

University of Dubuque Theological Seminary
MN555 Polity and Program of the Presbyterian Church (USA)
UDTSLearning.net - 3 credits (letter grade only)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course provides an overview of Presbyterian Church (USA) polity, both in principle and in practice. There will be an emphasis on the use of the constitution in the local congregation as well as the governing bodies. Class structure will include lectures, discussion, case studies, quizzes and outside assignments.

OBJECTIVES:

This course is designed:

1. to equip students to become competent moderators of Session
2. to help students become knowledgeable interpreters for the local congregation of the polity of the church, as well as the denomination's larger missional purposes
3. to instill in students an appreciation for our connectional nature
4. to provide a method which will help prepare students to take the Standard Ordination Exam in polity

M. DIV. CURRICULAR GOALS:

Furthermore, it is anticipated that students will develop skills:

1. to lead worship and administer the sacraments with theological integrity
2. to engage contemporary ethical issues with insight and humility
3. to educate and equip individuals and congregations to live joyfully and faithfully as part of their own denomination and the ecumenical church
4. to lead congregations to promote peace and justice in the public arena and encourage the witness and service of the church in mission to the world
5. to integrate theology and practice in all areas of life and ministry

REQUIRED TEXTS:

The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA), Parts I and II (most recent versions)
Beattie, Frank A., Companion to the Constitution: Polity for the Local Church
Gray, Joan S. and Tucker, Joyce, Presbyterian Polity for Church Leaders (Fourth Edition)
Wolfe, Marianne L., Parliamentary Procedures in the Presbyterian Church (USA) [*this is found as a PDF document at http://www.pcusa.org/media/uploads/oga/pdf/parliamentary_procedure.pdf*]

REQUIRED SUPPLEMENTAL TEXTS (YOU MUST PROCURE ANY ONE OF THESE):

Bradham, June, The Truth about What Boards Want
Daman, Glenn, Developing Leaders for the Small Church
Olsen, Charles, Transforming Church Boards Into Spiritual Communities
Tibbetts, Orlando, The Work of the Church Trustee

RECOMMENDED FOR FURTHER STUDY (See note at the end of the course calendar):

Chapman, William E., History and Theology in the Book of Order: Blood on Every Page

Chapman, William E., Finding Christ in the Book of Order

Robert, Henry M., Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, 1990 Edition

Rogers, Jack, Presbyterian Creeds, A Guide to the Book of Confessions

Rice, Howard L. and Calvin Chinn, The Ordination Questions: A Study for Church Officers

Any books from the previous section that were not chosen

ASSESSMENT:

1. Course Requirements

- Regular participation in class discussions (many of which will be based on scenarios extracted from previous standard ordination exams).
- Completion of the assigned reading during the indicated time period
- Attendance at one presbytery meeting (or one session meeting if it is completely unfeasible to get to a presbytery meeting) during the course period
- Timely submission of written work (an analysis of an observed governing body meeting [presbytery or session], one book report, agendas for a session meeting and for a congregational meeting, and a plan for church officer training)
- Completion of quizzes and the final exam

2. Evaluation will be based on class participation, evidence of knowledge of required reading, and quality of submitted work. The final grade will be determined in the following manner: 25% weekly postings and quizzes; 25% additional assignments; 25% final test; 25% class participation (responses to other students, answering instructor's follow-up questions, and so forth).

3. The Grading Scale is described in the seminary catalog.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION:

1. Late policy – due to the interactive nature of an online course, deadlines for assigned items must be met to avoid falling behind. Exceptions to this policy may be made for serious unforeseen circumstances with *prior* permission from the instructor. Exceptions will not be made after the deadline has been missed.
2. Plagiarism – please consult the current Student Handbook for definitions and consequences.
3. Inclusive Language – every effort should be made to use non-gender specific language, as this concern influences our interpretation of the Bible. Therefore, unless quoting something directly (like one of our confessions), be sure to use language that is more inclusive--such as stating "humanity" instead of "mankind," or "people" instead of "men."
4. Electronic Communication – students are expected to check the UDTSLearning course site regularly for course updates.
5. Tech Support – problems of a technical nature should be directed to the Assistant Director of Technology Services (Nicky Story, SemTech1@dbq.edu), NOT the instructor.
6. Subject to Change Clause – this syllabus, course calendar, and other attending documents are subject to change during the semester.
7. Americans with Disability Act (ADA) Statement - A student who has a disability that might affect his/her performance in this course should consult with the Director of Distance Learning.