

UNIVERSITY OF DUBUQUE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

MN555_60: POLITY AND PROGRAM OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)

Instructor: Scott A. Nesbitt

3 credits, letter grade only

(Spring 2010)

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.

Course Objectives

This course is designed:

1. to equip students to become competent moderators of Session
2. to help students become knowledgeable interpreters of the polity of the church in the local congregation
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

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

Gray, Joan S. and Tucker, Joyce, Presbyterian Polity for Church Officers (Third Edition)

Wolfe, Marianne L., Parliamentary Procedures in the Presbyterian Church (USA) [*this book is available as a PDF document at http://www.pcusa.org/ga214/02parliamentary_procedure.pdf*]

Recommended for Further Study (see note at very bottom of syllabus)

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

Olsen, Charles, Transforming Church Boards Into Spiritual Communities

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

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], 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.

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