



PAST 311/MINS 407

Preaching and Communication in a Contemporary Context

Distance Course Outline 2017

SEMESTER 1 2017

Lecturer & Course Coordinator:

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Welcome to this University of Otago paper on preaching and communication. We will be exploring a variety of communication issues that affect congregations and ministry organizations today, including interpreting the Bible and preaching in an increasingly secular world, as well as digital and online communication.

In recent decades, forms of communication have changed very rapidly, with significant implications for Christian communities. Blogs, promotional websites, social networking and other forms of

electronic communication are increasingly used by congregations and create challenges as well as opportunities. The rapidly changing New Zealand culture creates additional communication challenges as preachers and church leaders seek to speak about the Bible and Christian life in ways that are relevant in a secular, image-driven society.

This paper is offered with three learning methods: a teaching day in Dunedin and Auckland, five one and a half hour videoconferences, and Blackboard discussion. For those of you who are new to distance learning, this is a wonderful way to connect with people throughout New Zealand who are doing interesting things in ministry, serving a variety of churches and ministry organizations. I view all teaching and learning as a communal endeavor, so I encourage you to participate as fully as you can in the three modes of learning. We learn together and benefit from each other's thoughts and experiences. The teaching days, the videoconferences and the Blackboard discussion work well to bring together people from many settings and with wonderfully diverse experience and wisdom.

In the videoconferences and in the teaching day, I will teach largely by discussion. Occasionally I will present a short lecture, but generally I will ask questions about the readings and about your opinions and experience, and I will draw on your comments to bring all of our thoughts together. To experience this community of learners, it is therefore very important that you participate as much as possible, and that you carefully read each of the assigned readings before the videoconferences and teaching day.

Topics for the paper will include:

- Communicating with those inside and outside the congregation
- Congregational communication beyond the sermon
- Communicating the congregation's identity and values through mission statements and slogans
- Internet communication, including websites, blogs and social networking
- Visual communication and its role for congregations
- Assessing a congregation's communication
- The role of the Bible in preaching
- Interpreting Scripture for preaching: moving between text and context
- Understanding your context and audience for preaching
- The character of preaching today: inductive approaches, narrative, dialogue and using images

LECTURER'S INTRODUCTION

Welcome! I'm looking forward to getting to know you as we discuss many interesting issues during the paper. I know you will each bring your own experiences into the discussion, and I welcome the depth and richness your contributions will bring. I am very much looking forward to our discussions.

The issues related to communication in congregations are very important to me. I have been involved in Christian ministry in various forms for more than thirty years, in congregations, ministry organizations, church governing bodies, and in overseas mission, and I have seen over and over the significance of communication. From 1997 to 2004 I served as an associate pastor in a large, lively Presbyterian congregation in Seattle, USA. One of my tasks in that congregation was to coordinate all its communication, from the telephone answering system to the website. I left pastoral work in 2004 to pursue a PhD in communication so I could go into teaching. For my PhD, I studied congregational websites. If you're interested, you can read my doctoral thesis and an academic article that came from my thesis on my website, www.lynnebaab.com. Click on "academic" on the navigation bar.

From time to time, you may feel anxious about your study progress, and it is important that these anxieties be resolved promptly. If you have any queries concerning academic matters, please get in touch with me at lynne.baab@otago.ac.nz or by ringing 03 479 5358.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course has been prepared for students at both 300- and 400- level; the content is the same but the assessment differs.

At the end of the course, **PAST 311** students should be able to:

- Describe and critically analyse implications for congregations of new forms of electronic communication and the rise in visual communication
- Critically analyse the communication strategies of existing congregations
- Articulate ways to move between text and context as they study the Bible, considering the needs of the listeners, the challenges of the wider society and the relevance of the biblical text in preparing sermons
- Describe and critically evaluate trends in preaching styles that are relevant for our postmodern, post-Christendom, multicultural culture in New Zealand

At the end of the course, **MINS 411** students should be able to:

- Describe and critically analyse implications for congregations of new forms of electronic communication and the rise in visual communication
- Critically analyze the communication strategies of existing congregations
- Be able to make recommendations to their own or other congregations about electronic communication, visual communication and the congregation's communication strategies
- Articulate ways to move between text and context as they study the Bible, considering the needs of the listeners, the challenges of the wider society and the relevance of the biblical text in preparing sermons
- Describe and critically evaluate trends in preaching styles that are relevant for our postmodern, post-Christendom, multicultural culture in New Zealand
- Assess and modify their own preaching style in the light of new learning about how to move between text and context and how to consider audience issues

PAPER STRUCTURE

This course is divided into seven Modules:

Module 1: Changes in Communication

Module 2: Communicating Congregational Identity and Values

Module 3: The Rise in Visual Culture

Module 4: Electronic Communication

Module 5: Preaching the Bible

Module 6: Preaching: Moving from Text to Context

Module 7: Preaching and the Imagination

TEACHING

Teaching will consist of:

- Five one and a half hour Saturday morning videoconferences, using Zoom
- One Teaching Day, offered in Auckland and Dunedin

RESOURCES

- Blackboard, the University's online learning tool;
- A Course Book containing a Study Guide and required Readings
- This Course Outline, which explains how the course is taught
- eReserve, a resource for electronic and extra readings, which you can access via Blackboard;
- The Department's "Study and Style Guide" which recommends students use the 16th edition of the Chicago Style Guide when writing essays. It is available online at <http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/>
- The handbook *Distance Learning Information and Support 2017*, providing advice on administrative matters not covered in this course book and on the Distance Library Service. (You may download the PDF from the 'Essential Information' web page).

THIS IS IMPORTANT!

Please Note: You **must have access to Blackboard and your University email address** in order to complete this paper. You will receive access once your enrolment is complete. Communications from your lecturer regarding teaching matters will be provided **only** through Blackboard and your University email address (as outlined in the University's Student Communications Policy), so you must check these emails regularly, or arrange to forward them to your main address. eVision will also send important messages through your University email. If you have any concerns about your access to Blackboard or to other course resources, please contact the lecturer or administrative staff immediately so that these can be resolved.

You will find there is a lot of helpful information and resources on the Department's website. In particular, we require you to read the section called "Essential Student Information." You will find it here:

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/>

This page provides a number of useful resources such as the *Study and Style Guide* and the Plagiarism Declaration Form you must attach to your assignments. It supplies detailed information on assessment and student support. In particular, it contains guidance on the topics of plagiarism and deadlines, both of which can incur penalties if not heeded. This also is where you will find instructions for making online discussion posts and submitting

assignments electronically. So it is very important you make yourself familiar with this material. Our assumption is that you have read it.

We will make reference to information on the website in the following pages, so do take the time to follow the links and absorb the material. It will save you from making costly mistakes and help to make the practical experience of distance study a straightforward one.

VIDEOCONFERENCES

Interactive videoconferences enable immediate response from the lecturer and other students. They are an excellent forum for discussing the issues raised and for clarifying any problems you may encounter as you work through the material. For the method to be successful, it is essential that everyone participates fully. Videoconferences are not lectures, where the teacher delivers a monologue; nor are they a dialogue with one person in the group. They are intended to be similar to the tutorials which on-campus students attend and will involve you in careful listening and appropriate participation.

How should students prepare for each videoconference?

- Read the relevant section in the Study Guide and the Readings associated with it beforehand.
- Think about the issues raised in the course material and jot down a few points that you might like to make during the discussion.

What will we do at the videoconferences?

- The lecturer welcomes everyone. Material from the previous session may be reviewed and an introductory overview of the new topic is given.
- The lecturer will ask questions to engage students in discussion. The focus will be on the readings and the issues they raise.

An interchange of views and reactions to the study material is an important aspect of each videoconference. Each participant brings a unique combination of prior experience, study and theological perspective to the videoconference – and each participant is a resource for the group as a whole.

In this kind of learning situation it is very important that participants prepare well, not only to master the study material provided but also to be ready to state and support their own viewpoints in dialogue with the whole group.

Accessing the Videoconferences

For information about accessing Zoom please refer to the 'Essential Information' web page (link given above).

The **URL you need to access the meeting** is given on the '**Zoom Information**' link on the Blackboard page for this paper.

