
McMaster Divinity College
Winter Semester, 2017

MS 3XC3 / 6XC6

POSTMODERN, POST-CHRISTENDOM PREACHING

Wednesdays, 1:30 – 3:20 p.m.

Location: TBA

Dr. Michael Knowles

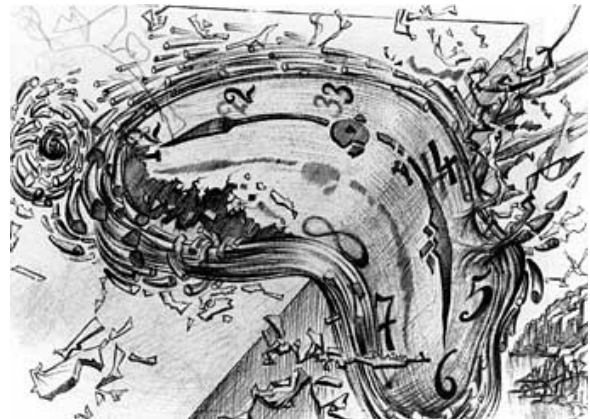
Office: DC 214

(905) 525-9140 x27088

knowlesm@mcmaster.ca

Course Statement

“Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity towards metanarratives” (Jean-François Lyotard). Preaching Christ to hearers who are instinctively dismissive of universal truth claims yet open to spiritual experience is no small challenge. Nonetheless, after discussing post-Christendom culture as an extension of the postmodern ethos and assessing recent homiletical responses, we will endeavour to construct a workable model for contemporary proclamation that emphasizes narrative, community, Christology, and spirituality.



Specializations

- ▶ Church & Culture
- ▶ Christian Worldview
- ▶ Pastoral Studies

Doctor of Practical Theology students who wish to apply for this course as an Advanced Elective for their degree program must consult with the Program Director of the DPT and the course instructor in order to develop an Advanced Elective approach to the course that fulfills the specific elements required by the DPT program. Once the elements of the Advanced Elective have been agreed upon by the student, the Program Director, and the instructor, a formal application can be made for an Advanced Elective in connection with this course. Once the application is accepted, DPT students can proceed with the course as part of their degree program.

Course Objectives

Knowing:

- ▶ To gain a basic familiarity with the characteristics of modernism, postmodernism, post-Christendom culture, and related developments.
- ▶ To assess the relevance of these conceptual paradigms for proclamation of the Christian gospel.
- ▶ To explore models of communication appropriate to each of the foregoing perspectives.

Being:

- ▶ To explore and experience the implications of modernist and postmodern models of personal, social, and corporate identity.
- ▶ To help students clarify the relationship between their own spirituality identity and contemporary cultural contexts.
- ▶ To develop and function corporately as a community of learning.

Doing:

- ▶ To gain proficiency, as appropriate, in Scriptural exegesis for postmodern and subsequent cultural circumstances.
 - ▶ To develop skills in the presentation and delivery of sermons.
-

Lecture Outline and Schedule:

January 11 "What is Truth?" Preaching in a Word-Weary World
READING: Martel, *The Life of Pi*

January 18 Where Are We? Part I: Lost in the Cosmos
READING: Percy, *Lost in the Cosmos*
DUE: "The After-Life of Pi" (Sermon)

January 25 Where Are We? Part II: Preaching, Perspective, and the Loss of Authority
READING: Craddock, *As One Without Authority*

- February 1 Who Are We? Part I: Dust in the Wind
READING: Middleton and Walsh, *Truth is Stranger Than It Used to Be*
- February 8 Who Are We? Part II: Preaching to a Community "In Christ"
DUE: "Reviewing the Options" (Book Review)
- February 15 What Time Is It? Urgency, Efficiency, and the End of the Ages
READING: TBA
- February 22 Reading Week (no classes)
- March 1 What's Wrong? Faith, Failure, and Falling Short of Glory
- March 8 What's the Remedy? Part I: Preaching Our Way out of Trouble
READING: Coupland, *Life After God*
- March 15 What's the Remedy? Part II: Learning to Let God
DUE: PAUL FOR THE END OF THE AGES
- March 22 "You Will Be My Witnesses": Preaching as Testimony
READING: Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutics of Testimony"
- March 29 Student Sermons I
- April 5 Student Sermons II

