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CH 670 Introduction to History of Preaching

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Course: CH670 W1 (SP 2009)
Title: Intro to History of Preaching
Hours: 3.00
Published: Yes, on 02/04/2009
Prerequisites: None

Department: Church History
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Meetings:
During 02/09/2009 to 05/22/2009 on Wednesday from 2:30p to 5:15p in BC223.

Maximum Registration: 20
Catalog Description: A study of preachers and preaching from the biblical period through the sixteenth-century Reformation. Preachers and sermons will be discussed in light of their primary role as pastors called by God to the practical tasks of forming and building up a Christian people, of nurturing and reinforcing Christian identity through the constant preaching of the Word of God to enable the church to discern and obey its scriptural pattern of faith and life.

Objectives:
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PR/CH 670: An Introduction to the History of Christian Preaching
The course will be offered for three (3) hours of course credit. It will be a 600 level course, cross-listed as PR/CH. Prerequisites are PR610 and CH 1&2.
The course will be conducted in a seminar format with a limit of 20 students. Students will be expected to acquire and demonstrate an understanding of the practice of preaching through guided reading, research and reflection in the homiletic tradition. Required Textbooks: Michael Pasquarello III, Sacred Rhetoric: Preaching as a Theological and Pastoral Practice of the Church, Richard Lischer, ed., The Company of Preachers; Irenaeus, The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching; Augustine of Hippo, Instruction To Beginners; Simon Tugwell, ed., The First Dominicans; Jaroslav Pelikan, Divine Rhetoric; Deitrich Bonhoeffer, Worldly Preaching. In addition, students are encouraged to consult, Hugh Oliphant Old, The Reading and Preaching of Scripture in the Worship of the Christian Church Vols. I - VI. The Biblical, Patristic, Medieval, Reformation, Pietist, and Modern Periods. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999-2007). Each student will also be required to research selected sermons from the tradition for discussion in class and the final paper. Students will be required to read primary and secondary sources that introduce them to representative members of the preaching tradition from the Patristic through the Modern periods. We will pay particular attention to Irenaeus, Augustine, Gregory the Great, Benedict, Bernard of Clairvaux, Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, Erasmus, Hugh Latimer, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, and Deitrich Bonhoeffer. Readings will be discussed during each class session, with students rotating responsibility for providing response and reflection to demonstrate historical and homiletic understanding of the material. A final reflection paper (15-20 pages) and presentation on a particular preacher will be required. The paper will describe and evaluate the homiletic (theological and pastoral) wisdom displayed in sermons and related material within the preacher’s historical context in order to bring these discoveries into fruitful, constructive conversation with contemporary homiletic practice. 

(3.2) An Introduction to the History of Christian Preaching will contribute to the Asbury curriculum in several ways. First, the course will increase students’ understanding of the preaching tradition by introducing them to the homiletic wisdom of exemplars from the past. Second, the course will encourage students to increase their understanding of the Christian tradition as seen from the perspective of preaching and pastoral ministry. Third, the course will help students to integrate the significance of historical and homiletic study for the practice of preaching. Fourth, the course will serve as a means to encourage the necessary disciplines of prayer and study for faithful pastoral practice in the ministry of the Word. (3.3) The content and methodology of the course will be appropriate for the Departments of Preaching and Church History, since the study of homiletic practice will be conducted within a larger ecclesial, historical, and social context. Preachers and sermons will be discussed in relation to doctrinal, exegetical, and pastoral developments across time. Students will be encouraged to recognize the role of preaching within the dialectic of continuity and change in the Christian tradition as a means of discernment for faithful practice in the future. 

Course Description: An Introduction to the History of Preaching

“The story of the sermon and the hymns and of the processions and of the sacramental acts and of the readings is to be God’s story, the story of the Bible. Preachers are the greatest sinners here: the text already is and belongs to the one true story; it does not need to be helped out in this respect. What is said and enacted in the church must be with the greatest exactitude and faithfulness and exclusivity the story of creation and redemption by the God of Israel and Father of the Risen Christ.” (Robert Jenson, ‘How the World Lost Its Story.’)

The purpose of this course is to introduce seminarians to the practice of preaching as both a theological discipline and a pastoral activity, a capacity that is a gift of the Holy Spirit by which the Risen Lord continues to speak to, in, and through the Church. Because the narrative of the Church’s faithful practitioners is its best advocate
and argument, the focus of our study will be directed towards particular preachers and sermons, homiletic treatises, pastoral handbooks, and theological works - from the Christian tradition. This approach will position us to learn from the wisdom, insight and example of our predecessors concerning the central activity of proclaiming the Gospel to create, enliven, and sustain the Church to be a faithful people called to worship and to participate in the life of the Triune God. We will read the works of faithful exemplars, beginning with the kerygmatic witness of Scripture - the preaching of the Prophets, Apostles, and Jesus Christ - and conclude with preachers in the early modern and modern period to understand more clearly the manner in which our contemporary practice of preaching is grounded, given life, judged and shaped by this company of preachers who have preceded us. As the work of Alisdair MacIntyre has shown, our contemporary practices are embedded in traditions which provide outstanding examplars of moral and intellectual excellence in the achievement of their respective purposes, offering means for self-criticism and self-correction which may direct us in our attempts to go forward. The standards of achievement within a craft such as preaching are justified historically because they have emerged from the criticism of their predecessors and succeeded in remedying their defects and overcoming their limitations as guides to excellent achievement. The authority of our acknowledged mentors and masters is more than exemplifying the best known standards known to date, more than improving relevant skills or techniques. It is also a matter of possessing practical knowledge, a kind of “knowing how,” given the concrete requirements of particular occasions and conditions, to go farther and how to direct others towards going farther, discerning from what may be learned from the past in order to move towards the goal of more mature, faithful practice in the future. We will therefore study their lives and works as the history in which we are participants and in which we share. This importance of practical judgment shaped by wisdom gained through learned experience was emphasized by John Henry Newman, who wrote in the Grammar of Assent: Instead of trusting logical science, we must trust persons, namely those who by long acquaintance with their subject have a right to judge. And if we wish ourselves to share in their convictions and the grounds of them, we must follow their history, and learn as they have learned. We must depend on practice and experience more than on reasoning.