Schedule of Videoconferences

Videoconferences will be held on **Saturday mornings** from **10.30 am-12 pm**:

Videoconference	Date
1	4 March: Intro and Module 1
2	8 April: Module 4
3	29 April: Module 5
4	13 May: Module 6
5	27 May: Module 7

TEACHING DAY

In addition to the videoconferences, this course involves a Teaching Day/Evening at one of the following venues. Although it is not compulsory to do so, students are strongly encouraged to attend ONE of the following teaching days. The same content will be repeated at both venues. During the teaching day we will cover Modules 2 and 3.

Please contact Katherine Rae (katherine.rae@otago.ac.nz) once you have decided which venue you plan to attend.

Auckland

Date: Friday 10th March

Time: 9.30-4.00 pm

Venue: St John's College, 202-210 St Johns Road, Meadowbank, Auckland

*Lunch will be provided at no cost, as well as tea and coffee. For catering purposes **please contact the Department to let us know if you will be taking part in the lunch.** (If not, please bring your own food.) Parking available onsite.*

Timetable for Auckland Teaching Day

9.30-1:00 - Session 1: Module 2

1:00-1:30 – Lunch (provided at St Johns if you sign up ahead of time with Katherine Rae)

1:30-4.00 - Session 2: Module 3

Dunedin

Date: Wednesday 15th March

Time: 3:00-9:00pm

Venue: University of Otago, venue will be announced on Blackboard.

Timetable for Dunedin Teaching Evening

3:00-6:00 Session 1: Module 2

6:00-7:00 Dinner (students are responsible for providing their own dinner)

7:00-9:00 Session 2: Module 3

NOTE: it is essential that students email the Department when they have decided on which venue they will attend, and, in the case of **St Johns College Auckland**, if they wish to join in lunch in the Dining Room. (There are no convenient food outlets so we recommend you bring your own lunch if you are not eating in the Dining Room.)

Students are responsible for arranging their own travel and accommodation for the Teaching Days

ASSESSMENT

There is **no examination** for this paper. Assessment is comprised of **three essays and 15 blog posts**:

Assessment Task	Percentage
Essay 1. PAST311 - 1700 words. MINS407 - 2000 words	25%
Essay 2. PAST311 - 2000 words MINS407 - 2500 words	30%
Essay 3. PAST311 - 2000 words MINS407 - 2500 words	30%
Blog posts: 15 x 100-200 words each	15%

ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS

Assignment 1 – PAST311

Length **1700 words**
Value **25%**
Due Date **Friday, 31 March 2017**

Topic Preliminary Communication Audit

Choose a congregation, either your own or another congregation. Assess all of the congregation's communication through the eyes of a member, a person who has been attending less than a year, and a newcomer. Critically evaluate everything about the way the congregation communicates – the building, exterior signage, parking, lobby, worship space, brochures, website, blog, telephone answering system, worship bulletin, verbal announcements, bulletin board, etc. – through the three sets of eyes. In the first videoconference and teaching day, more information will be given about how to conduct a communication audit. An essay earning a B to B+ will usually include at least 8 footnotes from 4 different readings, making connections between the ideas in the essay and the course readings.

The marking of Assignment 1 will take into account:

- the clarity of your writing as you summarise and analyse the communication strategies of a congregation. This includes an inviting introduction, a compelling conclusion, a clear structure to the essay, and a good flow of ideas throughout the essay.
- your ability to make clear connections with the course readings, or with other readings if you are using them.
- your ability to refer to ideas we talked about in the videoconferences and during the teaching day.

Assignment 2 – PAST311

Length	2000 words
Value	30%
Due Date	Monday, 24 April 2017
Topic	Several options

Option 1: An essay on a topic from the paper

Write an essay focused on one of the topics of this paper, such as:

- changes in communication and the impact on congregations
- visual communication in congregations
- electronic communication in congregations

An essay that gets a B to B+ will usually include at least 12 footnotes from at least five different readings, making connections between the topic and the course readings or other readings.

Option 2: A rant

Using informal language and the use of “I”, use about 1200 words to state your strong opinion about something related to one of the topics of this paper. Perhaps you want to argue something from this list:

- electronic communication should be embraced by congregations
- electronic communication is dangerous for congregations
- visual communication should be embraced by congregations
- visual communication is dangerous for congregations

You may have another point you’d like to make that relates to this paper.

