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# DO 670 United Methodist Theology

Robert G. Tuttle

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# **DO670**

## **United Methodist Theology (2 hours)**

January term, 2002 (Jan. 28-Feb. 1)  
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### **I. PURPOSE:**

At Asbury Theological Seminary, there are four classes designed to meet the denominational requirements of The United Methodist Church for ordained ministry. They are DO 690 – John Wesley’s Theology Today; CH 600 – History of Methodism; PM 604 - United Methodist Polity; and this class DO 670 - United Methodist Theology. The purpose of this class is (1) to examine what constitutes United Methodist doctrine as well as its standards and norms, (2) to survey Methodist theology after John Wesley to the present with a special focus upon its American developments, (3) and to study a variety of theological perspectives existing presently within the denomination.

### **II. COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

As a result of this course, our class both individually and corporately should be equipped to do the following:

- (1) We should be able to appreciate, articulate and explain United Methodist doctrinal standards.
- (2) We should be acquainted with some of the representative theological trends, movements, and theologians within United Methodism.
- (3) We should be acquainted with some of the representative theological trends, movements, and theologians outside the United Methodist tradition that are impacting the United Methodist Church.
- (4) We should be able critically to assess past and present theological trends in light of United Methodist doctrinal standards.
- (5) We should be able to recognize the relationship of United Methodist Theology to all spheres of parish and denominational life and make applications.
- (6) We should be prepared to address the doctrinal questions, stated in The Discipline of the United Methodist Church, which are a part of the Church's ordination requirements.

### III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The success of our class is dependent on the timely completion of all assignments, in active participation in class discussion, and in building relationships with one another. During the semester you will be required to do the following for individual grades:

(1) **Assigned Readings:** You will be responsible for all reading assignments specified for each class. It would serve you well to have at least read the assigned books before the class begins. 10% of final grade.

(2) **Research Paper:** You will select a topic from those covered during the semester and write a 10-12 page research paper (typed, doubled spaced) on that topic. The research paper will be **due Feb. 1** (the grades have to in by Feb. 8). On questions of style with regard to paper organization and references, see Carole Slade, *Form and Style: Research Papers, Reports, Theses* (10th ed., Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997). 30% of final grade.

(3) **Reflective Essays:** You will be given two reflective questions for the Tuesday through Friday classes the day before (a total of four reflections from eight questions) to help you critically process course materials and connect it to the local church. Each student will write one essay (200-300 words **max**) for each class from **one** of the two questions and bring that to class for discussion. 30% of final grade.

(4) **Class Participation:** You will actively and thoughtfully participate as a member of a learning community. We will be interacting with and learning from one another. Expectations will be spelled out on the first day of class. 30 % of final grade.

During the week you are also asked and encouraged to do the following:

(1) **Pray Daily for All Participants in Our Course:** I encourage you to pray for everyone in our class and for our seminary. Please feel free to share prayer requests throughout the week. Know that I will pray daily for you individually and as a group.

(2) **Enjoy and Go Deeper:** God has given us the awesome ability to know each other and to know Him. This week in our work, in our discussions, in our readings, and in our chats we will have an opportunity to deepen our connection to Christ and to deepen our relationship with each other.

### IV. ASSIGNED TEXTS: (If at all possible it would be good if you could complete the reading ahead of time)

These textbooks may be obtained from the Asbury Theological Seminary Cokesbury Bookstore.

Required Texts:

1. The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 2000.
2. Abraham, William J. Waking from Doctrinal Amnesia: The Healing of Doctrine in The United Methodist Church. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995.
3. Campbell, Dennis. United Methodism and American Culture, Vol. III, Doctrines and Disciplines. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999.
4. Chiles, Robert E. Theological Transitions in American Methodism: 1790-1935, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984.

5. Langford, Thomas, ed. Practical Divinity: Readings in Wesleyan Theology, Vol. 2, revised text 1999. Abingdon Press.
6. Tuttle, Robert G., Jr. Sanctity without Starch: A Layperson's Guide to a Wesleyan Theology of Grace, Bristol House, 1992.

