

DRAFT OF SYLLABUS: Revised January 12, 2015 at 12:30pm

Spring 2015

Polity and History of the Unitarian Universalist Church (CM-256)

3 credit hours

Instructor Information

- The Rev. Dr. Barbara Coeyman: bcoeyman@wesleyseminary.edu
- The Rev. Dr. Carl Gregg: jgregg@wesleyseminary.edu

Course Information

- Course Description: Study and history of the present polity, organization and program of Unitarian Universalist congregations.
- Prerequisites: None

Course Learning Objectives

1. The course offers an overview of information about UU history and polity, so to instill fluency in students' capacity to address basic information about our past and to understand historical events as an influence on methods of governance within congregations as well as in the denomination at large. The MFC's Required Reading List related to history and polity will be the primary required reading for this course, and distillation of information will be reflected in the **Seminar Paper**.
2. The style of the course is aimed to instill a historical consciousness in ministerial development and the capacity of emerging ministers to incorporate UU history into our various ministries.
3. The course aims to observe the relevance of historical events and persons to contemporary congregational and denominational life. From our base as a congregational religion, writing an interpretative **Congregational History** of one Unitarian, Universalist or Unitarian Universalist Congregation will serve as a microcosmic study of broader issues in denominational development.
4. The course will encourage the development of analytical skills in evaluating the viewpoint of authors of secondary sources of history and polity and the language employed to explain trends and issues in Unitarian Universalism.
5. To further the sense of class members as historians, the course will include some capacity to work with historical primary sources and to serve as **Discussion Leaders** about these sources during conversations throughout the semester.
6. While the focus of the course is the history and polity of Unitarian Universalism in the United States, there will some coverage of topics which offer perspective on free religion in a global context.

Required Reading

The required reading is mostly the same resources and options as listed on the UUA Ministerial Fellowship Committee's "Required Reading" list under the categories of "UU History," "UU Polity," and "Classical Unitarian and Universalist History" (see: <http://www.uua.org/careers/ministers/becoming/16224.shtml>). The readings have been spread out across the semester such that it is possible to use this class as a means of completing the required reading from the history/polity section of the MFC's required texts. However, there is not a comprehensive "content" test as part of this course, so please do not be intimidated by the amount of reading listed on the syllabus. The instructors will, whenever possible, highlight the most important parts of readings assignments, ministerial candidates can finish the reading for the MFC after the course is complete on their own timetable. Much more than simply reading a lot of history, our goal is that you will emerge from this course with a solid grasp of basic historical concepts, a zeal for UU history/polity, and an increased sense of how to apply UU history to enrich your ministry.

Unitarian Universalist Polity

- *UUA Bylaws and Rules* (31 pages), available free online at <http://www.uua.org/documents/uua/bylaws.pdf>
- Conrad Wright, *Congregational Polity* (274 pages) (1997), available free online at <http://www.uua.org/documents/wrightconrad/congregationalpolity.pdf>

Unitarian Universalist History

- David Robinson, *The Unitarians and the Universalists* (1985)
- Charles A. Howe, *For Faith and Freedom: A Short History of Unitarianism in Europe* (1997)
- Charles A. Howe, *The Larger Faith*, available from the UUA bookstore at <http://www.uuabookstore.org/The-Larger-Faith-P16863.aspx>
- Warren R. Ross, *The Premise and the Promise: The Story of the Unitarian Universalist Association* (2001)
- Mark Morrison-Reed, *Black Pioneers in a White Denomination* (1980)
- Kathleen Parker, *Sacred Service in Civic Space* (2007)
- Cynthia Grant Tucker, *The Prophetic Sisterhood: Liberal Women Ministers of the Frontier, 1850-1930* (1990)
- Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Imagining Progressive Religion 1805-1900* (2001)

