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PM 604 United Methodist Polity and Discipline

H. O. Thomas

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WELCOME from Tom Thomas:

Welcome to UNITED METHODIST POLITY AND DISCIPLINE! This class, PM604, fulfills the disciplinary requirement for all United Methodist students seeking ordination as a deacon or elder in the United Methodist Church.

You will know you are in the right course if you realize The Book of Discipline is not a manual on getting your child to behave. Whether you have been a United Methodist for years or just a short time, do not feel bad if you are not familiar with the term “polity.” Most of us are not. Several years ago when my local church parishioners knew I would be teaching polity, they asked, “What is polity? Is it church politics?”

I’m going to try to work hard at not letting you have the experience I overheard one student having. One time when polity was offered as an intensive week course, he was overheard saying, “The redeeming feature of this course was that it only lasted one week!” I want you to discover what we have been discovering in previous classes: polity is a living and engaging concern in our beloved United Methodist Church. Further, the Church is absolutely bristling with fascinating issues related to United Methodist polity! What a charge to keep we have!

Purpose of the Course: This course seeks to acquaint you with how the United Methodist Church orders and structures itself in its total life, doctrine, ministry and mission. The course purposes to fulfill the denominational requirement for polity for you who are seeking ordination in the United Methodist Church.

Objectives:

• To enable you to have a working understanding of church order and practice and the practical discipline of the United Methodist Church and *The Book of Discipline*. This course seeks to ready you to use the Discipline as an ordained minister in a local United Methodist church.

• Where relevant, we will explore and become familiar with, analyze and evaluate the biblical and theological assumptions and historical developments that have given rise to and support our church’s structure.

• In a spirit of affirmation, you will offer candid critique and visioning for the future of our United Methodist polity.

• To enable you to become more conversant through classroom discussion with the live issues relating to United Methodist polity.
Course Requirements:
1. Punctual class attendance is expected. Active class participation (i.e., reading pre-assigned texts, attentive listening, notetaking, asking relevant questions, and entering into discussions) is vital. Realizing that if anything can go wrong it may, each student will be allowed only one unexcused absence. Points will be deducted from your final grade for each subsequent, unexcused absence. The only absences excused and the only criteria for delinquencies on due assignments and failures to show for an exam is bed-ridden illness, hospitalization, genuine emergencies, or death! For those with extenuating circumstances, make-up work will be arranged with the professor. (Value of the final grade – 3%. Default may result in up to 3% – 3 points – deduction from the final grade.)

2. Read the entire Book of Discipline (1996). Please type and submit to the professor by each reading due date on the course calendar two observations/reflections taken from your assigned weekly reading. An observation is a reference to a particular sentence or paragraph in the Discipline (please cite) and your reflection should be approximately 2 paragraphs in length (not to exceed 3/4 page in length) single-spaced. (Value of the final grade: 15% -- 15 points.)

3. Read Polity, Practice and the Mission by Thomas Frank. Please type and submit to the professor by each reading due date on the course calendar an approximately two-paragraph summary (not to exceed 3/4 page in length) of each chapter to be read that week. (Value of the final grade: 12% -- 12 points.)

4. Satisfactorily do one of the following: (Value of the final grade: 70% -- 70 points.)
   --Take the final exam.
   --Submit a ten-page research paper on an issue related to United Methodist polity. The following format must be followed or a point reduction results.
   1. Typed on 8½” x 11” paper, double spaced with one-inch margins.
   2. Format of the paper:
      a. Title Page (Title, name, professor’s name, course, and date)
      b. Introduction: Briefly give an introductory explanation of what you intend to do in the paper.
      c. Main Body. In writing your paper:
         --State the issue and the historical development which have precipitated the issue.
         --Analyze conflicting views or positions regarding the issue by stating each one’s biblical, theological, philosophical, and scientific premises. Note how terms are defined and used.
         --Argue for a position or build a case of resolution. Persuade the reader, giving reasons why this is the reasonable argument. Demonstrate the strength of your case.
      d. Conclusion
      e. Footnotes: Be careful to acknowledge sources either in footnotes or endnotes. These must be placed either at the bottom of each page or at the back of the paper.
      f. Bibliography: Please include only those sources which you have consulted in your research paper.
3. Additional Comments:
--Copy edit (correct and revise) the first draft. Spell-check and read over for correct grammar, syntax, proper expressions, and logical flow. Expect to write two drafts before finalizing the third. Proof-read the final draft.
--Put completed paper in manila envelope.
--Failure to turn in completed research paper on Nov 30th results in a 5% point reduction for each week late.

**For additional information on form, please consult Kate L. Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1973).

5. Class Devotionals. Students are invited to lead the opening class devotionals (three minutes). In your devotional, you may incorporate the United Methodist Hymnal and/or the Book of Worship or other sources as you choose.

