

## **Syllabus for United Church of Christ Covenant and Polity As of July 2017, we are in year 4 in the 4-year cycle**

*I would like to say “This is my final answer, but with the ever changing UCC, new issues evolve and I become aware of the new needs of the students. Any changes in the syllabus will be made available in a timely manner to the students. Also, I do not claim to be the all-knowing all-seeing mind of the United Church of Christ and this is the reason for bringing in guests. Meredith Hutchison*

*If you have any questions, my home phone is 724-468-0430. My e-mail is [mercomp@aol.com](mailto:mercomp@aol.com)*

Resources: You will need Internet access for this course [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org), [www.pennwest.org](http://www.pennwest.org) and other sites as well as Penn West Conference Annual Meeting Books (If you do not attend the meeting and need a copy of the book, let me know. MH), Journaling the Journey, Catholics in the United Church of Christ and Book of Worship-United Church of Christ (which you already need for the Worship and Preaching Course, The Marks Rubric).

Course Purpose: The purpose of this course is to prepare the students for ministry with an understanding of the governance structures of the United Church of Christ in all of its settings and to have a working knowledge of the covenantal relationships within the structure of our denomination. Additionally, the students will have background in the history of the United Church of Christ and its ministry now and in the future.

### Goals:

1. To help the students prepare for ecclesiastical authorization through the discernment process.
2. To understand the polity of the United Church of Christ and how the various structures operate in all its settings.
3. To meet people in our conference who have been active in the church in various settings beyond the local church and hear their stories.

(Goals continued next page)

4. To understand how covenant is essential in allowing the United Church of Christ to be and do church.
5. To have a working knowledge of the history of the United Church of Christ and how it is making history now.
6. To be able to teach others about how we do church in the United Church of Christ.

Year 1

Session 1

Class: Make sure that all students have the Summary Guide. Review the highlights of it.

Tour of UCC Web Site.

Look at Channing Bête booklet “About the United Church of Christ...A Guide to more effective church membership”.

What is discernment? What is a “member in discernment?” (Hand-outs provided by Meredith) Where are you in the process of discernment?

**First year students should begin Journaling the Journey (this can be done over the four years that you are in the Penn West Academy).**

**Assignment for next session-complete take-home exam (UCC Treasure Hunt)**

Session 2

Class: Bring a red pen. Go over and mark take-home exam. The UCC-United and Uniting, Reformed and Re-forming. What does the word “Polity” mean? The Covenanted Ministries. (Handouts relating to the answers on the take home exam.)

**Assignment for next session: Paper what are the CORE VALUES of the UCC and how do you interpret them in applying them to your particular setting in the local church.**

**(Fourth year students might want to consider beginning their fourth year paper.)**

Session 3

Class: The Penn West Conference.

Guest Speaker: The Rev. David Ackerman (Conference Minister) Depending on David’s Schedule this might be the May session.

**For next session-paper for 4<sup>th</sup> year students-See Summary Guide P. 9 (section pp) Fourth year paper due to Meredith 2 weeks prior to the last class.**

(Year 1 Continued)

Session 4 Class: Presentation and Discussion of 4<sup>th</sup> year papers.

Upcoming General Synod issues.

**Summer viewing and reading -Videos, resolutions and important decisions of General Synod.**

## Year 2

### Session 1

Class: Make sure that all students have the Summary Guide. Introduce Journaling the Journey.

General Synod 30. Reflections by delegates, highlights, significant votes of General Synod. Ask of delegates-“What didn’t you know that you didn’t know?”

Question for class at the conclusion of the Synod Presentation-In one or two sentences, state what you would say about General Synod in your local church.

**All students should begin Journaling the Journey. You may do this over the four years of the Academy (or however many years you have left).**

**Paper for next session: “My Experience in the Wider Church” and a 1 minute or less “elevator speech”. An elevator speech is what you might say to someone about the United Church of Christ in the time that it takes to travel no more than 2 floors in an elevator.**

### Session 2

Class: Reflections on Papers.

