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CL 553 United Methodist Polity and Discipline

Robert Bushong

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CL553 United Methodist Polity and Discipline

Fall, 2006

Tuesday, 10:00 - 11:40 a.m.

Instructor

Dr. Bob Bushong

bob_bushong@asburyseminary.edu

bobb@fumcwp.org

Office: 407-644-2906

Home: 407-644-3623

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

The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church, 2004

Thomas Edward Frank, *Polity, Practice, and the Mission of the United Methodist Church, 2006 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)

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*

United Methodist Communications, *Official United Methodist Program Calendar, 2005*

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. Project: As an individual or in groups of two or three, prepare a petition to be submitted to the 2008 General Conference. This petition will relate to a particular process, structure, ecclesiological, social, or theological issue found in *The Book of Discipline*. As a prelude to the petition itself, the student(s) should discuss why this is an important issue, and be sure that the point of view taken is rooted in a Wesleyan perspective that draws from scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. Care should be given to "think theologically," and for that thinking to be reflected clearly in the project itself.
8. Final exam.

Course Evaluation

1. Attendance and class participation – 15%
2. Reflection papers and classroom presentations – 15%
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.

Course Outline

(Note: Reading assignments listed are to be completed by class time on the date listed. A one-page written reflection on your personal devotional time and a one to two-page written reflection on some particular aspect of that week's reading assignments are due for each class, including September 5.)

September 5	Introduction/Overview of Class Class presentations sign-up Read: Nouwen; Frank, Forward and Introduction
September 12	The Nature of Polity Read: Frank, Chapters 1-2; <i>The Book of Discipline</i> , pp. 9-20
September 19	The Constitution of the UMC Read: Frank, Chapter 3; <i>The Book of Discipline</i> , pp. 21-39
September 26	Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task Read: Frank, Chapter 4; <i>The Book of Discipline</i> , pp. 41-86, pp. 95-125 Submit proposal for project
October 3	The Ministry of All Christians Read: Frank, Chapter 5; <i>The Book of Discipline</i> , pp. 87-94
October 10	The Local Church Read: Frank, Chapter 6; <i>The Book of Discipline</i> , pp. 127-193
October 17	The Ministry of the Ordained Read: Frank, Chapter 7; Willimon; <i>The Book of Discipline</i> , pp. 194-283
October 24	The Superintendency Read: Frank, Chapter 8; <i>The Book of Discipline</i> , pp. 285-311
October 31	General, Jurisdictional, Central Conferences and the General Agencies Read: Frank, Chapter 9; <i>The Book of Discipline</i> , pp. 313-350; pp. 451-670
November 7	Annual and District Conferences Read: Frank, Chapter 10; <i>The Book of Discipline</i> , pp. 351-449
November 14	Church Property Read: Frank, Chapters 11; <i>The Book of Discipline</i> , pp. 671-708 Projects due
November 21	Reading Week – No class
November 28	Judicial Administration Read: Frank, Chapter 12; <i>The Book of Discipline</i> , pp. 709-746
December 5	Let's Pull It All Together Read: Frank, Chapter 13 Final exam will be distributed
December 12	Final exam is due