

Syllabus for United Church of Christ Covenant and Polity



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Resources: You will need Internet access for this course www.ucc.org, www.pennwest.org and other sites the Manual On Ministry, Hidden Histories of the United Church of Christ Volumes 1 and 2 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 the Penn West Conference and the National Setting who have been active in the church in various settings beyond the local church and hear their stories.
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.

The course will address the following Marks for Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministry as its objectives:

Exhibiting a Spiritual Foundation and Ongoing Spiritual Practice

- Being called to authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ.

- Continuing discernment of one's call in community.
- Exhibiting a commitment to lifelong spiritual development and faithful personal stewardship.

Nurturing UCC Identity

- Acknowledging Jesus Christ as the sole Head of the Church.
- Communicating passion for the oneness of the Body of Christ.
- Holding active membership in a Local Church of the United Church of Christ
- Participating in the various settings of the United Church of Christ
- Knowing and appreciating UCC history, polity and theology.
- Exhibiting a commitment to the core values of the United Church of Christ

Building Transformational Leadership Skills

- Empowering the Church to be faithful to God's call, reflective of Christ's mission, and open to the surprises of the Holy Spirit.
- Strategically creating the future of God's Church.
- Witnessing in the public square God's redeeming power.
- Working collaboratively with intercultural awareness and sensitivity.
- Encouraging leadership development of self and others through continuing education and lifelong learning.

Caring For all Creation

- Stewarding the resources of the church.

Participating in Theological Praxis

- Practicing theological reflection and engagement as part of one's sense of ministerial identity.
- Integrating theological reflection in teaching, preaching and ecclesial and community leadership.
- Articulating a theology and practice of ministry consistent with the UCC Manual on Ministry.
- Demonstrating an appreciation for and participation in the ecumenical and interfaith partnerships of the United Church of Christ.
- Embodying the UCC Ministerial Code.

Strengthening inter and intra-personal assets

- Developing and maintaining a healthy sense of self as shaped by God, community and life experiences.
- Living in relationships of covenantal accountability with God and the Church.
- Demonstrating excellent communication skills.

1Session 1

Marks:

Exhibiting a Spiritual Foundation and Ongoing Spiritual Practice

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Class:

What is discernment? What is a "member in discernment?" What is the process for becoming a member in discernment. Where are you in the process of discernment?

Requirements to become an MID-Lay Ministerial Standing

Tour of UCC and Penn West Conference Web Sites.

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

1Session 2

Marks:

Nurturing UCC Identity

- Knowing and appreciating UCC history, polity and theology.
- Exhibiting a commitment to the core values of the United Church of Christ

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 UCC Structure and the Covenanted Ministries. (Handouts relating to the answers on the take home exam from various agencies of the church.)

Assignment for next session: The Statement of Faith as a Doxology. How do you interpret it as applying your local church.

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

1Session 3-

Marks:

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Caring For all Christion

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Class: The Penn West Conference.

Guest Speaker: The Rev. David Ackerman (Conference Minister) Depending on
Discuss Our Church's Wider Mission and Ways to Promote it.

Paper-Look at your local church's Constitution and Bylaws. Note any surprises or anything that you feel needs to be changed or updated?

Fourth year students-paper due to Meredith 2 weeks prior to the last class.

Suggestion that you focus on these Marks.

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1Session 4

Marks:

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Class: Presentation and Discussion of 4th year papers

Reports on local church constitution and bylaws.

Upcoming General Synod issues.

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

Read: A Short Course in the History of the United Church of Christ.

<https://www.ucc.org/who-we-are/about/history/>