COMMON COURSE SYLLABUS
DN 519 UCC HISTORY & POLITY
UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY Fall, 2014

INSTRUCTORS
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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course will introduce students to the history, theologies, liturgical traditions, polity, organization, ministerial authorization policies and practices, and mission of the United Church of Christ. It will follow the guidelines prepared by History, Theology and Polity teachers on the essentials of a basic one semester course.

II. REQUIRED READINGS:
Required reading assignments may be downloaded from LINKS PROVIDED THROUGH VIRTUAL UNITED or from other websites on the worldwide web. Some materials are .pdf files. To read these you will need to download Acrobat Reader (a free software program). Required reading is indicated and optional readings are suggested. There are also practical field assignments in addition to readings and short presentations that need to be developed and presented via an online format both for evaluation & discussion by the class as a whole. All of these files and websites will be accessible through UTS’s course management page; VirtualUnited.

REQUIRED TEXTS:


Post, Margaret Rowland. History and Program (United Church Press: 2007) 87 pages. Revised by Thomas E. Dipko. This best-selling, newly revised and updated reference shares a short history of the UCC, background on its predecessor bodies, information on its covenanted ministries, an explanation of its emblem and the statement of faith.


Gunnemann, Louis H. United and Uniting: The Meaning of An Ecclesial Journey, UCC 1957-1987. (Pilgrim Press: 1987). 215 pages. Continues the ongoing story of the UCC after 1957. From its beginning the UCC has exhibited some singularly formative ecclesial ideas, expressed in the intention to be a united and united church. This book provides and invitation for readers to join in a recovery of the original vision and, at the same time, allow it to correct their own understanding of the UCC.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS:
Fackre, Gabriel. *Believing, Caring, and Doing in the United Church of Christ.* (United Church Press, 2005) 253 pages - UCC history, theology, documents, movements and how they evolve into the integration of believing and doing in the UCC.


Gunnemann, Louis H., expanded by Charles Shelby Rooks. *The Shaping of the United Church of Christ: An Essay in the History of American Christianity.* (United Church Press, 1999) 277 pages. Gunnemann wrote a compelling story of how the UCC took shape in the mid-twentieth century when church unions were a prominent feature of the movement toward Christian unity. Rooks has expanded this classic text by bring the UCC to its 45 year mark.

Steckel, Clyde J. *New Ecclesiology and Polity: United Church of Christ* (Pilgrim Press, 2009) 142 pages - describes the transition from modernity to post-modernity, focusing on both awareness and action in the UCC and on how existing structures get in the way of faithful mission in the post-modern world.

**SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL READINGS:**

Balaam’s Courier Staff. *Balaam’s Unofficial Handbook of the United Church of Christ.* (United Church Press: 2008) 157 pages. The staff of Balaam’s Courier, the unofficial General Synod daily publication since 1975, provides a handbook of the basics of the UCC for new member and confirmation classes and anyone who has ever struggled to explain the UCC to others.

Caldwell, Quinn G., and Curtis J. Preston, editors. *The Unofficial Handbook of the United Church of Christ.* (United Church Press: 2001). 205 pages. This lighthearted, humorous look at the UCC is for all “UCCers,” but youth, teens, and anyone who wants to learn more about the denomination will find the book particularly appealing.


Paul, Robert S. *Freedom With Order.* (United Church Press: 1987) 148 pages. A discussion of the basic need for an ecclesiology, i.e., a doctrine of the church that will do justice to the history of the UCC and to its basic theological principles.
III. RATIONALE:
In this course students will be encouraged to learn about and become knowledgeable of the unique culture of the United Church of Christ. While knowing the “nuts & bolts” of the UCC is important; of equal importance is understanding the themes of covenant, evangelical courage, radical hospitality, early truth-telling, liberty of conscience, commitment to ecumenism, and of being an “unfinished” church with an open table.

