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PR 610 Pulpit Communication

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Welcome to PR 610!

I remember the first sermon I ever preached. I had been asked by a friend to lead a youth retreat for a small church in south Georgia. The retreat was to culminate in the Sunday morning worship service with yours truly preaching the sermon. Teaching was something I was familiar with. Public speaking as well. I had been an English/Speech major in college. I had a teaching degree. What could be so difficult about preparing sermon?

I wrestled with the text that I was supposed to use. I had many good ideas. But the weren’t the right ideas. I worried. I fretted. I prayed. I cried. I had no idea what I was doing. And I had a bad feeling: This wasn’t going to turn out right! The morning of the sermon arrived. My friend introduced me to the congregation. I arose and made my way to the pulpit. I cleared my throat and began. And it wasn’t long before I realized the truth: Gazing at the glassy-eyed stares of my congregation, all my fears were confirmed. I should have worried, fretted, prayed, and cried—because I wasn’t ready. It was a total wash. An absolute bomb. Afterwards, people gave me the obligatory handshake. But they avoided eye contact. They asked me what my travel plans were. What was I going to have for lunch? Anything to keep from talking about what was supposed to have been a sermon.

The memory still brings me pain. Three years later, I found myself in seminary (and how I got there is another story). I had to take preaching. I thought it was going to be an experiment in disaster. More repeats of my confusion about
sermon preparation, more glassy eyes and painful conversation. Only this time I was going to be graded on it.

I don’t have clear memory of the first day, but I do remember the messages of the first weeks:

*Sermont spring out of your direct confrontation with the Word of God. The Word must speak to you before it can speak to others*…

*Sermon preparation is about method: a step-by-step procedure that you must learn to follow. Do the method and you will have a sermon to preach every Sunday.*

*Preach the Word. Preach the Word. Not what you want it to say. Not what you feel it says. But what it is intended to say.*

His words were not entirely comforting. But they did give me hope. And I learned about the Word, about the sermon, and about the method. In my experience, he was right. After twenty years of preaching—in different cultures and in two different languages, I can testify that the Word is powerful; it must “cut us” first before it can surgically cut others; and if you follow the method, you will have a sermon to preach every Sunday.

That’s what I want PR610 to be about: Confrontation with the Word and learning a practical method of sermon preparation so that you will have a sermon to preach—with confidence, with joy, and with conviction.

**Course Description**

PR 610 is the “bread-and-butter” course of your seminary curriculum. It is where all the energy of your preparation in biblical languages, theology, philosophy, and ministry will be focused like a laser. It is to bring all these disciplines in the creation of the sermon. As a result, my goals for you as students are that...

1. You will understand the nature of human communication. What makes messages effective.

2. You will acquire the tools to better understand your listeners. Effective communicators are listener-centered, and we'll learn ways to carry-out audience/congregation analysis.

3. You will understand the role of Scripture in sermon preparation and be able to give an explanation for and defense biblical preaching.

4. You will be able give a personally reflective response to passage to be preached, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead you into all truth.
5. You will be able to apply the disciplines of inductive Bible study, exegesis of the text in its original languages, historical context, and theological analysis to the exposition of Scripture in order to derive the central idea of a sermon.

6. You will be able to take this central idea and develop it organizationally so that you support, illustrate and apply the claims that you derive it.

7. You will be able to alter the organization of the central idea in order to adapt it to a variety of presentational settings.

8. You will be able to construct a preaching manuscript using effective word choice, descriptive language, and meaningful illustrations.

9. You will carefully examine the components of presentational effectiveness from non-verbal communication, vocalics, dynamics, and word choice.

10. You will explore secondary ways to enhance the effectiveness of your presentations such as the incorporation of visual aids.