Covenant (Biblical foundations for covenant. Salem Church Covenant. Local church autonomy and covenant. Signs of the covenant in the UCC (OCWM, participation in annual meeting, service in the wider church, etc.). Three and four-way covenants in the United Church of Christ. Ordained Minister’s Code.)

**Fourth year students may want to start working on their final paper.**

**All-Paper for next session: 3-5 pages on a “Hidden History” as assigned (<http://www.ucc.org/about-us/hidden-histories/>) . Everyone is to read the Introduction to Volume 1, “Beyond Historical Orthodoxy” as well as the Introduction to Volume 2, “Unity and Diversity”.**

**Choose one of these hidden histories to read and report on:**

#### **Volume 1:**

- **“American Indians, Missions and The United Church of Christ.”**
- **“The Afro Christian Connection” and “Blacks and the American Missionary Association”**
- **“The Ursinus School and the Reaction against Evangelical Catholicism” (If no one chooses this, we will all read it)**

**(Year 2-session 2 continued)**

- **“Armenian Congregationalists flee from genocide and find a home in the US”**
- **“The Deaconess Movement in 19<sup>th</sup> Century America: Pioneer and Professional Women”**
- **“Women’s Work and Women’s Boards”**
- **“Sho-Chiku-Bai: Japanese-American Congregationalists**

**Volume 2:**

- **“The Union Church: A Case of Lutheran and Reformed Congregations”**
- **“Origins of the Christian Denomination in New England”**
- **“Women’s Mission Structure and The American Board”**
- **“Religious Journalism: A Legacy from the Christian Church”**
- **“The Congregational Training School for Women”**
- **“Chinese Congregationalism”**

**Session 3**

Class: Hidden Histories of the UCC. Summarize your report by naming three things that surprised you about your “Hidden History”. Where is the church where you serve or are a member in the Ursinus debate?

**For next session-paper for 4<sup>th</sup> year students. See Summary Guide P. 9 (section pp) Paper Due to Meredith NO Later than April 18, 2016.**

**Session 4**

Class: Presentation and discussion of 4<sup>th</sup> year papers.

**Summer Assignments:**

**Reading- Catholics in the United Church of Christ**

**Reading-A Short Course in the History of the United Church of Christ (www.ucc.org)**

**Reading-Hidden Histories Volume 1: “The Calvin Synod: 500 years of Tradition lead to the UCC” and visit [www.bethlen.com/](http://www.bethlen.com/)**

**Paper-Reflections on the local church, your association, The Penn West Conference and why covenants in these bodies allow us to do God’s work.**

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([www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org))**

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Tradition lead to the UCC” and visit [www.bethlen.com/](http://www.bethlen.com/)**

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Conference and why covenants in these bodies allow us to do God’s work.**

Session 1-September 10, 2016

Class: A Hidden History Among us-Rev. Imre Bertalan, Executive Director of  
Bethlen Communities, Rev. Gábor G. Nitsch, Chaplain Communities, Rev. Judith  
Tobias, Pastor-St. John’s UCC in Larimer

**First year students should begin Journaling the Journey (this can be done  
over the four years that you are in the Penn West Academy).**

**For Next Session-Look at Services of Recognition and Authorization of  
Ministries in the Book of Worship/The United Church of Christ.**

**Reflection paper-Choose one service where you have been authorized or hope  
to be authorized and reflect on what this covenant service means to you.**

Session 2-October 8, 2016

Reflections from the Assignment: **Reflection Paper-Choose one service where you have been authorized or hope to be authorized and reflect on what this covenant service means to you.**

Justice Issues and the United Church of Christ

What are some of the most important practical justice issues that we deal with day to day within the United Church of Christ (i.e. salaries of our employees or called pastors, working towards creation care, issues around hunger, addiction)?

Discuss Salary issues and Compensation Guidelines as well as how we advocate for ourselves to be compensated.

What have been some of the key justice issues addressed from the founding of the United Church of Christ in 1957 to the present (perhaps issues to be addressed at General Synod-UCC Website)?

