

## **COS 324 – Preaching**

**Winter 2025, Feb. 7-8 and March 7-8**

**Fully online with 12 synchronous hours via Zoom (out of 20 hours)**

**Zoom times: Feb. 7, 5-7 p.m. EST; Feb. 8, 1-3 p.m. EST**

**March 7, 2-4 and 5-7 p.m. EST; March 8, 9-11 a.m. and 1-3 p.m. EST**

**Rev. Dr. Robin Knowles Wallace**

Ask general questions through the bulletin board on Populi or individual questions on the various assignment pages; see syllabus on Populi for email address

COS 324 – Preaching Description, Outcomes, and Textbook

*set by General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of The United Methodist Church*

This course focuses on preaching the gospel from the Old and New Testaments.

Students will be able to:

1. Articulate a theology of proclamation.
2. Exegete a variety of biblical passages for preaching.
3. Evaluate sermons for biblical integrity, theological soundness, internal logic, and delivery, and appropriate insights gained from the evaluation of their own sermons.
4. Develop plans for ordering and delivering sermons in their congregational and communal context.

### **TEXTS**

Taylor, Barbara Brown. *The Preaching Life*. Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 1993.

Wilson, Paul Scott, gen. ed., *The New Interpreter's Handbook of Preaching*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008. We will be reading individual articles as assigned below, sometimes noted as *The Handbook*.

Excerpt on Populi from Willobee, Sondra B. *The Write Stuff : Crafting Sermons That Capture and Convince*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009.

### **SCHEDULE/TIMELINE**

*Posted=posted on Populi* **under Assignments (unless otherwise noted)**

*All times are listed according to Eastern Standard Time*

February 1, Populi opens to students

Feb. 3, 11 p.m. Journal Exercise #1 on biggest challenge/want help with

Feb. 6, 11 p.m. Exegesis Exercises #1-4 posted; please post as you go along—don't wait until the deadline to post all of them

Feb. 7, 5-7 p.m. Zoom class. Have your 3-minute introduction ready to present at the beginning of class. For the remainder of this time, we will work in small groups on "simple declarative sentences to state the message of possible sermons" from scriptures in the Hebrew Bible and shared them on a discussion board. See <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/types-of-declarative-sentences-with-examples> (also on Populi, "What is a declarative sentence?")

Feb. 8, 11:15 a.m. COS Worship on Zoom

Feb. 8, 1-3 p.m. Zoom class. Preach a short sermon—for children (3 options, see below), wedding, or funeral.

By Feb. 8, 11 p.m., post your manuscript, outline, or notes from your short sermon  
Feb. 12, 11 p.m. Let professor know the scripture for your next class sermon  
Feb. 14, 11 p.m. Journal Exercise #2 on the Sermon posted  
Feb. 21, 11 p.m. Journal Exercise #3 on the Preacher posted  
March 6, 11 p.m. Exegesis Exercise #5 posted  
March 7, 2-4 p.m. Zoom class. First 4 sermons will be preached  
March 7, 5-7 p.m. Next 4 sermons will be preached  
March 8, 9-11 a.m. Next 4 sermons will be preached  
March 8, 11:15 COS Worship on Zoom  
March 8, 1-3 p.m. Final sermons will be preached  
By March 10, 11 p.m. post your manuscript, outline, or notes from your long sermon  
March 12, 11 p.m. Theology of Proclamation posted  
March 31, 11:59 p.m. Student access to Populi will close for the winter term

## **ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING**

“Exercise” and “journal” suggest informal writing. If you do quote something directly from a reading, put the author and page # in parenthesis at the end of the sentence, before the period. Some of your entries may be as short as several sentences or a short list; some may require more paragraphs. The primary criteria for the grading is evidence of thoughtful engagement between you, your experience, and the readings.

Exegesis and Journal exercises may be typed into a Word or Pages document and uploaded into the Assignment file. (If you are working on exercises and journal entries before Populi is open, this is one way to do that.) Or you may write by hand and then photograph or scan them and upload into the Assignment file. While you can type directly into the Populi assignment page, things can get lost if not all typed at one time.

A word about plagiarism: Sermons and illustrations are easy to find online. They are also easy to trace. Do your own work, please. The point of this class is to help you find your own voice in preaching, not how to weave together other people’s ideas. Follow the process outlined in class and it will help you find YOUR voice as you bear witness to the good news of Jesus Christ.

(While we will work in this class on your own original voice, week in and week out, outside of class, there is a good chance that you will turn to resources to add to and weave in with your own voice. Understand that there is nothing wrong with that blending process and it is necessary over time as you seek to balance pastoral duties, other work, family, and life. But strengthening your own voice, through thoughtful scripture work and depending on the Holy Spirit, is what we will concentrate on, and that will make everything else you do in preaching easier.)

**Exegesis Exercises, Introductory Speech, and Short Sermon** – all due before or on first class weekend, February 7 and 8– total 35 points

- Journal Exercise #1: What is your biggest preaching challenge or what do you need the most help with in preaching? Shared only between you and the professor. Due Feb. 3, 11 p.m.

