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CL 553 United Methodist Polity and Discipline

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Syllabus

Course: CL553 X1 (SP 2009)
Title: United Methodist Polity/Discip
Hours: 2.00
Published: Yes, on 11/17/2008
Prerequisites:

None

Department: Christian Leadership
Faculty: Rev. Dr. Mike Voigts



Email: mike.voigts@asburyseminary.edu
 Office: SH
 SPO: 1235

Meetings:

During 02/09/2009 to 05/22/2009 Online via ExL.

Maximum Registration: 22

Catalog Description: A thorough study of the polity and discipline of The United Methodist Church. The student is equipped to meet the requirements of the Discipline for admission-on-trial into the various conferences. Required of all candidates for the United Methodist ministry.

Objectives:

United Methodist Polity & Discipline

CL 553X1

2 Credit Hours

Spring 2009

[The Discipline] is the most current statement of how United Methodists agree to live their lives together. It reflects our understanding of the Church and of what is expected of its laity and clergy as they seek to be effective witnesses in the world as a part of the whole body of Christ.

-- Book of Discipline, "Episcopal Greetings"

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisite courses for CL553. While a general knowledge of the history and structure of The United Methodist Church would be helpful, it is not required.

Course Description

This course is a thorough study of the polity and discipline of The United Methodist Church. By successfully completing this course the

student is equipped to meet the requirements of *The Book of Discipline* for admission-on-trial into the various annual conferences. This course is required of all candidates for United Methodist ministry.

Welcome from Your Instructor

Welcome to class! This usually isn't a course that students take for the sheer joy of experiencing *The Book of Discipline*, but I promise we'll make this learning experience as painless as possible. It may be *The Book of Discipline* that ties United Methodists to each other through polity and administration, but it's the love of God that unites our hearts. I think we'll discover that the *Discipline* is about much more than paragraph numbers and regulations. For pastors and other ministers, it provides many freedoms to do the work of ministry.

You are probably at different stages in your ordination tracks, so our interactions with one another will provide support and encouragement for one another as we learn together. It's going to be a great semester, and I'm thrilled that you're a part of this course.

General Conference changes to the Discipline go into effect immediately. Since the 2008 Discipline is not yet printed, we will examine the changes online. It should be an interesting summer!

About Your Instructor

Michael C. Voigts, Ph.D.

Adjunct Instructor of Christian Leadership and Discipleship

E-mail address: mike_voigts@asburyseminary.edu

Asbury Theological Seminary
204 North Lexington Avenue
Wilmore, Kentucky 40390

B.A., Baylor University (1990); M.Div., Asbury Theological Seminary (1993); D.Min., Asbury Theological Seminary (2004); Ph.D., Brunel University/London School of Theology (2008).

I've been a pastor in The United Methodist Church since 1993. In 2001, we moved back to Wilmore and Asbury Seminary, where I assumed the position of Director of Alumni and Church Ministries. I've recently completed a Ph.D. in historical theology, studying the spiritual leadership of St. Bernard of Clairvaux. Although a majority of my pastoral ministry took place in Texas, I'm now a member of the Kentucky Annual Conference. My wife Sheryl and I have two children, aged 13 and 10. I'm a proud Die-Hard Chicago Cubs fan, and in my spare time I enjoy photography, playing the guitar, golf, and reading.

Course Objectives

- Possess a working knowledge of The United Methodist Church order and practice
- Be able to use and follow *The Book of Discipline* as a member of the ordained clergy in a local church
- Gain a comprehension of the biblical, theological, and historical foundations of our denomination's polity and structure
- Develop knowledge of the current issues facing The United Methodist Church, particularly how they relate to the *The Book of Discipline*

Modules

This semester we will be utilizing the new "Moodle" online classroom environment. If you've taken ExL classes in the past, I think you'll notice a marked improvement over the "First Class" interface. I ask that we be patient with one another as we use this environment for the very first time.

This course is designed around "modules," through which we will approach the subject matter in *The Book of Discipline* and our textbook. The highly-interactive nature of this course will help us learn from each other as we process the vast amount of information regarding the polity and discipline of the Church.

Each module is two-weeks long, providing ample time to complete readings and assignments.

