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CL 553 United Methodist Polity and Discipline

Joe Harris

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Welcome from Joe Harris:

Welcome to UNITED METHODIST POLITY AND DISCIPLINE! This class, CL553 fulfills the disciplinary requirement for all United Methodist students seeking ordination as a deacon or elder in the United Methodist Church.

United Methodist Polity and Discipline outlines the ‘rules’ which United Methodist order their lives together. This course is more than just an ancient creedal memorization course or a set of outdated and outmoded customs and traditions, passed on through generations of United Methodists. On the other hand it is also not just a course of relativistic modern propositions designed to be relevant to today’s cultural norms devoid of the ancient witness. This Polity and Discipline course will prepare the student to understand how the United Methodist Church functions in today’s world while holding fast to the foundations of it’s historical and theological development.

We will deal with the ‘issues’ facing the church today, the numerous structure challenges, the ‘hard’ realities facing clergy and laity in the annual conferences and the future challenges and opportunities that United Methodist Church must face. In addition, we will explore the role of racial ethnic persons in the church, women, men, youth, Caucasus’s (official and unofficial), UM agencies, Council of Bishops, Judicial Council, seminaries and the effects of ecumenical groups (i.e., World Methodist Council, World and National Council of Churches, etc.) on the mission and ministries of the denomination. It is expected that by the end of this course the student will be able to articulate his/her understanding of how Polity and Discipline fit in the life of the denomination as well as how its fit’s into the life of the prospective United Methodist clergy person.

Purpose of the Course: This course seeks to acquaint students 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 students 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, The Book of Discipline and The Book of Resolutions. This course seeks to ready you to use the Discipline and the Book of Resolutions 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 the 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, note-taking, 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 instructor. (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 (2000) and the Book of Resolutions (2000). 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 in the Book of Discipline. 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. You may read the Book of Resolutions at your own pace. Following the completion of your reading you are asked to choose three resolutions from three different sections (Nurturing Community, Social Community, Economic Community etc.) and offer a one page assessment of the merits (or lack of) of each selected resolution along with your critique of the relationship of the resolution to the Polity and Mission of the church. These assessment/critiques are due no later then May 7th (Value of the final grade: 20% -- 20 points.)

3. Read Polity, Practice and the Mission by Thomas Frank. Please type and submit to the instructor 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. During the semester, attend one Church Council meeting of a local United Methodist church other than the one you currently attend. You are to act as a reporter and observe what organizational structure is assumed by the church. In light of ¶ 242, 243.1, 243.2 and 246.2 briefly describe in one or two paragraphs the church’s organizational plan. Is it the “basic organizational plan” described in ¶243? Does it use the former Administrative Board and Council of Ministries structure? Does it use simply the old “Administrative Council” structure (which carries both the responsibilities of Administrative Board and Council of Ministries)? Does it use some alternative structure per ¶246.2 and ¶242? How does the
church conduct its meetings and business? What is the role of the pastor? How does the structure enhance the church mission? Submit a one page paper before the end of the semester on your observations and answers to the questions noting name of church, date attended meeting and name of pastor and Council/Board chair (Value of final grade: 5% -- 5 points)

5. Satisfactorily complete one of the following: (Value of the final grade: 60% -- 60 points.)
   --Take the final examination. OR
   --Submit a ten-page paper on an issue related to United Methodist polity. The following format must be followed or a point reduction results.
   1. Typed on 8 ½” 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. Proofread the final draft.
      --Put completed paper in manila envelope.
      --Failure to turn in completed research paper on April 30th results in a 5% point reduction for each week late.

**For additional information on form, please consult Carole Slade’s Form and Style: Research Papers, Reports and Theses (This book is available at the Library Circulation Desk).

