

**CH 311: UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST POLITY
SPRING, 2011
UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY of the TWIN CITIES**

SYLLABUS

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Rather than my designating specific office hours, I welcome your requests for one-on-one conversation as needed and will make every effort to find a time when we can meet that works well for both of us.

I. Course Purpose:

The formation of the United Church of Christ has been characterized as a special development in church history moving beyond traditional forms of polity in response to the influence of modern ecumenism and the need for a new style of organization appropriate for God's mission in these times. Polity-in-process is the story of the UCC. This course will explore the development of ecclesiology in the UCC and the implication of those developments on the ministry and mission of various settings of the UCC—local congregations, associations, conferences, and the national church—as well as the role of authorized ministers within those settings. This course completes the UCC History, Theology, and Polity sequence expected by most UCC Committees on Ministry for authorization.

II. Course Topics:

- A. Ecclesiologies present in the UCC;
- B. The structures and missions of each setting of the UCC;
- C. The meaning of ordination in the UCC and the process for authorizing ministry in the UCC;
- D. The Search and Call process and how to participate in a way that keeps covenant with the UCC;
- E. Ways to access resources and provide leadership for certain of our deeply held values;
- F. Worship and sacraments;
- G. Living out our vocation as a “United and Uniting Church.”

III. Learning Objectives

Because most—perhaps all--students in this course desire ordained ministerial standing in the United Church, this course is designed around this working definition of the meaning of ordination: “The ordained person is called on to represent the faith,

traditions, values, and covenants *of* the Church *to* the Church and *to* the world beyond the Church.”

The intent of this course is to equip you for this representational function. If you engage the material of this course, by the time we are done, you will:

1. **be able to describe, discuss, and represent the unique nature of the UCC’s covenantal polity and ecclesiology, and be able to discuss how they do and do not work in today’s “post-modern” world;**
2. **be able to articulate the meaning of authorization for ministry (becoming ordained, commissioned, or licensed) in the UCC, and be prepared to participate faithfully and effectively in the process of becoming authorized;**
3. **be prepared to participate faithfully in the UCC’s Search and Call process, knowing how to conduct your own search in ways that respect our commonly held norms;**
4. **be able to describe accurately the roles and missions of various settings of the UCC and how they relate to each other, and be able to imagine yourself serving in those various settings;**
5. **be able to access resources for ministry from various settings of the UCC;**
6. **be able to imagine your own leadership in helping the UCC live out our ethos as an Open and Affirming, Just Peace, Multi-Cultural, Multi-Racial, Anti-Racist, Accessible to All Church of Extravagant Welcome;**
7. **be able to articulate your understanding of the UCC Ordained Minister’s Code and how you will serve within the framework of that code.**

Oh, yes, and hopefully you will enjoy this class and will develop life-long bonds with class-mates!

IV. Required Texts (Most of these will be placed on reserve so that you may make your own decisions about purchasing them. These are all worth adding to your personal, professional library)

1. *New Ecclesiology and Polity: United Church of Christ*, by Clyde Steckel
2. *Theology and Identity*, edited by Daniel Johnson and Charles Hambrick-Stowe
3. *Patterns of Polity*, by Edward LeRoy Long, Jr.
4. *The Constitution and By-Laws of the United Church of Christ (2005 edition)*—may be downloaded from ucc.org
5. *UCC Manual on Ministry*
6. *Book of Worship, United Church of Christ*
7. *The Evolution of a UCC Style: Essays in the History, Ecclesiology, and Culture of the United Church of Christ*, by Randi Jones Walker
8. *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*—World Council of Churches
9. *Beginning Your Ministry in the UCC* (this is now mostly just the UCC Desk Calendar and Plan Book, the MOST valuable resource for you to purchase. Everything else that used to be in this packet is now available on line.)

Highly recommended: *New Century Hymnal, and Companion to NCH*

The Living Theological Heritage of the United Church of Christ, Vol. 7, ed. by Barbara Brown Zikmund

All these materials will be on reserve in the UTS Library.
There will also be a number of printed handouts throughout the semester, as well as assignments that will ask you to do some on-line research.

V. Schedule of Classes and Assignments

Session I—February 8, 2011

A: Class introductions, syllabus and texts, guidelines for conversation, group formation and assignments, class style (heavy on dialogue, light on lectures, question sets, guest speakers, case studies, etc.), worship schedule

B: Brief review of hoped-for new polity to result from merger of Congregational Christian churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Church atp*,

Session II--February 15, 2011

Understandings of Covenantal Polity and the National UCC Constitution and By-Laws (mostly Constitution...By-Laws will come later)

Assignments: Constitution of the United Church of Christ (2005 edition), and worksheet, Scavenger Hunt Through the Constitution

Reuben Sheares, "A Covenant Polity", ch. 7, *Theology and Identity...*

Louis Gunnemann, "The Polity of the United Church of Christ" (handout)

Bill Hulteen, "United Church of Christ Covenantal Polity" (handout)

Peter Schmiechen, "Achievement and Promise" (handout)

Donald Freeman, "Autonomy in a Covenant Polity" (handout)

Session III---February 22, 2011

Guest speaker for the whole class session: Rev. Dr. Clyde Steckel, to discuss with us issues he raises in his book, *New Ecclesiology and Polity: United Church of Christ*.

