School of Theology and Ministry – Seattle University
STMA 576 - UCC History & Polity
Part I, History & Theology
Winter Quarter 2014

A Brief Description of the Course Brief Course Description

This is one of two studies in the preparation for ministry in the United Church of Christ. In this course we will explore the origins, history and theology the four primary traditions that have shaped the life the UCC. We want to reflect on how our worship, faith, mission and practice are grounded in the diversity of our theological traditions and unity of our aspirations.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course, the student should be able to

1) Articulate the diverse histories that comprise the United Church of Christ, to situate them in a broader evolution of faith traditions and relate them to the theology and polity and practices of the local church.
2) Communicate the key elements of the UCC Statement of Faith, preamble of the constitution and "the heart of the UCC" style and the implications for the life of the church and their own ministry.
3) Articulate the UCC's commitment to being a united and uniting, multiracial, multicultural, open and affirming, just peace church, accessible to all.
4) Clearly understand one's own involvement in the leadership of the church in light the historical and theological traditions as they are reflected in the life and mission of the church today.
5) Listen to others respectfully and carefully, and engage in a covenant of learning and growth with the instructor and classmates.

Course Requirements

1) Attendance at all classes,
2) Engaged participation—active listening, raising questions, sharing perceptions.
3) Leading the class in an aspect of the topic under consideration.
4) Write a paper, no more than 20 pages
    a. Select a word, line, stanza, concept from the UCC Statement of Faith that matters to you
    b. Demonstrate how it is related to one or more traditions of the church. Identify and discuss a particular person, group, movement or time that was especially important to this line or concept.
    c. Discuss how this aspect of the Statement is important for our time, the life of the church now.
    d. Reflect on why this aspect is important to you, what is at stake for you and how you stand in relation to it.
5) Lead an opening devotional/mediation.

Grading Criteria

Informed, active class participation and leadership 70%
Final Paper/Presentation 30%

January 9 – INTRODUCTION, WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?

It's all about relationships.
…the history of the Church is only vital when it becomes someone's history.
When (memories) are shared, the stories released give character to our common life.

☼Focus: ***Getting to know each other – our history.***

- Sharing a sense of who are and where we come from and what is important about taking this class to each of us
- Review the Syllabus and Lay Out Expectations for the Course
- Review Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministers in the UCC

- Read/Reflect on A Most Difficult and Urgent Time (handout)
- Read/reflect on the Preamble to the Constitution of the UCC (handout)
- Raise the questions that matter to you

January 16 – INVESTIGATING OUR ROOTS, Part One

The UCC holds within itself all the major strands of the Reformation.

☼Focus: ***Getting acquainted with our story***

Readings:

1. "A Short Course in UCC History"
2. *Theology and Identity* Chapters 1-4
3. Gunnenmann, Chapters 6 & 7. ucc.org/polity resources
4. UCC Firsts
5. Chart: historical origins of the UCC

January 23 --INVESTIGATING OUR ROOTS, Part Two

☼Focus: ***Getting acquainted with our story, from different perspective***

Readings:

1. Randi Walker's *The Evolution of a UCC Style*, Ch. 1: "Critique of the Four-Tradition Origin Myth "
2. Gunnemann, Chapter 5 UCC. Polity resources
3. Theology & Identity, Chapter 5,6
4. Hidden Histories Vol. 1 &2 (selected), UCC History & Polity resources
5. Women in the UCC, in UCC History & Polity Resources

January 30 CLARITY IN THE FAITH, Part One

It claims as its own the faith of the historic Church expressed in the ancient creeds and reclaimed in the basic insights of the Protestant Reformers.

☼Focus: ***How have we made public our Faith?***

Readings:

1. The Heidelberg Catechism, The Apostles Creed, The Nicene Creed, the Kansas City Statement of Faith, the Principles of the Christian Church, The Barmen Declaration. Bekenntnisparagraph, The UCC Statement of Faith (3 versions)
   All found at ucc.org/about us/History & Polity Resources.
2. *Confessing Our Faith*, Part Two

February 6—CLARITY OF FAITH, Part Two

It affirms the responsibility of the church in each generation to make this faith its own in reality of worship, in honesty of thought and expression and in purity of heart before God.

The Ultimate identity of any religious body lies in its basic convictions. Lee Barrett

☼Focus: ***Reflecting on the meaning of the statements for our day.***

Readings:

1. *Theology & Identity* , Chapters 11, 14,15, 16
2. Articles by Jackson, Hirano, Maxey, Ringe, Essex, Armiljo in Theology section of hsiotry & Polity resources.
3. Walker, Chapters, 3 &4
4. John Thomas, Pastoral Letter on Faith and Engaging Science and technology", "A Theological Heart; Confessional Commitment in the United Church of Christ""

5. T. Dipko, "Theological Guidelines That Informed the Development of the *Book of Worship*," ucc.org History & Polity Resources
6. What we believe, ucc.org
7. *Confessing Our Faith,* Part One

FINAL PAPER ***TOPIC*** DUE

February 13--BEING A PEOPLE OF THE COVENANT: A Lifestyle for the UCC

We covenant with the Lord and one with another and doe bynd ourselves in the presence of God to walke together in all his waies, according as he is pleased to reveale himself unto us in his blessed word of truth.

☼Focus: ***What is Covenant, Covenantal Theology and, therefore, covenantal behavior? How is covenant both a theology and the shaping of a common life?***

Readings:

1. Michael Walzer, "The Covenant and the Free People."(?)
2. Theology & Identity, Chapter 7
3. C. Hambrick Stowe, "A Company of Professed Believers Ecclesiastically Confederate"
4. The Cambridge Platform of 1648
5. Walker, Ch. 5 "Covenant Community: Congregationalism and Its Discontents."
6. Find Three Covenants of local churches, bring them to class and think about them
7. Toward an Understanding of Local Autonomy (1969), History and Polity Resources
8. Look up "Covenant " in a Bible Dictionary
9. "UCC Ecclesiology," History & Polity Resources
10. John Thomas, "To Find Proper Words", ucc.org/theology under Sound Teaching

February 20 – PIETY AND POLITICS:

You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.

☼Focus: ***The relationship between what we believe, our faith, and what we do in the world***

Reading:

1. W. S. Coffin, "Preaching: the Dangers of Self-Righteousness." LTH/7, #75
2. R. Niebuhr, The Problem of Justice and the Power of Love," LTH/7, #14
3. Walker, Ch. 4 "The Entertainment of Doubt"
4. A. C. Smock, "Christian Principles of…", LTH/7 #94
5. G. Fackre, "Evangelism and Social Action: Either/Or?" LTH/7, #28
6. An interview with Jennifer McBride, "The Witness of Sinners, Christian Century," 12/11/13

February 27 – INCLUSIVITY, UNITY, THE USE OF SCRIPTURE

We are People of God's Extravagant Welcome.

☼Focus: ***The challenge of Extravagant Welcome and the Role Scripture in faith and life.***

Readings:

1. Walker, Ch. 3 "Roots of Theological Diversity in the UCC
2. In support of Equal Marriage for all(2005) , Open and Affirming Resolution (1985) UCC History & Polity
3. W. Brueggemann, "Biblical Authority, handout
4. 3 articles on Biblical Authority, see ucc.org/beliefs/theology/Dunkirk
5. Thomas, Contemporary Commitment and Catholic Substance"
6. J. Thomas, \Taking the Bible Seriously (handout)

7. J. Williamson, "Confessions, Creeds and Covenants in the United Church of Christ" (Prism)

March 6 WORSHIP AND THE IMPORTANCE OF EXPERIENCE

The United Church of Christ is a liberal Pentecostal church.

☼Focus: ***Discernment in the Spirit: more than a feeling, different than a head trip.***

Readings:

1. J. Williamson, from *Prism,* "Confessions, Creeds and Covenants in the UCC." (Handout)
2. Dipko, Introduction to the Book of Worship, UCC History & Polity
3. Gunnemann, articles on Baptism and Eucharist in UUCC History and Polity.
4.
5. "▸▸▸***DRAFTS*** **OF FINAL PAPER DUE, COPIES FOR ALL CLASS MEMBERS**◂◂◂

March 3 – Concluding Conversations

I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one…so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

Readings:

1. Preamble to the Constitution of the United Church of Christ
2. Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, and the UCC Response
3. Walker, Ch. 6 "Conclusion: the United Church of Christ as an Ecumenical Project"
4. John Thomas, "The United Church stands for something"

March 10--PROJECT PAPERS, EVALUATIONS and PARTY

Having presented copies of a draft of final papers to all class members two weeks before, students will present the main themes of their papers verbally to the class, with discussion following each presentation. There will also be time in class for evaluations of the course, and we will end with a little party. (Hand in papers to the instructor.)

Readings:

Walker, Randi Jones; *The Evolution of a UCC Style: Essays in the History, Ecclesiology, and Culture of the United Church of Christ*; United Church Press; Cleveland, 2005

Johnson, Daniel L. and Charles Hambrick-Stowe; *Theology and Identity: Traditions, Movements, and Polity in the United Church of Christ*; Pilgrim Press/United Church Press; Cleveland, 1990

Shinn, Roger, "Confessing Our Faith", United Church Press, Clevedland,1990

Various articles from *Living Theological Heritage*, *placed on reserve in the Library*

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