

**CH 310: UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST  
HISTORY AND THEOLOGY, FALL, 2010  
UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

**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:** (from the UTS Catalog)

“The formation of the United Church of Christ has been characterized as a “special development in church history”. This course identifies the nature of that special development through an exploration of the four streams of traditions that united in 1957 to become the UCC and the development of the denomination since 1957. This exploration will involve both an historical and theological probing of UCC development in its historic and current modes. This course is a prerequisite to the UCC polity course and meets half of the history, theology, and polity requirements for ordination in the United Church of Christ.”

A worthy motto for this course: “Remembering our way into the future!”

**II. Course Topics:**

- A. Traditions and groups which were the predecessors of the UCC;
- B. The events, processes, and people of the union;
- C. The developments since 1957;
- D. Theological underpinnings of the history, structure, and mission of the UCC;
- E. Theological issues and challenges.

The overarching question we will ask at almost every turn is, “Why is what we are studying relevant to ministry in the United Church of Christ in the first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century?”

**III. Learning Objectives**

Because most—perhaps all--students in this course are desiring 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

do the work of this course, by the time we are done, you'll be able to respond to intelligent questions you might receive from a prospective member, or from a Confirmation Class, or from someone you meet in a chaplaincy setting, or from a member of your church who is curious. These questions include:

**1. Where did the United Church of Christ come from?**

You'll be able to speak of the four antecedent denominations and ethnic groups that comprised them, you'll be able to interpret the relevance of the Reformation for our modern liberal denomination, and you'll be able to speak of the so-called hidden histories of groups that have come to be part of the modern-day United Church of Christ other than the Big Four.

**2. What does the United Church of Christ believe?**

You'll be able to speak of core affirmations while at the same time accurately interpreting our freedom of theological expression. You'll be able to describe the unique characteristics of the United Church of Christ Statement of Faith and the Preamble to the national UCC Constitution and By-Laws. You'll be able to speak of the United Church of Christ in theological language that makes sense for our times.

**3. What are great moments in our history, both before and after the founding of the UCC, that shaped our development?**

You'll be able to speak of the great migrations of people that brought our fore bearers to the United States and of events such as the Amistad, the beginnings of the American Missionary Association, the incredible impact of the global missionary movement on local churches, the ordination of the first woman, Rev. Antoinette Brown, the Mercersburg Movement, and the development of the Social Gospel. You'll also be able to tell the amazing story of the union that formed the UCC, and what shaped this new denomination in its early years.

**4. Who are some of the people both before the UCC came into existence and since then who in some significant way shaped who we are today?**

You'll get to interview at least one great person and share that interview in class (see list later in the syllabus). You'll become familiar with many other enough so that you can speak knowledgeably of their gifts to the shaping of who we are.

**5. We have many people in the UCC today who do not trace their personal histories through any of our antecedent denominations. How did they come to be part of the UCC and where do they find their sense of belonging?**

You'll have the opportunity to interview folks from one local congregation to hear their own stories and learn about their sense of belonging or lack thereof to the UCC as a whole.

**6. What is distinctive about the UCC today?**

As you research movements in the UCC during our first 53 years, you'll be able to speak about the current ethos of the UCC and what has helped to form that ethos.

**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. *Confessing Our Faith*, by Roger Shinn

3. *Hidden Histories in the United Church of Christ, Vols. 1&2*, ed. by Barbara Brown-Zikmund,
4. *The Shaping of the United //Church of //Christ: An Essay in the History of American Christianity*, by Louis Gunnemann
5. *The Heidelberg Catechism*
6. *The Evangelical Catechism*
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. *On the Heels of Freedom*, by Joyce Hollyday

**A resource we will use frequently:** *The Living Theological Heritage*, ed. by Barbara Brown Zikmund (BBZ). This is a seven volume collection of primary documents related to this course. Because of the expense, we do not require purchase, although assembling your own set over time would be a valuable resource for your ministry. One bound copy of the entire set and one set of reprints of most assigned readings will be on reserve. You may find it useful to make your own copies for your study when you are not under the time pressure of returning reserve items.

