

**40-678x United Methodist Polity
Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
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A Note on This Syllabus

This syllabus is exceptionally long and detailed, including step-by-step instructions for navigating the course in Moodle and detailed explanations of what the graded assignments entail. This is because we will never meet face-to-face in the course, so I will not be able to answer those questions along the way. Please be certain to familiarize yourself thoroughly with the syllabus. All the information you need is here. Prior to contacting the instructor about the course, check the syllabus to see if the information you want is already in it. The syllabus is binding. There will be no modifications from it. If you cannot accomplish all the work described in it at the times described, you should consider dropping the course.

Dates for Course

The course will become available 2 September 2014 and be available through 12 December 2014. During that time, you must adhere to all the deadlines set within the Course Assignments section of the syllabus.

Failure to meet the deadlines will be reason for failure of the course. Absolutely no late work will be accepted under any circumstances. No extensions will be granted. If you run into deadline problems early in the course, you must drop the course to avoid failing it.

While this course is online, it is the expectation of the instructor that it will take as much time as a regular, face-to-face course. You should plan on spending approximately six hours per week working on this course and all of its assignments.

Course Description

This course is designed to provide students with the opportunity to fulfill the learning goals described by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of The United Methodist Church for fulfillment of the Polity requirement. We will focus on the broader ecology of the ecclesiological forms, governance configurations, membership and orders as they are expressions of the United Methodist expression of Christian mission. The student's use and growing familiarity with the *Book of Discipline (2012 edition)* and *Book of Resolutions* is an essential requirement and expectation of the course. It is important for the student to be aware that supplementary texts written about UM Polity

may be helpful to understanding the material, they may be written based on a specific BOD other than the current one and publication dates are important guides. Updates are not necessarily published each quadrennial (much as we would like them to be).

Course Objectives

The course will engage the students with:

Being

- A participant in the mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church through a deeper understanding and facility with the ecclesiology and order of the denomination.
- A knowledgeable participant in the structures of The United Methodist Church
- Able to envision appropriate governance adjustments and ecclesiological reforms that bring together the particular theological focus, renewed understanding of aligned governance and ecclesiology and the capacity for effective change and reformation in The United Methodist Church.

Doing

- Utilizing the operations described in the Book of Discipline to accomplish the practical work of mission in the church.
- Articulating the meaning of Baptism, Licensed Ministries and Ordained Ministries in terms of their place in The United Methodist Church and a rationale for the student's ministry finding itself within one of these categories.
- Articulating the alignment of mission and governance as it is presently expressed in The United Methodist Church and possible stumbling blocks and options for moving into the future.

Knowing

- The mission, vision and compelling narrative of The United Methodist Church
- The governance structures and mechanisms of The United Methodist Church
- The Orders of Ministry of The United Methodist Church
- The order of The United Methodist Church.
- The ecology and ecclesiological connections and relationships within and outside the denomination.
- Possible options for church organization and ecclesiological focus for the future.

Navigating the Course

This course will be taught entirely on-line and asynchronously (meaning that you can complete the course requirements at any point that the course is available). There will be no face-to-face meetings, nor required virtual meetings. However, note that there are deadlines within the course that you must meet. The discussion forums have weekly deadlines by when you need to post, meaning that you must do the reading and watch the lectures in time for this each week. Likewise, all the other assignments must be turned in by certain times. Finally, since you will be working with a group for the forums and the wiki, you must take into account how to organize your time together with others.

The course will be delivered through the Moodle software Garrett-Evangelical uses (<http://garrett.ethinkeducation.com/>). Please be certain you can log on to Moodle before the course begins. Once it is available, the course name will appear on your Moodle list.

When you click on the course name, you will see a screen with the title of the course and my contact information. As you scroll down, you will see that the content of the course is contained in several large boxes, each with the title of the topic of the week. The course is organized around a series of activities that are in each of these boxes. Within each box you will find a series of hyperlinks. These links will connect you to readings that are available online or a variety of assignments you need to complete (discussion forums, wiki, etc.). You will have to click each of these in order to access the documents and assignments that are required in the course. This syllabus will explain the organization of the course and the activities that students are expected to accomplish in each section.

Course Policies

1. **Cheating and Plagiarism:** These are serious breaches of academic integrity, involving claiming credit for the work that someone else has done. Don't do this! If you are uncertain in any way as to what is entailed in these activities, contact the instructor.

2. **Excellence in Writing:** Even though this is an UM Studies course, everything you have learned about good writing style still counts! Obtuse or inelegant writing in your essays will be reason for a reduced grade. If you need help with your writing, please contact the instructor.

