



Preaching in the 21st Century
MS 3XP3 (Professional Degree)
MS 5XP5 (Doctor of Practical Theology)
MS 6XP6 (MA/PhD)
Mondays, 1:00 – 2:50 p.m.

Dr. Michael Knowles
Divinity College 214
(905) 525-9140 x27088
knowlesm@mcmaster.ca

Course Description

Karl Barth speaks of the Word of God in its “threefold form”: the living Word (Christ), the written Word (Scripture), and “the Word of God Preached” (*Church Dogmatics* 1.1.4). Guided by a conviction that the written word determines the shape of the preached word in its testimony to the Living Word, this course introduces the theory and practice of Christian proclamation in a congregational setting, giving particular attention to a post-modern setting. As a hybrid course, it consists of twelve on-line modules with face-to-face sessions scheduled midway through the semester.

Specializations: Pastoral Studies

Course Objectives

KNOWING:

- ▶ To introduce basic hermeneutical issues that apply to the process of moving from biblical and social exegesis to proclamation.
- ▶ To examine and evaluate the component elements of preaching and their respective contributions to effective communication.
- ▶ To explore contemporary contexts for preaching, with particular attention to the impact of postmodern thought.

BEING:

- ▶ To reflect on spiritual and ministerial identity as they apply to Christian proclamation.

- ▶ To help students identify their preferred style or styles of preaching, and gain confidence in public presentation.

DOING:

- ▶ To evaluate representative forms and models of preaching in relation to students' own ministries of preaching.
- ▶ To provide students with practice in the composition and delivery of sermons, together with opportunities for comprehensive peer evaluation.

This course is intended to help students:

- ▶ Read biblical texts and congregational contexts in light of each other.
- ▶ Communicate a biblical world view and biblical insights in a creative and engaging manner.
- ▶ Communicate comprehensibly and proficiently in public.

Lecture Outline and Schedule

Offered in a modified hybrid format, this course will alternate (beginning September 27) between online and in person meetings. When meeting in person, students are required to maintain social distancing and observe appropriate health protocols, for the safety of all members of the community.

September 13 (in person)

1. Preaching: The Basics

September 20 (in person)

2. The Preacher as Witness; the Preacher as Navigator

Reading: Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 11–57
Supplemental: Karl Barth, *Homiletics*, 47–55

September 27 (online module + synchronous meeting)

3. Textual Interpretation

Reading: Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 58–112

October 4 (in person)

4. Cultural Awareness: Texts and Contexts

“Reading to Speak” due (all programmes)

October 11 Thanksgiving (no class)

October 18 (in person)

Reading: Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 113–70
Supplemental: Wilson, *The Four Pages of the Sermon*, 15–29

5. The Art of Communication: Finding Analogies

October 25 Hybrid Intensive Week (no meeting scheduled)

November 1 (in person)

Reading: Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 171–223
Explanatory essays for OT sermons due (Professional degree programmes)
Theory and Practice of Preaching due (Research degree programmes)

6. Focus and Function: Keeping the Main Thing the Main Thing

November 8 (online module + synchronous meeting)

Reading: Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 224–86

7. The Art of Composition: Principles for Composing a Sermon

November 15 (in person)

Student Sermon Presentations (Hebrew Bible/Old Testament)

November 22 (online module + synchronous meeting)

“Patterns of Preaching” due (Professional degree programmes)

8. Forms and Styles of Preaching (view a minimum two of the four modules)

- a. Expository Preaching (Mayhue, “Rediscovering Expository Preaching”)
- b. Narrative Preaching (Miller, “Narrative Preaching”)
- c. Pastoral Preaching (Neufeld, “Preaching and Pastoral Care”)
- d. Liturgical Preaching (Quivik, “On Liturgical Preaching”)

November 29 (in person)

Student Sermon Presentations (New Testament)

December 6 (online module + synchronous meeting)

9. Proclamation, Authority, and Grace

Research essay due (Research degree programmes)

December 10

Last day of classes / Final date for submission of late assignments

Course Requirements:

A. Textbooks (on reserve)

Allen, Ronald J., ed. *Patterns of Preaching: A Sermon Sampler*. St. Louis: Chalice, 1998.
Long, Thomas G. *The Witness of Preaching*. Third Edition. Louisville:
Westminster/John Knox, 2016.

All required textbooks are available from MDC's book service, READ On Books, located in the Hurlburt Family Bookstore at McMaster Divinity College, located in Cullen Hall. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6H3. Orders can be placed by phone (416 620.2934), text (416 668.3434), or email (books@readon.ca), with payment by e-transfer, credit card, or cheque; shipping is free for students. Other book services may also carry the texts.

Available on the course website (A2L):

Mayhue, Richard L. "Rediscovering Expository Preaching." *The Master's Seminary Journal* 1.2 (1990) 109–27.

Miller, Calvin. "Narrative Preaching." In *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*, edited by Michael Dudit, 103–16. Nashville: Broadman, 1992.

Neufeld, John H. "Preaching and Pastoral Care." *Vision* 10.1 (2009) 67–73.

Quivik, Melinda A. "On Liturgical Preaching: The Body of Christ in Time." *Liturgy* 25.4 (2010) 3–9.

B. Supplemental Resources

Barth, Karl. *Homiletics*. Tr. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Donald E. Daniels. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991.

Wilson, Paul Scott. *The Four Pages of the Sermon, Revised and Updated: A Guide to Biblical Preaching*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2018.

The course bibliography is available on the Avenue to Learn course site

In addition of the virtual and print collections of McMaster Mills Library, all registered students have access to the online Digital Theological Library collection: <https://libguides.thedtl.org/home>. Please keep the password that you have been assigned confidential.

C. Assignments

% of Final Grade

D. Course Requirements

Written assignments are due at noon on the due date, and are to be submitted via the Avenue to Learn course website. In order to avoid late penalties, students are responsible for ensuring that assignments have been successfully uploaded.

Requirements for course assignments differ according to degree programme and specialization. In completing both oral and written assignments, DPT/MA/PhD students will focus on issues that correspond to their respective programmes of research, while MDiv/MTS students are expected to identify and emphasize themes relevant to their chosen specialization.

1. Class Participation

All students (including Auditors) are required to view the online modules and to participate fully in on-site class sessions, including presentation of two sermons for peer evaluation. Due to the nature of the class schedule and the fact that students are responsible for evaluating each other's sermons, enrolment in this course implies agreement to full participation in the synchronous sessions (whether in person or via live streaming) as a requirement for academic credit.

2. Assigned Readings

Students enrolled for credit are required to complete the assigned readings for each module. The remainder of the minimum reading requirements may be selected from the course bibliography (available on the Avenue to Learn course site) and/or background materials for written assignments.

- a. MDiv/MTS 1,500 pages
- b. DPT 4,000 pages
- c. MA/PhD 6,000 pages

Bibliographies appended to written assignments should indicate the approximate number of pages read in each source listed, as well as a cumulative total.

3. Reading to Speak (All programmes)

The purpose of this assignment is to offer practice in the process of moving from text to sermon. Considering the Letters of John as sermons preached to the church of another era, select a brief passage (minimum 10 verses) from one of the three letters and explain how you would re-preach it today. In particular, what does the passage say (first) about God and (second) about life in the presence of God? What do you hear God saying in this text? In what way might this passage help your hearers to live as disciples of Jesus in 2021?

- MDiv/MTS 1,000 words (10%)
- DPT 1,500 words (10%)
- MA/PhD 2,000 words (10%)

Due: October 4

4. Theory and Practice of Preaching (Advanced degree only)

Citing relevant contemporary homileticians of your choice, briefly outline your understanding of the rôle and authority of Scripture as the basis for Christian teaching and preaching.

- DPT 1,500 words (20%)
- MA/PhD 2,500 words (20%)

Due: November 1

5. Sermon Preparation

Each student will preach two sermons in class, on texts of the student's choosing from the Old and New Testaments, respectively. Preparation for the first sermon (for Professional Degree students) will take the form of an explanatory essay to be graded and returned no later than one week prior to the sermon presentation. Sermons will be discussed and graded by other members of the class, using the "Sermon Evaluation Form" posted on the course website.

a. *Explanatory Essay* (Professional degree only)

Assemble preparatory material for a sermon based on a text of your choice from the Hebrew Bible. Explain why you chose this text and what you understand it to mean. Of all possible sermons that could be preached from this text, explain why you intend to preach in this manner to this particular congregation (i.e., your fellow students). Do not submit a draft of the sermon itself; simply summarize your main points, indicating how each is derived from the text and applies to your audience. Where appropriate, include footnotes indicating use of secondary sources (i.e. commentaries or texts on preaching). Because they are intended as preparation for in-class preaching, late essays will not be graded or accepted for academic credit.

MDiv/MTS 1,500 words (15%)

Due: November 1

b. *Sermon Presentations* (All programmes)

Incorporating responses to the explanatory essay and/or insights from peer assessment, preach two sermons in person on November 15 (OT texts) & 29 (NT texts).

MDiv/MTS 2 × 25% Length: 15 minutes maximum (all programmes)

DPT 2 × 15%

MA/PhD 2 × 15%

6. Patterns of Preaching (Professional degree only)

Select four sermons of your choice, one from each of the four sections of Ronald J. Allen, ed., *Patterns of Preaching: A Sermon Sampler* (St. Louis: Chalice, 1998):

“Traditional Patterns,” “Contemporary Patterns,” “Patterns for Subjects,” and “Patterns for Theology.” Briefly describe the content and method of each sermon in relation to the intended purpose and goals of the pattern in question. Explain what makes each sermon effective (or ineffective), both in terms of the techniques that the particular sermon employs and as concerns the value of the method that the sermon exemplifies. As illustrated by your chosen examples, to what sort of message and pastoral situation is each of these strategies best suited?

Length: 2,000 words (25%)

Due: November 22

7. Research Essay (Advanced degree only)

Using the essays in Jana Childers, ed., *Purposes of Preaching* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2004) as a starting point (and interacting extensively with other critical literature, as appropriate), discuss:

- a. the theological, ecclesiastical, social, and/or rhetorical purpose(s) of contemporary preaching;
- b. what method(s) or style(s) of preaching are best suited to achieving these goals, and why, in relation to the postmodern (or post-postmodern) context.