Guest speaker

**Paper for next session: Describe a difficult encounter with a person or persons who are not members of the United Church of Christ and how you gave witness to the United Church of Christ. (Hint to students seeking ecclesiastical authorization: this may be included in your portfolio as your case study.)**

1. Describe the setting or situation.
2. Name the participants (Please use your own name, but use pseudonyms for other persons.)
3. Verbatim:  
Mary: (what did Mary Say?)  
John: (what did John Say?)  
Meredith or you: (what did you say?)  
(And so forth... or course you will not remember everything that everyone said, but get the general gist of the conversation)
4. What were my strengths in the conversation?
5. How did I feel during the conversation?
6. What was I thinking during the conversation?
7. How might I have approached this differently?

Overall, I felt \_\_\_\_\_ (how?) about my responses.

Fourth year students may want to start working on their final paper.



Year 3 (continued)

Session 3- March 11, 2017

Class: Ecumenism. How do we maintain the integrity of our identity in the United Church of Christ in the midst of varying Christian Traditions and other faiths traditions and still work within the ecumenical community?

The impact of other faith traditions on the United Church of Christ (besides Roman Catholicism, which you should have read for the Sept. 10 class.

Guest Speaker-Liddy Barlow, Executive Director of Christian Associates of Southwestern Pennsylvania

**Paper for 4<sup>th</sup> year students-See Summary Guide P. 9(section pp) **Paper due no later than April 28, 2017.****

Session 4- May 13, 2017

Updates on General Synod 31 in Baltimore MD, June 30-July 4, 2017

The anatomy of a Resolution

Class: Presentation and Discussion of 4<sup>th</sup> year papers.

**Summer assignment-How would you teach History and Polity of the United Church of Christ to a confirmation class without boring them silly?  
For viewing and reading -Videos, resolutions and important decisions of GS 31.**

(Year 4 in the 4-year cycle)

Session 1-September 16, 2017

Changes in organizational structure of the United Church of Christ

Discussion about teaching about the UCC in the setting where you serve

Reflections from Baltimore GS 31 delegates: Highlights, significant votes, the impact of the GS experience. Ask of delegates- “What didn’t you know that you didn’t know?”

**First year students should begin Journaling the Journey (this can be done over the four years that you are in the Penn West Academy). Other students should start working on the Assessment Rubric of the Marks of Faithful and effective Authorized Ministry ( <https://www.uccresources.com/products/the-marks-rubric?variant=35848196431> )**

Session 2-October 14, 2017

Class: The Marks: What areas do you need to develop and how can we address some of these in UCC Covenant and Polity Class and in the Penn West Academy? (Dean Joseph Hedden may want to attend this class)

**Fourth year students may want to start working on their final paper. Updated guidelines to be provided.**

**All: For next session: Download the Ordained Minister’s Code**

**Read the New Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ.**

**Paper for next session (Hint to students seeking ecclesiastical authorization: this is a part of your fourth-year paper).**

- **What are the most important points of the preamble**
- **Did you discover anything that you hadn’t already known about the UCC?**
- **What does this say about how we do church?**
- **Why is the local church key to the functioning of the United Church of Christ?**
- **How does the structure of the UCC reflect the concept of covenant?**
- **Any other thoughts and comments?**

Session 3-March 10, 2018

Class:

Reflections on what you learned by reading the Constitution and Bylaws of the UCC.

The Ordained Minister's Code and the difference between limited standing and licensure. Where are you in your discernment process.... are you comfortable in beginning to think about ordination? Or NOT?

**Assignment-Paper for 4<sup>th</sup> year student. Paper due to Meredith no later than April 28, 2018. Updated guidelines to be provided.**

Session 4-May 12, 2018

The UCC-What we believe (<http://www.ucc.org/about-us/what-we-believe> )

The UCC Statement of Faith and other creeds in the United Church of Christ. What does it mean to use The Statement of Faith as a doxology?

Presentation and discussion of 4<sup>th</sup> year papers.