Use the remaining 800 words to use long footnotes to make connections with the readings. An essay that gets a B to B+ will usually include at least 12 footnotes from at least five different readings. In the footnotes, give the citation and a brief explanation of the connection you made between your idea and the idea in the reading. The majority of the footnotes should come from the course readings.

Option 3: An essay on another topic related to communication

Sadly, in this paper we did not have time to discuss two major communication issues that affect congregational life: interpersonal communication and cross-cultural communication. You can write an essay on either of those topics. The challenge here is that you will need to find other books, beyond the course book, to serve as references. An essay that gets a B to B+ will usually include at least 12 footnotes from at least five different readings, making connections between the topic and the course readings or other readings.

Option 4: Summary and analysis of 2 interviews

For this option, pick two people in ministry and ask each of them for a 30-45 minutes of their time for an interview. You might choose a minister or lay leaders at a church or a staff member for a para-church organization. Ask them what they consider to be the biggest communication challenges in ministry today. You may record the interviews or take notes on them. Use about 1000 words of your essay to summarise what your interviewees said, and use the remaining 1000 words to analyse what they said in the light of the readings. An essay that gets a B to B+ will usually include at least 12 footnotes from at least five different readings, making connections between the topic and the course readings.

Option 5: An essay on preaching

If your major interest in taking this paper is the topic of preaching, you are welcome to choose one of the options from Assignment 3 and do that option for assignment 2. Obviously you will have to choose another option when you complete Assignment 3. If you choose this option, you will need to read ahead in the course readings in order to cite appropriate readings in the essay.

The marking of Assignment 2 will take into account:

- the clarity of the argument you are making in the essay. This includes an inviting introduction, a compelling conclusion, a clear structure to the essay, and a good flow of ideas throughout the essay.
- your ability to make clear connections with the course readings, or with other readings if you are using them.
- your ability to refer to ideas we talked about in the videoconferences and during the teaching day.

Assignment 3 – PAST311

Length	2000 words
Value	30%
Due Date	Friday, 26 May 2017 (no late penalty will be imposed until 5 June)

Topic **Several options**

Option 1

Rework a sermon you have already preached. Turn in a script of the revised sermon, accompanied by a 2000-word essay describing the changes you made. The essay should:

- explain the changes you have made

- offer a coherent justification of these changes (both theological and sociological). The weight of marking will be focused on this second area.

An essay that gets a B to B+ will usually include at least 12 footnotes from at least five different readings, making connections between the topic and the course readings or other readings.

Option 2

A rant about the place of preaching in congregational life today. Use an informal writing style including the use of “I.” Take a position about the value (or lack of value) of preaching today, or take a position about a specific aspect of preaching (e.g., preaching today must have visual components in order to be “heard,” or preaching today must include real-life stories, or preaching today must reveal an authentic person behind the sermon).

The rant itself should be about 1200 words. Use the remaining 800 words to create long footnotes to make connections with the readings. An essay that gets a B to B+ will usually include at least 12 footnotes from at least five different readings. In the footnotes, give the citation and a brief explanation of the connection you made between your idea and the idea in the reading. The majority of the footnotes should come from the course readings.

Option 3

A rant about the place of the Bible in preaching in today’s society. Use an informal writing style including the use of “I.” Take a position about the value of the Bible in preaching today, or take a position about a specific aspect the way Christians talk about, promote or engage with the Bible.

The rant itself should be about 1200 words. Use the remaining 800 words to create long footnotes to make connections with the readings. An essay that gets a B to B+ will usually include at least 12 footnotes from at least five different readings. In the footnotes, give the citation and a brief explanation of the connection you made between your idea and the idea in the reading. The majority of the footnotes should come from the course readings.

Option 4

Doug Pagitt, an emergent church leader in the United States, has mounted a bit of an attack on traditional preaching in his book *Preaching Re-Imagined*. The book is available as an electronic book in the University of Otago library. Read Pagitt’s book and write a review of the book, comparing and contrasting it to the readings in this course book. You might want to use about 1000 words to summarise his book and the remaining 1000 words to make comparisons and contrasts with our course readings. An essay that gets a B to B+ will usually include at least 12 footnotes from at least five different readings, making connections between the topic and the course readings.

