

PRTH 657 (online version)
Senior/Advanced Preaching
Scott Hoezee, Professor

CATALOG DESCRIPTION: An advanced study of the principles and practice of preaching in public worship. Each student presents sermons for discussion and evaluation. This course also incorporates elements of the former course on Confessional Preaching and so will look at methods for catechetical preaching from the confessions of the church.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: Students will:

- 1) Reflect on the form and structure of sermons to learn habits of sermon-construction that will consistently produce sermons that proclaim the gracious activity of God in Scripture and the world today.
- 2) Learn various models to follow when writing sermons based on confessions like the Heidelberg Catechism.
- 3) Write two sermons, one based on a gospel text (assigned) and one based on a Lord's Day in the Heidelberg Catechism (of the student's choice).
- 4) Participate with other students in the course through discussion strings, answering instructor questions, and providing constructive evaluations of the sermons of fellow students.

COURSE READINGS/MATERIALS

- 1) Paul Scott Wilson, *The Four Pages of the Sermon* (Abingdon)
- 2) *Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions* (CRC Publications)
- 3) Scott Hoezee, *Speaking of Comfort: A Look at the Heidelberg Catechism* (CRC Publications)
- 4) Audio Materials Available via ANGEL:
 - a. William Willimon: "Preaching and Ethics"
 - b. Thomas G. Long, "Keynote Preaching Lecture"
 - c. Fred Craddock: "Preaching to Listeners Who Remember"

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction. Review Faculty Statement on Excellence in Preaching and CTS/CEP Sermon Evaluation form (links provided to the CEP website). Online discussion on these documents. Texts for the first sermon will be assigned this first week.

Week 2: Read and discuss *The Four Pages of the Sermon* chapters 1-3. Listen online to William Willimon lecture, "Preaching and Ethics" and discuss online with peers as guided by instructor.

Week 3: Read and discuss *The Four Pages of the Sermon* chapters 4-10. Listen online to Thomas G. Long lecture on ANGEL and discuss online with peers.

Week 4: Submit sermon based on assigned gospel text. Listen online to and then discuss Fred Craddock lecture, "Preaching to Listeners Who Remember."

Week 5: Discussion of Hoezee book on Heidelberg Catechism and the models presented (on ANGEL) for different ways to preach a catechetical sermon. Assignments will be made for second sermon on a Catechism Lord's Day.

Week 6: Online discussion forums on peer sermons (available for listening via ANGEL)

Week 7: Online discussion forums on peer sermons (available for listening via ANGEL).

Week 8: Online discussion forums on peer sermons (available for listening via ANGEL). Submit sermon based on a Lord's Day in the Heidelberg Catechism.

Week 9: Online discussion forums on peer sermons (available for listening via ANGEL)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Students enrolled in this course must:

- 1) Participate in weekly threaded discussions to answer instructor questions and to dialogue with fellow students. The expectation is that each student will contribute to online discussions at least 3 days each week.
- 2) Have access to a computer equipped with a broadband or high speed connection so as to be able to download audio presentations available on ANGEL.
- 3) Have access to recording equipment that will record in a format that can be sent electronically to CTS for posting on ANGEL where the instructor and other students will be able to listen to the sermons.
- 4) Sermons will be submitted in audio format from which the entire class will be able to listen to the sermon online. Additionally, written manuscripts will be submitted to the instructor.