## V. Schedule of Classes and Assignments

### Session I—September 14, 2010

A: Class introductions, syllabus and texts, guidelines for conversation, group formation and assignments, class style (heavy on dialogue, light on lectures, question sets, reader’s theaters, etc.), context for studying UCC history and polity, the place of our own history in the UCC’s history.

B: We will view the “UCC @ 50”, a great summary of the UCC’s first 50 years. Precursors of the Reformation—Hus, Wycliffe, etc. Reader’s theater.

### Session II---September 21, 2010

A: Significance of the Reformation

Reading Assignments: If you cannot answer the questions in the discussion guide I will hand out on the first day of class, these readings from *Living Theological Heritage* (LTH)II will help:

Luther, on freedom: pp.98-120;

Zwingli, on the Lord’s Supper: pp.205-213;

The Marburg Colloquy: pp. 224-247;

Calvin and the law: pp. 266-279 (Note: LTH is on reserve—one set of the actual books, and one set of copies of copies of specific readings)

B: First Wave of Immigration, Colonial and frontier Congregationalists  
Student presentation: interview of historic Congregational figure

Reading Assignments: Gunnemann, ch. 6  
 LTH III: pp. 1-7  
 LTH IV: pp. 413-419

**Session III---September 28, 2010**

A: Second Wave of Immigration—German Reformed Churches  
 Student presentation: interview of historic German Reformed figure  
 Reading Assignments: Gunnemann, ch. 7, pp. 167-182  
 LTH III: pp. 7-19

B: Revivals, the Great Awakenings, Mercersberg, and the Heidelberg  
 Catechism  
 Reading Assignment: read the beginning of the *Heidelberg Catechism* and  
 scan it enough to understand the structure and approach (please bring to class)  
 Supplemental Readings: LTH IV: pp. 511-640; LTH 111-120

Assignments for everyone to turn in:

- (1) name of congregation for congregational history project (*it is assumed that you will have secured permission!*)
- (2) Essay, 3-5 pages, your response to the question, “So now, then, pastor, what do those old Reformers have to do with us?”

**Session IV—October 5, 2010**

A: Third Wave of Immigration—German Evangelicals, a people whose religious experience is characterized as a “warm-hearted faith spent in the world”  
 Student presentation: interview of historic German Evangelical figure  
 Reading Assignments: Gunnemann, Ch. 7, pp. 183-189; read enough of *The Evangelical Catechism (bring to class)* so you can compare and contrast it with the Heidelberg Catechism

B: Homegrown Religion—Christian Connection and the Afro-Christian  
 Connection  
 Student presentation: interview of historic figure from one of the Christian  
 movements  
 Reading Assignments: LTH IV, pp. 1-13;  
 Hidden Histories, v. 1, pp. 21-36  
 Supplemental: LTH IV, pp. 14-204

**Session V---October 12, 2010**

A: Development of the consciousness of wider mission—the Haystack Meeting, the forming and early work of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, and discussion of the place of this component of our history for today’s church.

Student presentation: interview of Haystack meeting participant or early foreign missionary.

Reading assignments: to be announced

B: Our hidden histories—the beginnings of work with groups and issues that have evolved into our distinctive identity today: Native Americans, African Americans, women’s leadership in church and society, historic work with Armenian Christians, missionary work in Hawaii and Paul Sherry’s apology to the people of Hawaii.

Student presentation: interview of historic figures from one of these groups

Reading assignments: from *Hidden Histories*, specific chapters to be negotiated and coordinated with student interviews.

