Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
LTRGY 850: Preaching and Trauma
Spring, 2026

Dr. Gennifer Brooks
E-mail – gennifer.brooks@garrett.edu

Rev. Seyeom Kim, TA
Styberg Teaching Fellow
E-mail – seyeom.kim@garrett.edu

Telephone #: 917-297-7557

Class Format: Online Synchronous

Meeting Times: 4 Weekends: Fridays: 4:30 – 9:30; Saturdays 9:30 – 1:30

Meeting Dates: February 6 & 7; February 27 & 28; March 20 & 21; April 10 &11

Course Description:

This course aims to equip students to think theologically and respond homiletically in the midst of, through and beyond the instances of trauma that occur, whether as a regular part of life, or because of sudden and unexpected events. Students will be invited to think theoretically and theologically about how the experience of trauma on individuals and communities impacts their ability to receive the good news of the sermon. The course will also consider different types of trauma – historical, catastrophic, major illness, accident, death, etc. – and how they influence the behaviors of both the congregation and the preacher.

In the process of creating and preaching sermons that offer good news to people who are impacted by trauma of one form or another, students will investigate the requirements of honing the sermon purpose, selecting the texts, the sermon style and contents, the call to discipleship, and the style of delivery.

This class is available to students at several levels. It may be taken for credit within the boundaries of a Masters degree, a Doctor of Ministry, or a Doctor of Philosopy program. The class may also be audited without credit applied and may be taken as a part of the collective. The requirements for each level are stated in the **Class Requirements and Grading** section of the syllabus.

Please note: Because we are all part of the wider community in the world, even a discussion of trauma may cause trauma to those so engaged. It is important that students be self-aware and pay attention to the impact of such discussions on their own persona, and do the self-care necessary for their well-being.

Course Outcomes

As the student fulfills the requirements of this course, the student will learn to…

1. Understand the complexities entailed in the concept of individual and community trauma.

2. Think critically and reflectively in order to identify the impact of trauma on individuals and the community.
3. Gain an understanding of the theological realities confronted by the preacher during the development of biblically-based sermons to congregations who are impacted by specific trauma.
4. Develop a homiletical theology and skills that facilitate offering good news to a community that is coping with trauma in their midst or because of its impact on their lives.
5. Create two sermons to be preached in class, one based on a type of personal trauma and the other on community trauma.

Assessment instruments connected to course outcomes (above):

1. In-Class Participation.
2. In-Class Participation.
3. In-Class Participation, Reflection Paper.
4. In-Class Participation, Preached Sermons.
5. In-Class Participation, Preached Sermons.

Class Assumptions and Expectations:

1. That all students have read and are familiar with the class syllabus and therefore responsible for meeting all class requirements.
2. That all students will attend all class sessions, whether in-person or on-line, on time and will be prepared to participate fully in class activities.
3. That all students will both consult Canvas for class assignments and be attentive to in-class updates of course information, so that all assigned material will be read, all assignments will be completed, and all sermons preached as scheduled.
4. That all students understand that the content of the course represents a beginning point in the ongoing development and growth of their preaching skills and are committed to their continued growth and development as preachers.
5. That the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) or NRSV Updated Edition (NRSVUE) of the Bible will be used in class and for preaching.
6. That inclusive language will be used for God and human beings in written and oral work.
7. That all students understand and adhere to G-ETS policies on plagiarism. (see Student Handbook).
8. **That the schedule and syllabus WILL be modified, and additional material added as professors consider necessary to the course and the development of students.**
9. **That there will be no extensions allowed past the end of the term.**

Classroom Culture:

- **A Culture of Respect:** Students are expected to follow the direction of the instructor, to be in the classroom or sign-in to the on-line session on time, and to participate with integrity in all class activities, in order to maintain a culture of respect for all participants in the class. In virtual mode, this means that students will remain muted until called on to speak and allow those speaking to complete their statement without interruption. Likewise, students will monitor the length of their statements so that as many persons as possible may have the opportunity to speak and be heard. **All participants, both students and**

instructors, will respect and use the chosen gender identity of each person, but all are expected to respond to errors in usage with a spirit of generosity and compassion.