Classical Unitarian and Universalist History

- Edict of Torda (1568), available online at <http://www.uupcc.org/docs/edict-of-torda.doc>
- Hosea Ballou, "Treatise on Atonement" (48 pages)" (1805), available online at http://img.uua.org/mfc/Ballou_Treatise_Atone_Excerpt_F.pdf
- William Ellery Channing, "Unitarian Christianity" (1819), available online at <http://www.americanunitarian.org/unitarianchristianity.htm>
- William Ellery Channing "Likeness to God" (1828), available online at <http://www.americanunitarian.org/likeness.htm>

- Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Divinity School Address” (1839), available online at <http://www.americanunitarian.org/divinityschool.htm>
- Theodore Parker, “The Transient and the Permanent in Christianity” (1841), available online at <http://www.americanunitarian.org/transient.htm>
- Hosea Ballou, “The Doctrine of Universal Salvation” (16 pages) (1849), available online at http://img.uua.org/mfc/Ballou_Doctrine_Universal_Salvation.pdf
- James Freeman Clarke, “The Five Points of the New Theology” (1886), available online at <http://www.uuchristian.org/Articles/5Points.html>
- William Channing Gannett, “The Things Most Commonly Believed Today Among Us” (1887), available online at http://www.famousuus.com/writings/things_commonly_believed.htm
- Peter Hughes, *The Cambridge Platform: Contemporary Reader's Edition* (2008), available online at http://www.americanphilosophy.net/cambridge_platform.htm
- Paul Raser and Susan Ritchie, Unitarian and Universalist Professions of Faith (4 pages) (1790-1985), available online at http://img.uua.org/mfc/Faith_Affirmations_1790-1985.pdf

AUA/UUA Commission on Appraisal Reports

- AUA, *Unitarians Face a New Age* (179 pages), available online at http://www.uua.org/documents/coa/36_unitariansfaceanewage.pdf
- UUA, *Empowerment: One Denomination's Quest for Racial Justice* (104 pages) (1983), available online at http://www.uua.org/documents/coa/83_empowerment.pdf
- UUA, *Interdependence: Renewing Congregational Polity* (1997), available online at <http://www.uua.org/governance/polity/index.shtml>
- UUA, *Belonging: The Meaning of Membership* (2001) (166 pages), available online at <http://www.uua.org/documents/coa/belonging.pdf>

Core 20th-Century Unitarian and Universalist Theologies

- Curtis W. Reese, *Humanism* (22 pages) (1926), available online at http://img.uua.org/mfc/Reese_Humanism.pdf
- John Dietrich, “Unitarianism and Humanism” (10 pages) (1927), available online at http://img.uua.org/mfc/Dietrich_Humanism_Unitarianism.pdf
- Clarence Russell Skinner, *The Social Implications of Universalism* (1915), available online at http://img.uua.org/mfc/Skinner_Social_Implicat_Uism.pdf

Recommended Reading

There are also many more resources listed on the “Ministerial Fellowship Committee Encouraged Reading List and Resources,” available at <http://www.uua.org/careers/ministers/becoming/110035.shtml>. See, in particular, the sections on “Unitarian Universalist History,” “History: General,” “Online History Resources,” “History: Special Topics,” and “Biographical and Cultural Resources,” and “The Unitarian Universalist Tradition: A Basic Research and Reading List.” Throughout the course, the instructors will also provide other reading recommendations and resources for further study.

Assignments and Participation

Class Attendance: Be clear about your attendance policy and whether attendance will affect a student's grade.

Required Reading: Students are expected to have read all required materials for each session before class, and to participate in class activities and discussions.