**Summary of Grading Procedure:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>Exceptional work: outstanding/surpassing achievement of course objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>Good work: substantial achievement of course objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>Acceptable work: essential achievement of course objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>Marginal Work: minimal or inadequate achievement of course objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>Unacceptable work: failure of course objectives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Extra Credit:**

For extra credit, using at least three of the publications listed below, identify five current issues relating to United Methodist polity. On paper, you will state the issue exemplified and summarize it (approx. ½ page) and submit it with a supporting copy of the article from which the issue is drawn to the professor by Dec 5th. (Value is 2% -- 2 points.)

UM Publications:
United Methodist Reporter
Circuit Rider
Interpreter
Quarterly Review
Newscope
Good News magazine

www.umc.org
How to Study for this Course:

The best way to study for this course in addition to reading and familiarizing yourself with the required texts is to pay particular and close attention to the lectures. Taking complete and careful notes will go a long way to helping you do well on the exam.

About the Professor:

The Rev. H. O. (Tom) Thomas, Jr. has known personally and walked with Jesus for over thirty years. He has pastored six local churches in southern California and England. He received his Ph.D. degree from Bristol University, Bristol, England, where he lived in John Wesley’s Chapel “The New Room” and studied the theology of John Wesley. He has been married to his wife Pamela for twenty-four years. They have two children, Karissa, 11 and John who is almost 4 years old. Dr. Thomas is on the Board of Ordained Ministry and a supervising mentor in the California-Pacific Annual Conference.

   His plea is, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.”
## Fall 2000 Calendar for PM604

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>Reading from Discipline*</th>
<th>TOPIC of Class and Reading from Frank*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Syllabus and Introduction to Polity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 14</td>
<td>pp. v-20</td>
<td>Historical Considerations in the Formation of UM Polity Chs. 1, 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 21</td>
<td>pp. 21-72 (¶62)</td>
<td>Constitution and Doctrinal Standards Ch. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 28</td>
<td>pp. 72-106</td>
<td>Our Theological Task and Social Principles Ch. 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 5</td>
<td>pp. 107-146 (¶253)</td>
<td>The Ministry of All Christians Ch. 5 Class Evaluations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 12</td>
<td>pp. 146-169</td>
<td>The Local Church Ch. 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 26</td>
<td>pp. 212-246</td>
<td>The Ministry of the Ordained Ch. 7 Guest: Jim Heidinger, Good News Magazine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 2</td>
<td>pp. 247-272</td>
<td>The Superintendency Ch. 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 9</td>
<td>pp. 273-324 (¶610)</td>
<td>The Conferences – General, Jurisdictional, and Central Ch. 9 Guest: Maxie Dunnam, President of Asbury Theological Seminary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 16</td>
<td>pp. 324-396</td>
<td>The Annual Conferences and General Agencies Ch. 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 23</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reading Week – Nothing Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 30</td>
<td>pp. 397-646</td>
<td>Church Property Ch. 11 Optional Research Paper Due (in Professor’s Office)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec. 5</td>
<td>pp. 647-742</td>
<td>Judicial Administration Ch. 12 and Conclusion Extra Credit Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 11-15</td>
<td></td>
<td>FINAL EXAM WEEK (Exam date: Tuesday, December 12, 1-3pm)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Please note: The readings listed for each date should be completed before coming to class.*
BIBLIOGRAPHY

REQUIRED TEXTS
Thomas Edward Frank, Polity, Practice, and the Mission of the United Methodist Church
(Nashville: Abingdon, 1997)
Tuell, Jack M., The Organization of the United Methodist Church, Abingdon, 1997

RELATED TEXTS
Harmon, Nolan B, The Organization of the Methodist Church (Nashville, Abingdon, 1962)
Richey, Russell E., Perspectives on American Methodism (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1993)

OTHER RESOURCES
Bromily, G., Children of Promise: The Case of Baptizing Infants, Eerdmans, 1979
Colaw, Emerson, Beliefs of a United Methodist Christian, Tidings, (3rd ed.)
Green, M., Baptism, Downers Grove, 1987
Guidelines for Leadership in the Local Church 1985-1988, Abingdon Press, Printed in the USA.
Harmon, Nolan B., Understanding the United Methodist Church, Abingdon, 1983
Harper and Wilson, Faith and Form, Zondervan, 1988
Heidinger, United Methodist Renewal: What Will It Take, Bristol, 1986
_______, ed., Basic United Methodist Beliefs: An Evangelical View, Bristol, 1986
Hunt, E., A Bishop Speaks His Mind: A Candid View of United Methodism, Abingdon, 1987
Hunt, Hinkle, Malony, Clergy Assessment and Career Development, Abingdon, 1990
Johnson and Waltz, Facts and Possibilities: An Agenda for the United Methodist Church, Abingdon, 1987
Madsen, N., This We Believe: The Articles of Religion and Confeension of Faith, Graded Press, 1987
Willimon and Wilson, *Rekindling the Flame*, Abingdon, 1988

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