The marking of Assignment 3 will take into account:

- the clarity of the argument you are making in the essay. This includes an inviting introduction, a compelling conclusion, a clear structure to the essay, and a good flow of ideas throughout the essay.
- your ability to make clear connections with the course readings, or with other readings if you are using them.

- your ability to refer to ideas we talked about in the videoconferences and during the teaching day.

Assignment 4 – PAST311

Length	15 blog posts of 100-200 words each
Value	15%
Due Date	Each week of the semester there's not another assignment due (9 weeks), plus six responses to other students' posts

For each week that no assignment is due (nine weeks of the semester), I will post questions on the Blackboard Discussion Board. In the first week you'll be asked to introduce yourself. For the remaining 8 weeks, you'll be asked to respond on Blackboard to a recorded interview (posted on Blackboard) or to an article or exercise online about communication.

You will be expected to post at least one 100-200 word answer in response to my questions in each of the nine discussion periods. In addition to answering my questions with nine posts, you will be expected to respond at least six times over the course of the semester to something another student has said, making a total of at least 15 posts. To count as one of the six required responses, your post must be between 100 and 200 words. You are welcome to respond briefly to other students' posts as often as you like, but in order to count as one of your 15 required posts, your response needs to be at least 100 words.

Posts should be informal and conversational, but posts should engage seriously with the topics and make references to the interviews and readings if possible. (There is no need to footnote comments about the interviews or readings from the course book, but if you cite or quote some other source, let us know what it is by putting the title and author in parentheses.) I will respond only very occasionally to the Blackboard discussion board posts. I view the discussion board as a place for you to interact without a lot of input from me.

The nine posts that are your responses to my questions will have a due date, which will be clearly indicated in the title for each discussion thread. Late posts will get one-half credit. The six posts that are responses to other students' posts can be written any time during the semester. I want to encourage you to go back to the discussion threads and read what students have added after you wrote, so I don't check the dates on your responses to other students. I will inform you what will be the last possible date in the semester to make comments or add late posts.

When you respond to another student's post, I encourage you to try to build on what the other student has said. You are also welcome to respectfully disagree with something another student has written. Please do so with civility and kindness. If you don't understand something another student has said, feel free to ask questions for clarification. If you have concerns about what another student has written, please contact me directly. If I perceive that a post is disrespectful, I will remove it immediately and send an email to the student, explaining my action and asking for the post to be rewritten.

The marking of the Blackboard posts will take into account:

- The depth of your interaction with the interviews, articles and topics.
- Evidence you have been listening in the teaching day and the videoconferences.

- Evidence you have engaged with the readings.
- Evidence you are engaging with other students' posts.
- Evidence you can be brief and concise.

Assignment 1 – MINS 407

Length **2000 words**
Value **25%**
Due Date **Friday, 31 March 2017**

Topic Preliminary Communication Audit

Choose a congregation, either your own or another congregation. Assess all of the congregation's communication through the eyes of a member, a person who has been attending less than a year, and a newcomer. Critically evaluate everything about the way the congregation communicates – the building, exterior signage, parking, lobby, worship space, brochures, website, blog, telephone answering system, worship bulletin, verbal announcements, bulletin board, etc. – through the three sets of eyes. In the first audio conference and the teaching day, more information will be given about how to conduct a communication audit. An essay that earns a B to B+ will usually include at least 10 footnotes from 4 different readings, making connections between the ideas in the essay and the course readings.

The marking of Assignment 1 will take into account:

- the clarity of your writing as you summarise and analyse the communication strategies of a congregation. This includes an inviting introduction, a compelling conclusion, a clear structure to the essay, and a good flow of ideas throughout the essay.
- your ability to make clear connections with the course readings, or with other readings if you are using them.
- your ability to refer to ideas we talked about in the videoconferences and during the teaching day.

Assignment 2 – MINS 407

Length **2500 words**
Value **30%**
Due Date **Monday 24 April 2017**

Topic **Several options**

Option 1: An essay on a topic from the paper

Write an essay focused on one of the topics of this paper, such as:

- changes in communication and the impact on congregations
- visual communication in congregations
- electronic communication in congregations

An essay that gets a B to B+ will usually include at least 15 footnotes from at least five different readings, making connections between the topic and the course readings or other readings.

