

H349INT – Congregational Polity, January 14-15, 2012, 0.5 credit, Instructor: Rev. John Morehouse

This half credit intensive course will provide the students with an introduction into the history, theory and ministerial issues of congregational polity. The course will answer the following: How did congregational polity develop especially in our own traditions? What are the theoretical ramifications of congregational polity for our churches and our future as a liberal faith? What are the practical implications for the practice of ministry from ordination to ministerial authority?

Students will be asked to reflect on how congregational polity might impact their current or future ministries. Though our class time will be limited the reading list is extensive in order to prepare students for the MFC and further study. All of the MFC reading requirements are assigned in addition to other important historical, theoretical and practical works.

Congregational polity is central to the ministerial calling. Students preparing for the ministry need a firm understanding of the history and theory of congregational polity in order to claim their authority as ministers and respect the shared nature of their calling with the laity they serve. This course should provide the student with the most basic understanding of this dynamic. Moreover, as ministers, we have an important role in helping to set the direction of not only our churches and organizations but the future of our movement. Understanding congregational polity will be vital to being a part of that conversation.

Requirements: Students are required to read all assignments prior to the class. The instructor will be referring to several texts in each session so it is important to have read all the texts prior to the first session. It would be advisable to finish your readings by the end of the first week of Jan. 2012.

By October 21, 2011, post a one-page brief introduction of yourself and your learning goals for the course.

A two page reflection paper on what congregational polity means to you will be due on LiveText by Jan. 2, 2012. These short reflections will help to set the course for our work together.

Active participation in class is required. We will be breaking up into small groups for assigned discussion during each session. Our class will run for two days, from 8.30 AM to 5 PM with an hour lunch break.

A final 7-12 page paper on how congregational polity will impact your ministry is due two weeks after the class. It is expected that the student will cite at least four relevant sources using the Chicago style with footnotes and bibliography. You will need to write the paper prior to the beginning of January intensives, but will have two weeks after the class for minor revisions in light of course discussions.

Grading: this course will be graded pass/fail

Class outline:

Saturday morning: Introductions. Lecture on why congregational polity is critical to our identity as Unitarian Universalists.

Breakout discussions: What is the meaning of membership?

Relevant Texts: *Meaning of Membership, The Premise and the Promise, Interdependence: Renewing Congregational Polity*

Saturday afternoon: Lecture on the History of Congregational Polity from our European roots to our Puritan forbearers.

Breakout discussion: Where does our history leave us now?

Relevant Texts: *Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism (read especially, The Cambridge Platforms and the introductions to each document through "The Saybrook Platform), Walking Together*

Sunday morning: Brief opening worship. Lecture on congregational polity and the formation of the UUA; its history and theology.

Breakout discussion: What are the guiding principles of our free faith?

Relevant Texts: *Our Covenant 2001-2002 Minns Lectures, Habits of the Heart* chap.1-3, 8-9

Sunday afternoon: lecture on ministerial authority in relation to the laity, an introduction to Policy Governance.

Breakout discussion: How will you minister within congregational polity?

Relevant Texts: "What They Dreamed to Be Ours to Do: Lessons from the History of Covenant", *Interdependence: Renewing Congregational Polity* UUA 1997
<http://www.uua.org/leaders/governance/congregationalpolity/index.shtml>, MFC Policies (PDF, 15 pages) MFC Rules (PDF, 17 pages), UUMA Guidelines and Code of Professional Practice, *Basic Principles of Policy Governance*

Governance and Ministry

Reading List for Congregational Polity (Please read the following by the first week of January):

- Bellah, Robert, et al. *Habits of the Heart* chap.1-3, 8-9
- Carver, John *Basic Principles of Policy Governance* Jossey-Bass, 1996
- Hotchkiss, Daniel *Governance and Ministry: Re-thinking Board Leadership*, 2009

- Parker, Rebecca “What They Dreamed to Be Ours to Do: Lessons from the History of Covenant” preached at General Assembly. <http://www.uua.org/ga/1998/fulfillingpromise/123808.shtml>
- Robert, Henry, et al. *Roberts Rules of Order* most recent edition you can find, for reference.
- Walker, Williston, *The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism* Pilgrim Press, 1991.
- Ross, Warren *The Promise and the Promise*, Skinner House Books, 2001
- Wesley, Alice Blair, *Our Covenant 2001-2002* Minns Lectures
- Wright, Conrad *Walking Together* Skinner House Books, 1989
- _UUA Commission on Appraisal *Belonging: The Meaning of Membership*, UUA 2001
<http://www.uua.org/documents/coa/belonging.pdf>
- The following are all MFC required readings and can be found on uua.org
- __ Conrad Wright, Congregational Polity (PDF, 274, pages) (1997)
- _UUA Commission on Appraisal *Interdependence: Renewing Congregational Polity* UUA 1997
<http://www.uua.org/leaders/governance/congregationalpolity/index.shtml>
- __ UUA Bylaws and Rules
- __ MFC Policies (PDF, 15 pages) MFC Rules (PDF, 17 pages)
- __ UUMA Guidelines and Code of Professional Practice