Discussion Facilitator: Depending on the number enrolled in class, each student will sign-up for approximately two times over the course of the semester to facilitate discussion of the primary texts for that week. Each student will prepare a short (one-page) written "discussion sparker," due at the beginning of class on the day of the discussion. You may draw on secondary research if you wish, but your main task is to glean information from the text itself. You will be evaluated on your ability to draw inferences from the text, not on the number of background facts at your disposal. Some of the issues you might address are:

- What clues does the text provide about its author? How are his or her core beliefs and values embodied in the text? How is the author's relationship to Unitarianism and/or Universalism manifest in the text?
- What does the text tell you about the intended audience? Is the author writing primarily for Unitarians and Universalists, or for a broader public? How would you describe the genre of the text?
- In what ways does the text shed light on the history of Unitarianism and Universalism? What sort of historical projects might make use of this text as a source?
- To what extent are the ideas expressed in the text still relevant for Unitarians and Universalists (or others!) in the twenty-first century?
- What do you still not know about this text? How would you go about learning more if you had more time?
- At the end of your reflection, please include a list of at least four questions, and a list of at least four especially relevant passages, to guide your peers in discussion. During class time, you will NOT read your reflection in its entirety. Instead, you should take no more than three minutes to introduce the text, then facilitate discussion among your peers.

Congregational History Presentations: Research the history of a local Unitarian Universalist congregation. How is the history recorded (documents, oral tradition, or other)? In what way is the history told? How is the local history connected to the broader context of Unitarian Universalist history? Then, prepare a presentation of approximately 30 minutes (times will be adjusted based on number of students) of your findings. Be creative in your presentation of materials, which could include making a film and/or PowerPoint reporting not only on the history but how the history is recorded. Think about not only the available textual documents, but also the material and visual culture as well such as buildings, furniture, decorations, lighting, space, and surrounding buildings. How did this congregation become Unitarian or Universalist? What is the background? Tell us how it fits your own history. Why do you feel at home there (or not)? Does the story mirror yours in some way?

Paper and Presentation: Each student will write a 7- to 10-page paper on an individual, event, crisis in Unitarian, Universalist, or Unitarian Universalist history. The model for this paper is that of a 20-minute presentation at a UU History Convocation or similar scholarly meeting. Students will then present their research using the model of the UU History and Heritage Conference.

Course Calendar

The standard class format most weeks will be one or two conversations of approximately 30 minutes on the day's Primary Source focus, guided by a student **Discussion Facilitator**. One or more lectures will then be presented by one or both instructors. Each class session will also include interactive discussion of materials and topics for that session. Toward the end of the semester, students will use the final portion of each class session for presentations of congregational histories and reports on research papers.

Required Reading to be completed before Session #1

- Charles A. Howe, *For Faith and Freedom* (Boston: Skinner House, 1997). Read All. [Note: The first half (through page 110) on Servetus, Socinus, and Dávid are more important than the second half of the book.]
- David Robinson. *The Unitarians and the Universalists* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985). Ch. 1: Summary Overview, 3 – 8.
- *The Cambridge Platform (1649)*: To introduce the theme of historical context of UU polity, in the first class session we will discuss *The Cambridge Platform*, a 'platform of church discipline.' Barbara will present discussion of this document to illustrate presentation of a primary source, an activity in class sessions which students will assume in subsequent meetings. To prepare for January 23, the ideal would be to read the entire *Cambridge Platform*. Class discussion will focus on portions of the document which define identity of church leaders and membership (Ch. 6 – 11 on officers; Ch. 12-13 on membership). The document is on-line at http://www.americanphilosophy.net/cambridge_platform.htm] (note: the link from MFC reading list is not active). The 2008 edition of the work by Peter Hughes (Skinner House) includes a ten-page introduction by Alice Blair Wesley which places the document in historical context: read this introduction as time allows.

Recommended Reading

- Roland H. Bainton, *Hunted Heretic: The Life and Death of Michael Servetus, 1511-1553* (1953/2005)
- Susan J. Ritchie, *Children of the Same God* (Boston: Skinner House, 2014)

For Further Exploration: History

- Gerda Lerner. "Why History Matters," *Why History Matters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 199-211.
- Margaret Bendroth. *The Spiritual Practice of Remembering* (Grand Rapids: William B. Erdman Publishing, 2013)

- John Fea. *Why Study History* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 2013).