IV. SPECIFIC COMPETENCIES:
Theology:
Participants will obtain knowledge of:

□ Theological documents and texts (e.g. Statement of Faith, Basis of Union, Prism articles, various working papers of the national setting, ecumenical documents, pronouncements of General Synod, etc.)
□ Worship (including Book of Worship, New Century and other hymnals)
□ Ecclesiology (the nature of the church)
□ Creeds and confessions ("testimonies, not tests" of what is commonly held among us)

History:
Participants will obtain knowledge of:
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- Origins, development, significant documents, major events, important persons in the four primary constituent traditions (Congregational, Christian, Evangelical, Reformed)
- Selected other traditions and/or groups within the United Church of Christ (especially, but not necessarily limited to, African American, American Indian, Pacific Islander/Asian American, Hispanic)
- Founding of the United Church of Christ; developments in the United Church of Christ from 1957 to the present

**Polity:**
*Participants will obtain knowledge of:*
- Constituent parts of the United Church of Christ? i.e., local church, conferences and associations, national setting, General Synod (Constitution and Bylaws)
- Past and present structure of the United Church of Christ ("covenental polity")
- Patterns of accountability and autonomy in the various settings of the church

**Ministry:**
*Participants will obtain knowledge of:*
- Forms of ministry: licensed, commissioned, and ordained; ministerial partners (CC/DoC); emerging patterns for authorized ministry; ministry of all the baptized
- Structures and patterns of accountability: i.e., ordination, standing, discipline
- Ministerial ethics (Ordained Minister's Code, in MOM; other ethics documents)
- Understandings of ministry in the UCC: "embodiment" and "empowerment" models

**V. TEACHING STRATEGIES:**
This course will be primarily Online. All sessions will be in the format of online reading, viewing of video, and discussion in synchronous and asynchronous format. This means each student will be expected to login each week and participate in the online forum discussions. Additionally, we will have four mandatory video conferences on the following Saturdays from 10am-12pm: 9/7, 9/28, 10/26 and 12/7. Students are encouraged to meet face-to-face on campus if you can during the first (9/7) and last session (12/7). Weekly discussion grades will be given based on a minimum of one response to each discussion question or assignments posted by the instructors and an equal number of responses to other students’ postings. **Please understand this will be a minimum number of postings.**

1. **Postings in response to Instructors Questions MUST be in by Wednesday, Midnight. Responses to other students MUST be completed by Saturday, Midnight.**

2. **New Questions will be posted by Sunday morning for the following week.**

3. A word of caution; students should not expect to put in less time on any distance learning course versus a face-to-face course; and certainly not this on this one. Time will however be saved through a minimum amount of commuting & the flexibility of class time. Students may choose when they wish to do their postings each week; however the deadline for each week’s postings will be Saturday night at midnight. It is advised that the earlier the postings the better. This will give students maximum opportunity to give and receive comments and feedback.

4. **Details of expectations and online work will be covered in the first class session. Students will receive hands-on exposure to the United Theological Seminary course management software and support will be available to students throughout the course from the instructors & the IT Department at United.**
VI. CALENDAR OF TOPICS AND READINGS:

1) **WEEK ONE** - Saturday, 09/20: 10:00 am – 2:00 pm – MANDATORY F2F INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION (via either face to face interaction or video conferencing)
   a) Introductions, Orientations & Online Course “Nuts & Bolts”:
      i) Come prepared to share 3 to 5 minutes about why you wish to learn more about the United Church of Christ.
      ii) Come prepared to share 3 to 5 minutes of your personal spiritual journey.
      iii) If you have a laptop you plan to use in the course; please bring it to this session; (this is NOT a requirement; we have plenty of desktops for you all to use). This will enable you to begin setting certain electronic bookmarks that will make your experience in the course more enjoyable and will move the technology out of the way for the real learning to take place.
      iv) This will be an important time of “Greeting & Meeting” and therefore; the session will officially conclude at 2:00 pm; lunch will be catered for face to face attendees ($10 charge).
   b) An orientation of Moodle, locating the reading assignments, links and discussion questions online.
   c) Discussion Forum postings to instructors are due no later than Wednesday, Midnight of each week. Responses to at least one other students’ posting are due by Saturday, Midnight of each week. However, for everyone to benefit the most from these online discussions; the earlier in the week you can post your comments the better.

2) **WEEK TWO - 9/22-27: THEOLOGY FROM A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**
   a) Your response to each Discussion Forum due by Wednesday, midnight;
      a) Respond to at least one other student in each Discussion Forum by Saturday, midnight;
   b) These written papers will be seen by the instructors only, due by Saturday, midnight.
      i) Choose a reading assignment *from each of the four separate traditions* and write one page (double spaced) on each tradition giving your understanding of its historical influence on the present day United Church of Christ (total four pages double spaced).

3) **WEEK THREE - 9/29-10/4: UCC THEOLOGY SINCE 1957**
   a) Examine formal expression of UCC Theology since 1957 through readings.
   b) Your response to each Discussion Forum due by Wednesday, midnight;
   c) Respond to at least one other student in each Discussion Forum by Saturday, midnight;
   d) These written papers will be seen by the instructors only, due by Saturday, midnight:
      i) What major theological (God, Jesus, trinity…) commonalities and what major differences, if any, do you see between the UCC’s four ancestral traditions? Respond with two double spaced pages. **OR**
      ii) Write a two page narrative (double spaced) linking the evolving positions of the United Church of Christ to its historical beginnings.
      iii) Submit in Electronic Drop Box

4) **WEEK FOUR – 10/6-11: BACK TO HISTORY - WHO WE ARE FROM THE GROUND UP**
   There are no discussion forums this week, but there is a mandatory video conference between instructors and students on Saturday (10/11)!
   a) Skim the chapter titles and read several of the Hidden Histories chapters.
   b) Your first written paper, which will be shared with all other students, is due by Wednesday, midnight:
i) Select one hidden history and write two to three paragraphs that “introduce” this history to someone else. Please post your hidden history selection on the forum “Paper Choices” as soon as you choose it. [Note to class: If someone else has already chosen a specific hidden history, please select another so we will all learn from the diversity.] Be prepared to share your insights with other students during the video conference on Saturday, 10/11 from 10am-12pm EST.

ii) Write a one page “history” of a UCC congregation. Remembering that all history begins locally, do some informal and formal “research” about the history of one UCC congregation, perhaps your own. Find out if there is any kind of written history and/or interview long-time members. Learn if the congregation came from one of the historic traditions (and if so which one) or if it was birthed as a “UCC” congregation. This paper will not be shared with other students.

Some questions you may ask:

iii) What traditions are part of its past? How many members did it have ten years ago, twenty years, thirty years, etc? Have its racial or ethnic or socio-economic characteristics changed?

iv) Does that make any difference in the identity and life of the congregation?

v) What is one (or several) significant event in the life of the congregation?

vi) What was it before 1957, if it existed before then? Where is it located? Why there? Has the congregation relocated over its history and why?

You need not respond to all of these questions. But your one page “history” of the congregation should be more than dates of pastors and buildings.

c) Share your Hidden History summary with your classmates during the Google Hangout – Time TBD

d) Submit written assignments to the instructors via the Digital Drop Box by Saturday, midnight.

5) WEEK FIVE – 10/13-18: FROM THE "BIG PICTURE OF HISTORY TO LIVING HISTORY

a) Review assigned reading. There is a lot of reading here but you will need to be familiar with these materials. Particularly read Gunnemann’s summary of events that led the four separate denominations into formation of the UCC in 1957.

b) Your response to each Discussion Forum due by Wednesday, midnight;

c) Respond to at least one other student in each Discussion Forum by Saturday, midnight;

d) These written papers will be seen by the instructors only, due by Saturday, midnight;

i) Write one page reflection on what you see as the major hurdles and turning points in the UCC formation process.

ii) Since 1957, the United Church of Christ has particularly been formed and expressed through actions of the General Synod. Find and read the Resolutions/Pronouncements on “Open and Affirming,” “Just Peace,” “Multiracial-Multicultural Church,” and “Accessible to All.” Select one action and write a one page summary on how you see this action emerging from the UCC’s theological and ecclesiological history.