3. **Intellectual Virtue:** We are striving not only to learn about a subject, but to sharpen our abilities to think critically. To do this, we must practice intellectual virtue by being open-minded, straightforward and thoughtful in our spoken and written work. We show our Christian scholarship not only by considering issues and questions that are central to our faith, but by being careful and respectful in our treatment of the authors of our texts, the ideas we discuss, and the thoughts of our fellow classmates.

4. **Late Work:** See first page of syllabus. Late work is not accepted in this course.

5. **Disability Accommodation Statement:** Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary is committed to providing equal access to its programs of graduate professional education for all qualified students with learning, physical, medical, or psychological disabilities. The Seminary aims to provide reasonable accommodation for qualified individuals with a disability (based on clinical documentation) to ensure their access and participation in Seminary programs. For details, see "Disabilities Policies and Procedures" in the Student Handbook.

Technology Notes

Given the lack of personal contact during the course, you will need to be certain you have sufficient technological ability to access and participate in this course. **It is the student's responsibility to have sufficient technology to access and participate in the course.**

The instructor will assume this, and is not obligated to take technological difficulties into account when assessing the student's work.

Minimum technological requirements:

- Web Browser – You will need the latest version of the web browser you are using (Internet Explorer, Firefox, Google Chrome, etc.). Note that not all browsers work equally well with Moodle, so you may need to experiment with them if you have difficulty using all the functions on the site. (I use Internet Explorer on my PC and Chrome on my Apple laptop and have never had issues. Safari has presented problems.)
- Operating System – In order to use the latest browser, you will need to have an operating system (Windows, Mac OS, etc.) that is up-to-date enough to handle it. Please be certain you have such an operating system.
- Internet Connection – You will need a high-speed internet connection that is sufficient to run streaming video with no difficulty. Usually cable and dsl connections can do this. Dial up cannot. If your home internet connection is not sufficient to provide this kind of connection, you will need to find access to a computer that does have this connection.

Hardware – Bear in mind that you will need sufficient computing power in terms of memory, speed, audio, and video for the different aspects of this course to work well. Make certain that you have all of these in place so that you can run the necessary software and fully participate on-line.

Readings

Primary Required Reading

Crain, Margaret Ann. *The United Methodist Deacon: Ordained to Word, Service, Compassion and Justice*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2014. ISBN: 9781426776113. \$12.49.

Cropsey, Marvin, ed., *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 2012*. Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 2012. ISBN: 978-1-426-71812-0. \$11.49.

Cropsey, Marvin, ed., *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church, 2012*. Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 2012. ISBN: 978-1-426-75787-7. \$11.48

Frank, Thomas E., *Polity, Practice and the Mission of The United Methodist Church, 2006 ed.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006. ISBN: 978068733512. \$19.26.

Lawrence, William, *Ordained Ministry in The United Methodist Church*. Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 2011. ISBN: 9780938162698. \$11.81.

Recommended Reading

Heavner, Betsey. *Job Descriptions and Leadership Training 09-012*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2009. ISBN:9780881775488. \$16.38.

Jones, Scott, ed. *The Future of The United Methodist Church: 7 Vision Pathways*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010. ISBN: 9781426702525. \$12.92.

Purushotham, Gwendolyn. *Watching Over One Another in Love*. Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 2011. ISBN:9780938162728. \$11.81.

Richey, Russell. *Connectionalism*. Nashville: General Board of Higher Education & Ministry, 2009. ISBN: 9780938162858. \$14.48

Richey, Russell. *Extension Ministers*. Nashville: General Board of Higher Education & Ministry. ISBN: 9780938162889. \$11.81.

Richey, Russell. *The Methodist Conference in America*. Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1996. ISBN: 9780687011871. \$22.80.

Online Resources

Care needs to be expressed when using online material.

<http://www.umc.org/> The official website of The United Methodist Church

In the directory tab of [umc.org](http://www.umc.org/) are links to the Boards and Agencies, Annual Conferences, local churches and many other areas of the church. Please explore these.

As we talk about the affiliated and para-church agencies of the denomination, please access their websites. They give a variety of visions of the church. To begin:

<http://www.bmcrumc.org/> Black Methodist for Church Renewal

<http://www.saint-luke.net/> Order of Saint Luke

<http://mfsaweb.org/> Methodist Federation for Social Action

<http://www.goodnewsumc.org/> Good News UMC

<http://confessingumc.org/> Confessing Movement

<http://www.rmnetwork.org/> Reconciling Ministries Network

<http://aldersgaterenewal.org/> Aldersgate Renewal Ministries

Please add to this list and share it on the MOODLE site.

Course Assignments

1. Group Discussion Forums/Lectures/Readings

- Each week of the course students are required to watch the appropriate lecture and read the assigned material. Lectures will be posted each Monday, except Thanksgiving break, beginning September 1.
- By Thursday (beginning 4 September) of the week the students must post a reflection on the lecture and reading on the group's discussion forum for that week. **The reflection should start with a hymn from The United Methodist Hymnal or The Faith We Sing that you think best engages the material covered.** The post should be 300 +/- 10% words.
- By Monday of the next week, the group members must have responded to each other's initial posts. Further interaction on each forum is highly encouraged, but not required. The post should be 150 +/- 10% words.
- **All posts must be submitted by 11:59 a.m. CT on the day they are due.**
 - See appendix on the discussion forum for rubrics on how they will be graded
- **40% of final grade (3% per forum x 13 forums)**
- **Due each week of the course per description above from Thursday 4 September (initial post)/Monday 8 September (responses to initial posts) - Thursday 4 December/Monday 8 December. (Respecting the Thanksgiving Break as time away.)**

2. Order of Ministry Paper

- The student will develop a paper of 8-12 pages (double spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman font) that will describe the Orders of Ministry and their relationship to the ecclesiology of The United Methodist Church. Further, the paper will describe the relationship to licensed pastors as well as supply and other categories of ministry. A rationale for these in relationship to United Methodist ecclesiology, mission and order shall be developed. The student shall also offer any insights they may have to modify the plan of ministry leadership as it now exists.
- A further important aspect of this paper shall be the writing it from the perspective of one who will be entering a particular category of ministry or continuing in one. The effective personal description of the order as it applies to the student and the vision for relationship to the other categories of ministry are critical to the successful completion of the assignment.
- **25% of final grade**
- **Due 3 November at 11:59 a.m.**

3. Case Study Diagnosis

- On 27 October a case study will be posted on MOODLE for your diagnosis. The student will develop a plan for accomplishing the proposed direction arising from the case (double spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman Font) The case will focus on a complex challenge of church polity that will involve a multi-level use of the order of the church as outlined in the BOD and discussed in class.

The student needs to clearly outline the steps that are necessary to resolve the problem with the end in mind contemplated in the case. Each step should be set off by a **BOLD FACED** heading. The appropriate paragraph references in the BOD and a rationale for the step to be taken should be described under each heading. Citations from the BOD should be included in the body of the paper in parenthesis. If a vote is to be taken, a notation should be made of the consequences of a “nay” vote and the direction in which the “nay” vote would take the course of events. *Commentary on the “nay” vote should be in italics and should be a brief and implicit sketch. This is simply designed to demonstrate the student’s understanding of the role of voting and its consequences in the church.* A chart may be used as a reference to the process you have put in place to fulfill the vision of the fulfillment of the case.

- **35% of final grade**
- **The paper is due 8 December at 11:59 p.m.**

The Order of Ministry and Case Study diagnosis shall be posted by the time designated on the TURNITIN assignment for the week in which the paper is due. The paper should be in Microsoft WORD.

Everyone gets 1% grace credit automatically on the final grade!

Course Schedule

Class Dates	Lecture/Discussion Topics	Class Assignments
Session 1	Introduction & ecclesial ecology	1.Frank 1-68 2. BOD Part I 3. Discussion Forum
Session 2	A Constitutional Government “It comes into existence by legislation”	1.Frank 69-140 2.BOD Part II & III 3. Discussion Forum
Session 3	Wesleyan essentials and United Methodist ecclesiology	1. Frank 141-172 2. BOD Part IV 3. Discussion Forum
Session 4	The Local Church part 1	1. Frank 173-194 2. BOD Part VI chapter 1

		3. Discussion Forum
Session 5	The Local Church part 2	1. Frank 173-194 2. BOD Part VI chapter 1 3. Discussion Forum
Session 6	Ordained/Licensed/Supply Ministry	1. Frank 195-228 2. Crain (all) 3. BOD Part VI chapter 2 4. Discussion forum
Session 7	Ordination, Superintendency and the Conferences	1. Frank 229-298 2. Lawrence (all) 2. BOD Part VI chaps 3-4 3. Discussion Forum
Session 8	Agencies and Administrative Order	1. BOD Part VI chapter 5 2. Discussion Forum
Session 9	Church Property	1. Frank 299-308 2. BOD Part VI chapter 6 3. Discussion Forum
Session 10	Judicial Administration	1. Frank 309-318 2. BOD Part VI chapter 7 3. Discussion Forum
Session 11	The Social Principles and the Book of Resolutions	1. BOD Part V BOR all 2. Discussion Forum
Session 12	Challenges to the Constitutional ascendancy of the UMC	1. Discussion Forum
Session 13	The Future of the UMC	1. Jones (all) 2. Discussion Forum

Appendix I: Discussion Board Rubrics

Here are the criteria to grade your posts. Each forum is graded as a whole, so all posts (initial and responses) must be of good quality.

Note that, if a student does not make the initial post *and* a response to each of the other initial posts by the deadlines in a forum, that student will receive a zero (0) for the entire forum. The posts must be made and made on time to receive a grade.

Number of points for each section	Excellent – 100%	Above Average – 85%	Average - 70%	Failing – 0%
Timeliness = All or nothing	The student posted according to the deadlines. No points added, but forum posts can be graded per below.	N/A	N/A	The student did not post according to the deadlines. The forum fails.
Followed Directions = 15	The student posts threads and responds to threads as directed to in the syllabus, using the appropriate forum areas in Moodle. All posts are within specified word limits.	The student posts threads and responds to threads as directed to in the syllabus, using the appropriate forum areas in Moodle. Most posts are within specified word limits.	The student posts threads and responds to threads as directed to in the syllabus, using the appropriate forum areas in Moodle. Most posts either exceed or fall short of the specified word limits.	The student posts unauthorized threads or fails to use the forums appropriately.

Coherence = 25	There is a logical flow throughout the post such that it is easily understandable and persuasive in the points they make.	There is a logical flow throughout the post such that it is easily understandable. It may not be persuasive in its presentation, however.	There is an overall logic apparent in the post, though it requires some effort to grasp what the logic is.	There is no apparent logic to the post. It is obtuse and difficult to understand the points it makes.
Content: Initial Post = 25	The student clearly interacts with the course materials (the appropriate texts and the lecture material itself), demonstrating both comprehension of the material and offering thought-provoking questions for further exploration on the lecture material.	The student clearly interacts with the course materials (the appropriate texts related to the quizzes and the lecture material itself), demonstrating comprehension of the material.	The student clearly interacts with the lecture only, demonstrating comprehension of the material.	The student's post either does not make reference to the lecture material or clearly misunderstands the lecture material.
Content: Responses = 20	The student responds to others substantively by finding points to agree with, disagree with, or to nuance in the previous post based on ideas raised in course materials. The	The student responds to others substantively by finding points to agree with, disagree with, or to nuance in the previous post based on course materials.	The student responds to others, but only uses personal experiences or ideas of evangelism to do so. There is little interaction with course materials.	The student responds in a hostile way that seeks to end conversation, or the student's response clearly does not address the issues raised in the previous post.

	response invites constructive conversation with the previous post.			
Collegiality = 15	The posts are academic in tone, inviting further constructive conversation on the matter at hand, even in the case of disagreements.	The posts are academic in tone, though can emphasize deconstructive interaction more than constructive.	The posts are mature in tone, though may be more conversational than academic in tone and/or are defensive about engaging in constructive self-reflection.	The posts are entirely informal and/or may be entirely negative by attacking others and resisting reflection on one's own work invited by others.

Appendix II: Order of Ministry Paper and Case Study Diagnosis

Grading Rationale for Papers

Score Levels	Content	Conventions	Organization
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is well thought out and supports the thesis of the paper ▪ Reflects application of creative and critical thinking ▪ Has clear goal that is related to the topic ▪ Is pulled from a variety of sources ▪ Is accurate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No spelling, grammatical, or punctuation errors ▪ High-level use of vocabulary and word choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information is clearly focused in an organized and thoughtful manner. ▪ Information is constructed in a logical pattern to support the thesis statement. ▪ Any graphics used are clear and helpful to the narrative.
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is well thought out and supports the thesis ▪ Has application of critical thinking that is apparent ▪ Has clear goal that is related to the topic ▪ Is pulled from several sources ▪ Is accurate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Few (1 to 3) spelling, grammatical, or punctuation errors ▪ Good use of vocabulary and word choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information supports the thesis statement of the paper. ▪ Any graphics used are clear and helpful to the narrative.

<p>C</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supports the thesis ▪ Has application of critical thinking that is apparent ▪ Has no clear goal ▪ Is pulled from a limited number of sources ▪ Has some factual errors or inconsistencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minimal (3 to 5) spelling, grammatical, or punctuation errors ▪ Low-level use of vocabulary and word choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project has a focus but might stray from it at times. ▪ Information appears to have a pattern, but the pattern is not consistently carried out in the paper. ▪ Information loosely supports the thesis statement. ▪ Any graphics are somewhat clear, but are not decisively helpful. There are inaccuracies.
<p>D</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides inconsistent information for the thesis ▪ Has no apparent application of critical thinking ▪ Has no clear goal ▪ Is pulled from few sources ▪ Has significant factual errors, misconceptions, or misinterpretations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More than 5 spelling, grammatical, or punctuation errors ▪ Poor use of vocabulary and word choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Content is unfocused and haphazard. ▪ Information does not support the solution to the thesis statement. ▪ Information has no apparent pattern. ▪ Any graphics are not informative or helpful to the narrative or have inaccuracies.