

**Safe Congregations: Exploring and Creating Safe Congregations**  
**MEADVILLE LOMBARD THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL**

*This online syllabus should be used to gain a better understanding of the content and focus of the course. The syllabus given out in the class may differ from this online version and its content supersedes that of the online syllabus.*

**Time: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm**

**Dates: January 9-13, 2012 Intensive**

**Course Number      Units: 1                      Location of the Course - TBA**

**Professor:      Rev. Dr. Qiyamah A. Rahman (qrahman@meadville.edu)**

**Description**

Clergy are invited into the most intimate aspects of people's lives. This requires integrity, moral wisdom, and spiritual discipline.

The objective of this course is to prepare Unitarian Universalist ministers to be aware of and address issues of professional ethics and safety. This course will primarily focus on the importance of boundaries, pastoral authority and power dynamics, self care and abuse prevention policies. It includes both a traditional approach to professional ministerial boundaries (clergy sexual misconduct and child safety) in addition to exposing students to a larger context that also addresses the safety of congregational members in general: interpersonal violence (clergy sexual misconduct, domestic violence or partner abuse, elder abuse, stalking,) sexual assault (rape, marital rape, date rape) and economic misconduct. A working definition of "Safe Congregations refers to dynamics that impact the safety of the congregational community and its members.

**Goal**

This course aims to create, promote, and implement ministerial readiness regarding sexual ethics, professional ethics, healthy boundaries and self-care as a standard aspect of seminary education. Students will leave this course with a clearer understanding about how to address ethical dilemmas and other issues that may pose a threat to their ministry and the safety of the community. Students will develop and deepen their ability to articulate their ethical reasoning.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Participants will be able to do the following pertaining to ministerial boundaries and ethics:

1. understand, identify and discuss resources, frameworks and appropriate goals to prevent boundary violations
2. enhance critical thinking skills and potential ethical dilemmas
3. understand, analyze and critically evaluate a wide range of issues and texts related to the topic
4. express self clearly, cogently and critically in written works

5. write a sermon or present a lecture or training
6. tap into existing networks that inspire social justice, crisis responses and serve as a source of sharing and exchange.
7. discern and make theologically based ethical decisions in the midst of a complex and/or paradoxical context
8. teach and model sexually appropriate behavior reflecting the Professional Codes of Conduct of the UUMA of the UUA.
9. discover sociological dynamics and trends about “Safe Congregations” to apply to specific ministry settings including pastoral care and counseling.

**Expectations:**

1. Reading required materials
2. Completion of written assignments;
3. Mandatory attendance - class participation is one of the most significant parts of the shared learning experiences. Any student that misses more than one class may be at risk for failing the course.
4. *Let me know if you have any problems.* If at any point you have questions or concerns about this course, please know that you are more than welcome to make an appointment to meet with me.
5. Submission of a research paper by February 15, 2012. Research proposals should be submitted in advance to the instructor by December 1, 2011. All assignments are expected to show integration of reading and class materials.

**Participation:**

Contributing to the learning of all is expected and will be evaluated by the following criteria:

- a. accurate use and integration of reading materials assigned
- b. attention to and ability to appropriately engage the contributions of classmates
- c. openness to reflecting critically on the implications and ideas discussed from readings and presentations
- d. prompt and regular attendance

**Format of the Course:** Classes will start each day with a 7-10 minute centering/reflections/meditation/devotion led by student(s). Students will sign up on the first day of class either individually or in pairs. In addition, each day will consist of theological reflections in small groups based on the readings, along with small group work to develop and present daily case studies. The day will also include short lectures, possible scheduled guest speakers, and videos. Each day we will aspire to conclude with covenantal groups.

**Requirements for Writing Papers:** Each student is expected to use a consistent notation style (either the “humanities” or “author-date” format) and include a complete bibliography as described in Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (6th. ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). All papers will observe rules concerning plagiarism and citation of sources. Finally, each student is encouraged to use gender-inclusive language.

Students will write a six to ten page paper on an issue of interest to them that focuses on professional ministerial boundaries and related “Safe Congregations” issues. The paper should show a graduate level review of the literature and scholarship, including UU scholarship addressing the issue and appropriate application of concepts introduced in the course.

**Consultations with Instructor** – In the course of the semester students will have access to the instructor via email [qrahman@meadville.edu](mailto:qrahman@meadville.edu) and scheduled appointments.

### **GRADING POLICY**

Student may take this course for a letter grade unless arrangements are made with the instructor for a Pass/Fail. Please indicate which you choose when you register for the course.

#### **Final grades will be based on:**

1. attendance and participation 5%
2. assignments 25% (all or nothing)
3. research paper 70%

**90%-100% = A**

**80%-89% = B**

**70% – 79% = C**

**Special Accommodations** - Students with disabilities should inform the instructor to determine what if any special accommodations are available.