Course Requirements

Textbooks

Yann Martel. *Life of Pi: A Novel*. Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2002. PS 8576 .A7683L54 2002

J. Richard Middleton and Brian J. Walsh. *Truth is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995. BT 28 .M494 1995

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the

first day of class. Other book services may also carry the texts. For advance purchase, you may contact:

READ On Bookstore	E-mail: books@readon.ca
5 International Blvd	http://www.readon.ca
Etobicoke, ON	Tel: (416) 620-2934
M9W 6H3	FAX: (416) 622-2308

Additional reading available on reserve at Mills Memorial Library

Douglas Coupland. *Life After God*. New York: Pocket, 1994. PS 8555 .O865 L54 1994
Fred B. Craddock. *As One Without Authority*. Rev. ed. St. Louis: Chalice, 2001. BV 4211.3 .C73 2001
Paul Ricoeur. "The Hermeneutics of Testimony." Tr. David Stewart and Charles E. Reagan. In *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Lewis S. Mudge. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980. Pp.119–54. BS 476 .R52
Walker Percy. *Lost in the Cosmos: The Last Self-Help Book*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1983. PS 3566 .E6912 L6 1983

Assignments	% of Final Grade
-------------	------------------

In completing course assignments, students are expected to identify and emphasize themes relevant to their chosen area of specialization, whether Church & Culture, Christian Worldview, or Pastoral Studies. Auditors are requested to complete the course readings, and are required to complete the "Preaching to Post-Christendom" assignment.

1. CLASS PARTICIPATION

Regular and timely participation in all class sessions, including peer evaluation of sermons presented in class. Auditors are asked to complete the assigned weekly readings, as well as the final assignment ("Preaching to Post-Christendom").

2. READING

a. Completion of weekly reading assignments.

- b. The remainder the minimum reading requirements may be selected from the course bibliography and/or from theological, devotional, and exegetical materials that provide research background for the written assignments (below).
 - i. MDiv/MTS 1,500 pages
 - ii. DPT 4,000 pages
 - iii. MA/PhD 6,000 pages
- c. Bibliographies appended to written assignments should indicate the approximate number of pages read in each source listed, as well as a cumulative total.

3. THE AFTER-LIFE OF PI 15%

According to the introductory “Author’s Note,” Yann Martel’s novel *Life of Pi* was inspired by the claim of an accidental acquaintance: “I have a story that will make you believe in God.” In a style of your own choosing and in dialogue with this novel, compose an original sermon that will make its hearers believe in God.

Length (all programs): 2,000 words Due: January 18

4. REVIEWING THE OPTIONS 25%

Review one work (from the bibliography appended below) on preaching in a postmodern and/or post-Christendom context (minimum 200 pages), assessing a) its understanding of contemporary cultural developments; b) its engagement with and response to specific elements of a postmodern/post-Christendom worldview; and c) the theological and cultural appropriateness of its proposed homiletical strategy.

Length: MDiv/MTS 1,500 words Due: February 8
 DPT 2,500 words
 MA/PhD 4,000 words

5. PAUL FOR THE END OF THE AGES 40%

Reflecting on the biblical account of Israel in the wilderness, Paul observes that “These things were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come” (1 Cor 10:11). Assuming a similar perspective, compose a thematic commentary on First or Second Corinthians, Ephesians, or Philippians, interpreting the letter in such a way as to address specifically postmodern and/or post-Christian concerns, and interacting where appropriate with other contemporary commentators or homileticians. On the basis of your analysis, provide a one page

outline of a sermon series suitable for presentation in the context of your home church or field education setting.