- **Commitment to Maintaining Expansive Space:** In recognition of diversity in all aspects of human identity all participants in the classroom, both students and instructors are to engage each other – the professors, other instructors, teaching assistants and fellow classmates – as colleagues; to develop and maintain a spirit of collaboration within the classroom; and to receive all material with respect for the author. Participation in group and class activities must consider the right of every student to be heard equally.
- **Canvas:** Students are expected to be familiar with the expanded class schedule, weekly readings and class assignments that have been provided on Canvas. Students will be notified in class of additional class readings and assignments as they are posted. **Where the two sources of information differ, in-class direction overrides the instructions posted on Canvas.**
- **Computer Access:** All students are expected to ensure that they have the appropriate hardware and software as well as the internet connectivity to participate fully in class sessions with both audio and video presence. Only in emergency situations will students be allowed to participate in online sessions by phone. In such cases, both video and audio capabilities should be available and utilized.
- **Interruptions:** Since all class sessions are held in a synchronous format, students are participating on-line are required to locate themselves in an area that facilitates participation without interruption that may be caused by outside noise, telephones or other issues.
- **Accommodations:** Special accommodations will be honored as appropriate while ensuring that all the elements of the course are fulfilled. Students joining the class digitally are welcome to ask for special accommodation against situations that may negatively affect their physical wellbeing or their ability to participate fully in the class.
- **Engagement of Instructors:** All communications must be addressed to Dr. Brooks and may include a copy to the TA/Teaching Fellow – Seyeom Kim. Please do not communicate directly with or only to the TA as you will not receive a response.
- **Recording of Class and Availability of Lecture Materials:** All class sessions will be recorded. The recordings and all PowerPoint files used in class will be made available by downloading protocols within a day after the class.

Required Texts:

1. Jennifer Baldwin, *Trauma-Sensitive Theology: Thinking Theologically in the Era of Trauma,* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018) ISBN 978-1-4982-9684-7 $26.00
2. Gennifer Benjamin Brooks. *Good News Preaching: Offering the Gospel in Every Sermon. 2nd Edition* Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2025. ISBN-978-0829803501- $24.95
3. Joni S. Sancken, *Words That Heal: Preaching Hope to Wounded Souls* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2019). ISBN-13: 978-1- 5018-4968-8 $18.99
4. Sarah Travis, *Unspeakable: Preaching and Trauma-Informed Theology*, (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2021) ISBN 978-1-7252-6797-8 $21.00
5. Kimberly R. Wagner, *Fractured Ground: Preaching in the Wake of Mass Trauma,* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010). ISBN-13: 978-0-664-26784-1 $28.00

6. The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

Secondary Texts:

1. James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree,* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2012). ISBN 978-1-57075-937-6 $28.00
2. Rasmaa Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Healing our Minds and Bodies*, (Las Vegas, NV: Central Recovery Press, 2017. ISBN-13: 978-1-9420-9447-0 $12.01
3. Shelly Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010). $21.99
4. Lisa L. Thompson, *Preaching the Headlines: Possibilities and Pitfalls,* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2021). ISBN 978-1-5064-5387-6 $19.99
5. Bessel A. Van der Kolk. *The Body Keeps Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma,* (New York: Viking, 2014).

Class Requirements and Grading:

1. **Preparation, attendance and participation:** Since this is an intensive class, students are expected to read all textbooks, prior to the start of class. Students must attend all sessions, be visibly present, and be on time for all sessions. All assignments must be completed and submitted as scheduled. Since all class sessions are held virtually, students are required to have the necessary bandwidth to facilitate uninterrupted class participation, except in times of emergency. In addition to the full class, there will be individual and group work.

   10%

2. **Pre-Class Assignment:**
   1) Research the meaning of **Trauma** and provide multiple definitions and meanings of different types of trauma (1-2 pages).
   2) Read *Good News Preaching* and answer the following questions:
      a. What did is the thesis of this book?
      b. How does that thesis relate to the issue of trauma and preaching?
      c. Considering the thesis and your understanding of trauma, what issues do you believe will confront the preacher who tries to be faithful to the congregation?

   DO NOT TURN IN YOUR WORK PRIOR TO CLASS. YOU WILL USE IT DURING CLASS DISCUSSION AND TURN IT IN AT THE END OF THE CLASS.