**Course Content:** The use of graphic videos and class discussions will include highly sensitive topics that can cause a strong emotional impact. Please talk to the instructor if you have any concerns. The instructor will also serve as chaplain for those students that find they need to avail themselves of one

### **Meadville Lombard Theological School Harassment Policy**

Meadville Lombard is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, or sexual orientation.

#### **Questions regarding the course should be directed to:**

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c/o Meadville Lombard Theological School  
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Chicago, IL 60637  
Phone: 773 256 3000 ext. 242  
Email: [qrahman@meadville.edu](mailto:qrahman@meadville.edu)

## Required Readings

- UUMA Guidelines & Code of Professional Practice  
<http://www.uuma.org/?page=guidelines>
- Hoertdoerfer, Patricia and William Sinkford, eds. *Creating Safe Congregations: Toward an Ethic of Right Relations*. Boston: UUA, 1997.
- Hoertdoerfer, Patricia and Fred Muir, eds. *Creating Safe Congregations*. Boston: UUA, 2005.
- Rahman, Qiyamah A. *By the Shores of Babylon We Wept: An Exploration of the Institutional Response of the UUA to Clergy Sexual Misconduct Between 1991 – 2005*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Clark Atlanta University, 2007. (excerpts to be posted on LiveText)
- Weaver, Andrew. John D. Preston, and Charlene Hosenfeld. *Counseling on Sexual Issues: A Handbook for Pastors and other Helping Professionals*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2003.
- Wekesser, Carol, Book editor, Karin I. Swisher, book editor, Christina Pierce, assistant editor. *Sexual Harassment*. San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press Inc., 1992.

## Seminar Readings

For Seminar Readings the Professor will assign one to two readings to each student from the resources listed below. Students will prepare a 10 minute presentation to be delivered in class that states the basic hypothesis, summarizes and analyzes the reading in light of its application and usefulness to UU ministry and congregational life.

- *Color of Violence: the Incite! Anthology/Incite! Women of Color Against Violence*.
- Carol Adams and Marie Fortune, editors, *Violence Against Women and Children: A Christian Theological Sourcebook*. NY: Continuum, 1995
- Ellison, Marvin M. and Sylvia Thorson-Smith, eds. *Body and Soul: Rethinking Sexuality as Justice-Love*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2003.
- Tanis, Justin. *Trans-gendered: Theology, Ministry and Communities of Faith*. Pilgrim Press, 2003. Or Mollenkott, Virginia Ramey and Vanessa Sheridan. *Transgender Journeys*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2003.
- Tigert, Leanne McCall. *Coming Out While Staying In: Struggles and Celebrations of Lesbians, Gays, and Bisexuals in the Church*. Cleveland: United Church Press, 1996.
- Palmer, Timothy and Rev. Debra W. Haffner. *A Time to Seek: Study Guide on Sexual and Gender Diversity*. Westport, CT: Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice and healing, 2006. <http://www.religiousinstitute.org/timetoseek.html>.

## Pre-assignments:

1. By October 21, 2011, post a one page statement in which you introduce yourself to the rest of the class, and describe your particular learning objectives for the course.
2. Review and write no more than two pages summarizing your reflections on: the UUMA's Professional Code of Conduct. What surprised you? What is in your opinion is missing? Did you find it helpful, unhelpful? Why? How does it inform you as a UU

religious professional about the professional ethics of the UUMA?  
(<http://www.uuma.org/?page=guidelines>) (Due December 1)

3. **Vocational Autobiography – Write a three to five page reflections paper that** reflects your sexuality attitudes and beliefs as well as how your sexuality and personal sexual history affects your ministry. **Address the following questions:**

**Grounding Orientation:** How do you understand yourself as a moral professional? What is your “grounding orientation”? [I.e. “Golden Rule.” “Live Long and Prosper,” “Walk softly and carry a big stick,” Etc.]

**Social location:** Gender, ethnicity/race, class, education/training? Any other relevant factors? How do you see these informing your understanding of yourself as a professional minister?

**Professional training/education:** Specific training (or not) for professional role(s). How this influences moral/ethical stance as a minister.

**Values:** What are your basic life orienting values? (For example: family cohesiveness, National security, human rights. Individual conscience? Free speech?

**Norms:** What “rules” do you follow, stand by, advocate for?

**Role models, exemplars:** What role model, images, symbols are important to you?

**Implications:** What are the strong points from your “vocational autobiography” for ethical/moral engagement as a professional? What limitations do you see for ethical/moral engagement in the profession of ministry? How does UUism contribute to your moral engagement as a professional? (Due November 3, 2011)

4. Visit your home congregation or another UU congregation and interview the minister and DRE about their existing policy and procedures on “Safe Congregations” that is, policies designed to foster a safe environment and procedures to ensure safety. Write no more than 3 pages that describes, analyzes and evaluates their policies and procedures. Include copies of policies. (Due Day 1)
5. Prepare a 10 minute homily on a topic of human sexuality that is difficult for you to talk about or one you know little or nothing about. You will deliver your sermon in the course of the class and post an electronic copy. (Due Day 5)