/ imperial domination?
- 3) Colonizing discourse: does it appear in the text? Do you perceive in the text, or in your reaction to the text, engagement in colonizing discourse that seeks to dominate, separate, homogenize or rely on fixed identities or categories? What does this text say to colonizing discourse as it occurs in the world you and your listeners inhabit?
- 4) How does the text represent the identities of various biblical characters? What happens in the encounters between and among biblical characters, the in-between spaces?
- 5) What categories are relevant to interpreting this text (geography, land, economics, power, agency, borders or boundaries, difference, culture)?
- 6) Do you want to applaud and collude with, or resist the message of this text? Why?

Format:

- *Introduction* (including brief description of your own context for preaching), *Body* (answer questions from section c above), *Conclusion*.
- Complete sentences.
- 1200-1500 words.
- Simple footnotes (i.e. Author, abbreviated title, pg #)

Evaluative Criteria:

- Have you shown a deep understanding of the text? Have you engaged with a broad variety of resources?
- Keeping in mind that this is likely a new style of interpretation for you, have you made a clear effort to interpret the text according to a postcolonial perspective?
- Clarity and quality of writing.
- Attention to your context.
- Honesty and depth of reflection. I encourage you to tell me about your struggles with the text, and its interpretation. For example, in question #7, how do you feel about the idea of 'resisting' the message of a text?

2. Sermon and Evaluation 30%

Manuscript Due: beginning of class, Week 6

Sermons to be preached: Week 6, 7, 8

Self-Evaluation/Reflection Due: One week after sermon is preached

Purpose: To practice the creation and delivery of postcolonial sermons. To engage in a process of communal reflection. To personally reflect on the sermon as preached, and consider possible improvements/new directions in light of feedback and conversation with peers and instructor.

Procedure:

1. Write a sermon based on one of the following texts Matthew 28:16-20; Matthew 22: 15-22; Exodus 3:7-12; Joshua 1:1-11, or Romans 13:1-7. You may choose another text, but you must consult with the professor.
2. While you are not required to preaching using a manuscript, a complete manuscript must be prepared and handed in on the first day of preaching (Tuesday, July 8th).
3. Preach the sermon on the designated day. Participate in a frank discussion about your sermon.
4. Using these questions, evaluate your sermon:
 - a. What was most effective about the content of this sermon? What do you wish you had done differently?

- b. Which aspects of sermon preparation were most challenging? Why?
- c. How do you think your listeners would react/respond to this sermon?
- d. What surprised you the most about the comments of your peers/professor?
- e. What is your greatest learning after preaching this sermon?

Format:

Sermon: 14-16 minutes. Any style (i.e. Verse by Verse, 4 pages, etc)

Manuscript: No footnotes necessary (if quoting, put author in brackets). Double-spaced.

Self-Evaluation/Reflection: Answer the questions provided.

Evaluative Criteria:

The total score for this sermon is 100. The sermon as preached will be marked out of 70, the self-evaluation out of 30. I recognize that preaching is always a work in progress. Therefore, there is a lot of weight on your ability and willingness to reflect honestly on the tasks of sermon preparation and evaluation.

Evaluation for Sermon: Please pay careful attention to the “Postcolonial Sermon in a Nutshell”

Identify colonizing discourse in the historical/contemporary context.

Dispute or resist colonizing discourse

Cast an alternative vision for human ethics/identify /40

Application of exegetical work /5

Delivery /10

Clarity of ideas, creativity. /10

Impact /5

Total: /70

Evaluation for Self-Evaluation/Reflection: to what extent do you reflect learning and engagement with peer/instructor feedback? Do you clearly name what you learned about yourself/sermon through this process. Clarity of thought and written expression.
Total: /30

3. Attendance and Participation 20%

Students are expected to prepare for each class as indicated by course outline, and come ready to discuss readings. Evaluative criteria include evidence of substantial engagement with readings/research; articulate participation in class discussions; willingness to wrestle with this challenging subject.

4. Reflection Paper 25%

Due: Week 8

Purpose: An opportunity to reflect on your learning in this course, and consider applications beyond the course.

Procedure: Thinking about the entire course (not just the process of writing a sermon), reflect on your learning. I would like to know: What questions remain? What has been most surprising? What has been most difficult? Relevance for your own ministry context (denomination/congregation/region). Beyond these questions, please feel free to elaborate on any topic/issue that is particularly interesting to you.

Format: 3000 words, double spaced, 12pt font

Evaluative Criteria:

- incorporation of class readings, lectures, discussion and independent exploration. /25
- attention to your own life, context and ministry. /25
- form, language, style. /25
- depth of insight. /25

Policies

Accessibility. Students with a disability or health consideration, whether temporary or permanent, are entitled to accommodation. Students must register at the University of Toronto's Accessibility Services offices; information is available at <http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/>. The sooner a student seeks accommodation, the quicker we can assist.

