

COS 324 – Preaching **Spring 2026, April 17-18 and May 8-9**

Fully online with 12 synchronous hours via Zoom (out of 20 hours)
Zoom times: April 17, 3-5 p.m. EDT; April 18, 9-11 a.m. and 1-3 p.m. EDT
May 8, 3-5 EDT; May 9, 9-11 a.m. and 1-3 p.m. EDT

Rev. Dr. Robin Knowles Wallace

Ask general questions through the bulletin board on Populi
or individual questions on the various assignment pages; email rkwallace@gmail.com

Note: Order your textbooks as soon as possible. Populi will open for this course on April 1, but some of you may prefer to not enter it until after Easter, and that is fine. Nothing is due until after Easter.

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, 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=*post on Populi under Assignments (unless otherwise noted).

Details of assignments are below. All times listed are Eastern Daylight Time.

Preparation and First Course Weekend, due dates as noted, total 35 points

April 1, Populi opens to students

April 7, 11 p.m. Exercise #1 on biggest challenge/want help with, posted

April 14, 11 p.m. Exercises #2 through #4 posted

April 16, 11 p.m. Four points about short sermon posted

April 17, 3-5 p.m. Zoom class. Three-minute introductions

April 18, 9-11 a.m. Zoom class, “Four pieces of the sermon” and Collects

April 18, 11:15 a.m. COS Worship on Zoom

April 18, 1-3 p.m. Zoom class. Preach a short sermon (for children, wedding, or funeral)

By April 18, 11 p.m., post your manuscript, outline, or notes from your short sermon

Between Classes, includes Preparation for Second Weekend, due dates as noted, total 30 points

By April 23, 11 p.m. Let instructor know the scripture and lectionary date for your full sermon

By April 30, 11 p.m. Exercises #5 and #6 on the Sermon and on the Preacher posted

By May 6, 11 p.m. Theology of Proclamation posted

By May 8, ready to preach full sermon

Second Course Weekend, due dates as noted, total 35 points

May 8, 3-5 p.m. Zoom class. First 5 sermons will be preached

May 9, 9-11 a.m. Next 5 sermons will be preached

May 9, 11:15 COS Worship on Zoom

May 9, 1-3 p.m. Final sermons will be preached

By May 9, 11 p.m. post your manuscript, outline, or notes from your full sermon

May 31, 11:59 p.m. Student access to full course page on Populi will close for the spring term, grades posted before then

Assignments

Exercises, Introductory Speech, and Short Sermon. All due before or in first class weekend, April 17-18. Total 35 points. Please post as you go along; don't wait until the deadline to post all of them.

Exercise #1 What is your biggest preaching challenge or what do you need the most help with in preaching? Due on Populi under Assignments by April 7, 11 p.m.

Exercise #2 "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 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? Graded on thoughtful engagement between your current work and the readings. Write your answers and post everything in this exercise as one document on Populi under Assignments by April 14, 11 p.m.

Exercise #3 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 under Assignments by April 14, 11 p.m.

Exercise #4 Read two of the following sermons from Part II of *The Preaching Life* by Barbara Brown Taylor

- Do love, Luke 10.36-37
- The one to watch, Mark 12.41-42
- None of us is home yet, Matthew 6.26
- The prodigal father, Luke 15.11-12

At our first weekend together on Zoom, be ready to discuss the following points about each of the two sermons you read. Nothing to post on Populi beforehand.

1. What **human condition** is addressed in the biblical text/sermon?
2. What is the **good news** in the sermon that addresses that human condition?
3. What is the predominant image of **God** in this sermon?
4. In one simple declarative sentence (see file on Populi, “What is a declarative sentence?”), state the **message** of this sermon.

Introductory speech, 3-minute maximum, given at the beginning of Zoom class on April 17. 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 summaries of Exercises #2 and 3, above.

Original “short” sermons (not preached before) Preached in the afternoon of our Zoom class on April 18. Topics: wedding, funeral, children and baptism, children and communion, or children and a religious symbol in your sanctuary. **Plan on 3-4 minutes total** (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: 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 short sermon. Make note for yourself of your findings and also answer these four points about the scripture and your short sermon:

1. In one sentence, describe the **human condition** addressed in the biblical text.
2. In one sentence, identify the **good news** in the scripture/your sermon that addresses that human condition.
3. What is the predominant image of **God** in each sermon?
4. In one simple declarative sentence, state the **message** of this sermon.

Post those four points on Populi under Assignments by 11 p.m., April 16. On or before April 18, 11 p.m., post your manuscript, outline, or notes on Populi under Assignments.

Exercises between Zoom class weekends. Due dates as noted, total 30 points.