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:

A = 93-100  B = 80-92  C = 70-79  D = below 70

A  4.00  Exceptional work: outstanding/surpassing achievement of course objectives
A-  3.70
B+ 3.30
B  3.00  Good work: strong, significant achievement of course objectives
B-  2.70
C+ 2.30
C  2.00  Acceptable work: basic, essential achievement of course objectives
C-  1.70
D+ 1.30
D  1.00  Marginal Work: minimal or inadequate achievement of course objectives
D- .70
F  0.00  Unacceptable work: failure of course objectives

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 describe the issue exemplified and its relation to U.M. polity (½ page). With it submit a supporting copy of the article from which the issue is drawn to the professor by May 7th. (Value is 2% -- 2 points.)
  - United Methodist Reporter
  - Circuit Rider
  - Interpreter
  - Quarterly Review
  - Newscope
  - Good News magazine
  - www.umc.org
- In consultation with Dr. Harris, a group of students working together may schedule a 20-30 minute class session in which they present a panel discussion centered on a particular topic relevant to UM Polity.

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: Rev. Dr Joseph Harris currently serves as the General Secretary for the Commission on United Methodist Men based in Nashville, TN. Dr. Harris is an elder from the Oklahoma Annual Conference. He served several churches in the conference as well as serving eight years as the district superintendent of the Ardmore district. Dr Harris received his BA degree from the University of Mass and his M.Div. and Doctor of Ministry degrees form Oral Roberts University Theological Seminary in Tulsa Oklahoma. He has an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Oklahoma City University and has done postdoctoral studies at Alliance School of Theology. Dr. Harris is married to Nancy and has two grown children, Sarah and Joe II Dr. Harris has served on numerous annual conference boards and agencies, the General Board of Church and Society, the Good News Board of Directors, Black Methodist for Church Renewal and World Methodist Council. He currently is a trustee at Asbury Theological Seminary.
### SPRING 2003 Calendar for CL553

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<thead>
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<th>DATE</th>
<th>Reading from Discipline*</th>
<th>TOPIC of Class and Reading from Frank*</th>
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<tr>
<td>Feb. 12</td>
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<td>Syllabus and Introduction to Polity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Pp. v-20</td>
<td>Historical Considerations in the Formation of UM Polity Chs. 1, 2</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Pp. 21-74</td>
<td>Constitution and Doctrinal Standards Ch. 3</td>
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<td>March 5</td>
<td>Pp. 74-86,</td>
<td>Our Theological Task Ch. 4</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Pp. 87-94, 95-122</td>
<td>The Ministry of All Christians and Social Principles Ch. 5</td>
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<td>Class Evaluations</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Pp. 123-181</td>
<td>The Local Church Ch. 6</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Pp. 182-228</td>
<td>The Ministry of the Ordained Ch. 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 2</td>
<td>Pp. 228-265</td>
<td>The Ministry of the Ordained Ch. 7</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Organizational Report Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>7-11</td>
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<td>READING WEEK – Nothing Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Pp. 267-294</td>
<td>The Superintendency Ch. 8</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>Pp. 295-349</td>
<td>The Conferences – General, Jurisdictional, and Central Ch. 9</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>Pp. 349-425</td>
<td>The Annual Conferences and General Agencies Ch. 10</td>
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<td>Guest:</td>
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<td>May 7</td>
<td>Pp. 426-648, Pp. 649-685</td>
<td>General Agencies and Church Property Ch. 11</td>
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<td>Research and assessment Papers Due</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Pp. 687-799</td>
<td>Judicial Administration Ch. 12 and Conclusion Extra Credit Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>19-22</td>
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<td>FINAL EXAM WEEK</td>
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<td>(Exam date: Wednesday, May 22, 8 – 10 a.m.)</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
Campbell, Dennis M., William B. Lawrence, and Russell E. Richey, editors. Doctrine and
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Lawrence, William B., Dennis M. Campbell, Russell E. Richey, editors. The People(s) Called
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Tigert, John J., A Constitutional History of American Episcopal Methodism (Nashville:
Publishing House of the M.E. Church South, 1894), p. 27.

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.
_______, ed., *Basic United Methodist Beliefs: An Evangelical View*, Bristol, 1986
Hunt, Hinkle, Malony, *Clergy Assessment and Career Development*, Abingdon, 1990
Willimon and Wilson, *Rekindling the Flame*, Abingdon, 1988

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