### **Session VI—October 19, 2010**

A: The Amistad experience, the founding of the American Missionary Association and its work

Student presentation: interview with an Amistad participant or an early AMA teacher

Reading assignments: LTH V, pp. 1-27, pp. 298-305; selected chapters from *On the Heels of Freedom*

B: Congregationalism comes of age, the “Burial Hill Statement”, articulation of the Social Gospel

Student presentation: interview with one of the early proponents of the Social Gospel

Reading assignments: LTH VI, pp. 21-24; LTH V, pp. 406-420

### **October 26, 2010 NO CLASS—READING WEEK**

#### **Session VII—November 2, 2010**

**A and B:** Union approached, then delayed, then achieved!

Student presentation: interview with one of the leaders involved in the movement toward union

Reading assignments: LTH VI pp. 1-20; pp. 261-274; pp. 385-395; pp. 503-518 (if you have to triage readings, do this first)

Gunnemann, chs. 1-3

Supplemental readings: all of LTH VI is devoted to unions of the Evangelicals and the Reformed, then the Christians and the Congregationals, and the struggles around the union that created the UCC.

#### **Session VIII—November 9, 2010**

**A and B:** What do we believe in this new UCC and how do we figure that out?

Student presentation: interview with living, long-retired UCC pastor, hopefully, one who remembers the union

Reading Assignments: *Confessing Our Faith*, section 1 (supplemental reading—rest of the book)

Also, *Revisiting the Statement of Faith*, pp. 5-16, in *Prism*, Vol. 21, #1  
(on reserve or to be handed out)

Also, two papers by former UCC president, John Thomas, to be handed out in class.

**Assignment for everyone to turn in:** 5-7 page essay in response to the question, “So now, then, pastor, what do we in the UCC believe?”

### **Session IX—November 16, 2010**

A and B: Our New Alphabet Church: M&M; A2A; ONA; OCLL;  
UCBWM, UCBHM, AMA, etc., our Ecclesiological issues, developing a UCC style  
If needed, student presentation: interview of living, long-retired UCC

pastor

Reading Assignments: Walker. Chs. 1-2  
Steckel, Chaptes to be announced

### **Session X—November 23, 2010**

We begin reports based on your research papers and devote time to unfinished questions

### **Session XI—November 30, 2010**

“An Exasperating, Heady Mix!!!”

We continue reports based on research papers, and catch up on topics left undone!

Assignment for everyone: Local Church History Projects Due

### **Session XII—December 7, 2010**

We conclude reports based on research papers, fill in missing pieces, and summarize where we have been. ALL WRITTEN REPORTS ARE DUE TODAY.

### **Session XIII—December 14, 2010**

Final class: we WILL have a final exam—an in-class, no notes essay in response to the question, “So now, then, pastor, where did the UCC come from and what made it what it is today?” Clearly, books have been written in response to such a question, but imagine you are preparing to answer the question in an Adult Ed Forum where you have time to go into some depth and detail—but not a lot. Your essay will be evaluated according to your historical accuracy, your integration of material you engaged during the semester.

## **VI. Course Requirements**

- A. Active participation in each class meeting
- B. Completion of all reading assignments in a timely manner
- C. Projects
  1. 3-5 page essay in response to the question, “So now, then pastor, what do those old Reformers have to do with us today?” (DUE SEPTEMBER 28)
  2. “Interview” with one major figure of our history OR with living, long retired clergyperson and reporting on this interview to the class (10-15 minute

presentation)(more on this below)(DUE ON THE DATE FOR WHICH YOU SIGN UP)

3.5-7 page essay in response to the question, “So now, then, pastor, what do we in the UCC believe?” This essay should include a discussion of the UCC Statement of Faith, the Preamble to the Constitution, where the work of theology happens in a church like ours, and the tension between our insistence on freedom of individual conscience and core values of the community. (DUE NOVEMBER 9)

5. Local Church History (more on this below) (DUE NOVEMBER 30)

6. A research paper on a topic of UCC life, mission and ministry from our first 50 years (DUE DECEMBER 7, PREFER RECEIVING IT THE DAY OF YOUR PRESENTATION)