The preachers studied in this course will be presented as reliable (although not perfect), experienced examplars and mentors in the “preaching life,” rather than as theorists of homiletic technique or style. We will discuss their lives, sermons, and works in light of their primary role as pastors called by God to the practical task of forming Christian identity by the constant preaching of the Word of God in Scripture which enables the Church to discern and follow the pattern of its Lord. While we will consider shifts and changes in preaching within particular historical contexts - noting the variety in its topics, themes, arrangement, and style - we will devote our primary attention to discerning continuities within the larger purpose of preaching and the manner in which change serves constancy in the formation of Christian conviction and character within the worshiping life of the Church. With this important assumption in mind, we will read sermons that exemplify pastoral wisdom, looking to discern within them a practical vision of the Church oriented to God through the public proclamation of the Word as found in the people of Israel and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. By positioning ourselves within the homiletic tradition and its extended conversation, we may hope to gain a vital and necessary understanding of preaching as a theological and ecclesial practice which requires: 1) the practice of prayer and obedience; 2) the study and interpretation of Scripture; 3) the testing of exegesis by means of the Church’s theological convictions for faithful homiletic performance.
Moreover, a personal and historical introduction of this nature may serve to edify and encourage students to cultivate an ‘eye’ and ‘ear’ for the character and wisdom embodied in the practice of preaching: the necessary attentiveness and insightfulness for the task of summoning the Church to know, love, and serve the Triune God whose incarnate Word authorizes its life and secures its future. We will devote time during the first half of the course to the proclamatory nature of Scripture and the preaching and pastoral wisdom of the Church Fathers, since both Medieval and Reformation era preachers claimed to be faithful to Scripture and Patristic exemplars in extending the practice of preaching for the good of the Church in their care. We will also discuss selected excerpts from letters, treatises, and handbooks on preaching that address the theological, moral, and homiletic resourcefulness required for the task of preaching in the “midst of the Church.”

A primary objective is that students will come to see themselves as members of the Church’s company of preachers, so that the conditions for our conversation will encourage the discovery of a discourse through which the nature of preaching as a theological and pastoral practice may be examined, understood, articulated, and defended. Students will be encouraged to see themselves as responsible learners and participants in the history of a Christian practice, rather than as consumers and users of skills and technique; and as those called to possess the necessary character and wisdom for preaching within the particular circumstances, contingencies, and conditions of the Church in service to the kingdom of God.

Class work will consist of discussing the assigned readings, as well as appropriate sermons or treatises, with emphasis being given to discerning the manner in which the preacher’s manner of life, exegetical insight, theological wisdom, and homiletic design are integrated as a means of instructing, sustaining and strengthening the Church within a particular time and place. Students will rotate responsibility for reporting on assigned readings. A final project (15-20 pages) and presentation examining a particular preacher(s) from one of the historical periods covered in this course will be due at semester’s end. The subject of the paper will be determined in conversation with the Professor and will reflect upon the practice of preaching as seen through the work and experience of the particular preacher(s) homiletic topic, or historical period under consideration, demonstrating the student’s progress towards fulfilling the goals of the course. The Virtual Classroom is built upon the open-source Moodle platform. By logging into http://one.asburyseminary.edu and clicking on the Virtual Campus tab (upper right corner) you will have access to this course and be able to collaborate with participant-colleagues and me throughout the course. The following are functions with which you should familiarize yourself: 1. The Course Information Center contains many features to be used throughout the semester: a) Course News and Announcements, where I will post items important for the entire class; b) Syllabus, where a copy of the syllabus is provided; c) To Professor, which is a way for you to post a message directly to me and we can discuss an issue privately; d) Course Questions, which is a public forum where you can publicly post any questions you have regarding the course so others may see your message and respond. Anytime you have a question or comment about the course, the schedule, the assignments, or anything else that may be of interest to other participants and me you should post it to the Course Questions Forum; e) Prayer Forum, which is a public forum where you can post prayer concerns and praises for all to see. This is a way for us to build community; f) Open Forum, which is a public forum where you can post anything that is not course-related for all to see. Examples include someone getting married, an upcoming birthday, discussions on topics not course-related, etc. This is a way for us to build community. 2. Modules, which are located below the Course Information Center, will contain forums where group discussions will
take place, documents or other files to download or view online, and assignment links where you will post your assignments to me. Modules will be clearly labeled so you can follow along during the semester.

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   and enter your 10-digit student ID# number in the login box. Your student ID# is provided on the biographical information section of the student registration webpage. Add a 2 and enough 0's to the front to make a 10-digit number (20000XXXXX where XXXXX = your student id).

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