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# CL 553 United Methodist Polity and Discipline

Robert Bushong

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# CL553 United Methodist Polity and Discipline

Fall, 2008

Thursday, 9:00 - 11:40 a.m.

## Instructor

Dr. Bob Bushong

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## Purpose

This course introduces participants to the organizational structure of The United Methodist Church as it has emerged out of the Wesleyan tradition, with an emphasis on using our denominational polity to strengthen and undergird ordained leadership in the local congregation and in the larger church.

## Objectives as Identified by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of the United Methodist Church

1. To examine the development of United Methodist Polity from an historical and theological perspective:
  - a. to understand the implicit and explicit expressions of ecclesiology
  - b. to become familiar with the nature and implications of connectionalism and itinerancy for ministry
  - c. to understand the annual conference as the basic unit of The United Methodist Church
  - d. to study and understand the covenantal relationship between ministers (lay, diaconal and ordained) in The United Methodist Church
2. To use *The Book of Discipline* and *The Book of Resolutions* as working handbooks for mission and ministry:
  - a. to understand the process by which leaders are selected
  - b. to gain a knowledge of the selection, deployment, evaluation, and termination of clergy
  - c. to become familiar with the decision-making process at all levels of the church
  - d. to become aware of the required structure and alternative organization of the local church
  - e. to examine connectionalism in relation to church property
  - f. to understand the judicial structures, the appeal and review process
  - g. to gain an awareness of the role and function of the general boards and agencies
  - h. to understand the role of caucuses and special groups in the church
  - i. to perceive the nature of ecumenical relationships

## Required Texts

*The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2004 (2008 if available)*

Thomas Edward Frank, *Polity, Practice, and the Mission of the United Methodist Church, Updated Edition*

\*Henri Nouwen, *Can You Drink the Cup?*

William Willimon, *Calling and Character: Virtues of the Ordained Life*

\*Note: Henri Nouwen's *Can You Drink the Cup?* is to be completed prior to the first class.

### **Additional Recommended Resources**

Cokesbury, *Guidelines for Leading Your Congregation: 2005-2008*

Decisions of the Judicial Council (available at [www.gcfa.org](http://www.gcfa.org))

Paul Chilcote, *Praying in the Wesleyan Spirit*

W. Stephen Gunter, Scott J. Jones, Ted A. Campbell, Rebekah L. Miles, Randy L. Maddox,  
*Wesley and the Quadrilateral: Renewing the Conversation*

John E. Harnish, *The Orders of Ministry in the United Methodist Church*

Thomas A. Langford, *Practical Divinity: Theology in the Wesleyan Tradition*

Jack Seymour and Mary Ann Crain, *A Deacon's Heart*

Jack M. Tuell, *The Organization of the United Methodist Church*

*The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church, 2004* (2008 if available)

United Methodist Communications, *Official United Methodist Program Calendar, 2008*

### **Course Requirements**

1. Regular and punctual class attendance and participation.
2. A daily personal devotional time.
3. A weekly one-page type-written reflection on the participant's personal devotional time.
4. Completing the weekly reading assignments.
5. A weekly one to two-page type-written reflection on some particular aspect of that week's reading assignment.
6. Classroom presentations (number to be determined), making use of the participant's written reflection on some particular aspect of that week's reading assignment (dates for presentations will be selected the first day of class).
7. A ten-page research/reflection paper related to some aspect or dimension of leadership in The United Methodist Church. This paper should reflect thoughtful theological reflection and clear practical application.
8. Final exam.

### **Course Evaluation**

1. Attendance and class participation – 10%
2. Reflection papers and classroom presentations – 20%
3. Project – 35%
4. Final exam – 35%

### **A Word about Writing**

Please note that all written assignments should reflect that appropriate attention has been given to grammar, punctuation, spelling, and other aspects that apply to completion of assignments in a graduate level course.