7. An oral presentation of your research paper in #4 above (DUE THE DAY FOR WHICH YOU SIGN UP)

D. Final exam, described above, last day of class

E. Read the COMMAntary weekly email newsletter from the Minnesota Conference of the UCC. We will discuss this briefly each week. To get on the mailing list, contact AlisonB@uccmn.org

F. Visit the national UCC homepage (ucc.org) at least once a week and be prepared to discuss

G. 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.

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	10
Reformation Essay	10
Interview presentations	10
Theology essay	10
Congregational History project	10
Final research paper (written)	15
Final research paper (oral presentation)	15
Final exam	20

### VIII. Promptness/Tardiness/Quality of Work

Students are expected to meet all deadlines. *Please note that some dues dates are close to one another and thus will require careful planning. Your Congregational history project and the final research paper both will require early planning to accomplish needed interviews, research, and the like before you actually begin writing.*

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 usually will 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 research paper, be extremely cautious of using certain Internet-based resources. 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.*

### Project Assignments

1. Interview with a key historical figure or with a living, long retired UCC pastor.

The purpose of this exercise is to give you the opportunity to engage a key figure of one of the strands of our United Church of Christ heritage, to share what you learn about your interviewee with the rest of the class—and to employ the device of informed imagination. Your questions and the answers you imagine must be reasonably grounded in the historical records about this person. Pay attention to your interviewee's historical context and her/his interaction with and influence on that context.

Suppose, for example, you were interviewing John Robinson. A question and answer might look like this: “The United Church of Christ in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century has drawn heavily from your famous advice to your congregation at Leyden that 'the Lord has yet more light and truth to break forth from God's Holy Word.' Was there a specific reason you thought your congregation might need to be flexible and listen for some new Word from God?” His reply: “Yes, there was a reason. Most of my congregation were firm Separatists. But I recognized that in the New World they would encounter colonies of non-Separatist Puritans (those people whose goal was to *purify* the Church of England). They would need to figure out how to get along with one another if the colonies had any chance of success.” Your answer might continue by explaining the difference between the Separatists and non-Separatists and how their differing views on ecclesiology spilled over into their political philosophies.

Please be creative in making this presentation but don't spend lots of time cooking up something that might be interesting but that would mostly be a diversion from the real goal of this assignment (for example, hand-sewn costumes from the historical period might be interesting but very likely will not tell us what we want to know...).

### **Interviews with a living, long-retired UCC minister**

There are two ways to do this. One is to identify someone you would go visit, interview, and then report to us the results of your interview. The other is to invite this person to class and conduct the interview in front of the whole class. This can be a rich experience for us all! Please talk to me about this option if this is what you would like to do. Clergy who remember the union that formed the UCC in 1957 and the struggles that followed often can bring a perspective not found in any of the literature. I can suggest names of several persons in the Twin Cities who have provided fascinating interviews in the past.

A sign-up list with dates is on a separate sheet.

2. A Local Church in the Context of 50-plus years of the UCC:

There are three ways you can do this project:

First, there is an excellent study guide for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary DVD, “UCC @ 50” which contains about 22 discussion questions for a local church study group that has viewed the DVD. This option for fulfilling this assignment is to see if you can gather a

group of adults in the local UCC you will be studying, show them the DVD (available in the UTS library, or it may be borrowed from me, or the church you are studying may have its own copy), lead them through the discussion and then turn in a report on that discussion.

Second, see if you can gather about a dozen or so folk who would be willing to share with you their individual stories of how they came to be members of this UCC congregation. Are they here by virtue of family tradition and ties, or did they choose the UCC out of many other options? See if you can discover how much they actually know about the history of the UCC and see whether or not they identify with that history.

Third, interview the pastor and a small group of lay leaders about the history of that local church and its relationship to the UCC.

3. Your final project will require some research. Please select a topic from the list below of significant areas of UCC life, mission, and ministry from our first 53 years. Your paper will need to “tell the story” of the topic you choose, including the Biblical/theological and historical foundations for what happened, what took place in the national church (i.e., were there General Synod actions, was there institutional expression of this area of mission and ministry, what happened in local churches, and what happened, if anything, in the wider society as a result? Clearly, a full treatment of any of these topics would be book-length, but I ask for no more than 10 pages.

