

Name: Jacob D. Myers, Ph.D.

Field: Homiletics

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Course Title: For God So Loved The World: Preaching Toward Environmental Sustainability

My thinking regarding environmental sustainability deepened through the Piedmont Fellowship. In particular, I began to see that breaking down the topic of sustainability into its three component and interrelated aspects (biological, social, economic) could give students a better grasp of the scope and complexity of environmental sustainability. In my field of Christian preaching/homiletics, I added the theological dimension to help students think about sustainability according to this fourth paradigm of inquiry. Furthermore, in learning about sustainable practices involving food, I saw how that topic could model the kind of four-fold attention that could lead to preaching on environmental sustainability.

Spring 2016

Candler School of Theology
Emory University

For God So Loved the World: Preaching Toward Environmental Sustainability

Mondays 1:00 - 4:00

INSTRUCTOR

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Office Hours: By Appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course aims to empower preachers to address issues of environmental degradation through their preaching ministries with the hope of mobilizing congregational engagement toward sustainability. To that end, this course will equip students with critical tools to prepare congregations for theological and ethical engagement for a range of sustainability ministries. This course will model a certain kind of social analysis, theological/ethical reflection, and prophetic preaching — such that is *globally aware* and *locally mobilized*. Students will select one topic that touches upon environmental sustainability in Atlanta for close social analysis, which will serve as a catalyst for ethical, theological, and homiletical reflection.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of the course students should have gained . . .

. . . a critical awareness of the myriad aspects of the environmental crisis and a familiarity with

the tools necessary to conduct such analyses

. . . a deeper knowledge of a particular social issue that is especially germane to environmental sustainability present in Atlanta (e.g., community supported agriculture, organic farming, transportation)

. . . a critical understanding of the challenges and opportunities the current cultural realities present to a preaching ministry attuned to the realities of environmental degradation

. . . a deepening of the skills learned in Introduction to Preaching with a particular emphasis on the arts of prophetic and testimonial preaching

. . . a capacity to couple experience (both reported and personal) with biblical texts to craft sermons that lead to congregational engagement in sustainability ministries and organizations.

COURSE METHOD

The three hours of each course will be roughly divided in thirds. During the first third of each class session students will receive lectures from the instructor. In the second third we will screen a documentary film that highlights an issue of environmental concern. The final third of each course will be conducted seminar-style, involving class discussion on the readings, lectures, and pertinent experiences students are having in their immersion sites. This format aims to facilitate the kind of critical reflection, practical engagement, and dialogical awareness necessary for preaching justice toward environmental sustainability.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The following are required:

- 1) Faithful attendance at seminar sessions and active participation in discussion
- 2) 12 hours of volunteer work at a local immersion site (**nb: required to pass the course**)
- 3) Semi-weekly reflection papers on the assigned readings (10 total; you can drop one)
- 4) A final project providing in-depth social analysis on a topic of sustainability in Atlanta with attention to its global impact and practical application for the local church
- 5) One 15-30 minute sermon delivered in class (with accompanying homiletical analysis paper) that is related to the student's sustainability project

COURSE ASSESSMENT

Assessment of learning will take into account the following criteria: accuracy and precision of scholarship, contribution to class processes of inquiry and discussion, creativity and critical judgment. The distribution of assignments for final evaluation is as follows:

Seminar Preparation and Participation: 10%

Reflection Papers (3% each): 30%

Sustainability Project: 30%

Sermon: 30%

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS & EXPECTATIONS

Attendance & Participation: Learning, at bottom, is predicated upon showing up for class ready to learn. If you are not in class you cannot participate in the class discussion and therefore your learning for that session will be severely inhibited. **N.B., Students who miss more than 2 classes will not receive credit for this course.** In addition, when you are tardy it disrupts the flow of conversation and thus learning is frustrated. Therefore, in this course **2 tardies equals 1 absence**. Students are encouraged to come prepared with notes taken from the readings so that they are ready to participate in discussion. If you

are present in class the instructor will assume you are ready to participate in discussion so do not be surprised when you are invited to weigh-in on a topic without warning.

Immersion Participation: N.B., Students must complete this requirement to pass this course.

All students are required to commit at least **12 hours** over the course of the semester volunteering at an Atlanta-based nonprofit organization or ministry committed to environmental sustainability. No later than the 3rd class session, students should have negotiated a suitable placement and present to the instructor a participation form* signed by the site director or supervisor indicating the ways in which the student will learn from and participate in this organization. For a list of possible organizations in the Atlanta area see: (http://oucpc.emory.edu/about_oucpc/partners.html).

Reflection Papers: All students are required to write **ten** 2-3 page reflection papers during the semester (see schedule). The purpose of these papers is to demonstrate your grasp of the material covered in the course and to provide a formal space for reflection on how what you are learning can be integrated into your present and future ministries. In the papers, roughly 2/3 should consist of direct analysis/critical engagement on/with the assigned readings and 1/3 should consist of your reflection. Papers are due at the *beginning* of each class. Students are encouraged to submit their papers electronically to save paper.

Sustainability Project: Each student is expected to prepare a 10-15 page paper that provides in-depth social analysis on one area of environmental sustainability. Highlights from these projects will be shared in class in 30 minute blocks (see schedule). It ought to treat the same issue of sustainability as the sermon, at least peripherally. For example, a student might preach a sermon with a focus on sustainable food initiatives in Atlanta and her justice project might treat the issue of “food deserts” in relation to sustainability, thereby treating the same topic broadly, but from different angles. The aim of this project is to nurture and hone the skills of social analysis that will serve future ministries.

Sermon: Each student is expected to prepare and deliver a 15-20 minute sermon in class (with accompanying homiletical analysis paper*). Sermons may be “performed” with the use of a manuscript (though not merely read!). If the student prefers, his/her sermon may be delivered extemporaneously. The sermon should bear in mind the skills developed in Introduction to Preaching and should display a critical engagement with an issue of environmental sustainability. Sermons should arise out of critical engagement with a particular biblical text and be connected to the student’s immersion work. The instructor encourages students to solicit homiletical feedback in view of sharing the sermon in class.

***Homiletical Analysis Paper:** On the session the sermon is preached, the student is expected to deliver to the instructor a homiletical analysis paper in which s/he:

- 1) Summarizes pertinent exegetical/hermeneutical findings on the biblical text on which the sermon is based (~2-3 pages)
- 2) Presents relevant data related to the particular issue of environmental sustainability with which the sermon will deal (~2 pages)
- 3) Identifies the claim of the text, focus, and function of the sermon as it arises from the biblical text and the issue of environmental sustainability treated (1/2 page)
- 4) Offers a rationale for the moves of the sermon along theological, hermeneutical, rhetorical, stylistic, and delivery lines (~1-2 pages)
- 5) Provides a cogent defense for each part (or move) of the sermon *and* how it connects with the exegesis, data, claim, focus, and function statements (an outline is fine).

Papers will vary in length depending on the complexity of the biblical text on which the sermon is based and the issue of environmental sustainability treated. As a general rule, the instructor will expect a paper *no shorter than 5 pages and no longer than 10 pages*. Papers are due at the *beginning* of class. Students are encouraged to submit their papers electronically to save paper.

Late Work Policy: All late work will be reduced 8% for each day it is late. For example, if you earn a 78% (C+) on a paper turned in one day late your grade will be a 70% (C-), or if you turn in a final project that deserves a 98% (A) two days late your grade will be an 82% (B-).

Note: Those students with special needs (Disability, English as a Second Language, etc.) should inform the instructor of any special circumstances by the second week of class and will receive ample support and accommodation.

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the intentional or careless use and presentation of another person's words, thoughts, ideas or work that is not "common knowledge," as one's own, original work. In academic research and learning, both of which you will be participating in this semester, it is commonplace and necessary to learn from and use the work already done by others. However, when doing so you *must* provide citations, i.e., give credit to whom it is due, for your use of their work. If you engage in plagiarism you will automatically fail the course and be referred to Dean Strom. Please see this resource by Indiana University for more guidance on avoiding plagiarism:
<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml>.

GRADING SCALE:

93-100 = A (Excellent)	80-82 = B- (Above Average)	67-69 = D+ (Poor)
90-92 = A- (Superior)	77-79 = C+ (Average)	63-66 = D (Inadequate)
87-89 = B+ (Very Good)	73-76 = C (Adequate)	62 and Below = F (Failing)
83-86 = B (Good)	70-72 = C- (Below Average)	

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Ayres, Jennifer. *Good Food: Grounded Practical Theology*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013.

Brown, William P. *Sacred Sense: Discovering the Wonder of God's Word and World*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015.

Climate Change: Evidence and Causes. National Academies Press, 2014. (download for free on Kindle)

Caradonna, Jeremy L. *Sustainability: A History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Guthman, Julie. *Weighing In: Obesity, Food Justice, and the Limits of Capitalism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011.

Horrell, David. G., Cherryl Hunt, and Christopher Southgate. *Greening Paul: Rereading the Apostle in a Time of Ecological Crisis*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010.

McFague, Sallie. *Sallie McFague: Collected Readings*, ed. David B. Lott. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013.