The course is structured as follows:

MODULE 00	Course Syllabus
MODULE 01	Introduction, Our History, and the Constitution
MODULE 02	United Methodist Doctrinal Standards, Theological Task, and Social Principles

MODULE 03	The Ministry of all Christians and the Local Church
MODULE 04	The Ministry of the Ordained
MODULE 05	The Superintendency and the Conferences
MODULE 06	The General Agencies and Church Property
MODULE 07	Judicial Administration and Conclusion

Expectations

What you can expect of me:

1. Prompt replies to questions and postings.
2. Interaction, participation, and direction in the ongoing discussions that will occur over the course of the semester.
3. Prompt feedback and assessment on assignments.
4. Occasional bloopers as I continue to learn this mode of teaching and interact with the class.

What I expect of you:

1. Participation in online discussion both in the Discussion Center and in your Team Folder.
2. On time completion of assignments.
3. Your honest questions when you don't understand the material or the instructions.
4. Your patience as we work together in this medium.

Guidelines

1. Assignments: All assignments are due by the stated due dates. Late assignments will be penalized one letter grade per day late. For example, a B paper turned in one day late becomes a C, etc.
2. Postings: Postings in the Discussion Center and in your team folder (when necessary) should be limited to 75-100 words.
3. Discussion: A crucial element of this course is the dialogue that we enter into with each other. All discussions are to be in the vein of encouragement, gentleness, patience, persistence, and hope. This does not mean that we will not challenge, confront, or question each other. It does mean that these things will be undertaken for the purpose of growth and stimulation to think and understand the subject at hand more deeply and more intimately.

How to Submit Your Work

Please submit your responses to the appropriate folder. When you name them be sure to use your last name in the title of your response.

Course Requirements

Readings

Required Texts: (20 points)

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 2008 (available January 2009).
 Frank, Thomas Edward. *Polity, Practice, and the Mission of The United Methodist Church*, Nashville: Abingdon, 2006.

You will submit a reading report at the end of the semester, indicating the percent of the reading you completed.

Module Postings (20 points)

Each module will feature required reading followed by discussion questions. Each student is required to post a response to each of the questions, and then respond to the postings of the other members in your Team. Both the answers to the questions and your responses to your classmates should be 75-100 words. Believe it or not, keeping your responses to this work limitation is more difficult than it seems, so you must be succinct in your responses. Grading will be based upon your completion of the assignment listed above and your participation in your Team discussion.

NOTE: A Module's due date is the date when all postings and responses are due. Waiting to submit your responses until the due date may adversely affect the grade of the others in your Team, as they may not be able to respond to your postings in time. **Therefore, your responses to the Module's questions should be posted one week prior to the module's deadline.** This will allow the final week to be reserved for responding to the posts of everyone else on the Team. **I will not grade Modules posted past the due date.**

The purpose of the module postings is to learn from each other. The responses should be reflective in nature, and seasoned with Christian love. Sharp or personal criticism is rarely helpful, and thus should not be a part of this course.

Interview Project (20 points)

You will interview one pastor and one district superintendent to discover how the *Discipline* plays a role in their ministries. What you ask is up to you, but the interview should include at least 5-7 questions. You will then post to the discussion center a three-page, double-spaced reflection paper (12-point font, one inch margins) in which you summarize the responses you received and share what you gleaned from the interview process.

For extra credit, attend a church board meeting to see what *Discipline* issues are involved. You should share these experiences in your reflection paper.

This project is due by **March 20 by 11:59 p.m. EST**. The due date will be posted on the course calendar.

Integrative Paper (20 points)

You will select a topic covered in class and submit one (1) integrative research paper (8-10 pages each). The paper should be a 12-point font (Times New Roman preferred), double-spaced, with one-inch margins all around. The paper should conform to the MLA standard.

An integrative paper is one in which you weave the various aspects of the course (readings, the interviews, online discussions, and your own personal formation) into an integrative matrix. An integrative paper finds cohesion and fusion as you blend together the many elements of the course. The paper is designed to help you process the course material so that God can help you understand yourself, your vocational call, and your call to discipleship.

An integrative paper is more than merely summarizing the course experiences. It is not a research paper, in which you objectively approach a subject. An integrative paper is about you! As such, the personal pronoun "I" should be found throughout the paper. However, this paper is not a sermon, and since it is about how you have processed the materials of the course, you should avoid using the pronoun "they."

This paper is due by **May 8 at 11:59 p.m. EST**.