Late work (BD). Basic Degree students are expected to hand in assignments by the date given in the course outline. This is a short, intensive course. Thus, assignments must be submitted on time. Late assignments will not be accepted unless a prior arrangement has been made. This penalty is not applied to students with medical or compassionate difficulties; students facing such difficulties are kindly requested to consult with their faculty adviser or basic degree director, who should make a recommendation on the matter to the instructor. The absolute deadline for the course is the examination day scheduled for the course. Students who for exceptional reasons (e.g., a death in the family or a serious illness) are unable to complete work by this date may request an extension (SDF = "standing deferred") beyond the term. An SDF must be requested from the registrar's office in the student's college of registration no later than the last day of classes in which the course is taken. The SDF, when approved, will have a mutually agreed upon deadline that does not extend beyond the conclusion of the following term. If a student has not completed work but has not been granted an SDF, a final mark will be submitted calculating a zero for work not submitted.

Course grades. Consistently with the policy of the University of Toronto, course grades submitted by an instructor are reviewed by a committee of the instructor's college before being posted. Course

grades may be adjusted where they do not comply with University grading policy (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/grading.htm>) or college grading policy.

Plagiarism. Students submitting written material in courses are expected to provide full documentation for sources of both words and ideas in footnotes or endnotes. Direct quotations should be placed within quotation marks. (If small changes are made in the quotation, they should be indicated by appropriate punctuation such as brackets and ellipses, but the quotation still counts as a direct quotation.) Failure to document borrowed material constitutes plagiarism, which is a serious breach of academic, professional, and Christian ethics. An instructor who discovers evidence of student plagiarism is not permitted to deal with the situation individually but is required to report it to his or her head of college or delegate according to the TST *Basic Degree Handbook* and the Graduate program Handbooks (linked from <http://www.tst.edu/academic/resources-forms/handbooks> and the University of Toronto *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=4871>). A student who plagiarizes in this course will be assumed to have read the document "Avoidance of plagiarism in theological writing" published by the Graham Library of Trinity and Wycliffe Colleges http://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/Library_Archives/Theological_Resources/Tools/Guides/plag.htm.

Other academic offences. TST students come under the jurisdiction of the University of Toronto Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>.

Back-up copies. Please make back-up copies of essays before handing them in.

Obligation to check email. At times, the course instructor may decide to send out important course information by email. To that end, all students in conjoint programs are required to have a valid utoronto email address. Students must have set up their utoronto email address which is entered in the ACORN system. Information is available at www.utorid.utoronto.ca. The course instructor will not be able to help you with this. 416-978-HELP and the Help Desk at the Information Commons can answer questions you may have about your UTORid and password. *Students should check utoronto email regularly* for messages about the course. **Forwarding** your utoronto.ca email to a Hotmail, Gmail, Yahoo or other type of email account is not advisable. In some cases, messages from utoronto.ca addresses sent to Hotmail, Gmail or Yahoo accounts are filtered as junk mail, which means that emails from your course instructor may end up in your spam or junk mail folder.

Email communication with the course instructor. The instructor aims to respond to email communications from students in a timely manner. *All email communications from students should be sent from a utoronto email address.* Email communications from other email addresses are not secure, and also the instructor cannot readily identify them as being legitimate emails from students. The instructor is not obliged to respond to email from non-utoronto addresses.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Postcolonial Theory and Theology for Preachers

To prepare for today's class:

Read Travis: Introduction, Chapters 1,2, 3, 4.

Topics

Getting acquainted

Introducing the Course and Syllabus

Definitions and Historical Overview, Empire Today
Key concepts, Theorists and Theories
From Postcolonial Theories to Postcolonial Theologies
Responding Theologically to Colonizing Discourse

Week 2: Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation

To prepare for today's class:

1. Read Travis, Chapter 6
2. Read Dube article
3. Decide which scripture text/theme you will choose for your sermon.

Topics

The Bible and Colonialism
Postcolonial Hermeneutics: A new view of scriptures
Case Study: The Gospel of Mark
Adding Postcolonial Readings to Exegetical Toolbox

Week 3: Decolonizing Preaching in Canada

To prepare for today's class:

1. UCC "Living Faithfully in the Midst of Empire"
2. Allen, introduction, 1, 2, 3
3. Take a look at the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Topics

The Canadian Context
Preaching: Worldview, Identity, Ethics
The Pulpit and Colonizing Discourse

Week 4: Preaching with a Postcolonial Imagination

To prepare for today's class

1. Travis, Chapter 5
2. Allen, chapters 4,5,6.
3. Read Powery article

Topics

Tools and Key Issues for decolonizing preaching
Postcolonial Sermons in a nutshell

Week 5: Preaching Forgiveness, Reconciliation and Healing in Postcolonial Perspective

To prepare for today's class

1. Read Travis Chapters 3, 7.

Topics

In the Embrace of Trinity
Forgiveness and Reconciliation in Postcolonial perspective

Week 6: Class Sermons

Week 7: Class Sermons

Week 8: Class Sermons

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