

FAITH COMMUNICATION IN THE TOWN AND COUNTRY CONTEXT SYLLABUS

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

The oral culture and intimacy of the town and country context present a unique set of circumstances for preaching, evangelism, discipleship, and youth and children's ministries. This course explores the ways town and country culture impacts and reshapes the common methods and strategies for communicating the Gospel.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES AND RATIONALE

In Spirit

1. To feel a burden to effectively communicate the Word of God in ways that make it most hearable in the Town and Country culture.

In Understanding (Cognitive)

1. To define "faith communication" in a broad sense, encompassing both formal and informal settings.
2. To identify the distinctive opportunities and challenges of preaching in town and country contexts.
3. To identify and overcome the challenges that low population density places on youth and children's ministries.
4. To realize the effects of intimacy and isolation in the town and country context on personal evangelism.

In Attitude (Affective)

1. To see the town and country community as a viable and important field for evangelism, preaching, and teaching.
2. To appreciate the uniqueness of town and country culture as it affects faith communication.

In Skills (Behavioral)

1. To carry on an effective Christian Education program for all ages with limited resources.
2. To employ appropriate evangelistic strategies for the town and country context.
3. To select appropriate resources for Sunday School and youth programs in the town and country setting.
4. To evaluate homiletic methods regarding their suitability for the town and country church.

III. COURSE TEXTBOOKS

A. Required

- Chromey, Rick. *Children's Ministry Guide for Smaller Churches*. Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 1995 (139 pgs.)
- Grassel, Rich. *Help! I'm a Small Church Youth Worker*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002 (115 pgs.)
- Griggs, Donald L. and Walther, Judy McKay. *Christian Education in the Small Church*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1988. (112 pgs.)
- Ruffcorn, Kevin. *Rural Evangelism*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1994. (128 pgs.)
- McMullen, Shawn, ed. *Unleashing the Potential of the Smaller Church*. Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., 2006. (158 pgs.)

B. Suggested

- Hunter, R. Kent. *The Lord's Harvest and the Rural Church*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1993.
- Chromey, Rick. *Youth Ministry in Small Churches*. Loveland, CO: Group Publishing Co., 1990.
- Zunkel, C. Wayne. *Growing the Small Church*. Elgin, IL: David C. Cook Publishing Co., 1983.

C. Supplementary Bibliography

A supplementary bibliography may be handed out in class.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Reading Assignments

1. Read all Required Texts prior to the class week.

B. Written Assignments

PRE-COURSE

1. In a paper of 3-5 pages, compare Chromey's book on children's ministry and Grassel's book on youth ministry. How is ministry to each age group in the town and country church similar? How is it different? What issues from these books seemed to speak specifically to the town and country context, as opposed to small churches in any context?
2. After reading Griggs' and Walther's book, acquire a sample of Sunday School or Bible Study curriculum from a church, seminary library, or bookstore. Using criteria from the textbook and your own thinking, write a 2-3 page analysis of the suitability of that curriculum for use in a town and country church.
3. Ruffcorn's book looks primarily at the thinking in town and country congregations that inhibits evangelism, and how to change those patterns of thinking. In a paper of 2-3 pages, explain which of those patterns of thinking would challenge you most as a pastor, and why.
4. From the book edited by McMullen, which chapter or chapters seemed to speak most to what you hoped to learn from this course, and why? Answer in a 2-3 page essay.
5. Interview a pastor who has preached regularly in a town and country context for at least three years to find out what that pastor sees as being unique about preaching in this context. Report your findings in a 2-3 page paper. NOTE: this report is to be about preaching *per se*, not about ministry in general.

POST-COURSE

1. Choose two from the following topics (Preaching, Personal Evangelism, Corporate Evangelism, Christian Education/Discipleship, Youth Ministry, Children's Ministry) and develop a tentative plan for your first (or next, if you are already serving there) year of ministry in a town and country church. You should devote about 10 pages to each of the two topics you choose. Plans should be specific, and should include your rationale, supported by research.

C. Quizzes and/or Exams

Due to the intensive-week nature of this course, there are no quizzes or exams.

V. COURSE POLICIES

A. Weight Given to Course Requirements for Grading

Each Pre-Course writing assignment, 10% (50% total)
Pre-Course Reading, 10%
Class Participation, 10%
Post Course assignment, 30%

B. Class Participation

Students are expected to interact in class with the instructor, guest speakers , and class members.

C. Late Assignments

Pre-course assignments are due at the beginning of the class week. The Post-course assignment is due the fourth Friday after the class. Late work will be accepted, but 5% of the possible score will be deducted for each day the work is late, up to five days. No work more than five days late will be accepted. Exceptions may be made by the instructor or Dean of the participating seminary for medical or family emergencies.

D. Absences

Due to the “intensive week” format of this course, absences are not allowed. In the event of an emergency, the student should contact the instructor to see if an alternative can be worked out.

E. Letter/Numerical Grade Scale

A+	99-100	B+	91-93	C+	83-85	D+	75-77	F	0-69
A	96-98	B	88-90	C	80-82	D	72-74		
A-	94-95	B-	86-87	C-	78-79	D-	70-71		

VI. COURSE SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

This course is missiological in nature; it deals with the implementation of the Great Commission in a specific culture. It is aimed at helping the student discover and implement not only biblically but also culturally-appropriate and effective approaches for reaching town and country people for Christ and nurturing their spiritual growth.

A considerable portion of the material to be presented in class, especially on preaching, has never been published, or is out of print.

The TACT Program and its participating seminaries do not discriminate on the basis of disability in the operation of any of its programs and activities. To avoid discrimination the student is responsible for informing the appropriate seminary office and the course instructor of any disabling condition that will require modifications.

VII. COURSE LECTURES AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

This schedule, formatted to the dates of each class session, should include a list of lecture/course topics to be covered, written assignments with due dates, quizzes and /or exams with dates, and notation of days when regularly scheduled class sessions will not meet. The use of a table in this section is recommended. Labeled columns are suggestions only.

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00		Personal Evangelism in the Town and Country Culture (obstacles and opportunities, methods, message)	Community Ministry and Outreach in the Town and Country Context	Adult Education, Sunday School, and Small Groups in the Town and Country Church	Children's Ministry in a Town and Country Context (time and distance, resources, transportation)
9:00					
10:00					
11:00					
12:00	Lunch provided in the classroom	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	
1:00	Preaching in the Town and Country Context (sermon preparation, delivery, and support) Panel discussion.	Corporate or Mass Evangelism in the Town and Country Context (principles and programs)	Discipleship and Christian Maturity in the Town and Country Church (individual involvement, evaluation)	Youth Ministry in a Town and Country Context (pop. density, scheduling, cultural issues)	
2:00					
3:00					
4:00					
5:00					
6:00	Cultural Immersion Exercise	Cultural Immersion Exercise	Cultural Immersion Exercise	Cultural Immersion Exercise	
7:00	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA	
8:00					