In particular, discuss the rôle(s) of human and divine agency, respectively, in the preparation and delivery of the sermon.

DPT 3,500 words (40%)

Due: December 6

MA/PhD 5,000 words (40%)

Grading Summary				
		Length	Percentage	Due
<i>Professional Degrees (MDiv/MTS)</i>				
Reading to Speak		1,000 words	10%	Oct 4
OT Sermon	Explanatory Essay	1,500 words	15%	Nov 1
	In-class presentation	15 minutes	25%	Nov 15
NT Sermon	In-class presentation	15 minutes	25%	Nov 29
Patterns of Preaching		2,000 words	25%	Nov 22

<i>Research/Advanced Degrees (DPT/MA/PhD)</i>				
Reading to Speak		1,500/2,000 words	10%	Oct 4
Theory and Practice of Preaching		1,500/2,500 words	20%	Nov 1
OT Sermon	In-class presentation	15 minutes	15%	Nov 15
NT Sermon	In-class presentation	15 minutes	15%	Nov 29
Research Essay		3,500/5,000 words	40%	Dec 6

E. Academic Honesty

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. Gender Inclusive Language

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. Inclusive language is to be used in all MDC assignments.

G. Style

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: <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/>

resources-forms/mdc-style-guide. To assist with composition and completion of assignments, students are encouraged to make use of [grammarly.com](https://www.grammarly.com) (<https://www.grammarly.com>), along with the academic support services provided by McMaster's Student Success Centre (<https://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/academic-support>). Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions. See also "CRITERIA FOR GRADING OF WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS," below.

H. Cell Phone/Computer Policy

Students must refrain from conducting cell phone conversations while class is in session. Should 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 all computer-generated sound schemes, pagers, or other electronic annunciation systems.

I. Deadlines and Late Submission Penalty

Assignments are due at 1:00 p.m. on the due date, after which they will be considered late and penalized accordingly. The penalty for late submission of assignments is 1% per calendar day (without limit). The final date for submission of late work is December 10, after which date assignments cannot 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 revisions up to and including the first day of class.

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

UNDERSTANDING YOURSELF, YOUR CULTURE, AND YOUR AUDIENCE: AN EXERCISE IN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL EXEGESIS

Personal Information

Name: _____

Your Current Age: _____

Gender: _____

Highest Degree received: _____

Income Range of your Family of Origin:

Under 20K	_____	60 – 80K	_____
20K – 40K	_____	80 – 100K	_____
40K – 60K	_____	Over 100K	_____

Which of the following designations would best describe you, your family of origin, family friends, or neighbourhood?

Administration	_____%	Educational	_____%
Blue Collar/Labour	_____%	Management	_____%
Clerical	_____%	Military	_____%
Domestic	_____%	Professional	_____%

Institution or Context for Ministry

Name: _____

Age of Members of your Audience (by percentage):

0–15	_____%	35–45	_____%
15–25	_____%	45–65	_____%
25–35	_____%	65+	_____%

Gender of Audience/Community:

Male _____% Female _____%

Educational Background:

Primary	_____%	Secondary	_____%
Post-Secondary	_____%	Post-Grad	_____%

Income Range:

Under 20K	_____%	60 – 80K	_____%
20K – 40K	_____%	80 – 100K	_____%
40K – 60K	_____%	Over 100K	_____%

What percentage of your audience/community would likely describe themselves, their occupations, or employment situations in the following terms?

Self-Employed	_____%	Small Business	_____%
Service Industries	_____%	Unemployed	_____%
Skilled Trades	_____%	(any of the above)	_____%

In what church or setting were you converted, or did you spend the longest period of time between the ages of 5 and 25?

Type of Institution/Community (Church, Hospital, Prison, etc.):

Which of the following terms would you use to describe yourself and your faith journey?

Which of the following terms might significant numbers of your audience use to describe themselves and their faith journey?

Agnostic	Catholic	Feminist
Anglo-Catholic	Charismatic	Fundamentalist
Atheist	Conservative	Liberal
Back-sliding	Creationist	Liberationist
Bible-believing	Eco-Theological	Liturgical
Born-again	Evangelical	Messianic

New Age	Radical	Sacramentalist
Non-Christian	Reformed	Spiritualist
Non-conformist	Renewed	Traditionalist
Non-denominational	Restorationist	12-Step Adherent
Observant	Revisionist	Womanist
Orthodox	Revivalist	Other

Name three significant personal or social factors that keep you interested in reading the Bible and/or seeking to understand God:

What, in your opinion, are the three most significant reasons why people in your congregation/community gather together?

Name three reasons why, despite its difficulty, you want to undertake Christian ministry:

Identify three ways in which Christian adherence makes a difference in the lives of members of your community:

If Jesus were to grant you a personal audience this evening, what three questions would you ask him?

If Jesus were to attend the next gathering of your church or place of ministry, what three questions might its members most want to ask?

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			