   10%

3. **Book Reflections:**
   Based on the pre-determined schedule, students are required to read the assigned textbooks and prepare a 2-3 page response to the contents that highlight their key learnings from the text, in particular what it offers to the challenge of preaching in the face of trauma. The reading schedule is as follows:

   - Session 3:
     - Jennifer Baldwin, *Trauma-Sensitive Theology: Thinking Theologically in the Era of Trauma*
   - Session 4:
     - Sarah Travis, *Unspeakable: Preaching and Trauma-Informed Theology*

- Session 6:
    - Kimberly R. Wagner, *Fractured Ground: Preaching in the Wake of Mass Trauma*
- Session 7:
    - Joni S. Sancken, *Words That Heal: Preaching Hope to Wounded Souls*

20%

4. **In-Class Sermons:**
   Sessions 5 and 8 will be dedicated to preaching in class. Each student is required to preach two sermons (12-15 minutes) in class that directed to personal trauma (25 %) and the need for hope and the other to a selected community that offers good news in the face of trauma to the community (35%). **60%**

5. **Rpecial Requirements re. level of student participation;**
    a. **Masters** level students will follow the syllabus as presented.
    b. **DMin** students: Book reflections should be 4-5 pages and are also required to read ***The Cross and the Lynching Tree*** and prepare a reflection that highlights Cone's contribution to generation trauma.
    c. **PhD** students: In addition to the additional DMin requirements must also do a 20 page final paper on the topic of Preaching and Trauma. The subject must be approved by the professor.
    d. **Auditing** students should read and be cognizant of all materials but do not have to submit written assignments. They are encouraged but not required to preach the sermons.

<u>Schedule of Class Sessions</u>

Session 1: Friday, February 6, 4:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.

- Understanding **"Trauma"** – Definitions, types, challenges, opportunitis
- The trauma in preaching
- Preaching in the context of trauma
- Good News Preaching: The Sermon Purpose, the good news, the call to discipleship

Textbook: Good News Preaching
Turn in Pre-class assignment.

Session 2: Saturday, February 7, 9:30 a..m – 1:30 p.m.

- Understanding **"Trauma"** – Definitions, types, challenges, opportunitis (contd)
- The challenge of preaching good news in the context of trauma

Textbook: Good News Preaching

Session 3: Friday, February 27, 4:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.

- Theology and trauma: Understanding the place and work of the divine in the midst of trauma
- Trauma-sensitive Theology for congregarational health
- Trauma-sensitive Homiletical theology

Textbook: *Trauma-Sensitive Theology: Thinking Theologically in the Era of Trauma*
Turn in textbook reflection at the end of class.

Session 4: Saturday, February 28, 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

- Developing the trauma-sensitive sermon related to local or congregational trauma
- Identifying style, shape and content applicable to or facilitating attention to trauma event
- Trauma sensitive biblical interpretation

Textbook: ***Unspeakable: Preaching and Trauma-Informed Theology***

Turn in textbook reflection at the end of class.

Session 5: Friday, March 20, 4:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.

- **Preaching Sermon 1: Trauma in the Congregation**
  - Focus of sermon: the trauma should be local i.e. having direct impact on the congregation or the immediate community
- **Turn in your sermon and interpretive and other materials by midday.**

Session 6: Saturday, March 21, 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

- Developing a good news sermon in the face of trauma: challenges and pitfalls
- The fallout from mass trauma; issues of theology, context and content

Textbook: ***Fractured Ground: Preaching in the Wake of Mass Trauma***

Turn in textbook reflection at the end of class.

Session 7: Friday, April 10, 4:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.

- Offering good news in the midst of trauma and beyond into the future
- Theology, faith, hope and trauma: a model of good news preaching

Textbook: *Words That Heal: Preaching Hope to Wounded Souls*

Turn in textbook reflection at the end of class.

Session 8: Saturday, April 11, 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

- **Preaching Sermon 2: Offering Good News in the wake of mass trauma : A manifesto of hope and divine grace.**

<u>Rubrics:</u>

Areas of Assessment	**Exceptional Ability**	**Strong Ability**	**Adequate Ability**	**Marginal Ability**	**Fails to Demonstrate Ability**
Preparation, attendance, & participation • Presence • Class participation	Shows deep knowledge of textual material through consistent response and engagement in class sessions.	Shows adequate knowledge of textual material through response and engagement in class sessions.	Some knowledge of textual material and is somewhat responsive and engaged in class sessions.	Little knowledge of textual material and little engagement in class sessions.	Unaware of textual material and very little engagement in class sessions.