Length: MDiv/MTS 2,000 words
DPT 3,000 words
MA/PhD 6,000 words

Due: March 15

6. PREACHING TO POST-CHRISTENDOM

20%

Compose and present an original sermon that addresses the concerns of post-postmodernism and Christian identity within a post-Christendom culture. Creativity — in particular the use of contemporary literature and film — is encouraged. Sermons will be preached in class for peer evaluation.

Length: 15 minutes maximum Due: March 29 or April 5 (by prior arrangement)

D. Style

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/mdcstyleguide.pdf>. Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions. To assist with prose composition, students are encouraged to make use of grammarly.com, which is funded by the university, along with the Writing Support Services provided by McMaster's Student Success Centre (<http://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/students/academic-skills/writing-support-services.html>). See also "CRITERIA FOR GRADING OF WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS," below.

E. Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College. Students are responsible for

understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty: <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>

F. Inclusive Language

McMaster Divinity College is committed to employing inclusive language for human beings in worship services, written materials, and all publications. With regard to biblical texts, the integrity of original expressions (including references to God) should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV provide appropriate examples of the use of inclusive language for human subjects. With the exception of direct quotations from historical documents, inclusive language is to be used in all assignments submitted for academic credit.

G. Cell Phone/Computer Policy

Students are to refrain from conducting cell phone conversations while class is in session. If you need to maintain contact with family members and/or your church or ministry, please turn off the ringer so as to avoid disturbing others; upon receipt of an urgent call, you may discretely excuse yourself from the classroom. The same policy applies to sound generated by computers or other electronic systems.

H. Late Submission Penalty

Assignments are due at the beginning of the class session on the due date. The penalty for late submission of assignments is 1% per calendar day (without limit).

Graded assignments will be available for retrieval from the Student Records Office (Room 210) for 30 days after the end of the semester (calculated as the day on which grades are due), following which they will be discarded.

***Final date for submission of all course assignments is the last day of classes, April 12
Assignments received after this date will not be accepted for grading or credit***

Disclaimer:

This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.

Illustration: Salvador Dalí, *Soft Watch Exploding*, 1954.
Ink and pencil on paper, 5½ × 7½ in. (14 x 19.1 cm).
Salvador Dalí Museum, St. Petersburg, Florida.

Book Review Bibliography

- Allen, Ronald J. *Preaching and the Other: Studies of Postmodern Insights*. St Louis: Chalice, 2009.
- Altrock, Chris. *Preaching to Pluralists: How to Proclaim Christ in a Postmodern Age*. St. Louis: Chalice, 2004. BV 4211.3 .A47 2004
- Brueggemann, Walter. *Cadences of Home: Preaching among Exiles*. Westminster John Knox, 1997. BV 4211.2 .B745 1997
- Clarke, Erskine, ed. *Exilic Preaching: Testimony for Christian Exiles in an Increasingly Hostile Culture*. Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1998. BV 4211.2 .E95 1998
- Eswine, Zack. *Preaching to a Post-Everything World: Crafting Biblical Sermons That Connect with Our Culture*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008. BV 4211.3 .E89 2008
- Frost, Michael. *Exiles: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006. BR 115 .P74 F76 2006
- Groothuis, Douglas R. *Truth Decay: Defending Christianity Against the Challenges of Postmodernism*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000. BT 50 .G66 2000
- Johnston, Graham. *Preaching to a Postmodern World: A Guide to Reaching Twenty-First Century Listeners*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001. BV 4211.3 .J64 2001