Option 2: A rant

Using informal language and the use of “I”, use about 1500 words to state your strong opinion about something related to one of the topics of this paper. Perhaps you want to argue something from this list:

- electronic communication should be embraced by congregations
- electronic communication is dangerous for congregations
- visual communication should be embraced by congregations
- visual communication is dangerous for congregations

You may have another point you’d like to make that relates to this paper.

Use the remaining 1000 words to use long footnotes to make connections with the readings. An essay that gets a B to B+ will usually include at least 15 footnotes from at least five different readings. In the footnotes, give the citation and a brief explanation of the connection you made between your idea and the idea in the reading. The majority of the footnotes should come from the course readings.

Option 3: An essay on another topic related to communication

Sadly, in this paper we did not have time to discuss two major communication issues that affect congregational life: interpersonal communication and cross-cultural communication. You can write an essay on either of those topics. The challenge here is that you will need to find other books, beyond the coursebook, to serve as references. An essay that gets a B to B+ will usually include at least 15 footnotes from at least five different readings, making connections between the topic and the course readings or other readings.

Option 4: Summary and analysis of 2 interviews

For this option, pick two people in ministry and ask each of them for a 30-45 minutes of their time for an interview. You might choose a minister or lay leaders at a church or a staff member for a para-church organization. Ask them what they consider to be the biggest communication challenges in ministry today. You may record the interviews or take notes on them. Use about 1250 words of your essay to summarise what your interviewees said, and use the remaining 1250 words to analyse what they said in the light of the readings. An essay that gets a B to B+ will usually include at least 15 footnotes from at least five different readings, making connections between the topic and the course readings.

Option 5: An essay on preaching

If your major interest in taking this paper is the topic of preaching, you are welcome to choose one of the options from Assignment 3 and do that option for assignment 2. Obviously you will have to choose another option when you complete Assignment 3. If you choose this option, you will need to read ahead in the course readings in order to cite appropriate readings in the essay.

The marking of Assignment 2 will take into account:

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- your ability to make clear connections with the course readings, or with other readings if you are using them.
- your ability to refer to ideas we talked about in the videoconferences and during the teaching day.

Assignment 3 – MINS407

Length	2500 words
Value	30%
Due Date	Friday, 26 May 2017 (No late penalty imposed until 5 June)
Topic	Several options

Option 1

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- explain the changes you have made
- offer a coherent justification of these changes (both theological and sociological).
The weight of marking will be focused on this second area.

An essay that gets a B to B+ will usually include at least 15 footnotes from at least five different readings, making connections between the topic and the course readings or other readings.

Option 2

A rant about the place of preaching in congregational life today. Use an informal writing style including the use of “I.” Take a position about the value (or lack of value) of preaching today, or take a position about a specific aspect of preaching (e.g., preaching today must have visual components in order to be “heard,” or preaching today must include real-life stories, or preaching today must reveal an authentic person behind the sermon).

The rant itself should be about 1500 words. Use the remaining 1000 words to create long footnotes to make connections with the readings. An essay that gets a B to B+ will usually include at least 15 footnotes from at least five different readings. In the footnotes, give the citation and a brief explanation of the connection you made between your idea and the idea in the reading. The majority of the footnotes should come from the course readings.

Option 3

A rant about the place of the Bible in preaching in today’s society. Use an informal writing style including the use of “I.” Take a position about the value of the Bible in preaching today, or take a position about a specific aspect the way Christians talk about, promote or engage with the Bible.

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The marking of Assignment 3 will take into account:

- the clarity of the argument you are making in the essay. This includes an inviting introduction, a compelling conclusion, a clear structure to the essay, and a good flow of ideas throughout the essay.
- your ability to make clear connections with the course readings, or with other readings if you are using them.
- your ability to refer to ideas we talked about in the videoconferences and during the teaching day.