COURSE GRADE:

Threaded Discussion Participation:	40%
Submitted Heidelberg Catechism Sermon:	30%
Submitted Sermon on Assigned Text:	30%

WORKLOAD CALCULATION

Class Time / Online Time for Discussions:	27 hours
Readings and Audio Lectures Online:	12 hours
Sermon Preparation:	32 hours

Extra Online Time for Peer Sermons: 10 hours
Total Hours: 81 hours

THREADED DISCUSSION EXPECTATIONS

- 1) Students must be involved in threaded discussions at least 3 hours each week. Online time will increase when students devote time to listening to online lectures as well as the audio files of fellow students' interpretive Scripture reading and gospel sermon. The threaded discussions, as guided by the instructor, take the place in online courses of in-class lectures. Therefore, even as class attendance for lectures is required for in-residence courses at the Seminary, so also students must keep up with threaded discussions on a weekly basis—students may NOT make up for missed participation in weekly online discussions at later dates. **Failure to participate sufficiently in a given week will be regarded as the equivalent of being absent for a class.**
- 2) Students must keep a dated log for this course, indicating on what days and during what time periods they were working online, reading instructor comments/comments posted by other students, and posting their own comments in dialogue with others. A sample log entry might say, "Participated in Threaded Discussion 9/22-06 from 9:40am until 10:30am." Please submit your weekly logs to the instructor's drop box every week.
- 3) Threaded discussions will typically take their cue from a guiding comment or lead question asked by the instructor. Students will then answer the questions as posed but then also interact with subsequent postings by fellow students as well as dialogue with further feedback provided by the instructor. Feel free to challenge each other, ask follow-up questions regarding prior posts, and/or suggest further resources people can consult.
- 4) In order to ensure variety in our interactions, the same student should not always be the lead-off responder each week and/or for each instructor posting. Students should "take turns" and let others help shape the discussion week to week.
- 5) Shoot for postings that are full of content and not clutter or other empty phrases. Also, unlike emails, strive to use proper grammar and spelling, do not put in emoticons or other typical email-esque code phrases or abbreviations. Write in a way similar to how you would wish to speak (thoughtfully, articulately) were this an actual classroom setting.

MODELS FOR PREACHING ON/FROM THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM:

Method A: “Expository Sermon on Text”

In this scenario a given biblical text becomes the chief focus and the organizing principle of the sermon. The sermon presents a close reading and exegesis of the passage. The Lord’s Day or specific Question & Answer of the Catechism is then brought in as being the theological distillation of the biblical text. That is, the preacher demonstrates that a given theological point in a given part of the Catechism DERIVED from a text such as this one. For an example of this type of Catechism sermon, see the following message at this URL: <http://www.calvincrc.org/sermons/topics/heidCatechism/ld03Genesis3.html>

Method B: “Topical/Theological Sermon based on Catechism”

In this scenario, the theological point or doctrine as defined by a given Lord’s Day or specific Q&A of the Catechism is front and center in the sermon. The doctrine or theological point is then developed, deepened, and defined in the course of the sermon with the Scripture passage (or possibly with several Scripture references) being brought into the sermon to serve as a touchstone of where such-and-such a doctrine finds its biblical moorings/roots. For an example of this type of Catechism sermon, see the following message at this URL:

<http://www.calvincrc.org/sermons/topics/tenCommandments/ld42Eph4.html>

Method C: “Biblical-Theological Sermon”

In this scenario the Catechism and the Bible work in a kind of “tag team” effort as each illumines the other. Scripture is used in the sermon to demonstrate the biblical underpinnings of a given theological idea even as the Catechism is used to show the boiled-down, condensed version of the ideas brought out in the Bible. Neither the Lord’s Day/Q&A nor the Scripture passage dominate the sermon. Rather, both are partners in conveying the larger biblical-theological truth under consideration. For an example of this kind of sermon, see the following message at this URL:

<http://www.calvincrc.org/sermons/topics/heidCatechism/ld12Mark1.html>

Notice that in all three of these proposed models, Scripture and the truths as expressed by a given passage of the Bible are always prominent in the sermon. When some people hear about “Catechism” or “confessional” preaching, the assumption is sometimes made that such sermons will be topical but not particularly biblical (and for those who believe that all sermons must be first and foremost expository in nature, the prospect of “Catechism preaching” sounds, therefore, wrong-headed). But in the finest tradition of catechetical/confessional preaching, a document like the Heidelberg Catechism becomes like a lens that helps people to see the biblical text all-the-more clearly.