Final Exam (20 points)

This open-book exam will demonstrate your knowledge and ability to work with the *Book of Discipline*. The exam will be essay in nature, reflecting the student's holistic comprehension of using and understanding the *Discipline*. The exam will probe your ability to communicate your theological approach regarding our denomination's structure and laws. More information about this exam will be forthcoming as the semester progresses. DUE DATE: **May 22, 11:59 p.m. EST**.

Extended Bibliography

These resources might be helpful to you as you work on the various assignments and projects throughout the course:

- The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church*, (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House), 2005.
- Campbell, Dennis, *The Yoke of Obedience: The Meaning of Ordination*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988.
- Campbell, Dennis M., William B. Lawrence, and Russell E. Richey, ed. *Doctrine and Disciplines*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999.
- Harmon, Nolan B, *The Organization of the Methodist Church*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962.
- Heitzenrater, Richard, *Mirror and Memory: Reflections on Early Methodism*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989.
- Hickman, Hoyt, ed., *The Worship Resources of the United Methodist Hymnal*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989.
- Jones, Scott J., *United Methodist Doctrine: The Extreme Center*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002.
- Langford, Thomas A.. ed. *Doctrine and Theology in the United Methodist Church*. Kingswood Books. Nashville: Abingdon, 1991.
- Lawrence, William B., Dennis M. Campbell, Russell E. Richey, editors. *The People(s) Called Methodist: Forms and Reforms of Their Life*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.
- Long, Edward LeRoy, *Patterns of Polity: Varieties of Church Governance*. Cleveland, Ohio. Pilgrim Press, 2001.
- O'Malley, J. Steven, *Pilgrimage of Faith: The Legacy of the Otterbeins*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1973.
- Richey, Russell E., *The Methodist Conference in America*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996.
- , *Perspectives on American Methodism*. Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1993.
- , William B. Lawrence, and Dennis M. Campbell, editors. *Questions For the Twenty-First Century Church*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999.
- Tigert, John J., *A Constitutional History of American Episcopal Methodism*. Nashville:

Publishing House of the M.E. Church South, 1894.

Wesley, John, *The Works of John Wesley*. 14 vols.

Wheeler, Henry, *History and Exposition of the Twenty-Five Articles*. New York: Eaton and Mains, 1908.

Willimon, William H., *Calling and Character: Virtues of the Ordained Life*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000.

Yrigoyen, Charles, Jr., *Belief Matters: United Methodism's Doctrinal Standards*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2001.

Web Sites

This list is certainly not exhaustive, but it might be a helpful way to find some basic information about The United Methodist Church on the Internet:

United Methodist Homepage	http://www.umc.org
2008 General Conference	
Legislation Tracker	http://calms.umc.org/2008/Menu.aspx?tab=petition
Annual Conference Finder	http://archives.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=461
Council of Bishops	http://archives.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=21&mid=5855
Division of Ordained Ministry	http://www.gbhem.org/ordmin2.html
General Boards and Agencies	http://archives.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=2650
Judicial Council Decisions	http://archives.umc.org/interior_judicial.asp?mid=263
UMC Communications	http://www.umcom.org/
UMC Connections	http://gbgm-umc.org/connections/
The Upper Room	http://www.upperroom.org/

Online Etiquette

Although we're all used to quickly responding to people online and through Email with abbreviations and text-messaging abbreviations, for this course let's try to avoid them. Simple "emoticons" are fine to use occasionally, let's remember that our work is graduate-level, and should include proper grammar, mechanics, and punctuation.

In our correspondence with one another, we may encounter issues that are either controversial or can easily incite emotional reactions. Let's remember to treat each other with Christian love and respect. If you feel yourself becoming emotionally-charged about a particular issue, "let go of the mouse and step away from the computer" until you can approach the issue more objectively.

Regarding Online Classroom etiquette, please refer to the following links:

- Online Etiquette Quiz: www.bucks.edu/online/dlresources/etiquette.htm
 General Information: www.online.uwc.edu/technology/onletiquette.asp

Support

For general questions and administrative assistance regarding the ExL program contact Dale Hale at ExL_Office@asburyseminary.edu or phone 859-858-2393.

For technical support, library research support, library loans, and ExL media contact Information Commons at Info_Commons@asburyseminary.edu or phone 859-858-2233 or 866-454-2733.