6) WEEK SIX – 10/20-25: DIVERSITY - BEING A MULTIRACIAL / MULTICULTURAL CHURCH
a) Review the list of readings and select several selections of particular interest to you and read those in
depth. Skim the others and be prepared to enter into an active online discussion of what it means to
live out being a Multiracial-Multicultural (M&M) church in the 21st century.

b) Your response to each Discussion Forum due by Wednesday, midnight;

c) Respond to at least one other student in each Discussion Forum by Saturday, midnight;

d) These written papers will be seen by the instructors only, due by Saturday, midnight;
   ii) Interview a UCC lay person about what they believe “being a multiracial-multicultural church”
       means. Ask their permission to share their views with your instructors.
   iii) Write a one page paper that reflects your own understanding of the possibilities and challenges of
       being a Multiracial-Multicultural Church in the 21st century. Include interview material if you
       find it helpful.

7) WEEK SEVEN – 10/27-11/1: WORSHIP in the UCC
   a) Review reading assignments.
   b) Your response to each Discussion Forum due by Wednesday, midnight;
   c) Respond to at least one other student in each Discussion Forum by Saturday, midnight;
   d) These written papers will be seen by the instructors only, due by Saturday, midnight;
      i) Select what might be for you the most challenging topic from the following and write a one page
         paper about why it challenges you, what was helpful (or not) from the readings:
         (1) The sacraments in the UCC (in articles and/or your experience).
         (2) Inclusive language

8) WEEK EIGHT – 11/3-8: MOVING INTO THE FUTURE; THEOLOGICAL DIVERSITY,
   ECUMENICISM & INTERFAITH RELATIONSHIPS
   There are no discussion forums this week…however there is a mandatory video conference
   between instructors and students on Saturday (11/8), and reading and writing assignments!
   a) Review reading assignments.
   b) These written papers will be seen by the instructors only, due by Saturday, midnight;
      i) After completing the reading, prepare a one page paper on characteristics you see as part of an
         emerging UCC theology, including what you see as key issues in being a community of
         theological diversity.
         OR
      ii) Write a one page reflection about your perspective on Ecumenism and Inter-religious
          relationships as a central vocation of the UCC (why it is or is not so, has it changed since our
          founding, etc….)
      iii) Be prepared to share your insights with the instructors and other students during the video
          conference on Saturday, 10/26 from 10am-12pm.

9) WEEK NINE –11/10-15: POLITY & GOVERNANCE IN THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
   a) Review reading assignments.
   b) Your response to each Discussion Forum due by Wednesday, midnight;
c) Respond to at least one other student in each Discussion Forum by Saturday, midnight;

d) These written papers will be seen by the instructors only, due by Saturday, midnight;
  i) Interview two ordained pastors in the UCC (face to face or by phone), who have been involved in
     some UCC national settings event or structure (i.e., attended General Synod, served on a national
     board or task force, etc.) Ask him or her to reflect about UCC polity and how it has changed over
     the past ten years. Using this research write a one page commentary on the strengths and
     challenges of the UCC polity, particularly as we live in the tension of autonomy and covenant
     (review Fisler-Hoffman’s book “Covenant” as a resource.)

10) WEEK TEN – 11/17-22: OUR UCC NATIONAL MINISTRIES

   a) Review reading assignments.
   b) Your response to each Discussion Forum due by Wednesday, midnight;
   c) Respond to at least one other student in each Discussion Forum by Saturday, midnight;
   d) These written papers will be seen by the instructors only, due by Saturday, midnight;
      i) Visit the web sites of the UCC Covenanted Ministries. Select one to review closely and write a
         one page commentary about what you particularly noticed, found interesting, found missing, etc.
         OR
      ii) Prepare a one page presentation (or several screen PowerPoint) for a new member class that
          describes the different settings of the UCC and their relationship (local, association, Conference,
          national, the national ministries). “Bonus Points” for displaying your understanding of how $100
          dollars moves from an individual member to the national setting! (ok, so no bonus points but
          celebration!)

12) WEEK ELEVEN – 11/24-29: THANKSGIVING BREAK
   No forum discussions or written papers due this week. Use this time to read ahead or prepare your
   final paper for submission. Happy Thanksgiving!

