I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Informed by theology and focused on skills for practical ministry, this course is designed to respond to the need for those in ministry to deal with situations of conflict within the church.

II. TEXTBOOKS

Required Reading: To be read before the beginning of class.
Sawyer, David R. *Hope in Conflict: Discovering Wisdom in Congregational Turmoil*. ISBN 9780829817584

Recommended Reading:

III. COURSE GOALS

This course will enable students to identify conflict situations in the life of the church as part of understanding the church and its mission and to develop skills and perspectives necessary for providing leadership in the formation of disciples in facing conflicts that occur in the church.

IV. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. Students will demonstrate courage by facing situations of potential or real conflict through a written assignment.
2. Students will develop ability to identify conflict situations, develop a theological base and determine ministry needed to face identified situations in role play and written assignments.

V. TEACHING STRATEGIES:

The design of this course is based on the conviction that class members learn from their experiences and from one another and not only from the instructor and the assignments given. The instructor believes that she also will be learning in the process
of this course. The course includes lecture, discussion, role play, and possibly small groups and reflection on case materials. The course presumes that students bring varying life and ministry experiences with conflict with them into the course.

VI. CALENDAR OF TOPICS AND READINGS:

Read *Hope in Conflict* before the class begins.

February 25:  
Introductions to Conflict:
To the Course and Participants
Shaping our Class Covenant
Thinking Theologically about Conflict
Reflections from Scripture: Not New for the Church
The Prevalence of Conflict in the Church

March 4:  
Understanding Conflict:
Conflict in a Win-Lose Perspective
Roots and Sources of Conflict
Feelings about Conflict
Experiencing Conflict

March 11:  
Facing Conflict:
The Importance of Facing Conflict
Building Relationships that Can Handle Conflict
Positive Approaches to Dealing with Conflict in Ministry

March 18:  
Practice in Facing Conflict:
Self-awareness in Meeting Conflict
Conclusions and Evaluations

VII. SEMINARY STANDARDS:

A. Inclusive language

United Theological Seminary has an official policy regarding the use of Inclusive Language. The policy may be found in the Seminary Catalog and further explained in the Student Handbook.

B. Academic Integrity

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.

VIII. EVALUATION:

A. Assignments

1. Read: Sawyer
2. **Class Response:**
   During the last five minutes of each class session each person will write a paragraph evaluating **their own participation** in that day's class session and saying whatever they want to say to the instructor at that time. These papers will be handed in at the end of the class session and returned (with comments) at the next class session. **Please leave margins for comments.**

3. **Assignment to be Done During the Course (Due: by March 11)**
   Take the opportunity to speak out on something you need to confront—something either big or little. Once you have done so, write a **one to two page paper** on the experience responding to the following questions:
   - What/Who did you confront?
   - How did you speak out?
   - What had kept you from speaking out up to now? How did you overcome this?
   - What is your assessment of how you did in speaking out?
   - Include a brief **theological foundation** for doing this confronting.

4. **Major Paper Possibilities (select one):**
   1. **Select an issue of conflict in the church with which you are dealing (or which you are avoiding) or with which you need to deal.** Describe the situation including what is essential. Determine **what values are at risk** in this situation. **Decide** on a way to face/deal with the conflict and put it into practice. **Describe what happened. Evaluate** your handling of the conflict.
   2. **Select a particular conflict situation—real or imagined—** and reflect on that situation theologically. **What does your theology have to say** in relation to that conflict situation? How is God at work in this situation? What does your theology have to suggest about dealing with conflict? This **does not** have to be a one-to-one type of conflict and may be a conflict in which the whole church is embroiled.
   3. Other possibilities may be suggested for approval. One might be to evaluate theories of conflict resolution by using your theology. Another might be to develop a sermon or class to deal with conflict. You would need to provide a detailed manuscript for either lesson or sermon.

   Major papers should be about **5 to 8 pages** in length (not a rigid expectation).

   **Due Date for the Major Paper: March 18**

B. **Method of Determining Grade:**
   - Class Participation 20%
   - Speaking Out Paper 30%
   - Final Paper 50%
IX. Student Course Evaluations:

It is very important for students to submit a course evaluation toward the end of the semester. Instructors do not see the student evaluations at all until after the instructors have submitted the students’ final official grades. Students should feel free to evaluate the course without any negative ramifications.

X. References: