

Winter 2019

IST2062-10L-SP15 - UCC Polity

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Office Hours: email to set up a zoom conversation

Email Policy: I will get back to you within 24 hours.

Course Synopsis:

This course provides an introduction to the faith, polity, practice and identity of the United Church of Christ: its organization and understanding of its ministry, mission, and ecclesiology. The themes of identity, covenant, and change will frame our engagement with the material as we attempt to critically answer the question of who we are and who we are becoming as the UCC.

Books for the Course (*Required, please purchase):

1. *Randi Jones Walker. The Evolution of a UCC Style: Essays in the History, Ecclesiology, and Culture of the United Church of Christ. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2005. (ISBN 0-8298-1493-0)
2. *Fowler, Sidney: What Matters to You Matters to Us: Engaging Six Vital Themes of Our Faith. Pilgrim Press, 2008. ISBN 978-0-8298-1800-0
3. UCC Book of Worship (recommended for purchase if considering ordination, or borrow if your local church has an extra copy)
4. *Choose one:

Glorify: Reclaiming the Heart of Progressive Christianity, Emily Heath

Beyond Resistance: The Institutional Church Meets the Postmodern World, John Dorhauer

Real Good Church: How Our Church Came Back from the Dead, and Yours Can Too, Molly Phinney Baskette

Course Overview

This course provides an introduction to the faith, polity, practice and identity of the United Church of Christ: its organization and understanding of its ministry, mission, and ecclesiology. The themes of identity, covenant, and change will frame our engagement with the material as we attempt to critically answer the question of "Who We Are?" as the United Church of Christ.

Course Objectives

1. Students will have a working knowledge of the United Church of Christ – terms, settings, and procedures – and will be able to identify and describe the organizational structure of the UCC in the settings of local church, conferences and associations, national setting, and General Synod.
2. Students will be able to describe the tension between covenant and autonomy in the UCC, and describe patterns of accountability and autonomy in various settings.
3. Students will be able to evaluate how the polity of the UCC has evolved over the 50+ years since the birth of the denomination.
4. Students will be able to articulate a sense of the UCC ethos and core values of the denomination, as well as ecumenical commitments and partnerships.
5. Students will be knowledgeable about resources enabling them to pursue further study as well as provide resources to others.
6. Students will be able to articulate various forms of authorized ministry in the UCC, patterns of accountability and ethics. Students will situate their own ministry goals within this structure and articulate how they plan to demonstrate the marks of faithful and effective ministry to their communities.

Course Requirements

1. Prepare to critically engage each week by completing assigned readings	No % but critical for other engagement
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2. Weekly Substantive Engagement in Discussions: Participate in weekly discussion forums by establishing a regular and respectful online presence, including integrating reading into your responses and responding to your peers in ways that contribute to dialogue. Help contribute to the intellectual and spiritual space through sharing thoughts and getting to know others.	30%
3. Vital Theme Presentation:	10%
4. Faith Formation Resource:	10%
5. Midterm Paper:	20%
6. Final Polity and Practice Paper:	30%
7. Learning Agreement and Final Self Evaluation	No % but required for final grade

Course Requirement Details:

Each week students will post online in the weekly forum. We'll follow the following rhythm:

Course Rhythm:

Weekly Rhythm:

Our thinking and engagement with each other is focused towards our course objectives, equipping ourselves to further understand and articulate the United Church of Christ.

Each week we will be conversing together about the readings and themes for the week. I have pre-posted questions for each week and we'll engage with the questions and dialogue about the reading through our responses in the forum.

Monday-Wednesday Please log on to find both the readings for the week and the questions that accompany the readings. These are all pre-posted so you may also work ahead. Please complete the reading during the first part of the week

Thursday, at 11:59 PM

Post a reflection on the reading doing one of two things:

- 1) respond to the thematic questions posed by the instructor for the week's reading,
- 2) Begin a new conversation by posing a thoughtful question about the readings not raised in the thematic questions. This first post should be substantial and show your engagement with the theme and the readings for the week. Your first post should be between 250-500 words.

By Friday, at 11:59 PM

post once contributions to the conversation which extend the conversation further. Some of the ways you can do this include:

- 1) responding to issues raised in a classmate's post,
- 2) responding to questions raised in a classmate's response to your original post,
- 3) bringing insights from past weeks' readings to the discussion, 4) drawing on your personal and professional background to respond to the conversation. Your second post should be about 150 words.

By Saturday, at 11:59 PM

post a second time, contributing to the conversation as it unfolds. Follow guidelines above. Your third post should be engaging, but there is no word limit/guideline.

Some guidelines to posting:

1. Respond to the question, or pose a new question: The questions are not a quiz, therefore you can depart from the question, but do so in a substantive way.
2. Our goal is to engage in multiple conversations, if you are not inspired by the conversation, start a new one. This is how 'real world' conversation works, so we will aim to achieve a multiplicitous discussion.
3. Post on time: In order to achieve a dynamic conversation we need each person's voice in the mix. Thus, it is very important for you to be prompt and thoughtful with your postings.
4. Your postings constitute your attendance in class, so it is important to post on time to maximize your success in the course.

Substantive Engagement:

Your individual goal each week is to demonstrate substantive engagement. A key evidence of a substantive contribution is that it adds something to the conversation. Don't repeat what others have already said or simply tell us that you agree or disagree with the author, instructor or classmate. Tell us why, and tease out the implications of your responses. Locate your comment or question in relationship to the text we are discussing. It might usually take between 250-500 words to make a substantive post, but I will be looking for substance, not counting words.

Assignments:

Assignment #1 - Faith Formation Resource - Due Saturday, Week 4

- Sign up for one of the six ethos themes from the Six Vital Themes book (see google doc sign up sheet under 'collaborations')
- Read the chapter of the book corresponding to your theme
- Review the webpage (Links to an external site.)http://www.ucc.org/vitality_what-matters (Links to an external site.) for additional resources on your theme
- Using the format in [#1 Faith Formation Resource](#), provide minimum 2 page outline for leading an hour long Christian Education class on your theme. (Specify if the class is geared for a youth class or an adult educational class).
- Your final two page outline is **due Saturday, week 4**
- In addition, on the **Monday your theme is listed in the syllabus**, you will post a worship reflection that engages your theme. Details on this are also listed in the [#1 Faith Formation Resource](#)

Assignment #2 – Mid Term Paper due Saturday, week 7

For both papers, please review [Written Assignment Guide](#)

The mid-term paper should be 5 pages.

Construct the mid-term paper using the guidelines below. Both papers rely on guidelines adapted from the Manual on Ministry instructions for Part II and Part III of the ordination paper and from Section 2 of The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the UCC (see note and links below).

Mid-Term Paper (5 pages)

A) Identify and define three key words (e.g. covenant, unity, autonomy, congregational, or others) and use them to characterize the overall polity and practice of the United Church of Christ. Be sure to reference some of the key

paragraphs in the Constitution (6, 9, 16, 17, and 18) which address these themes as well as our reading for this course related to these themes.

B) Related to these key words, describe how they impact the different bodies of the UCC including local church, associations, conferences, and the national office. What are the relationships between these bodies?

Assignment #3 Final Policy and Practice Paper due Saturday, week 10

Again, please review [Written Assignment Guide](#) (below) Final paper should be 12-15 pages.

Construct your paper touching on your particular answers to the following questions. Note: Please don't provide a list of answers. Your paper should have its own integrity, thesis, theme etc. The guidelines below are adapted from the Manual on Ministry instructions for Part II and Part III of the ordination paper and from Section 2 of The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the UCC (see note and links below).

Final Policy and Practice Paper (10-12 pages)

A) What is your understanding of ordination? Church? Mission? Ministry? What is the challenge and vision you have for your ministry?

B) How does your vision of ministry relate to the UCC's commitment to diversity and other justice work (such as multiracial and multicultural, open and affirming, accessible to all, and just peace)?

C) What are those aspects of the theology, polity, and practice of the United Church of Christ that are most valued by you? How will these shape the way you engage in the tasks of ministry?

D) How do can the UCC in its various settings respond to religious, social, economic, and political trends, changing demographics, and other emerging factors. What is your role in the future of the UCC?

**Note: If you are planning on, or are in the process of writing this paper, both assignment #2 and #3 will be helpful to you as material you can use for your paper. If you don't plan to pursue ordination in the UCC, the assignment is still useful for explaining UCC polity as covered in this class and relating the polity and practice of the UCC to your goals for ministry.*

From Manual on Ministry [Link](#)

- "Part II of the ordination paper is intended to provide an opportunity for the student to demonstrate his or her knowledge and understanding

of the history, theological roots, polity, and practice of the United Church of Christ"

- **"Part III of the ordination paper is intended to be an integrating statement that invites the person to relate the faith and practice of the Church to her or his own pilgrimage of faith and understandings of and intentions for her or his ministry as a person ordained by the United Church of Christ."**

From Section 2: UCC Identity for Ministry [Link](#)

- **to explain and work within the current polity of the UCC and its denominational structure, and to describe the covenantal relationships among the General Synod, national setting, conferences, associations, and local congregations of the UCC.**
- **to share key elements of the UCC's statement of faith, constitution with its preamble, and bylaws regarding the governance, mission, and theologies of the UCC and their implications for the life of the church.**
- **to articulate the UCC's commitment to being a united and uniting, multiracial and multicultural, open and affirming, accessible to all and just peace church.**
- **to envision how the UCC in its various settings may respond to religious, social, economic, and political trends, changing demographics, and other emerging factors.**

Policies and Services -- See updated form on canvas

Grades/Evaluation:

Learning Goals and Final Self Evaluation

I will provide each student written feedback on assignments, but all students will evaluate their own work in the course and assign themselves a grade. This will be achieved by turning in a Learning Agreement Contract by week 2 and a Final Self Evaluation by week 10.

Learning Agreement Contract: DUE Week 2

By the end of the second week you should have a clearer picture of the expectations of this course. See file called "Learning Agreement Contract" to help you complete this assignment. You will submit a narrative description of your intentions for fulfilling all of the course requirements as they are delineated in the syllabus as well as a goal for your final grade.

The learning agreement will serve as a learning contract between you and me, and with yourself. **This learning agreement can be as long or as short as you wish in order to communicate your intentions.** You may not be completely sure of how you will approach each project, but you can indicate what you want to be leaning. At the end of the tool, please tell me what grade you intend to achieve. Your agreement is not complete unless you indicate the grade you intend to achieve.

Final Self Evaluation:

Making reference to your learning agreement, evaluate in how you think did in achieving your stated intentions and goals throughout the quarter, and whether or not you achieved the grade you anticipated.

There is no page requirement for this reflection. Although I intend to honor the grade you give yourself, ultimately I am responsible for assigning your grades and may negotiate with you in cases of wild over-or-under-estimation of your achievements.

At the end of this evaluation, you must give yourself a final grade.

Written Assignments:

As a graduate student it is expected that you turn in clear, concise and thoughtful work that critically engages with the course material as well as demonstrates creative and original thinking.

Please adhere to the following general guidelines:

- Top left hand corner of paper: name, date, course title, name of assignment
- On the next line provide a title for your work, centered.
- The remaining document should be typed, double-spaced, 1-inch margins in a readable 12 pt. font (preferably Times New Roman). *outlines, short answer documents can be single spaced.
- You may do either parenthetical citation or footnote/endnotes as long as it is consistent. You may choose the style most familiar to you although I prefer Chicago Manual of Style or Turabian) for citations. Links for Chicago:
- http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html (Links to an external site.)
- also: http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html (Links to an external site.)
- Please remember to proofread

UPLOAD TO CANVAS by stated due date

Please observe due dates and post your written assignments by the due date. If you need to alter a due date for a larger assignment due to circumstances out of your control, please speak with me.

Reading and Assignment Schedule (see canvase for proper links)

Week 1: Identity - What We Believe

Assignment: Sign up for a "Vital Theme" (See google doc under 'Collaborations tab on the left)

Theme: We'll begin our exploration of the UCC and its identity with readings and discussion on belief. What are the core beliefs of the UCC? Can point to these as descriptive of the denomination? What does the UCC stand for?

Readings:

1) "What we believe" <http://www.ucc.org/about-us/what-we-believe.html> (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.

2) "Toward the 21st Century: A Statement of Commitment"
<http://www.ucc.org/beliefs/toward-the-21st-century.html> (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.

3) "A United Church that Stands for Something" by John Thomas
<http://www.ucc.org/john-thomasa-unite>

Week 2: Identity - Faith

Assignment: Learning Agreement Contract Due Saturday

Theme: Looking back at the origins of the UCC, we continue to think about identity, this time in relationship to faith. The Constitution of the UCC was presented to the General Synod of the UCC in 1959 and approved at a special "adjourned session" of that Synod in 1960. The Preamble, especially the second paragraph, is an important expression of UCC faith and practice.

Readings:

1) Read the Preamble to the Constitution:
<http://www.ucc.org/about-us/constitution-of-the-ucc.html> (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.

2) "The Preamble defines our faith" by Clyde J. Steckel
<http://www.ucc.org/education/polity/pdf-folder/steckel-on-ucc-preamble.pdf>
(Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.

3) UCC Statement of Faith <http://www.ucc.org/beliefs/statement-of-faith.html>
(Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.

4) Roger Shinn, "Historical Reflections on the Statement of Faith"

<http://www.ucc.org/education/polity/pdf-folder/shinn-ucc-statement-of-faith.pdf>
(Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.

5) Introduction pg. 7-10 in *What Matters to You? Matters to Us: Engaging Six Vital Themes of Our Faith* by Sidney D. Fowler (I will post this on canvas in case you do not have your book yet).

Week 3: Identity - Theology

Theme: Continuing with identity, we explore the theological diversity of the UCC. Is there a UCC theology?

Readings:

1) Lee Barrett "Theological Worlds in the United Church of Christ <http://www.ucc.org/education/polity/pdf-folder/Barrett-Theological-Worlds-in-the-UCC.pdf> (Links to an external site.)

(Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.)

2) "Jesus Christ in the Texts of the United Church of Christ", Gabriel Fackre http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy_url/212/fackre-on-christ-in-texts-of-the-ucc.pdf?1418423576 (Links to an external site.)

(Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.)

3) Chapter 3 & 4 in *The Evolution of UCC Style* by Randi Walker

Week 4: Covenant - Freedom from or freedom for?

Due: Assignment #1 - Faith Formation Resource Outline

Vital Theme Discussion - We belong to Christ

Theme: Turning to the theme of covenant, we explore its centrality in UCC polity. We will aim to understand the tensions between covenant and autonomy, how they function concretely, and have developed over time.

Readings:

1) Walker, chapter 5

2) Constitution paragraph

1-19: <http://www.ucc.org/about-us/constitution-of-the-ucc.html> (Links to an external site.)

3) Jane Fisler Hoffman entitled *Covenant: A Study for the United Church of Christ* <http://uccfiles.com/pdf/Hoffman-on-Covenant.pdf> (Links to an external site.) Especially Pgs. 31-58

4) Donald Freeman, "Autonomy in a Covenant Polity" <http://www.ucc.org/education/polity/pdf-folder/Autonomy-in-a-Covenantal-Polity-Freeman.pdf> (Links to an external site.)

5): "Toward an understanding of local autonomy" <http://www.ucc.org/education/polity/pdf-folder/toward-an-understanding-of-local-autonomy.pdf> (Links to an external site.)

Week 5: Covenant - Church/Ecclesiology

*Vital Theme Discussion -We are a people of covenant a United and Uniting Church

Theme: This week we will examine the UCC understanding of the nature of UCC polity, its organizational structure. We'll also look at how the local church relates to other ecclesial bodies (such as synod, conference, associations).

Reading:

1) Constitution paragraph

37-56: <http://www.ucc.org/about-us/constitution-of-the-ucc.html> (Links to an external site.)

2) Long "Associational Congregationalism" (read chapter 8 beginning pg 118)) http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy_url/216/long-patterns-of-polity.pdf?1418423580 (Links to an external site.)

3) 2 short articles on

Conferences: **<http://www.ucc.org/education/polity/pdf-folder/prism-articles-on-conferences-1994.pdf>** (Links to an external site.)

4) Walker, Conference

Ministers <http://www.ucc.org/education/polity/pdf-folder/walker-episcopate-lth-vii-46.pdf> (Links to an external site.)

5) Walker chapter 6

Reference: "Manual on

Church" <http://www.ucc.org/education/polity/pdf-folder/manual-on-the-church-2005.pdf> (Links to an external site.)

Week 6: Covenant - Ministry & Worship

Assignment #2: Questions due Saturday

Vital Theme Discussion - We are One at Baptism and the Table

Theme: What we do as church is just as important as who we are as church. This week we'll look at the covenanted relationship of ministers and at themes of our common worship

Readings:

1. Skim Constitution paragraph 20-36: <http://www.ucc.org/about-us/constitution-of-the-ucc.html> (Links to an external site.)
2. "Empowerment and Embodiment: Understandings of Ministry in the UCC" by Barbara Brown Zikmund <http://www.ucc.org/education/polity/pdf-folder/zikmund-empowerment-and-embodiment.pdf> (Links to an external site.)
3. "Authorizing Ministry in the United Church of Christ: Slouching Towards Order, Clyde Steckel. <http://www.ucc.org/ministers/pdfs/authmin.pdf> (Links to an external site.)
4. <http://www.ucc.org/education/polity/pdf-folder/dipko-12-principles-behind-the-bow.pdf> (Links to an external site.)
5. Read one:

Baptism http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy_url/204/gunnemann-on-baptism.pdf?1418423566 (Links to an external site.)

OR

Eucharist: http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy_url/205/gunnemann-on-eucharist.pdf?1418423569 (Links to an external site.)

6) Review: Background document on Ministry Issues Implementation (including the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministry) <http://www.ucc.org/ministers/ministry-issues/Ministry-in-the-United-Church-of-Christ-A-Background-Document.pdf> (Links to an external site.)

Reference: <http://www.ucc.org/education/polity/pdf-folder/ucc-response-to-bem-1985.pdf> (Links to an external site.)

Reference: http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy_url/199/introduction-to-book-of-worship-1986.pdf?1418423563 (Links to an external site.)

Week 7: Change - Diversities

Midterm paper Due Saturday -- Week 7

Vital Theme Discussion - We are a people of God's Extravagant Welcome

Theme:

Readings:

1) Walker, Chapter 1 & 2

2) Review:

a) Pronouncement on Becoming a Multiracial Multicultural Church

<http://www.ucc.org/justice/multiracial-multicultural/pronouncement.html> (Links to an external site.)

b) Pronouncement

O&A http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy_url/259/ona-resolution-1985.pdf?1418423619 (Links to an external site.)

c) Pronouncement Just

Peace http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy_url/257/just-peace-church-pronouncement-1985.pdf?1418423617 (Links to an external site.)

2) Read one of the following:

a) Alike & Okawara, "Sho-Chiku-Bai: Japanese-American

Congregationalists" <http://www.ucc.org/about-us/hidden-histories/sho-chiku-bai.html> (Links to an external site.)

b) Armijo, "Immigrant Theology: Theology in

Context" <http://www.ucc.org/education/polity/pdf-folder/armijo-immigrant-theology.pdf> (Links to an external site.)

c) Alston, "The Afro-Christian

Connection" <http://www.ucc.org/about-us/hidden-histories/the-afro-christian-connection.html> (Links to an external site.)

d) Jackson, "An Indian Perspective on the United Church of

Christ" <http://www.ucc.org/education/polity/pdf-folder/jackson-indian-perspective.pdf> (Links to an external site.)

Week 8: Change - National Structure & Ecumenical Partnerships

Vital Theme Discussion - We Thank God by Working for a Just and loving World

Theme:

Readings:

1. Review Constitution paragraph

57-67: <http://www.ucc.org/about-us/constitution-of-the-ucc.html> (Links to an external site.)

2. Review: (former

chart) <http://www.ucc.org/education/polity/pdf-folder/national-ministries-of-the-ucc.pdf> (Links to an external site.)

3. Article on Governance Change (TBA)

4. Unified Governance
(UGOV) <http://www.ucc.org/governance/finalproposal.pdf> (Links to an external site.)
5. Synod: http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy_url/213/pronouncements-lth-vii-22.pdf?1418423578 (Links to an external site.)

****Possible Readings on Ecumenical Partnerships**

Week 9:

Assignment Due: Vital Theme -We Listen for the Still-speaking God

Discussion on choice book, future of UCC

Week 10: Change - Future

Assignment #3 - Final Polity and Practice Paper due Saturday

Final Self Evaluation Due with final paper

Theme:

Readings:

- 1) John Thomas "The Big Tent and the Great Parade" <http://www.ucc.org/news/significant-speeches/the-big-tent-and-the-great.html> (Links to an external site.)