For Further Exploration: General UU History

- John A. Buehrens, *Universalists and Unitarians in America: A People's History* (Skinner House, 2011)
- David E. Bumbaugh, *Unitarian Universalism: A Narrative History* (Meadville Lombard Press, 2001)
- Mark Harris, *The A to Z of Unitarian Universalism* (The A to Z Guide Series) (2009).
- _____, *An Introduction to the Unitarian and Universalist Traditions* (Introduction to Religion) (Cambridge UP, 2011)

Session #1: January 23, 2015

- Introductions
- Lecture: “What Is History and Why Do We Study It?” & “History as Spiritual Practice” (Barbara)
- Lecture: “History: Uses & Abuses” & “Polity: What & Why?” (Carl)
- Syllabus review
- Lecture: “The Roots of Unitarianism and Universalism in Europe” (Carl)
- Primary Source Discussion Example: “The Cambridge Platform” (Barbara)

Discussion Starters: What are your expectations and goals for this course? Any questions, suggestions, or concerns?

Required Reading to be completed before Session #2

(Weeks of January 26th and February 2nd)

- David Robinson. *The Unitarians and the Universalists*, Chapter 5 “American Universalist Origins”; Chapter 6 “Universalist Theology and Denominational Growth” [*Note*: The second half of Robinson’s history is “A Biographical Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Leaders.” When you come across a name in the first half with an asterisk (*), make a note to read the entry related to that name after completing that chapter.]
- Hosea Ballou, “The Doctrine of Universal Salvation” (16 pages) (1849), available online at http://img.uua.org/mfc/Ballou_Doctrine_Universal_Salvation.pdf
- Primary Source Discussion Focus: Hosea Ballou, “Treatise on Atonement” (48 pages)” (1805), available online at http://img.uua.org/mfc/Ballou_Treatise_Atone_Excerpt_E.pdf

Recommended Reading

- Charles Howe, *The Larger Faith* (Boston: Skinner House, 1993), chapters 1-4

For Further Exploration

- Ann Bressler. *The Universalist Movement in America, 1770-1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), chapters 1-4

Discussion Starters:

- What is the contemporary relevance of “tolerance”?
- What meanings does the word “salvation” hold today for UUs?

Session #2: February 6

[Note: Carl will be out of town at the UUMA Institute]

- Primary Source Discussion #1: Hosea Ballou, “Treatise on Atonement”
- Lecture: “Beginnings of American Universalism: 1770 – 1825: Concerns and Controversies” (Barbara)
- Primary Source Discussion #2: Hosea Ballou, “The Doctrine of Universal Salvation”
- Lecture: “The Development of Universalism to 1870: Flourishing as an American Denomination” (Barbara)

Discussion Starters:

- Do we need the threat of punishment in order to be good? Who has the power to determine good? What about evil and sin?

Required Reading to be completed before Session #3

(Weeks of February 9th and 16th)

- Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Imagining Progressive Religion 1805-1900*, Chapters 1-2.
- David Robinson, *The Unitarians and the Universalists*, Chapter 2 “American Unitarian Origins”; Chapter 3 “The Formation of a Denomination”; Chapter 4 “The Classic Period of Unitarianism”; Chapter 7 “The Transcendentalist Controversy”
- William Ellery Channing, “Unitarian Christianity” (1819) and “Likeness to God” (1828)
- Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Divinity School Address” (1839)
- Theodore Parker, “The Transient and the Permanent in Christianity” (1841)

Session #3: February 20

- Primary Source Discussion #3: William Ellery Channing, “Unitarian Christianity” (1819)
- Lecture: “American Unitarianism, Origins to 1850: Development, and Early Controversies” (Carl)
- Primary Source Discussion #4: Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Divinity School Address” (1839)
- Lecture: “The Transcendentalists” (Carl)

Discussion Starters:

- How do we know when the divine has been revealed? Is truth derived from experience or intuition? Head or heart? How do you know what is true? What role does reason play?
- How might the Standing Order controversy inform a contemporary UU perspective on the recent Supreme Court decision related to prayer at town council meetings in Greece, New York?
- What remains “Transient and Permanent” in Unitarian Universalism?