Choose scripture/Sunday for full sermon. By April 23, 11 p.m. let instructor know on the Assignment: 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 (Year A) any time on or after May 14, Ascension (see for

example, the *United Methodist Book of Worship* or <https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/>). The instructor will organize our May Zoom class time by lectionary order.

Exercise #5 on the Sermon: Read and write briefly about two insights (total) from Chapter 7 “Preaching” in *The Preaching Life* and from *The Handbook*: “Celebration” by Henry H. Mitchell (required) and “Without Notes” by Joseph M. Webb or an essay of your choice from Chapter 10, “Sermon.” Post on Populi. Due April 30, 11 p.m. EDT.

Exercise #6 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 Willobee; 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. Post on Populi. Due by April 30, 11 p.m. EDT.

Theology of Proclamation (that is, Preaching). Read “Theology as Proclamation” by James F. Kay, “Authority (Theology)” by Thomas G. Long, and “Sermon as Proclamation” by David J. Lose. Consider your introductory 3-minute speech from the first Zoom class.

Begin your around-500-word essay with:

- a. In one sentence, describe the **human condition in general** as featured in your preaching.
 - b. In one sentence, identify the **good news** in scripture/Jesus Christ that addresses that human condition.
 - c. What are some predominant images of **God** in your preaching?
 - d. In one simple declarative sentence, state the general content/**message** of most of your sermons.
- Describe your theology of preaching derived from these theological concepts and reference the readings as they inform your theology. Watch your word count. Post on Populi’s Assignments section. Due May 6, 11 p.m. EDT.

Full Sermon. To be preached in class on May 8 or 9. Total 35 points

Original “full” sermon: 15-minute maximum including scripture reading (please time this sermon, more than once!). It should be based on the upcoming lectionary (Year A) any time on or after May 14, Ascension (see for example, the *United Methodist Book of Worship* or <https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/>). The instructor will organize our May 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.

In preparation

Re-read chapter 7 “Prayerful and Meditative Exegesis” in “Exegesis” by Thomas G. Long (*The Handbook*)— 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 points 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. What is the predominant image/s of **God** in this scripture and sermon?
- c. In one simple declarative sentence, state the **message** of this sermon

Include these four points for the instructor at the beginning of your manuscript/notes/outline. (They should not necessarily be spoken at the beginning of your sermon.)

Preach the sermon on Zoom for the class

(if using gestures, please make sure they can be seen by your camera)

After hearing each sermon, students will respond on a discussion board with answers to one of these questions: “What will you take away from this sermon?” or “What drew you into the sermon and helped you connect with God?”

The criteria used by the instructor to respond to the sermon will include:

| | Strong | Average | Weak |
|-----------------------|--------|---------|------|
| Biblical integrity | | | |
| Theological soundness | | | |
| Internal logic | | | |
| Delivery | | | |

On or before May 9, 11 p.m., post your manuscript, outline, or notes, beginning with the four points noted above. Post on Populi’s Assignments section.

Nothing will be due after our final Zoom class. On May 31, 11:59 p.m. full student access to Populi will close for the spring term. Grades will be posted before then.

GRADING INFORMATION

Exercise, for this class, suggests informal writing. If you do quote something directly from a reading, put the author and page number 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 paragraphs. The primary criteria for the grading is evidence of thoughtful engagement between you, the readings, and your experience.

Exercises and sermons may be typed into a Word or Pages document and uploaded into the Assignment file. (If you are working on exercise entries before Populi is open, this is one way to do that.) Or you may write by hand (legibly) and then photograph or scan them and upload into the Assignment file.

Sermons are oral events, so whatever method you use to capture what you are going to say is up to you, with the following caveat: In order to give you grades on both “short” and “full” sermons, your instructor needs documentation, in manuscript, moderately detailed outline (especially for full sermon), or notes. These will not be graded for formatting or grammar, but will be graded on content and engagement in the preaching time. (See rubrics above.)

The “Theology of Proclamation” assignment, which is a requirement of GBHEM and thus something that might be shared beyond class (with DCOMs or in church introductions), is more formal or academic writing. Any phrases or sentences from sources need to be documented in proper citation style including page numbers, and grammar and style will be commented on as needed by the instructor.

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, outside of class, week in and week out, 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 may well be 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 in class, and that will make everything else you do in preaching easier.)

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.)

Students attending online are required to show their faces the entire class time in order to be considered present, unless internet bandwidth issues or emergency circumstances (e.g., a power outage) necessitate turning off one's camera or calling in to class by phone. You are expected to attend class as you would in a face-to-face classroom (e.g, not driving). During asynchronous class time, faculty may monitor time used in posting and responding to colleagues to track your participation.

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.