11. You will improve your ability to critical listen and evaluate the presentations.

**Required Materials/Resources**

Because this is a course that tries to be both practical as well as theoretical, the following texts and materials are necessary for you to complete this course:


**Equipment:** Since this course involves PRESENTATION, you will need to have access to the following equipment:

   1. A Video Camera for video-taping of three presentations. The camera should be in NTSC format. (NTSC is the format used in the USA. PAL and SEACAM are used outside the country and will not work for this course.) I can accept either video tapes or DVDs. Your choice of media will depend on what your team members can listen to as well.

   2. Video Equipment to copy your video presentations. All video tapes or DVDs should be copied for your own security in case an assignment is lost in the mail. (Lost assignments have happened every semester so don’t think it can’t happen to you!)
3. Real Producer—a free download in the course center and on the course CD. You can use this program to record all audio-only presentations. Real Player so you can listen to the presentations of your fellow students.

4. A microphone that can record audio presentations into Real Audio format. (I suggest a microphone headset.) If you would like to add a webcam, that’s great but it is not necessary.

5. Mailers for your video presentations.

6. BLANK video cassettes. About 8 blank audio cassettes.

Outside Support: As a distance learning course, PR 610 is going to require that you enlist the support of other adults in your church or community to serve as LOCAL MENTORS of your presentations. There must be at least FIVE mentors to listen to your video-taped presentations and complete the evaluation forms. THREE mentors should commit to listen to all video-taped presentations during the semester. The other mentors can be used who do not have to be at all presentations as long as there are at least five for the presentation. All mentors should meet the following qualifications.

1. At least one mentor should be a professional public speaker. My hands-down preference is that this person be a pastor with experience in preaching. I realize, however, that a pastor’s schedule doesn’t always permit this kind of involvement. If you cannot enlist the help of a pastor, let me suggest that find someone whose job or experience involves public presentation: a teacher, a lawyer, a salesperson.

2. At least one mentor must be male and not married to the female mentor.

3. At least one mentor must be female and not married to the male mentor.

4. No more than ONE mentor may be member of your family.

In addition to local mentors, you will also need the help of two additional people: a camera person to operate your video camera and a timer to help you stay within the time-limits of each presentation. Neither one of these should be mentors. I suggest that you equip your timer with visible index cards marking the 2-minute, 1-minute, 30-second end of your presentation. They can hold them up in an unobtrusive way during your presentation.

Making it work:
PR610 is both an academic and a performance class. I know that some of you are rolling your eyes saying, “It will never work!” I think you will be surprised that it does work if you follow these procedures for each audio and video presentations.
For Video Presentations

1. Record your presentation using a VHS or digital movie camera. Remember, your cameraperson SHOULD NOT be one of your mentors since they will be busy filling out your evaluation sheets.

2. Immediately after your presentation, ask your mentors to take time to fill out their evaluation sheets.

3. When the sheets are completed, ask them for verbal feedback as well so that they can elaborate on their comments.

4. Collect the sheets and photocopy them. Send the copies to me at 225 South Keeneland Drive, Richmond, Kentucky 40475. Keep the originals in a safe place until the end of the semester.

5. Copy your video using your camera and a VCR or some other copying device. You should make copies for:
   a. Your instructor
   b. Your team members (you will need to exchange postal addresses as soon as you are assigned to a team. Teams may change during the semester so keep informed.)

6. You are responsible to KEEP YOUR ORIGINAL until the end of the semester. This is important! Mail services can lose things! Please make sure you use a reliable mail service. I strongly suggest that you invest in the appropriate mailers for both video cassettes and for audio tapes. This will save you and me a lot of headaches. Please e-mail me and your team members when you send your tapes so that we can know to expect them.

7. When you receive your video, please send an evaluation to each speaker of your team and COPY IT FOR THE INSTRUCTOR. If you don’t send me a copy, then you will not receive credit for the evaluation.