11) WEEK TWELVE – 12/1-6: MINISTRY IN THE UCC

   a) Page through the Manual on Ministry. Select the section that relates most closely to your own
      process (privilege of call, dual standing, commissioning, or ordination) and review the process for
      members in discernment.
   b) Your response to each Discussion Forum due by Wednesday, midnight;
   c) Respond to at least one other student in each Discussion Forum by Saturday, midnight;
   d) These written papers will be seen by the instructors only, due on Saturday night;
      i) Write a one page reflection about your own understanding of ministry as it relates to the readings
         for this week. Identify any questions you may have concerning processes for members in
         discernment from the Manual on Ministry.
      ii) Be prepared to share these reflections with the instructors and other students during the video
          conference on Saturday, 11/16 from 10am-12pm.

13) WEEK THIRTEEN – 12/8-13: MINISTRY IN THE UCC: (continued)

   a) One key objective of this UCC History and Polity Class is to equip you to be “teachers” yourself
      about the UCC — not just formally in a class but in many ways. Your assignments this week move in
      that direction.
b) Your response to each Discussion Forum due by Wednesday, midnight;

c) Respond to at least one other student in each Discussion Forum by Saturday, midnight;

d) These written papers due on Saturday night;
   i) Make a one page outline of a new member or “adult confirmation” class or series of classes for your local church presenting UCC Identity, History and Polity. Include any video or print resources you might use. (These will be shared with the class.)
   ii) Briefly ask three people under the age of 30 (church or unchurched) what they think about clergy. Do they trust them? Do they think clergy are important? Could they imagine being clergy themselves? Why? Why not? Write a one page paper summarizing their answers and your reaction to their answers;

14) WEEK FOURTEEN – Saturday, 12/20: MANDATORY WEB CONFERENCE from 9:00 am – 1:00 pm EST FOR DISCUSSIONS, PRESENTATIONS & PAPER
   a) Final Paper: Review expectations of an ordination/commissioning/dual standing paper in Manual on Ministry and prepare the section you might offer presenting your understanding of the history, theological roots, polity and practice of the United Church of Christ. Submit paper by Friday, midnight, and prepare a creative presentation to the class on Saturday. Length: 5-6 pages double spaced.
   b) Be prepared to offer any unanswered questions, any lingering thoughts, concerns, etc.

VII: SEMINARY STANDARDS
   a) Inclusive language
      i) United Theological Seminary has an official policy regarding the use of Inclusive Language. The policy may be found in the Seminary Catalog and is further explained in the Student Handbook. If you have specific questions, please see me.
   b) Academic Integrity
      i) Student integrity regarding all work assigned in this class is a basic expectation of the Seminary community. A detailed policy regarding what constitutes a violation of academic integrity can be found in the Student Handbook.
   c) Online Confidentiality
      i) One of the highlights of the online classroom is that students can draw from the experiences shared during class discussions and in written work. However, it is imperative that students do not share information that is confidential, privileged, or proprietary in nature. In addition, students are expected to honor the privacy and confidentiality of their classmates by not disclosing online conversations with those outside of the classroom.

VIII: USING ONLINE RESOURCES
You may access all online courses, along with help guides for online learning, at http://virtualunited.utsweb.net. Help guides are also available in the student computer lab and in the Student Handbook.

IX. METHOD OF DETERMINING FINAL GRADE:
Finals grades will be determined by a measured level of scholarship appropriate to a master’s level course, active participation in online community activities, and demonstrated comprehension of the material presented.
  1) COURSE EVALUATIONS:
     a) Assignments: reflection papers, forum discussions and responses to other students, and final paper.
     b) Online participation is part of your grade.
i) You are expected to contribute to class discussions in a substantive way. Substantive participation means you analyze, digest and question the subject matter presented by the instructor (through lectures, reading assignments and research) and your classmates. It also requires you to actively communicate your thoughts, experiences and ideas with the online community.

ii) A simple reply such as “I agree” or “Yes/No” without elaborating on your thoughts does not constitute substantive participation.

iii) You are encouraged to challenge your own and your classmates’ perspectives in a constructive manner.

2) Rubric: What is the method by which the assignments will be assessed for the semester grade?

- Postings in Discussion Forums  
  25%
- Responses to other students  
  25%
- Weekly Reflection Papers & Final Presentation  
  50%