- Exegesis Exercise #1: “Exegesis, when the term is used in relationship to preaching, normally refers to the act of interpreting a biblical text so that the meanings of the text can be understood and the present-day import of those meanings can be expressed in sermons. Exegesis for preaching, then, requires, a careful attention to the nature and character of the biblical text itself as well as a discerning attention to the contemporary context in which that text is read and preached” (*The Handbook*, Location 1767 of 19512, Kindle). Considering this definition from the article on “Exegesis” by Thomas G. Long, list in your journal the process you currently use for exegeting sermon scriptures. Then read the article on “Exegesis” by Long. Which of his seven methods are you using well? What one or two might you use better or more often? Write down your answers. Then read “Introduction: Preaching in a Diverse World” by Joseph R. Jeter Jr. (*The Handbook*). Where does this article challenge or affirm your current practice? What things might you work on in upcoming sermons? Write your answers and post everything in this exercise as one document by Feb. 6. Summarize your current process of sermon preparation for part of your opening 3-minute speech for class on Feb. 7.
- Exegesis Exercise #2: Read “Exegesis of the Congregation and Denomination” by Stephen Farris and “Gender, Race, and Ethnicity” by Gary V. Simpson (*The Handbook*). Then in two paragraphs of prose (1. congregation, 2. denomination) or lists of seven adjectives (congregation) plus three adjectives (denomination) describe your current ministry setting. If you serve multiple congregations include something about each. Post this exercise on Populi by Feb. 6. Reflect on your writing, then summarize this as part of your opening 3-minute speech for class on February 7.
- Exegesis Exercise #3. Read two of the sermons in Part II of *The Preaching Life* by Barbara Brown Taylor. On the **Discussion board** for one sermon, post one-sentence answers (so four sentences total) to the following questions:
  - a. What **human condition** is addressed in the biblical text?
  - b. What is the **good news** in the scripture/the sermon that addresses that human condition?
  - c. In one simple declarative sentence (see file on Populi, “What is a declarative sentence?”), state the **message** of this sermon.
  - d. What is the predominant image of **God** in this sermon?

These questions have no “right” answer. Each of us and our congregations may well hear different things in scripture and in sermons than our neighbors. For this we can thank the Holy Spirit who cares for the needs of each of us.

For the second sermon you read, go to that sermon’s discussion board and dialogue briefly (one to four sentences total) agreeing with another student’s post or suggesting what you read/heard instead. Both sets of posting due February 6.
- Introductory speech, 3-minute maximum, given at the beginning of Zoom class on February 7. Use notes or not as you wish, BUT you must adhere to time limits. Introduce us to your congregation/s and your preaching process, using Exegesis Exercises #1-2 above.

- Original short sermons (not preached before), preached at the beginning of Zoom class on February 8. Topics: wedding, funeral, children and baptism, children and communion, or children and a religious symbol in your sanctuary. Three-minute minimum to five-minute maximum (please time it!). In order to have a variety, we will plan for several of each type. As soon as you read this part of the syllabus, you may email me with your top two choices and I will respond with your assigned one, according to how the types are filling up. Read the *Handbook* article related to your situation—children, funeral, wedding—before you pick your scripture and plan your sermon. Note that as Carolyn Brown’s article on children suggests, your “children’s sermon” may be a child-accessible section that would fit into a larger sermon on communion, baptism, or relating to a religious symbol in the sanctuary. For this sermon, do Exegesis Exercise #4: Reread #7 “Prayerful and Meditative Exegesis” in “Exegesis” by Thomas G. Long – go through the *lectio divina* practice with the scripture you will preach on for class for your short sermon. Write down your findings and also answer these four questions about the scripture and your short sermon:
  - a. In one sentence, describe the **human condition** addressed in the biblical text.
  - b. In one sentence, identify the **good news** in the scripture/your sermon that addresses that human condition.
  - c. In one simple declarative sentence, state the **message** of this sermon.
  - d. What is the predominant image of **God** in each sermon? Post by February 6. On or before February 8, 11 p.m., post your manuscript, outline, or notes on the same Populi Assignment as Exegesis Exercise #4.

**Journal Exercises and Exegesis Exercise between Zoom class weekends** – due dates as noted, total 30 points

- By February 12, (11 p.m.) let professor know on the Assignment: Full Sermon page what scripture and/or theme you will be preaching on in our next Zoom class together. It should be from the upcoming lectionary any time on or after March 23 (see for example, the *United Methodist Book of Worship* or <https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/>). Professor will organize our March Zoom class time by lectionary order (Multiple sermons on the same scripture may occur and will be different as each preacher comes to the text with their congregation in mind.)
- Journal Exercise #2 on the Sermon: Read and journal about two insights (total) from Chapter 7 “Preaching” in *The Preaching Life* and from *The Handbook*: “Celebration” by Henry H. Mitchell, “The Four Pages of the Sermon” by John M. Rottman, “Teaching” by Ronald J. Allen, “The New Homiletic” by Paul Scott Wilson, and “Without Notes” by Joseph M. Webb. Due February 14, 11 p.m. EST.
- Journal Exercise #3 on the Preacher: Read any chapter (1-6) from Part I of *The Preaching Life* by Barbara Brown Taylor; read on Populi: “Time to Revise” by Sondra Willabee; and read in *The Handbook* “Preacher’s Week” by William J. Carl III. Read, reflect, and write down three things you will work at/pay attention to in your upcoming sermon prep and performance, one for each of four-month intervals over the coming year. Put reminders in whatever calendar/scheduler you use. Due by February 21, 11 p.m. EST.