Required Reading to be completed before Session #4

(Weeks of February 23, March 2, and March 9)

- Cynthia Grant Tucker, *The Prophetic Sisterhood: Liberal Women Ministers of the Frontier, 1850-1930* [300 pages]
- David Robinson, *The Unitarians and the Universalists*, Chapter 10 “Liberal Religion and Social Reform”
- Kathleen Parker, *Sacred Service in Civic Space* [368 pages]

Session #4: March 13

- Lecture: “Unitarians and Universalists and Social Reform in the 19th century: Abolition, Temperance, Women’s Right, and Health Reform” (Barbara)
- Lecture: “Universalist Expansion to 1900” (Barbara)

Discussion Starters: Following the work of Dan McKanan in *Prophetic Encounters*, how can work for radical social reform be understood as ministry?

Required Reading to be completed before Session #5

(Weeks of March 16 and 23)

- Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Imagining Progressive Religion 1805-1900*, chapter 3-7
- Mark Morrison-Reed, *Black Pioneers in a White Denomination* [280 pages]
- David Robinson, *The Unitarians and the Universalists*, Chapter 8 “Liberal Religion at Midcentury”, Chapter 9 “Free Religion and Theological Radicalism”, Chapter 11, “The Humanist Debate”
- James Freeman Clarke, “The Five Points of the New Theology” (1886)
- William Channing Gannett, “The Things Most Commonly Believed Today Among Us” (1887)
- Paul Rasor and Susan Ritchie, *Unitarian and Universalist Professions of Faith* (4 pages) (1790-1985)
- AUA, *Unitarians Face a New Age* (1936) (179 pages), available online at http://www.uua.org/documents/coa/36_unitariansfaceanewage.pdf

Discussion Starters:

- If Olympia Brown (or other 19th-century Universalists or Unitarians) could see Unitarian Universalist congregations today, would they recognize as their rightful “descendants”? In what ways is that familiarity and unfamiliarity over time good or bad? How might we need to change our congregations to something that works even if it is unrecognizable? (Consider the Church of the Larger Fellowship, for example.)

Session #5: March 27

- Primary Source Discussion #5: James Freeman Clarke, “The Five Points of the New Theology” (1886) and William Channing Gannett, “The Things Most Commonly Believed Today Among Us” (1887)

- Lecture: “Unitarian Expansion and Transformation to 1900” (Carl)
- Primary Source Discussion #6: Curtis W. Reese, *Humanism* (1926) or John Dietrich, “Unitarianism and Humanism” (1927)
- Lecture: “Unitarianism and 20th-century reforms: Pre-Consolidation” (Carl)
- Primary Source Discussion #7: Clarence Russell Skinner, *The Social Implications of Universalism* (1915)
- Lecture: “Universalism and 20th-century reforms: Pre-Consolidation” (Barbara)

Discussion Starters:

- If Christianity has become “one among many,” where does authority lie for us today as UUs?
- Bill Sinkford writes, “We need some language that will allow us to capture the possibility of reverence, to name what calls us.” How does the humanist/theist controversy reflect our beliefs? Can we still talk about God?
- Are all religions one? Are faith statements useful? Are the Principles a reflection of a multi-faith creed? What does universalism mean?
- Compare the methods of organization (polity) of the Unitarian and the Universalist denominations. If you had been leading a consolidation, what recommendations would you have offered to merge the two denominations?