Collateral Texts:

1. Keller, Rosemary, Spirituality and Social Responsibility: Vision of Women in the United Methodist Tradition, Abingdon Press, 1993.
2. Norwood, Frederick A., The Story of American Methodism, Abingdon Press, 1974.
3. Tuttle, Robert G. Jr. On Giant Shoulders: The History, Role and Influence of the Evangelist in the Movement Called Methodism, a printout book available through the ATS bookstore.

## V. COURSE OUTLINE:

The following is a broad outline of the five classes for the course.

### Jan. 28: Introduction and United Methodist Doctrinal Standards

- Assigned Reading:  
Sanctity without Starch, entire book.  
The Book of Discipline 1996, pp. 39-83.

Reflective questions for the Jan. 29 discussion.

1. If John Wesley's theology of grace focused upon the work of the Holy Spirit, how is that significant for your own preaching and teaching in the local church?
2. From the collateral reading, On Giant Shoulders, Part 1. Chapters two and three speak of lay beginnings and ordination. If lay leadership is, according to Wesley, our peculiar genius then what is the significance of ordination?

### Jan. 29: UM Doctrinal Standards and Theological Task

- Assigned Reading:  
United Methodism and American Culture: Doctrines and Disciplines, entire book.

Reflective questions for the Jan. 30 discussion.

1. In "Doctrines and Discipline" Greg Jones asks the question in his article, "What Makes 'United Methodist Theology' Methodist?" How would you rewrite this article if you were asked to respond to the same question?
2. From On Giant Shoulders, Part II, what about the sources of our doctrinal standards. Are they adequate? Is anything missing?

**Jan. 30: Theological Developments in American Methodism from 1790 to 1935**

- Assigned Reading:  
Theological Transitions in American Methodism, pp. 13-114.  
Practical Divinity: Readings in Wesleyan Theology, pp. 44-53, 96-105, 125-136.

Reflective questions for Jan. 31.

1. In Theological Transitions in American Methodism, let's talk about the transitions that most speaks to you today.
2. In "Practical Divinity" (vol. 2) which of the personalities presented in the assignment for today speaks most to you at this point in your ministry and why?

**Jan. 31: Theological Developments in American Methodism from 1790 to 1935**

- Assigned Reading:  
Theological Transitions in American Methodism, pp. 115-213.  
Practical Divinity: Readings in Wesleyan Theology, pp. 75-84, 113-124, 174-182.

Reflective questions for Feb. 1.

1. Keller in her book, Spirituality and Social Responsibility: Vision of Women in the United Methodist Tradition, makes the point that women have made contributions to the church you might not have imagined. Any surprises here?
2. One of the reasons I like Abraham's book is that he is good at providing specific suggestions. In the last chapter he gives 8 responses to the question, "What Then Shall We Do?" Of the 8 which do you think is most important and why?

**Feb. 1: Contemporary Trends in United Methodism**

- Assigned Readings:  
Practical Divinity: Readings in Wesleyan Theology, pp. 183-324.  
Waking from Doctrinal Amnesia, entire book.  
**Term paper due .**

## **VI. GRADING:**

Asbury Theological Seminary uses the 4.00-point system for grading and evaluation. The grading system is:

A

4.00

Exceptional work: outstanding achievement of course objectives

A-

3.70

B+

3.30

Good work: substantial achievement of course objectives

B

3.00

B-

2.70

C+

2.30

Acceptable work: essential achievement of course objectives

C

2.00

C-

1.70

D+

1.30

Marginal work: minimal or inadequate achievement of course objectives

D

1.00

D-

0.70

F

0.00

Unacceptable work: failure of course objectives

## **VII: LEARN AND ENJOY:**

I fully expect you to enjoy this learning experience. It would help if you would enlist people to pray for our week together. I want you better prepared for life as well as ministry. Let God arise. Hos. 6:3.