

## **PHILLIPS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY SYLLABUS DISCLAIMER**

The following syllabus is the teaching and learning guide for the last time this course was taught. It will give you a good idea of the descriptions of the course, how it was taught, the reading, the papers and other assignments, the intended outcomes, and the workload. By examining this syllabus and others, you will be able to form an impression of what graduate theological education at Phillips Theological Seminary requires of students.

Due to periodic curriculum revisions, course names and/or numbers may be different on this syllabus than what the name and/or number of the current offered course may be.

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Narrative Preaching—syllabus  
 March 2012  
 Richard F Ward, Instructor

**Narrative Preaching**  
 Course Syllabus  
 Richard F. Ward, Instructor  
 March 19-22, March 30

I think people do want to hear the gospel in the form of a story. There's a story at the heart of every sermon. I think sermons fail when they take that story, stick it in a corner, and make it into a lecture.

Garrison Keillor, The Door

Form in literature is an arousing and fulfillment of desires. A work has form in so far as one part of it leads a reader to anticipate another part, to be gratified by the sequence.

Kenneth Burke, Counterstatement,  
 124.

### Focus and Goals

In this course we will study a sub-discipline of homiletics called “narrative preaching” in order to deepen our knowledge of the art and craft of preaching and enrich our own preaching practice.

At the end of this course you should be able to:

- a. Discuss and define what characterizes a ‘narrative’ sermon
- b. Analyze principles and practices of narrative preaching in the preaching of others
- c. Look at selected texts with the eyes of a ‘narrative preacher’
- d. Employ those principles and practices we will discuss in your own preaching
- e. “Try on” these principles through a (brief) narrative sermon in class and in one preached outside of class
- f. Write a critical essay that evaluates narrative preaching, identifying both its strengths in approach and challenges

### Books

Allen, Ronald J., ed. *Patterns of Preaching: A Sermon Sampler*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 1998. (recommended)

Graves, Michael and David Schlafer, eds. *What's the Shape of Narrative Preaching? Essays in Honor of Eugene Lowry*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 2008.

Long, Thomas G. *Preaching from Memory to Hope*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009. Chapter 1.

Lowry, Eugene L. *The Sermon: Dancing the Edge of Mystery*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1997.

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\_\_\_\_\_. *How to Preach a Parable*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1989. (recommended)

**Sermons** by Eugene Lowry (available on reserve in the library)

“Listening to the Dark, (1 Kings 19)”

“Cries from the Graveyard, (Mark 5:1-19)”

“Strangers in the Night, (John 3:1-19)”

**Biblical Texts** (for study in class)

From the “Liturgy of the Palms” Year B

Ps 118: 1-2, 19-29

Mark 11: 1-11

OR from the “Liturgy of the Passion” Year B

Is 50: 4-9a

Ps 31:9-16

Philippians 2:5-11

Mark 14:1-15:47

### Assignments

1. Read the following:
  - The Sermon: Dancing the Edge of Mystery,*
  - How to Preach a Parable*
  - Selected Essays from *What’s the Shape of Narrative Preaching*
  - Chapter 1 “A Likely Story” in *Preaching from Memory to Hope*
  - This reading is to be completed before the first day of class.
2. Read aloud the texts for study in class (see above). Use translations, not paraphrases. I recommend the Contemporary English Version for reading aloud. Be prepared to make some initial comments based on your reading of the texts.
3. A sermon to be preached for class on March 30 when we reconvene. The sermons will be recorded
4. Write a critical essay of 7-10 pages that covers the following topics:
  - a. A definition of narrative preaching, what it is, what it is not. Be sure to cite readings from the class.
  - b. A critical assessment of the place of narrative preaching—its assumptions, its role in the preaching ministry, its possibilities for further development. Be sure to engage those we have read.
  - c. A personal assessment of who you are in relation to narrative preaching: what elements from it do you want to develop? What ‘discoveries’ are you making about narrative preaching that you hope to incorporate in your own ministry? The essay will be due May 4<sup>th</sup>. (I will accept the papers anytime before that date).

### Grading and Evaluation

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I don't put a 'grade' on preached sermons because as yet I have never known a pastor whose congregations 'graded' him or her on particular sermons. They do, however, receive evaluations in various ways. I will lead the class in critical and affirmative evaluations of the sermons you preach in class on Friday March 30. I look for commitment to the material, for personal growth, for levels of investment in the material, and for collegiality in offering assessments to your colleagues.

I DO grade written work. I look for ability to define, clarify, support (with reference to resources) a coherent line of thought. In the case of a written sermon, I look for evidence of the principles we talked about in class and a grasp of preaching fundamentals.

### **Course Outline and Schedule of Topics:**

The daily sessions will include chapel and then be divided into three parts:

- 1) Sermon Analysis
- 2) Presentation of Topic
- 3) Discussion of Selected Biblical Text with regular breaks

Monday March 19th

1. Introductions
2. Sermon Listening and Analysis
3. Topic: History and Theology of Narrative Preaching

Prepare to Discuss: Lowry, Introduction, Chap. 1 2; Essays from part 1 of Graves/Schlafer

Tuesday March 20

1. Sermon Listening and Analysis "Cries from the Graveyard"
2. Topic: The Art of the Narrative Sermon and Assessments
3. Discussion of biblical texts: (Ps 118: 1-2, 19-29) Mark 11:1-11

Prepare: Lowry, 2 and 3; Essays from Part 2;

Wednesday March 21

1. Chapel
2. Sermon Listening and Analysis "Listening to the Dark"
3. Topic: Forms, Patterns and Shapes for Narrative Preaching
4. Isa 50: 4-9a

Prepare: Lowry 4; Essays from Part 2 and 3

Thursday March 22

1. Chapel
2. Sermon: "Strangers in the Night"
3. Topic: Preparation and Presentation of a Narrative Sermon
4. Text: Philippians 2:5-11

Prepare: Lowry, chap 5; Essays from Part 3 in Graves/Schlafer; Long, chap. 1

Friday March 23 (No class)

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Friday March 30

1. Your sermons and analysis
2. Assessments of Narrative Preaching

Prepare: Your sermon (remember the time limit!!!) and Long, chapter 1; More of Part 3

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