Required Reading to be completed before Session #6

(Weeks of March 30, April 6, and April 13)

- Warren R. Ross, *The Premise and the Promise: The Story of the Unitarian Universalist Association*. [228 pages]
- Selections from David Robinson, *The Unitarians and the Universalists*, chapter 12, “Liberal Religion in the Modern Age.”
- UUA, *Empowerment: One Denomination’s Quest for Racial Justice* (1983) (104 pages)

Session #6: April 17

- Lecture: Unitarian Universalism: Post-Consolidation (1961 -) (Carl)
- Student “Congregational History” Presentations (Copies of “Congregational History Presentations should be emailed to both professors no later than the beginning of class on April 17, 2015.)
- [Note: Grades for graduates are due by May 5. If you plan to graduate this spring, you will need to email your paper to both professors no later than Noon on Friday, May 1, so that grades can be submitted by the deadline.]

Discussion Starters:

- What does the BAC/ BAWA experience teach us about multiculturalism and race and class?
- How do we understand the meaning and implications of ‘faith development’?

Required Reading to be completed before Session #7

(Weeks of April 20, April 27, and May 4)

- Conrad Wright, *Congregational Polity* (274, pages) (1997)

- UUA, *Interdependence: Renewing Congregational Polity* (1997) [173 pages]
- UUA, *Belonging: The Meaning of Membership* (2001) (166 pages)

Session #7: May 8

- Primary Source Discussion: UUA Bylaws (Carl)
- Lecture: “Polity” (Carl)
- Student “Final Paper” Presentations (Final papers should be emailed to both professors no later than the beginning of class on May 8, 2015.)
- Wrapping up: Putting history and polity into practice in our congregations
- Evaluation of instructors

Discussion Starter: What might it look like to “make” UU history for future generations?

Grading Procedure

- 20% Discussion Facilitator
- 40% Congregational History Presentations
- 40% Paper and Presentation

Grading Scale

- A = 90-100
- B = 80-89
- C = 70-79
- D = 60-69
- F = 0-59

Technical Support

Students are responsible for meeting course deadlines. If you experience technical problems, please exercise one or all of the following options:

- Blackboard Support at blackboardsupport@wesleyseminary.edu
- By phone at (202) 885-6091
- Blackboard/E Support Ticket at <http://blackboardsupport.wesleyseminary.edu> or <http://www.wesleyseminary.edu/MyWesley/eSupport.aspx>

Please let me know when you contact Blackboard support as well so I will be aware you are having technical problems.

In order to access our course Blackboard site students need to go to MyWesley webpage and use student log on.

Blackboard site requires use of:

- An Internet connection. – A high speed Internet connection is highly recommended
- An Internet browser. (supported browsers include: Internet Explorer, Firefox, and Safari)
- An appropriate web browser configuration.

Any computer capable of running a recently updated web browser should be sufficient to access our Blackboard site. However, bear in mind that processor speed, amount of RAM and Internet connection speed can greatly affect performance. Those using dial-up connections will experience longer page load times and much slower performance.

For Blackboard Support: (202) 885-6091 or blackboardsupport@wesleyseminary.edu

Academic Misconduct

All students have signed the Covenant of Professional Ethics and Behavior. This must be adhered to, particularly in regards to academic honesty and plagiarism.

Plagiarism is regarded as a serious offense and will result in substantial penalties, including the possibility of academic dismissal. The Faculty regards the following as forms of plagiarism or dishonesty:

- copying from another student's paper
- giving or receiving unauthorized assistance to or from another student during an examination
- using unauthorized material during an examination
- borrowing and presenting as one's own (i.e., without proper attribution) the composition or ideas of another.

The mutilation, defacement, or stealing of library materials are examples of academic dishonesty and/or professional misconduct and are also subject to disciplinary action.

Weather Policy

If the seminary is open we will have class. If the seminary is closed, class is cancelled. If the seminary is closed there will be a recorded message at the main switchboard number: 202-885-8600.

Inclusive Language Policy

Bearing in mind that language reflects, reinforces, and creates social reality, the Seminary expects class conversation and written work to employ language that respects the equal dignity and worth of all human beings. In particular, linguistic sexism and racism are to be avoided.