Accessing Information Commons (Library) Materials:

1. General Questions:

The Information Commons is a "one-stop shop" for all student research, circulation and technical needs. The Information Commons hours are posted here: <http://www.asburyseminary.edu/icommons/hours.shtml>.

2. Materials Requests:

To search the library catalog for available materials, click here: <http://www.asburyseminary.edu/icommons/index.shtml>

ExL Students may request books, photocopies or emailed attachments of journal articles/portions of reference books from Asbury Seminary's Library. Please allow 3-10 business days for all requests to be filled. Contact the Information Commons for costs and instructions.

ExL students are encouraged to make use of local library resources. Students who live within a 50 mile radius of either the Florida or the Kentucky campus should visit campus to obtain their materials.

3. Research Questions:

You're encouraged to contact the Information Commons for research assistance including help choosing a paper topic, determining the best sources to use for a paper, finding book reviews, or research questions about using the online databases or any other library materials.

4. Online Databases:

To access the online library resources including the library catalog and full-text journal databases, go to <http://www.asburyseminary.edu/icommons/index.shtml> and enter your 10-digit student ID# number in the login box. Your student ID# is provided on the biographical information section of the student registration webpage. Add a 2 and enough 0's to the front to make a 10-digit number (20000XXXXX where XXXXX = your student id).

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ExL Media Copyright Information

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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-	.70	
F	0.00	Unacceptable work: failure of course objectives.

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CL 553 Course Modules**MODULE 01 Introduction, Our History, and the Constitution**

1. POST an introduction of yourself and your family, including where you live. What is your present occupation? In what types of ministries are you involved? Share something about yourself that is unique.
2. READ *Discipline: Historical Statement and the Constitution* (Part I)
Frank: Ch. 1-2
3. POST answers to the questions posted by the professor for this module. Respond to at least two (2) other class members in 75-100 words.

DUE DATE: February 20, 11:59 p.m. EST.

MODULE 02 United Methodist Doctrinal Standards, Theological Task, and Social Principles

1. READ *Discipline*: Doctrinal Standards and our Theological Task (Part II); Social Principles (Part IV)
Frank: Ch. 3-4
2. POST answers to the questions posted by the professor for this module. Respond to at least two (2) other class members in 75-100 words.

DUE DATE: March 6, 11:59 p.m. EST

MODULE 03 The Ministry of all Christians and the Local Church

1. READ *Discipline*: The Ministry of All Christians (Part III), The Local Church (Part V, Chapter 1)
Frank: Ch. 5-6
2. POST answers to the questions posted by the professor for this module. Respond to at least two (2) other class members in 75-100 words.

DUE DATE: March 20, 11:59 p.m. EST

INTERVIEW PROJECT DUE BY 11:59 p.m. on March 20**MODULE 04 The Ministry of the Ordained & the Superintendency**

1. READ *Discipline*: The Ministry of the Ordained (Part V, Chapter 2), The Superintendency (Part V, Chapter 3)
Frank: Ch. 7-8
2. POST answers to the questions posted by the professor for this module. Respond to at least two (2) other class members in 75-100 words.

DUE DATE: April 10, 11:59 p.m. EST

MODULE 05 The Conferences

1. READ *Discipline*: The Conferences (Part V, Chapter 4), Administrative Order (Part V, Chapter 5)
Frank: Ch. 9-10
2. POST answers to the questions posted by the professor for this module. Respond to at least two (2) other class members in 75-100 words.

DUE DATE: April 24, 11:59 p.m. EST

MODULE 06 Church Property

1. READ *Discipline*: Church Property (Part V, Chapter 6)
Frank: Ch. 11
2. POST answers to the questions posted by the professor for this module. Respond to at least two (2) other class members in 75-100 words.

DUE DATE: **May 8, 11:59 p.m. EST**

INTEGRATIVE PAPER DUE BY 11:59 p.m. EST on May 8

MODULE 07 Judicial Administration and Conclusions

1. READ *Discipline* Part V (Chapter 7), "Judicial Administration,"
Frank: Ch. 12 and the Conclusion
2. POST answers to the questions posted by the professor for this module. Respond to at least two (2) other class members in 75-100 words.

DUE DATE: **WEDNESDAY, May 20, 11:59 p.m. EST**

ONLINE FINAL EXAM DUE BY 11:59 p.m. on May 22