This project actually has two components: first, the written paper that you turn in, DUE DECEMBER 7, 2010, and second, an oral presentation of your research during class, dates to be determined (about fifteen to twenty-five minutes, including time for discussion with you). Your written paper and your oral presentation will be graded separately.

Please sign up for your topic as early in the semester as possible. We will all benefit if we have only one person per topic, which then helps us to cover more territory in the reports.

Suggested topics are on the next page:

## SUGGESTED TOPICS:

1. Women's Issues, including women in church leadership and reproductive rights. *(Although the development of gender inclusive language is often associated with Women's Issues, my bias is that how we speak of God touches on a wide spectrum of concerns and issues.)*
2. The UCC and Civil Rights
3. The UCC and peacemaking, especially during times of war
4. The UCC and lesbian, gay, transgender, and bisexual issues, especially the Open and Affirming movement, authorized church leadership of glbt persons, and marriage equality
5. The UCC and ministry with historically underrepresented racial/ethnic minority groups
6. The UCC and global ministries, especially the shifting paradigm about the nature of "mission" and our efforts to conduct such mission ecumenically
7. The UCC and the growth of the "A2A" movement ("accessibility to all")
8. Theological issues as addressed by the Statement of Faith, the New Century Hymnal, the Book of Worship, and the development of our understanding of COVENANT
9. The national restructuring that led to our current pattern of Covenanted Ministries guided by a collegium of officers
10. Our ecumenical work: how has the understanding of our vocation as a "united and uniting church" evolved since 1957, and what visible expressions of the unity of the Body of Christ have we helped to bring about?
11. Evangelism and Identity in the context of being a progressive denomination. This project would report on earlier efforts such as "Word and Deed Evangelism" (mostly in the 1970s) and especially on the recent development of the "God Is Still Speaking" initiative, with a more sophisticated understanding of branding and media advertising
12. New Church Development: historically, how did new UCC congregations come into being? What have been the obstacles and what strategies have evolved to where we are today with this part of our mission?
13. How has the UCC supported itself financially since 1957? What did OCWM mean originally, what does it mean now, and what systems have emerged to provide money for mission and ministry? As money flows from local church donor to national settings, what theological understandings have emerged to guide the sharing of that money?
14. Christian Education and Youth Ministry in the UCC: what kind of resources, training,

and programming has happened since 1957 to support our educational ministries? What have been the theological and educational foundations for this crucial work?

15. The 2009 UCC General Synod wrestled with a proposal for “Single governance.” What does this mean? What have been the struggles around this question? What has been the outcome?

**CH310 UCC History and Theology**  
**United Theological Seminary**  
**Rev. David McMahill, instructor**

Date	Strand of the Church/options for figures	Presenter
September 21, B	Congregational: John Winthrop, John Robinson, John Cotton, Cotton Mather, Anne Hutchinson, Jonathan Edwards, William Bradford, William Brewster	
September 28, A	German Reformed: John Phillip Boehm, Michael Schlatter, John Nevin, Phillip Schaff	
October 5, A	German Evangelicals: Joseph Rieger, George Wall, Andreas Irion, Philipp Jakob Spener	
October 5, B	Christian Connection: Elias Smith, James O'Kelly, Barton Stone, Abner Jones, Rice Haggard	
October 12, A	Haystack Meeting students, early world missionaries	
October 12, B	Antionette Brown, Lemuel Haynes, any others from <i>Hidden Histories</i>	
October 19, A	Singbe, the Tappan brothers, Gaulladet, an AMA teacher	
October 19, B	Washington Gladden, any of the congregational leaders involved in the Burial Hill statement	
November 2	Douglas Horton, James Wagner, Fred Hoskins, Samuel Press, Truman Douglas	
November 9	Living, long-retired UCC pastor	
November 16	Living, long-retired UCC pastor	