- Exegesis Exercise #5: Re-read #7 “Prayerful and Meditative Exegesis” in Exegesis by Thomas G. Long – go through the *lectio divina* practice with the scripture you will preach on for class for your original upcoming class sermon. Write down your findings and also answer these four questions about the scripture and your upcoming class sermon:
  - a. In one sentence, describe the **human condition** addressed in the biblical text.
  - b. In one sentence, identify the **good news** in the scripture/your sermon that addresses that human condition.
  - c. In one simple declarative sentence, state the **message** of this sermon.
  - d. What is the predominant image of **God** in each sermon? Post by March 6.

**Full Sermon and Theology of Proclamation/Preaching** – due March 7-8, total 35 points

- Original long sermon: 7-minute minimum and 12-minute maximum (time limits may change due to class size; whatever limits are, please time this sermon, more than once!). The scripture may be from the upcoming lectionary any time on or after March 23. Professor will organize our Zoom class time by lectionary/series order. The criteria used by the instructor to respond to the sermon will include:

	Strong	Average	Weak
True to scripture			
Theologically sound			
Logical thought progression			
Actual delivery			

After hearing the sermon, students will respond to each other’s sermons with the questions: “What will you take away from this sermon?” and “What drew you into the sermon and helped you connect with God?”

On or before March 8, 11 p.m., post your manuscript, outline, or notes.

- Theology of Proclamation/Preaching. Final assignment, around 500 words. Read “Theology as Proclamation” by James F. Kay, “Authority (Theology)” by Thomas G. Long, “Sermon as Proclamation” by David J. Lose, consider your introductory 3-minute speech from the first Zoom class. Write as though you were sharing your theology of proclamation/preaching with your District Committee on Ministry or at a church where you were being introduced as their new pastor. Due March 12, 11 p.m. EST.

**COSSO Academic Honor Policy**

The Course of Study School of Ohio requires that all material submitted by a student in fulfilling his or her academic requirements be the original work of the student.

Violations of academic honor include any action by a student indicating dishonesty or lack of integrity in academic ethics. Violations in this category include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly passing off work of another as one’s own.

Cheating includes seeking, acquiring, receiving or passing on information about the content of an examination prior to its authorized release or during its administration. Cheating also includes

seeking, using, giving or obtaining unauthorized assistance in any academic assignment or examination.

Plagiarism is the act of presenting as one's own work with the work of another whether published or unpublished (including the work of another student). A writer's work should be regarded as his or her own property. Any person who knowingly uses a writer's distinctive work without proper acknowledgement is guilty of plagiarism.

A student found guilty of a violation of the academic honor code, after a review of the case, may be subject to one or more of the following sanctions: (1) warning; (2) failing grade for the assignment and/or course; (3) probation; (4) suspension; (5) dismissal from the Course of Study School of Ohio. In severe or repeat cases (regardless of the sanctions) a letter will be sent to the student's District Superintendent and Board of Ordained Ministry representative.

### **COSSO Attendance Policy**

National policy from the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) states that a student is expected to attend every class session. Unexcused absences may be cause for loss of credit or dismissal from the school. A student missing 20% or more of the classroom work shall not receive credit for the class. In the event of extenuating circumstances which require the student to miss up to 20% of the synchronous course time (whether in-person or on Zoom), the student should contact both the instructor and the Director prior to the start of the class to get approval and discuss make-up work. (Extenuating circumstances include emergency situations, illness, and dire circumstances, for example. Students are to provide back-up coverage at the local church while attending COS classes.)

**Cancellation and Withdrawal:** Student must notify the COSSO office if they will be unable to attend class for which they are registered. Although there is no penalty when withdrawing more than two weeks in advance of the beginning of a term, registration fees are nontransferable and nonrefundable. A \$50.00 late withdrawal fee is charged for all withdrawals within two weeks of the start of a class. All tuition and housing payments are applied to a future term.

Students withdrawing after the start of a term will be assigned a grade of AW (Administrative Withdrawal) and will be responsible for the full \$300.00 tuition amount. Any annual conference scholarship applied to the student billing record becomes the student's responsibility and is due by the end of the term. Housing payment is non-refundable.

**No Shows:** Except in cases of immediate and dire emergencies, if a student misses any class without notifying the COSSO office, tuition and housing fees are due immediately, a \$50.00 no show fee is charged, and the student will receive an "F" in the class.