Assignment 4 – MINS 407

Length	15 blog posts of 100-200 words each
Value	15%
Due Date	Each week of the semester there's not another assignment due (9 weeks), plus six responses to other students' posts

For each week that no assignment is due (nine weeks of the semester), I will post questions on the Blackboard Discussion Board. In the first week you'll be asked to introduce yourself. For the remaining 8 weeks, you'll be asked to respond on Blackboard to a recorded interview (posted on Blackboard) or a recorded sermon posted online.

You will be expected to post at least one 100-200 word answer in response to my questions in each of the nine discussion periods. In addition to answering my questions with nine posts, you will be expected to respond at least six times over the course of the semester to something another student has said, making a total of at least 15 posts. To count as one of the six required responses, your post must be between 100 and 200 words. You are welcome to respond briefly to other students' posts as often as you like, but in order to count as one of your 15 required posts, your response needs to be at least 100 words.

Posts should be informal and conversational, but posts should engage seriously with the topics and make references to the interviews and readings if possible. (There is no need to footnote comments about the interviews or readings from the coursebook, but if you cite or quote some other source, let us know what it is by putting the title and author in parentheses.) I will respond only very occasionally to the Blackboard discussion board posts. I view the discussion board as a place for you to interact without a lot of input from me.

The nine posts that are your responses to my questions will have a due date, which will be clearly indicated in the title for each discussion thread. Late posts will get one-half credit. The six posts that are responses to other students' posts can be written any time during

the semester. I want to encourage you to go back to the discussion threads and read what students have added after you wrote, so I don't check the dates on your responses to other students. I will inform you what will be the last possible date in the semester to make comments.

When you respond to another student's post, I encourage you to try to build on what the other student has said. You are also welcome to respectfully disagree with something another student has written. Please do so with civility and kindness. If you don't understand something another student has said, feel free to ask questions for clarification. If you have concerns about what another student has written, please contact me directly. If I perceive that a post is disrespectful, I will remove it immediately and send an email to the student, explaining my action and asking for the post to be rewritten.

The marking of the Blackboard posts will take into account:

- The depth of your interaction with the interviews, articles and topics.
- Evidence you have been listening in the teaching day and the audioconferences.
- Evidence you have engaged with the readings.
- Evidence you are engaging with other students' posts.
- Evidence you can be brief and concise.

TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE

The translation used in the Department is the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). This translation attempts to stay reasonably close to the original Hebrew and Greek text, while using contemporary and gender inclusive language.

REFERENCING SYSTEM

For writing essays, the Department requires that you use the 16th edition of the Chicago Style Guide, which is the norm for many academic journals in the Humanities and is often recommended for theses in the humanities. The Department has prepared a *Study and Style Guide*, which outlines the Chicago Style and offers other advice on essay presentation. You may find it via the Department's "Student Resources and Information" page: <http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/>

A Note on Resources for Assignments and Footnoting

I expect you to interact with the readings as you write these assignments, and I expect to see footnotes from the readings to acknowledge that interaction. I like footnotes that make very clear what connection you are making with the reading. Some examples of ways of making connections with the readings:

Example 1, indirect quotation: John Smith argues that the most significant challenge facing congregations in the twenty-first century is the burden of old buildings.¹ (In your footnote numbered 1 you give the information about John Smith's book or article, plus the page number where you found this idea. If it came from a website, you give the title of the article, the name of the website, the URL of the website and the date accessed.)

Example 2, direct quotation: Jane Jones writes, “The most significant issue facing congregations today is the loss of younger members.”² (In your footnote numbered 2 you give the information about Jane Smith’s book or article, plus the page number where you found the quotation. If it came from a website, you give the title of the article, the name of the website, the URL of the website and the date accessed.)

Example 3, citing a fact or date you got from a reading: Fifty-six percent of congregations find it difficult to sustain the cost of maintaining their buildings.³ (In your footnote numbered 3 you give the information about the book or article where you got this fact including the page number. If it came from a website, you give the title of the article, the name of the website, the URL of the website and the date accessed.)

Example 4 (the least preferred way of referring to a reading), an indirect reference to an idea in a reading: Many issues face congregations in the twenty-first century.⁴ (In the footnote numbered 4 you give the full information of where you got this idea just like in examples 1-3. With this kind of footnote, it is less clear exactly what you’re referring to in the reading. The connection with the reading will be much stronger if you give a sentence or two in the footnote that explains what the author was saying. Use these kinds of connections with readings sparingly because they are not strong connections unless you use the footnote to explain exactly what the author was saying.)