Assignment: read his entire book and come prepared with 1 to 5 questions you would like to discuss with Clyde.

Session IV—March 1, 2011

Ordination in the United Church of Christ—called, set apart, what does it all mean?

Assignments: John Thomas, "Something More: Authorized to Represent" (handout)

David McMahill, "Called to Ordained Ministry" (handout)

"Theological Assumptions...: Representative and Covenantal" (handout)

Ross Winner, "The Mystery of Our Calling" (handout)

Martin Copenhaver, "The Good Life..." (handout)

UCC Book of Worship, Order for Ordination to Ministry, pp. 400-411

Atp: in-class case study, The Communion Without Clergy Caper

{*atp= As Time Permits }

Session V---March 8, 2011

A: Our polity in relationship to other forms: promise and peril
 Assignment: Edward Long, *Patterns of Polity*, Chs. 7-9

B: Living our values: Guest speaker from MN Conference GLBT Team
 Assignment: please go to UCC.org and see what resources you can find to help a church considering the Open and Affirming process.

PAPER NUMBER ONE DUE TODAY (see description later in this syllabus)**Session VI—March 15, 2011**

Living Our Values, continued: the UCC's commitment to be a Multi-Cultural, Multi-Racial, Anti-Racist Church

A. Discussion of readings and research assignments, which are:
 Norman Jackson, "An Indian Perspective on the UCC" (handout)
 Samuel Slie, "The UCC and the Experience of the Black Church", ch. 5 in *Theology and Identity*
 Rosemary McCombs Maxey, "Who Can Sit at the Lord's Table: The Experience of Indigenous Peoples," ch. 6 in *Theology and Identity*

Please go to UCC.org and see what resources you can find to help with becoming an M&M church

B. Guest speakers from the MN Conference Emmaus Ant-Racist Team

March 22, 2011 NO CLASS—READING WEEK**Session VII—March 29, 2011**

Authorization for Ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ
 Guest speakers (entire session): Rev. Rick Wagner and Rev. Elena Larson, associate Conference Ministers, MN Conference UCC

Assignments: *UCC Manual on Ministry* (affectionately known as MOM)
 Bill Hulteen, "The Relationship of Standing to Faith & Order in the UCC" (handout)

Please come with 1 to 5 questions for our speakers on the authorization process

Session VIII—April 5, 2011

The Search and Call process in the UCC: what are the polity and theological issues that undergird Search and Call, and how do authorized UCC ministers participate in the process and keep covenant?

Guest speakers (entire session): Rev. Wagner and Rev Larson (as above)

Assignment: look on line at UCC.org for materials related to preparing a ministerial profile and materials related to a local church preparing its own profile.

Session IX—April 12, 2011

A. A time for integrating sessions from the last two weeks or more as needed using case studies on authorization and standing issues.

B. Preparing for next week's guest speaker by discussing the following:
Randi Walker, "Episcope" (handout)

Bertrice Wood, "Theology of Mission" Ch. 12 in *Theology and Identity*

Norman Jackson, "Missio Dei" (handout, also in LTH v. VII)

Reporting on your going to the website of a Conference and giving us a flavor of life in that Conference (we will agree on who will go to which Conference's website the previous week)

DUE DATE FOR PAPER NUMBER 2**Session X—April 19, 2011**

Ministry and mission in Associations and Conferences

Guest speaker (entire session): Rev. Dr. Karen Smith Sellers, Conference Minister, MN Conference UCC

APRIL 26, NO CLASS**Session XI—May 3, 2011**

A. Worship and sacraments UCC style—or is there such a thing?

Assignment: "Introduction to the Book of Worship"

B. Living our values: A Church Accessible to All

Guest speaker: Rev. Jo Clare Hartsig, UCC Disabilities Ministry, and primary author of curriculum, "Anybody, Everybody, Christ's Body"

Assignment: Find this curriculum on line (start at UCC.org, follow links to Disabilities Ministries). Come with 1 to 5 questions for our speaker about this curriculum.

Session XII—May 10, 2011

A. Our vocation to be a United and Uniting Church

Assignments: Randi Walker, *Evolution of a UCC Style*, ch. 6
Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry

B. Living our values: Evangelism, Church Growth, and Church Planting UCC style. Guest speaker to be announced.

DUE DATE FOR PAPER NUMBER 3**Session XIII—May 17, 2011**

Last session. We'll discuss your last papers, so in order to do that, they must be turned in on time so I can read them and get them back to you for this discussion.