- Kysar, Robert, and Joseph Webb. *Preaching to Postmoderns: New Perspectives for Proclaiming the Message*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006. BV 4211.3 .K97 2006
- Long, Jimmy. *Emerging Hope: A Strategy for Reaching the Postmodern Generations*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004. BV 4446 .L66 2004
- Loscalzo, Craig A. *Apologetic Preaching: Proclaiming Christ to a Postmodern World*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000.
- Lose, D. J. *Confessing Jesus Christ: Preaching in a Postmodern World*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003. BV 4211.3 .L67 2003
- McClure, John S. *Other-Wise Preaching: A Postmodern Ethic for Homiletics*. St. Louis: Chalice, 2001.
- Murray, Stuart. *Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange World*. Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004. BR 481 .M87 2004
- Penner, Myron B., and Hunter Barnes. *A New Kind of Conversation: Blogging Toward a Postmodern Faith*. Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2007. BR 115 .P74 N49 2007
- Stone, Bryan P. *Evangelism after Christendom: The Theology and Practice of Christian Witness*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2007. BV 3790 .S85 2007
- Sweet, Leonard. *Postmodern Pilgrims: First Century Passion for the 21st Century World*. Nashville: B & H, 2000.
- Vicker, Douglas. *The Fracture of Faith: Recovering Belief of the Gospel in a Postmodern World*. Fearn: Mentor, 2000. BT 771.2 .V53 2000
- Warren, Robert. *Building Missionary Congregations: Towards A Post-Modern Way of Being Church*. London: Church House, 1995.
- Wells, David F. *Above All Earthly Pow'rs: Christ in a Postmodern World*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005. BR 115 .P74 W45 2005
- Willimon, William H. *Exilic Preaching: Testimony for Christian Exiles in an Increasingly Hostile Culture*. Harrisburg: Trinity, 1998. BV 4211.2 .E95 1998

SERMON EVALUATION FORM

Date:

Start time:

End time:

Preacher:

Evaluator:

Theme, focus, or text:

Thesis: The main point this sermon makes is...

Purpose: As a result of this sermon, the hearers should...

Structure: What is the basic outline of this sermon? (List points on reverse side)

Was the sermon clearly structured or developed (beginning, middle, end)? Easy to follow?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 _____

Biblical exegesis/theological analysis: How clearly did the sermon explain the text/theme?

3 6 9 12 15 18 21 24 27 30 _____

Culture and Audience: How clearly did the sermon relate to contemporary culture/the immediate audience?

3 6 9 12 15 18 21 24 27 30 _____

The Speaker: How effectively did the speaker use voice and body movements?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 _____

Communicative strategies: How effective were the illustrations in relation to the text/theme?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 _____

Summary: How effective was the sermon in accomplishing its intended purpose?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 _____

Additional comments and observations:

TOTAL _____

100

CRITERIA FOR GRADING OF WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

Grading of written materials will be based on the following general criteria

Grade Range	Content	Argument	Presentation
90–100 A+ 85–89 A 80–84 A–	Mastery of subject matter; creativity and individualized integration of insights and their relationships; exceeds required elements	Clear, logical structure; with comprehensive introduction, persuasive argumentation, and innovative conclusions	Detailed adherence to relevant style for formatting of text, notes, and bibliography; no errors of grammar or syntax; elegant presentation
77–79 B+ 73–76 B 70–72 B–	Above-average grasp of principles and concepts, and their inter-relationship; completion of all required elements	Coherent structure and consistent argumentation; well-stated introduction and conclusion	General adherence to relevant style and format; few errors of grammar or syntax
67–69 C+ 63–66 C 60–62 C–	Adequate understanding of theoretical foundations; minimal completion of required elements	Rudimentary structure; minimal introductory and concluding statements	Significant errors of grammar, syntax, or style
57–59 D+ 53–56 D 50–52 D–	Low level of comprehension; required elements incomplete or missing	Lack of coherence or structure in argumentation; no introduction or conclusion	Abundant grammatical, syntactical, and stylistic errors
0–49% F	Inability to grasp basic concepts; required elements missing	Incomprehensible or illogical structure and argumentation	Failure to follow stylistic guidelines; incomprehensible syntax
Comments			