In the study guide, I have given you additional books you can refer to, many of which are in the University of Otago Library. I also want to encourage you to use the Internet to find information about these topics. The New Zealand Census provides much fascinating information (<http://www.stats.govt.nz/census/default.htm>), as does Statistics New Zealand (<http://www.stats.govt.nz/default.htm>). You can also do Google searches for the topics of this paper and see what you find. Whenever you cite a website, you must give the URL (the website address) and the date you downloaded the material.

When I find an article on a website I think I might want to use for an essay, I copy the article on the website and then paste it in a Word document. Then I copy the exact website address (URL) and paste it at the top of the Word document, and I add “downloaded on _____” and note the date. There is a specific form for footnotes of Internet resources, which includes the name of the article or website, the URL, and the date accessed.

I am quite an informal teacher and I teach with lots of discussion, and I want Blackboard posts to be informal. But I want assignments to be carefully documented. I want you to use the Chicago footnote and bibliography style, which is clearly set out in the departmental study and style guide: <http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/otago029305.pdf>

I will post the study and style guide on Blackboard for you. Page 19 gives information about how to cite Internet resources.

Some additional information on resources: Wikipedia is a good place to get general information about a topic, but it should not be cited in academic writing. Because it is a wiki (open source), anyone can change an entry. Therefore it is not authoritative. You have to be discriminating about which websites you cite for academic essays. Websites of government agencies and church-related organizations are usually safe. Personal blogs are not authoritative! You can cite something from a dubious website as an example of an opinion that a person might hold, but you shouldn’t cite information from the Internet as authoritative unless you know something about the organization that sponsors the website.

All assignments should have footnotes and a bibliography that lists all the resources you cited.

SUBMITTING WRITTEN WORK

All assignments shall be submitted **electronically** via the “Assignment” feature on Blackboard by **midnight** on the due dates notified. Please do not submit paper copies. For full instructions about how to submit assignments electronically via Blackboard as well as other important information on plagiarism, grading, and deadlines, please see the “Essential Information” web page.

PLAGIARISM

All Assignments submitted in the Department of Theology and Religion must be prefaced with a student Plagiarism Declaration Form. They will not be deemed to have been submitted unless and until the Plagiarism Declaration Form has been submitted.

It can be downloaded from: <http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/> It is also on the Blackboard site for this course.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity means being honest in your studying and assessments. It is the basis for ethical decision-making and behaviour in an academic context. Academic integrity is informed by the values of honesty, trust, responsibility, fairness, respect and courage. Students are expected to be aware of, and act in accordance with, the University’s Academic Integrity Policy.

Academic Misconduct, such as plagiarism or cheating, is a breach of Academic Integrity and is taken very seriously by the University. Types of misconduct include plagiarism, copying, unauthorised collaboration, taking unauthorised material into a test or exam, impersonation, and assisting someone else’s misconduct. A more extensive list of the types of academic misconduct and associated processes and penalties is available in the University’s Student Academic Misconduct Procedures.

It is your responsibility to be aware of and use acceptable academic practices when completing your assessments. To access the information in the Academic Integrity Policy and learn more, please visit the University’s Academic Integrity website at www.otago.ac.nz/study/academicintegrity or ask at the Student Learning Centre or Library. If you have any questions, ask your lecturer.

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/administration/policies/otago116838.html>
<http://www.otago.ac.nz/administration/policies/otago116850.html>

STUDENT SUPPORT

The “**Essential Information**” web page provides helpful information on how to access the University Library’s resources, as well as a guide to the support services available to students at the University of Otago, including the Student Learning Centre and Disability Support.

For all **administrative enquiries**, please contact:
The Administrative Assistant for Theology and Religion.
Email: theology@otago.ac.nz Phone: 03 479 8516

For all **distance learning enquiries**, please contact:
Katherine Rae, Administrative Assistant for Theology and Religion.
Email: katherine.rae@otago.ac.nz Phone: 03 479 8639

We recommend that you contact the Department as soon as possible if you have any problems participating in the course or accessing resources. Please remember to check your University email account regularly for updates and announcements.