

# Unitarian Universalist History Survey Course

January 24-28, 2011

Meadville Lombard  
Theological School  
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The purpose of this course is to provide a general introduction to the history of the Unitarians and Universalists in Europe, and later, North America. Comprehensive coverage of such a diverse landscape is *not* our goal. Rather, we will focus on individuals and events that highlight different ways Unitarians, Universalists, and Unitarian Universalists spoke of belief and practiced their religion in a variety of contexts.

Starting from emergence of the early Church and Arianism—we will move quickly to the so-called “Radical” Reformation in Spain, Poland, and Transylvania to the English antecedents of Unitarians and Universalists. Then we go on to investigate evidence about the movements of Unitarians and Universalists as they appear in the burgeoning United States and Canada how they expressed their beliefs in North American contexts.

As we move into the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, we look at issues that proved controversial among the various Unitarian and Universalist groups—including views of polity, belief, institution building, sexuality, expansion, changing beliefs, and other moments of dynamism and controversy.

## Course Objectives

The chief aims of the course are:

- 1) to develop a historical overview of the Unitarians, Universalists, and Unitarian Universalists in Europe and North America;
- 2) to become familiar with central events, people, and places in Unitarian Universalist history and thus develop a broad framework of Association history in support of future research, sermon writing, and teaching;
- 3) to sharpen your analytic faculties by working with primary and secondary sources and better understand the interpretation of historical sources—in other words, to develop as a “minister-historian” or “lay leader historian.”

## Course Requirements

- Full participation in a one-week intensive is essential to the success of the course.
- Students are required to complete all the readings prior to the beginning of the course and record journal entries (approximately 300-400 words) for each book/reading assigned. This is a place to record the thesis of the work, major themes, and to reflect on your questions. This journal is due prior to the beginning of the course and will help shape class lectures.
- Checking your Meadville email account and On-line Meadville resources regularly. You will be asked to provide a biography and introduction by October (see Due Dates below).
- A Class Presentation: Research the history of your local Unitarian Universalist congregation. How is the history recorded, documents, oral tradition, etc. In what way is the history told. Then, prepare a 15-20 minute presentation of your findings. Be Creative in your presentation of materials—give a sermon, write a newsletter article, make a film and/or PowerPoint reporting not only on the history but how the history is recorded. Think about the words used—but attend to the material and visual culture as well.
- Group Presentation (group size dependent on course enrollment): small groups of students (ideally 3-4) will work together prior to the beginning of class to create a presentation on the assigned historical topic. Creativity is a Must! Educate your classmates in a fun and helpful (and accurate) way on your assigned topic. 45 minutes in class. Students will be asked to evaluate one another in the preparation and presentation of this project as well as the instructor and classmates!
- Final Research Paper: 12-15 pages on an individual, event, crisis in Unitarian, Universalist, or Unitarian Universalist history. Turn in a one-page Paper Proposal and brief bibliography for feedback from instructor on November 1<sup>st</sup>.

## Due Dates

October 15 – On-line introductions among class members posted.

October 25 – Student groups assigned for group presentation.

November 1 – Turn in a one-page Paper Proposal and brief bibliography for feedback from instructor.

December 15 – Report to your instructor on the status of your congregational history project—roadblocks, discoveries.

January 18 – Journal on the course readings is due.

January 24-28 – Class meets.

February 7 - Final paper due.

## Course Schedule

Each day will be divided into a series of layers with breaks and a lunch period. Approximately two hours a day will be devoted to lecture by your instructor—a morning lecture and afternoon. Student groups will make presentations on assigned topic for approximately forty-five minutes. Other periods will be devoted to general discussion, presentation of paper topics, and a film. Our last hour of the day (4-5 pm) will be devoted to precept small groups with focused discussion on the assigned primary sources.

### **Monday: Course Introduction and the “Radical” Reformation**

Introduction: Why history?  
Michael Servetus  
Polish Unitarianism, Socinianism  
Transylvanian Unitarianism

*Group Presentation:* English Unitarianism and Universalism

*Precept Discussion:* Excerpt from the *Errors of the Trinity* (1531)  
[Edict of Torda](#) (1568)  
Racovian Catechism (1605)

*Reading:* Storey, William Kelleher. *Writing History: A Guide for Students* (2008)  
Bainton, Roland. *Hunted Heretic* (2005)  
Howe, Charles A. *For Faith and Freedom* (1997)

### **Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century American Universalism:**

18<sup>th</sup> century American Universalism  
Hosea Ballou  
American Universalism, 1800-1870  
Universalist Women in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century

*Group Presentation:* Universalist Women in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century

*Precept Discussion:* Hosea Ballou, “[Treatise on Atonement](#)” (1805)  
Hosea Ballou, “[The Doctrine of Universal Salvation](#)” (1849)  
Universalist Affirmations of Faith

*Reading:* Cassara, Ernest, ed. *A Treatise on Atonement by Hosea Ballou* (1986)-  
the introduction by Cassara.

Bressler, Ann Lee. *The Universalist Movement in America, 1770-1880* (2001)  
Emerson, Dorothy May, ed. *Standing Before Us*(1999) Universalist Selections  
Robinson, David. *The Unitarians and the Universalists* (1985)

## Wednesday American Unitarianism 19<sup>th</sup> Century Development and Early Controversies

William Ellery Channing  
American Unitarian Association  
Transcendentalists  
Unitarian Women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

*Student Presentation:* Transcendentalists

*Precept Discussion:* William Ellery Channing, "[Unitarian Christianity](#)" (1819)  
William Ellery Channing "[Likeness to God](#)" (1828)  
Ralph Waldo Emerson, "[Divinity School Address](#)" (1839)  
Theodore Parker, "[The Transient and the Permanent](#)" (1841)

*Reading:* Dorrien, Gary. *The Making of American Liberal Theology (Vol I)* pp. xiii-110  
Wright, Conrad. *A Stream of Light*: (1989)  
Wright, Conrad. *Three Prophets of Religious Liberalism* (1986) The introduction is helpful and it contains the primary texts. However, these three speeches are also on the MFC website.  
Tucker, Cynthia Grant. *Prophetic Sisterhood* (2000)

## Thursday Unitarian Expansion and Transformation

Unitarians in India  
National Conference & Free Religious Association  
Western Conference of Unitarianism

*Group Presentation:* Religious Humanism

*Precept Discussion:* Curtis W. Reese, [Humanism](#) (1926)  
John Dietrich, "[Unitarianism and Humanism](#)" (1927)  
William Channing Gannett, "[The Things Most Commonly Believed Today Among Us](#)" (1887)

*Reading:* Lavan, Spencer. *Unitarians and India* (1977)  
Lyttle, Charles. *Freedom Moves West: 1852-1951* (2006)  
Schulz, William F. *Making the Manifesto* (2002)

## **Friday            Major Developments in Unitarian Universalism**

American Universalism 1870-2010  
Canadian Unitarians & Universalists  
Merger  
Unitarian Universalists: Race and GLBT  
Unitarian Universalist Challenges

*Group Presentation:* A Unitarian and Universalist Merger

*Precept Discussion:* Excerpts from *Empowerment: UUA Commission on Appraisal Report*

*Reading:*        *Empowerment*, UUA Commission on Appraisal  
Morrison-Reed, Mark. *Black Pioneers in a White Denomination* (1994 )  
Ross, Warren. *The Premise and the Promise* (2001)

On this day, we will end class with a lecture and discussion. The Group Presentation and Precept Discussion will occur earlier on Friday.

## **Required Readings**

While in some cases we are covering material that some of you are familiar, do *read the sources slowly and carefully* in order to get a sense of what the early Unitarian and Universalists felt was important.

*Primary Sources:*

Edict of Torda (1568)

Hosea Ballou, “Treatise on Atonement” (1805)

William Ellery Channing, “Unitarian Christianity” (1819)

William Ellery Channing “Likeness to God” (1828)

Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Divinity School Address” (1839)

Theodore Parker, “The Transient and the Permanent in Christianity” (1841)

Hosea Ballou, “The Doctrine of Universal Salvation” (1849)

Racovian Catechism (1605)

*Secondary Sources:*

Bainton, Roland. *Hunted Heretic: The Life and Death of Michael Servetus 1511-1553* (2005)

Bressler, Ann Lee. *The Universalist Movement in America, 1770-1880* (2001)

Cassara, Ernest, ed. *A Treatise on Atonement by Hosea Ballou* (1986)-especially the introduction by Cassara.

Emerson, Dorothy May, ed. *Standing Before Us: Unitarian Universalist Women and Social Reform, 1776-1936* (1999) Purchase at the UUA bookstore for a better price than Amazon!

*Empowerment*, UUA Commission on Appraisal

Dorrien, Gary. *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Imagining Progressive Religion 1805-1900*. (2001) pp. xiii-110

Howe, Charles A. *For Faith and Freedom: A Short History of Unitarianism in Europe*. (1997)

Lavan, Spencer. *Unitarians and India: A Study in Encounter and Response* (1977)

Lyttle, Charles. *Freedom Moves West: A History of Western Unitarian Conference 1852-1951* (2006)

Morrison-Reed, Mark. *Black Pioneers in a White Denomination* (1994)

Storey, William Kelleher. *Writing History: A Guide for Students* (2008)

Robinson, David. *The Unitarians and the Universalists* (1985)

Ross, Warren. *The Premise and the Promise* (2001)

Schulz, William F. *Making the Manifesto: The Birth of Religious Humanism* (2002)

Tucker, Cynthia Grant. *Prophetic Sisterhood: Liberal Women Ministers of the Frontier, 1880-1930* (2000)

Wright, Conrad. *A Stream of Light: A Short History of American Unitarianism* (1989)

\_\_\_\_\_. *Three Prophets of Religious Liberalism: Channing, Emerson, Parker*. (1986) The introduction is helpful and it contains the primary texts. However, these three speeches are also on the MFC website.

***Students will receive an extensive bibliography when they register for the course to support research for the class assignments and as a future resource for ministry and lay leadership.***