We will close with a Service of Holy Communion

VI. Course Requirements

- A. Active participation in each class meeting
- B. Completion of all reading assignments in a timely manner; there will also be times you'll be asked to do some internet research, development of questions for guest speakers, and development of questions for the whole class to pursue. These are all considered part of "reading assignments."
- C. Three papers:

Paper Number 1: Imagine yourself teaching an Adult Ed class (or a new members class) about the covenantal polity of the UCC. How do you explain this in theory and actual practice in 5 to 7 pages? One element that must be included is to explain what it means for our polity to begun with the faith expression, "Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church" (as in the Preamble to the UCC Constitution). This paper is due March 8.

Paper Number Two: Imagine yourself being pressed hard by a Committee on Ministry for an explanation of the meaning of ordination in the UCC in theory and in practice. How do you provide that explanation in roughly 5 pages?

Paper Number Three: Imagine yourself having to explain to the instructor of this course (or better yet, your Committee on Ministry!) how you imagine yourself keeping covenant with the United Church of Christ in whatever setting for ministry you find yourself, in roughly 5-7 pages. This paper must demonstrate knowledge of our polity, your role as a representative of the UCC, and familiarity with the Ordained Minister's Code.

D. Go to ucc.org weekly. 2-3 times during the semester, you'll be asked to report on some piece of news or information from ucc.org or one of the related sites.

E. There are numerous weekly or bi-weekly (or daily) e-things that come from the national United Church of Christ. Following the links from the national homepage, sign up for at least one of those regular "mailings" and from time to time, report to us on what you are getting (like the Congregational Vitality newsletter, JPANet, Stillspeaking Daily Devotional, etc.)

Also strongly recommended: attendance at any available gathering of the wider UCC (i.e., a Conference or Association meeting); anything else you can do to immerse yourself in the life of the wider United Church of Christ

VII. Grades

The course grade will be based on points given for various components of course requirements. Class participation/evidence of reading is worth 25 points. Each paper will be worth 25 points. Papers and participation total 100. Papers and participation are designed to support the learning objectives for this course. No final exam.

90-100=A

80-89=B

70-79=C

60-69=D

below 60=F

VIII. Promptness/Tardiness/Quality of Work

Please meet all deadlines. The job of planning ahead is yours, not mine. Extensions may be granted only in emergency circumstances with permission of the instructor (UTS policy). (Emergency=serious illness, death, etc. of yourself or family member. UTS policy is that extensions may be granted for only 6 months after the end of the semester. After that, a grade must be turned in no matter what. I do not recommend counting on extensions as a way to bail out when it looks like you can't get material in on time. You would be better off to drop the course before that deadline rather than hoping to use an extension to finish late work. If you are likely to be called out for a special service you are expected to lead, please plan your work to allow for a last minute intrusion.) Late work (without extension) is not eligible for full points and may be graded without comment.

Quality of work: this is *graduate theological education*, which assumes your ability to write and spell correctly. I recognize that not all spell check programs work equally well and there will be an occasional typo that slips through. If I find myself drawn to correcting spelling or goofy grammar, your paper may receive a tombstone, which means the paper died at that point. Tombstones get no points at all. You will have the opportunity to rewrite for a grade but in no case will the rewrite be eligible for more than the equivalent of a B.

When doing your papers, be extremely cautious of using certain Internet-based resources. Material you get from ucc.org is generally reliable. If you are not sure about the veracity of what you are seeing through an internet resource, talk with me about it, please! Whenever using someone else's work, you must give appropriate credit via footnotes. It is usually easy for me to tell the difference between your writing and what someone else has written. Most of us count on the wisdom of other people a lot, like it or not. Be sure to give credit where it is due.

VIII. Auditing: This course is open to auditors (assuming that we have enough seats) according to the formula usually followed by UTS: for classes ten and under, one auditor, for classes ten to nineteen, two. Auditors normally do not prepare written assignments or receive any other evaluations. However, if auditors expect to participate in class discussions, they should read the assigned materials. *If you wish to audit this course in order to seek ministerial authorization in the United Church of Christ, you should be absolutely sure that your Committee on Ministry is satisfied with your auditing the course rather than taking it for credit. If you are in this category, please talk with me, because under these circumstances, doing all the written work may be necessary to satisfy your Committee on Ministry.*

Opening Worship Sign-Up
(about a five minute moment of centering....preferably close to the topic we are considering for the day)

Feb. 8: David McMahon

Feb. 15:

Feb. 22:

March 1:

March 8:

March 15:

March 29:

April 5:

April 12:

April 19:

May 3:

May 10:

May 17: David McMahon

News from National Sign up

Feb. 8 David McMahill

Feb. 15

Feb. 22:

March 1:

March 8:

March 15:

March 29:

April 5:

April 12:

April 19:

May 3:

May 10:

May 17:

