

Starr King School for the Ministry

Preach It!

Spring 2011 Syllabus

Something inside [jazz trumpeter Miles] Davis curled up and changed and there was this emptiness, but then a new thing came.

--Gardner C. Taylor, Baptist Preacher

Course Description: Theories abound about how to construct authentic sermons. In the non-exegetical homiletic path of UUism/Liberal religion, there is another possibility. This experiential preaching course will focus on finding your authentic style and voice. In constructing sermons, we will encounter: Presence. Power. Passion. Humility. Humor. The truth in one's chest and gut---the body somehow singing through thought. Further, we will explore tapping the neural ground of connection between speaker and listener and seek sources of relevance for words that speak truth, lift hope, inspire action and offer blessing. A preacher for 15 years, a public speaker for over 30, the instructor loves the pulpit whether in a house of worship, on the street, or in the halls of government.

Course Objectives: By the end of this short class, students will be able to:

- ✿ Conceive, Write and Deliver a 20 minute sermon in which they speak, somewhere in the sermon, with noticeable authenticity.
- ✿ Identify specific practices that increase the probability of speaking authentically.
- ✿ Describe two or more instances when they spoke in public (inside/outside the classroom) with a strong sense of authenticity.

- ✿ Identify half dozen dynamics that increase their capacity to connect with those to whom they are speaking (while they are speaking).
- ✿ Identify key experiences in the history of their personal conditioning and learning that shaped and affected their "voice" and/or self-expression.
- ✿ Locate and Describe the key bodily sensations that enhance/verify authentic utterance.
- ✿ Identify half a dozen practices that encourage the creation of authentic writing.

Course Format: The class will meet on Thursday afternoons (2:10 pm – 5:00 pm) beginning on Thursday, February 04, 2010.

Course Outline:

Class One (02/04/10):

Opening Gratitude and personal introductions. Query into reasons for taking the class. Sharing expectations and trust guidelines. Lecture/Discussion of the central issues of the course. Introduction of the basic texts and other readings. Introduction of personal journal work. Introduction of grounding/relaxing exercises.

Class Two (04/10) and beyond:

This semester class will include: Exercises in opening the voice and loosening the body; visiting Bay Area services and Actions where/when sermons/homilies are given; analysis & critique of DVDs and CDs of sermons; exploration of personal history affecting voice and expression; class visits from preachers; exploration of personal expression and "sermonizing" in a variety of forms.

Course Texts: *Thematic Preaching*, Jane Rzepka & Ken Sawyer; *Birthing the Sermon: Women Preachers on the Creative Process*, Jana Childers; *Best*

Advice for Preaching, Edited by John S. McClure. Additionally articles from relevant texts will be posted on Moodle.

Course Requirements: Students are expected to: (a) Attend class and participate fully in discussions/reflections and in actively exploring their voice/expression and the nature and sources of its authenticity. (b) Do the assigned readings. (c) Keep a Journal. (d) Offer structured critique of other students' preaching. (e) Meet with the professor for an individual conference at least one time. (f) Deliver at least one extemporaneous homily. (g) Conceive, write and deliver a number of short homilies, culminating with a 20 minute original sermon to the class (the option will be offered for one student to deliver their sermon in Tuesday Chapel, and one will be offered an opportunity at a local UU congregation).

Educating to Counter Oppression & Multi-religiosity: Authentic expression of one's own authentic voice is a counter-oppressive act. Preaching/Speaking in public venues is one of the central tools/activities of the minister whether in the parish or the community. Speaking authentically must be grounded in psychological and spiritual openness and love. Love is always counter-oppressive and multi-religious because it invokes the prophetic for justice and wholeness and messes with rigidity by inviting intimacy with reality (out of which all religions are born).

Course Instructor: Rev. Kurt A. Kuhwald received a BA in Literature, an MS in Counseling from San Diego State University and an M.Div from Pacific School of Religion (after earning significant units from the Claremont School of Theology). He was a certificated public school teacher, in Special Education, for 23 years. He has given countless public presentations/talks and has served and preached in seven UU congregations. He has served on various UU Association working groups and boards committed to counter-oppression.

Office Hours: Office hours are set by advance agreement.