Pre-Class Paper • Contents • Format	Clearly articulates and offers careful reflection on ideas about Trauma.	Clearly articulates ideas about Trauma, but with limited reflection.	Presents ideas about Trauma. but with limited depth and reflection.	Ideas about the meaning of Trauma are not clearly represented.	No direct representation or reflection on Trauma
Book Reflections • Contents • Format • Relevance to the theme of Trauma.	The paper reflects clear and critical understanding of the source and critical engagement and reflection of the trauma theme.	The paper reflects appropriate understanding of the source and the appropriate engagement and reflection of the trauma theme.	The paper reflects some understanding of the source and the appropriate engagement and reflection of the trauma theme.	The paper shows some understandin g of the source but insufficient engagement and reflection of the trauma theme.	The project falls short of with respect to the source material and contains little to no engagement or reflection of the trauma theme.
Sermons - Content: • Scripture • Engagement of Theme of Trauma • Application to Context	Biblical text appropriate to the theme of trauma and is well applied to the selected congregational context.	Biblical text appropriate to the theme of trauma but is not as appropriate to the selected congregational context.	Biblical text does not fit the theme of trauma but is appropriate to the selected congregationa l context.	Biblical text does not fit the theme of trauma, but may apply to the selected congregation al context.	Biblical text does not fit the theme of trauma, and is not appropriate to the selected congregationa l context.
Sermon – Structure: • Introduction • Body – Style and structure • Conclusion	Clearly amplifies the focus of the sermon and the theme of trauma and functions to draw listeners into the body of the sermon by application to the context and offers a definite message and a call to action.	Clearly amplifies the focus of the sermon and the theme of trauma and functions to draw listeners into the body of the sermon by application to the context but without a definite message or call to action.	Clear representation of the theme of trauma but without the application to the context needed to draw listeners into the body of the sermon and there is no real message or call to action.	Merely suggests the theme of trauma but without direct application to the context and there is no real message or call to action.	No direct connection to the theme of trauma and there is no real message or call to action.
Content: • Use of Scripture	Selection, presentation, exegesis and	Appropriate selection, presentation,	Selection of scripture to the theme and	Selection of scripture to the theme is	The selection of scripture is not

• Material on Trauma • Good News	application of scripture to the theme and to the project context is exceptional.	exegesis and application of scripture to the theme and to the project context.	to the project context is appropriate, but not well applied to the project context.	appropriate but not to the project context.	appropriate to the theme or the project context.
Delivery	General embodiment (eye contact; voice, variety of expression, pace, posture, gestures, facial expression, energy) and handling and use of manuscript are exceptional.	General embodiment (eye contact; voice, expression, pace, posture, gestures, facial expression, energy) are appropriate but handling and use of the manuscript are somewhat distracting.	Some aspects of embodiment (eye contact; voice, expression, pace, posture, gestures, facial expression, energy) are inappropriate and handling or use of the manuscript is distracting.	Inappropriate embodiment (eye contact; voice, expression, pace, posture, gestures, facial expression, energy) of the sermon and poor handling and use of the manuscript.	Use of body, voice, facial expression, and relationship to manuscript are not connected to and distract from the purpose and focus of the sermon.

<u>Selected Bibliography</u>: To be updated

Boase, Elizabeth. "Fragmented Voices: Collective Identity and Traumatization in Lamentations." in *Bible Through the Lens of Trauma.* Edited by Elizabeth Boase and Chirstopher G. Frechette. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2016.

Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History.* Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Copeland, Shawn M. "'Wading through Many Sorrows': Toward a Theology of Suffering in a Womanist Perspective." In *A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering.* Edited by Emilie M. Townes. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993.

Crumpton, Stephanie M. *A Womanist Pastoral Care Theology Against Intimate and Cultural Violence.* New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Erikson, Kai. "Notes on Trauma and Community." In *Trauma: Explorations in Memory.* Edited by Cathy Caruth. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.

Faimon, Mary Beth. "Ties that Bind: Remembering, Mourning, and Healing Historical Trauma."

American Indian Quarterly, Vol 28, Nos. 1&2 (Winter & Spring 2004): 238-251.

Frank, Arthur W., *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

Jones, Serene., *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World,* First Edition. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009.

Long, Thomas G. In *What Shall We Say? Evil, Suffering, and the Crisis of Faith*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011.

Reyes, Patrick B., *Nobody Cries When We Die: God, Community, and Surviving to Adulthood.* Danvers, MA: Chalice Press, 2016.

Stolorow, Robert. *Trauma and Human Existence: Autobiographical, Psychoanalytic, and Philosophical Reflections.* New York, NY: Routledge, 2007.

Swain, Storm, *Trauma and Transformation at Ground Zero: A Pastoral Theology*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011.

West, Gerald O. "Between Text and Trauma: Reading Job with People Living with HIV." in *Bible through the Lens of Trauma.* Edited by Elizabeth Boase and Chirstopher G. Frechette. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2016.

Williams, Delores. "Black Women's Surrogacy Experience and the Christian Notion of Redemption." In *After Patriarchy: Feminist Transformations of the World Religions.* Edited by Paula M. Cooey, William R. Eakin, and Jay B. McDaniel. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998.