8. When I receive the video or audio tape, I will send my evaluation to you as a Word attachment. I may also place some sample audio/video presentations on the course web site: http://fc.asburyseminary.edu/~fred_fitch/

For audio presentations

There are two ways you can do the audio-only assignments:

OPTION # 1—Use Real Producer and send them as e-mail attachments (preferred):

1. Download and install Real Producer Basic from the course center
2. Using the recording wizard, choose the second option “Record from a media device.”
3. Since you are only doing audio, select “capture audio” from the following screen and click “next.”
4. Fill out the information to identify your presentation. You only need to fill in the “title” and your name. Click “next”.

5. On the “file type,” choose “Single-rate web servers.” Click “next.”
6. For target audience, choose 28K modem. Click “next.”
7. For audio format, choose “Voice Only.” Click “next.”
8. For the output file, leave as is (or save it differently if you’re computer savvy—just make sure you retain the “.rm” extension.) Click “next.”
9. Click Finish.
10. Plug in your microphone. Click “start” when you are ready to record. When you are done recording, click “stop.”
11. Click play to review.

The advantage to this method is it will give you some extra time in completing your assignment and getting feedback from your class members. You’ll be sending these files as e-mail attachments, and that’s free! The disadvantage is that sometimes these files take a long time to download—especially if you are working with a dial-up connection.

OPTION #2
1. Record your presentation using the recording program that comes with your Windows operating system.
2. This will produce a .wav file. Save that file to a place where you can easily find it.
3. Because the file is large you may want to use Real Producer to convert the file to a .rm file. OR you can send it as an attached file so that your team members can listen.

The advantages to this method are the same as above. The disadvantage is that .wav files are HUGE. Upload and download will take a long time. I recommend this only if you and your team members have a DSL or cable modem connection.

Making it really work:
In working with video and audio files, videotape, e-mail and regular mail, it will come together if you ALWAYS keep these things in mind:

First, observe all due dates. Late assignments will not only jeopardize your grade (ahem!), they will slow everything down for everyone else.

Second, observe the 24-hour turn around. Get assignments off within 24 hours. Make sure you include enough postage when you send video and audio tapes.

Third, observe time-limits. Each presentation has specific time limits. Going over those limits (along with detracting from effectiveness) will increase recording, copying, downloading, and evaluating time.

Fourth, keep a copy EVERY assignment. Sometimes things get lost in transfer. Sometimes they get sent to the wrong place. Sometimes postal services (like in
New Jersey) have to screen all mail. Just in case something gets lost, make sure you save a copy.

**Important People:**
For institutional and ExL questions, you should contact Amy Jo Adams (ExL_Coach@asburyseminary.edu) or Kevin Osborn (ExL_Director@asburyseminary.edu).

For computer technical support, you will need to know Andy Adams (exl_support@asburyseminary.edu).

Hannah Kirsch is Asbury's reference librarian for the ExL program (Hannah_Kirsch@asburyseminary.edu).

Dorothy James is in charge of Inter-Library Loans, and she can help you find specific articles for your work (Dorothy_James@asburyseminary.edu). There may also eventually be a teaching assistant, to serve as a back-up when I am out of town.

**Class Procedures**
The ExL program of Asbury Theological Seminary works to insure that you, as an on-line student, will be receiving the same materials and equivalent experiences of those who are taking the class on-campus. To help achieve this goal, the course is divided into learning modules. Modules will be posted in the course center as the class advances throughout the course. Each module will include items for you to discuss as a class, to work on as a team, and to complete as individuals. Each module will also include the due date for the completion of assignments/presentations.

**Speaking Assignments**

**Special note:** Because this is a course designed to enhance your presentational skills, all speaking assignments must be completed in order to pass the course. Not completing any presentation will result in an automatic F for the class.

**Module 1: Greeting (Audio-taped using RealProducer)**
During the first week of class, I would like everyone to send a greeting using the RealProducer software. This will give you some practice using the software. It will also give us all a chance to know you! Send this file to the discussion center an attachment. Then we will have a chance to hear each other. *(Please call the file: yourlastname01.rm, i.e. smith01.rm)*
The Devotional Thought (Audio only, 3 minutes)
The purpose of this assignment is to whet your appetite for preaching by preparing a short devotional that you will share with your local mentors and recorded with your learning team. The format should include:

- a) A scriptural base: A portion of scripture that will serve as the foundation of your thought.
- b) An explanation: An a brief exposition of the scripture that demonstrates its relevancy to your listeners.
- c) An application: An action that you want your listeners to take as result of listening to your message.

This should not be a complicated or stress-making assignment. It should not be longer than three minutes (something like a radio-talk). It should be recorded on real producer and sent to your team members as a file attachment. It should be presented for and evaluated by your local mentors. After they complete their evaluations, please collect them, copy them, and send the copies to me along with your own self-evaluation.

Oral Interpretation (Audio only, 2-3 minutes)
Choose a passage of scripture and read it aloud. The presentation should be audio-recorded, sent to me and to members of your team. (Local mentors are not required to evaluate this assignment.) You will evaluate each other in terms of vocalics: expressiveness, variety in pitch, rate, tone.

Sermon 1: The Preaching Event (Video-taped, 10-12 minutes)
Upon the completion of your first sermon file, you will preach to your mentors (and anyone else you would like to be present). There will be many written assignments that will prepare you for this presentation including a personal confrontation reflection paper, an exegetical analysis of your passage, a complete outline, and a manuscript. The presentation should be video-taped. One copy along with mentor evaluations will be sent me; the other copies will go to your team members for their evaluations.

Sermon 2: The Revision (Audio only, 6-8 minutes)
The purpose of this assignment is to revise your message changing its purpose and format. Based on the materials that you gathered from your original file, reformulate your sermon for a different purpose and a different audience. This time the format will be more like a radio-talk (shorter) with the general purpose to motivate and persuade. The revision should be audio-recorded and sent to your team members for their evaluation. Written materials for this assignment will include a revised outline and manuscript.

Sermon 3: The Practice Sermon (Audio, peer evaluated only, 10-12 minutes)
The purpose of this speech is allow your peers to prepare you for your final sermon. It is practice only and will not be evaluated by the instructor, but by the members of your learning team. Their evaluations will be sent to you and copied to me so that they receive credit for this assignment. This is strictly a pass/fail assignment. You will receive full credit for it as a presentation when you submit the attachment to your team folder.

**Sermon 4: The Final Sermon (Video-taped 8-12 minutes)**
Having completed a full sermon file on a passage of scripture of your choice and having received and benefited from the constructive criticism of your peers, you will preach your final sermon to your mentors and others whom you would like to involve in this final preaching event. The sermon will be video taped with a copy retained for your own self evaluation and copy sent to me for the final evaluation.

**Written Assignments**

**My Theology of Preaching**
This introductory paper is a personal integration of your own principles and beliefs about preaching. In 3-5 page document (Word or WordPerfect only), deal with the following issues:

- The call to preach: What motivates you to be a preacher? Why have you chosen this vocation?
- The content of preaching: What is your theology of scripture? What is the relationship between the written and the preached word?
- The communication of preaching: Using what you understand of communication theory, what happens when you preach?
- The community and preaching: What do you want to do to your listeners when you preach? How do you expect your preaching to impact the lives of other human beings.

**Annotated Bibliography**
As a team, create an annotated bibliography of helpful resources (excluding commentaries) for the creation of sermons. Of particular importance are web resources. A minimum of 45 resources is expected.
Rhetorical Analysis of a Preacher
Based on the content of the course, write an 5-8 page critical analysis of a preacher based on a minimum of 3 sermons that you have heard or read. This paper should include

- Biographical information about the preacher.
- An analysis of her/his use of Scripture.
- An analysis of preaching materials and organization.
- An analysis of communication effectiveness (ability to instruct and motivate listeners).
- An analysis of delivery style
- A summary of personal application (what elements of this preacher should be emulated; what elements should be avoided.)