Selections from (PDFs Available on Blackboard):

- Carter Florence, Anna. *Preaching as Testimony*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2007.
- Habel, Norman C., ed. *The Earth Story in the Psalms and the Prophets*. The Earth Bible, vol. 4. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001.
- Habel, Norman C. and Shirley Wurst, ed. *The Earth Story in Genesis*. The Earth Bible, vol. 2. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000.
- McClure, John S. *Otherwise Preaching: A Postmodern Ethic for Homiletics*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001.
- Harris, James Henry. "Preaching Liberation: The Afro-American Sermon and the Quest for Social Change," *The Journal of Religious Thought*, 76, no. 33 (Spring/Summer, 1989): 72-89.
- Todd Peters, Rebecca. *Solidarity Ethics: Transformation in a Globalized World*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014.
- Tubbs Tisdale, Lenora. *Prophetic Preaching: A Pastoral Approach*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2010.
- Wirzba, Norman. *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Schedule

Week One: What is Sustainability And Why Does it Matter Theologically?

In Class

- : Overview of Syllabus
- : Film screening (*Tomorrowland*)

Week Two: Sustainability and the Prophetic Imagination

Prior to Class

Listen: www.onbeing.org/program/prophetic-imagination-walter-brueggemann/475

Read: Brown, pp. 1-160

In Class

- : Discussion on Brown and Brueggemann
- : Lecture on Sustainability and the Prophetic Imagination

Part One: Understanding Environmental Sustainability

Week Three: Environmental Sustainability & Ecotheology

Prior to Class

Read: McFague, pp. 95-165

- : Carter Florence, pp. 131-58
- : Horrell, et al., p. 10-60

In Class

- : Discussion on readings
- : Lecture on Theology, Sustainability, and Preaching
- : Film Screening (*Ethos*)

Reading Reflection #1 Due

Week Four: Environmental Sustainability & Biological Systems***Prior to Class***

Read: Climate Change, pp. 1-66
 : Tubbs Tisdale, pp. 41-88

In Class

: Discussion on readings
 : Lecture on The Science of Climate Change
 : Film Screening (*Flow*)

Reading Reflection #2 Due**Week Five: Environmental Sustainability & Economic Systems*****Prior to Class***

Read: Caradonna, pp. 1-20, 89-135
 : McFague, pp. 195-226

In Class

: Discussion on readings
 : Lecture on The Science of Climate Change
 : Film Screening (*No Logo*)

Reading Reflection #3 Due**Week Six: Environmental Sustainability & Social Systems*****Prior to Class***

Read: Caradonna, pp. 136-45
 : McFague, pp. 241-65

In Class

: Discussion on readings
 : Lecture on Preaching Sustainability in an Age of Globalization
 : Film Screening (*Addicted to Plastic*)

Reading Reflection #4 Due**Week Seven: Spring Break (NO CLASS)****Part Two: Case Study****Thinking Sustainably About Food: Toward Tasty Sermons****Week Eight: Food and Farming*****Prior to Class***

Read: Ayres, Part I
Watch: Food, Inc. (on Blackboard)

In Class

: Discussion on readings
 : Field trip to Georgia Organics

Reading Reflection #5 Due**Week Nine: Food, Eating, and Health**

Prior to Class*Read:* Ayers, Part II

: Guthman, pp. 1-45

Watch: *The Skinny on Obesity* (on Blackboard)***In Class***

: Discussion on readings and film

: Guest Speaker: Holley Barreto, Cooking with Holley

Reading Reflection #6 Due**Week Ten: Food and Justice*****Prior to Class****Read:* Guthman, pp. 46-115

: Wirzba, pp. 1-34

Watch: *Living in a Food Desert* (on Blackboard)***In Class***

: Discussion on readings

: Field Trip to Concrete Jungle

Reading Reflection #7 Due**Week Eleven: No Class — Field Research****Part Three: Sustainability Preaching****Week Twelve: Student Presentations*****Prior to Class****Read:* Caradonna, pp. 176-256

: McClure, pp. 47-66

In Class

: Discussion on readings

: Student presentations

Reading Reflection #8 Due***Student Presentation Sign-Ups***

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Week Thirteen: Student Presentations***Prior to Class****Read:* Todd Peters, pp. 49-68

: Harris, pp. 72-89

In Class

: Discussion on readings

: Student presentations

Reading Reflection #9 Due

Student Presentation Sign-Ups

Week Fourteen: Student Sermons

Prior to Class

Read: Habel and Wurst, pp. 60-72, 200-10
: Horrell, et al., pp. 63-116

In Class

: Discussion on readings
: Student sermons

Reading Reflection #10 Due

Student Sermon Sign-Ups

Week Fifteen: Student Sermons

Prior to Class

Read: Habel, 29-41, 65-83

In Class

: Discussion on readings and course evaluation
: Student sermons

Reading Reflection #11 Due

Student Sermon Sign-Ups
