

DM 9337 Creative Sermon Design: Story/Narrative  
Perkins School of Theology  
Winter, 2017

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Schedule: January 3-13  
1:30-4:30PM

### **Course Description:**

An exploration of story/narrative forms of preaching, employing the two books of Samuel from the Hebrew Bible as resources.

### **Required Readings:**

The David Story, Robert Alter (Norton: New York, 1999)

The Secret Chord, Geraldine Brooks (Viking: New York, 2015)

The King David Report, Stefan Heym (Northwestern University: Evanston, IL, 1997)

King Saul, John C Holbert (Wipf & Stock: Eugene, OR, 2014)

Telling the Whole Story, John C Holbert (Cascade: Eugene, OR, 2013)

**Note on the readings:** The books of Samuel are among the greatest writings of the ancient world, not merely fine writing from the Bible, and they have generated more than a few fictional accounts. I want you to read three novels based on these writings, one of them my own, as a way for you to engage your own imaginations to see these stories for what they are: nothing less than the origins of prose fiction in the Western world.

### **Assignments for the Course:**

#### **Week 1:**

Before the first class of Jan 3, you will have read the novels, King Saul and The King David Report, as well as the first half of Robert Alter's The David Story through p 192. The first week will be given over to a careful examination of the book of I Samuel, concluding with the death of Saul. On Thursday and Friday of that week (we may need only one day for preaching depending on class size), Jan 5 and 6, you will preach a sermon based on a text from the stories of I Samuel. Your sermon will use as its base a significant component of story/narrative. To discover what I mean by that, please refer to chapter 2 of my book, Telling the Whole Story. (You would do well to have read that chapter before the class begins.) We will, of course, be talking about this in class from

the first day. In addition to your sermon manuscript of no more than five pages, double-spaced, you will provide an exegesis paper that suggests just how you got to the sermon from the text you chose. This four to seven-page paper may include traditional elements of exegesis (word study, thematic plot elements, broader literary context, etc), but the main goal of the paper is to make clear to me just how your text served as basis for your sermon. You may or may not use the written manuscript as you preach; it is your choice.

## Week 2:

Beginning on Jan 9 we will turn our attention to 2 Samuel and the long story of David, which of course actually begins in I Samuel 16 and does not end until I Kings 2. Alter, 195-384, will serve as commentary for us. You will have read Brooks' novel before this week begins. We will again preach sermons on the two final class days of the week (or one again depending on class size), Jan 12 and 13. The same guidelines control this second sermon as in the first (see above).

There is one final assignment. You will write for me a short story, based on a text you choose from the books of Samuel. The length of the story is up to you, but 10 double-spaced pages may be a fair guide, though it could well be shorter or longer. This story will be due the final day of class, Jan 13.

I will also assume that you will have read the books of Samuel from the Bible before the first class day. One of the skills I hope we can improve during this class is how to read such literature effectively, as my book Telling the Whole Story tries to indicate.

## Grading:

Nasty old grades are required to be given, so here is the nasty old way I intend to do that.

Attendance and class participation: 20%

The two sermons and exegetical papers: 35% each

The short story: 10%

Of course, as the benevolent overlord of the class, I reserve the right to adjust these percentages depending on serious, or, God forbid, less than serious engagement with the work.