The Sermon File
Over the course of the semester, you will compile two complete sermon files. The first will be for a passage that will be assigned; the second will be for a passage of your own choosing. Each file will include the following components

- Initial impression: A paragraph or journal entry that reports your initial response to the passage you are preaching. How does the passage affect you? Where does it “cut” you? What is the Holy Spirit saying to you with the passage? What personal behaviors might be impacted?
- Audience analysis: Compile as much demographic information that you can about the congregation you will be preaching to. Whether 5 or 500, who are they? What do you know about them? What are their needs? Why do they need to listen to you?
- Background analysis: Compile the relevant information that you need to have to explain your text. This would include historical background, literary context, genre, information about the author and the recipients.
- Exegetical/IBS analysis: A complete study of the passage applying the tools you have of biblical analysis. Include a structural analysis, key interpretive questions, and key verses.
- Correlation and Application: An interpretation of the life-issues and human behaviors that the passage addresses. What principles does the passage address? What characteristics can be emulated? What questions does it answer? What things must change: personally, socially, psychologically, politically, etc.? SO WHAT? WHAT DO YOU WANT US TO DO?
- Central Idea: What is the subject and predicate of the passage?
- Complete Outline: Following the guidelines of the text, you will write an outline that will include a specific purpose, a central idea, an introduction, transitions, conclusion, and the major points of your message.
- A Sermon Manuscript. Based on your outline, you will write a complete transcript of your message.
- A final reflection: A paragraph that revisits your initial impressions and addresses the question: What must the Holy Spirit do in your own life as
a result of your encounter with the Word? What does He want to do in
the lives of your listeners?

- **A self-critique**: After preaching your message, what worked? What
didn’t work? What do you need to do differently when you preach the
passage again?

**On-line discussions**

A component of each module will be participation in an on-line discussion. The
general discussion board will be reserved for questions about assignments that
you can answer for one another and which I can address. The Teams folder will
be used for submitting the components of your first sermon file so that your team
members can comment, offer suggestions, encouragement, and, when
necessary, challenge some of your thinking. Team assignments will be made
after the first module. You may be reassigned to a different team if members of
your first team drop the course. You will be evaluated by your participation with
and contribution to your fellow team members.

**Peer Evaluations**

As a student of PR610, you will have an active part in evaluating each other in
this virtual classroom. Please take the time to listen carefully to those students
you are asked to evaluate. Balance your comments so that they are both
encouraging and constructive. Please make your comments as complete as
possible. The PR610 office should receive a CC of all peer evaluations. Peer
evaluations can be sent using the on-line forms found by following the links on
the course home page or may be mailed as attachments using the evaluation
forms in the “Forms Folder.”

**Final Reflection E-mail**

On the last week of class, I would like you write a no-draft reflection e-mail
discussing both the strengths and weaknesses your mentors and peers have
pointed out in your public speaking. What strengths are consistent? What
problems persist as well? Have the evaluations been accurate? Why or why
not? Evaluate your own progress since the beginning of the semester. (This is a
sit-down-and-write assignment.) Do it sincerely and you get full credit.

**Evaluation of presentations**

All of your oral presentations will be evaluated by me based on the criteria of the
class. I need to warn you in advance that as a skills-based course, evaluations
will be come stricter as your presentational skills become refined. What I’m
saying is that I tend to evaluate earlier assignments with greater leniency than
later assignments. I welcome your reactions and responses to my evaluations.
If you do have any questions or concerns, I welcome your e-mails and phone
calls.
Making contact
I welcome you to contact any time by e-mail. If you need to speak with me, feel free to call me on my mobile phone (732), 672-8203. If for any reason the First Class program is not working, you can send e-mail to me at ffitch@prodigy.net. (Please do this only in the case that First Class doesn’t seem to work.)

Selected Bibliography


