

The Polity and Program of the Presbyterian Church (USA) - Online

MN555D

Fall 2006

3 credits

Faculty Information:

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Overview/Course Description

This is a course in the principles and practices of the polity of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The class will study the ecclesiology reflected in the government of the church and will deal specifically with the powers, rights and responsibilities of the local congregation, the session, the presbytery, the synod, and the General Assembly, as well as General Assembly agencies and the minister. The foundation of the course will be the Book of Order of the PC (U.S.A.), with particular emphasis on the Form of Government and the Rules of Discipline. The class will also study the mission program and administrative process of the governing bodies. This class is highly recommended for Presbyterian students.

Course Objectives - Student Competencies/Outcomes

1. to equip students to become competent moderators of Session and effective presbyters
2. to help students become knowledgeable interpreters of the polity of the church in the local congregation so congregations may live as faithful Christian communities
3. to instill in students and appreciation for the connectional nature of the Presbyterian Church (USA)
4. to provide a preparation for students to take the Standard Ordination Exam in polity

This course helps fulfill the following M.Div. curricular goals:

- Nurture habits and disciplines of study, prayer, and reflection that increase their love of God and neighbor and shape their personal and professional lives.
- Be formed by, live in, and minister out of scripture and the historical and theological tradition of the church.
- Educate and equip individuals and congregations to live and minister joyfully and faithfully as part of their own denomination and the ecumenical church.
- Integrate theology and practice in all areas of life and ministry.

Required Texts

- *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA), Parts I and II*
- 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)**

Recommended for Further Study

- Chapman, William E., **Finding Christ in the Book of Order**
- Olsen, Charles, **Transforming Church Boards Into Communities of Spiritual Leaders**
- Robert, Henry M., **Roberts' Rules of Order (Most Recent Edition)**
- Rodgers, Jack, **Presbyterian Creeds, A Guide to the Book of Confessions**

Technology Requirements and Computing Facilities

1. Electronic Communication: Students are expected to check their UD e-mail accounts regularly for course updates. Instructions for forwarding e-mail from a dbq.edu account can be found at the Technology Services link on the UD Web Page. Distance students will receive email accounts and University of Dubuque library access. Instructions for receiving a student technology account will be emailed to all distance students.
2. Distance Students: Visit www.dbq.edu. Choose "Technology Services" from the dropdown menu. On the right side navigation, read "Acceptable Use Policy" and "Policies and Procedures."

Course Requirements

1. Regular participation in class discussions
2. Complete the assigned reading during the indicated time period
3. Timely submission of written work
4. Attendance at one presbytery meeting and one session meeting during the semester
 1. The Grading Scale is described in the seminary catalog
 2. Evaluation will be based on class participation and evidence of knowledge of required reading. There will be weekly online discussions and written assignments, including electronic team assignments. During the course of the semester at least one assignment will be a standard ordination exam style paper. Case studies will be assigned for collaborative work. Analyses of the observed governing body meetings are required. Agendas for a

session meeting and a congregational meeting and a plan for church officer training will also be required.

Administrative Information

1. A grading penalty will result from work turned in late unless a legitimate (approved by the instructor) reason exists. Please consult with your instructor before missing due date.
2. Work must be your own, unless the assignment was a team project.
3. See the UDTS Student Handbook (www.udtseminary.net) for the policy on plagiarism. Choose "Current Students," then "Student Handbook."
4. See the UDTS Catalog (also available online) for the Inclusive Language Policy.
5. The Student Handbook and Catalog are the final authority on all issues not specifically addressed by distance education and online class policies. >
6. This syllabus, course calendar, and other documents are subject to change during the semester.
7. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Statement – A student who has a disability that might affect his/her performance in this course should consult with the instructor and the campus ADA compliance office, in confidence, by the second class session. UD's ADA compliance committee is co-chaired by Susanna Robey, Academic Support Center (ext. 3218)

Course Schedule

(Numbers following book titles or authors refer to chapter numbers, unless otherwise noted.)

Week 1 Beginning September 8, 2006

INTRODUCTORY and PRINCIPLES

Introduction to course: requirements, purpose, organization Discussion What is Polity?

Gray, Forward, Introduction, chapter 1

Gray, chapters 1, 9

Book of Confessions, 3.18 - .20; 5.001 - .014; 6.002, .006, .112, .173 - .176; 7.002 - .003, .113 - .115; 8.01 - .04, .20; 9.01 - .05, .40

* Rogers, pp. 1-36

Week 2 Beginning September 15 2006

INTRODUCTORY and PRINCIPLES

Book of Order, Form of Government, chapters 1 - 4 Discussion

Chapman, entire book

Week 3 - Beginning September 22, 2006

THE PARTICULAR CHURCH, MEMBERSHIP

Book of Order, Form of Government, 5, 7, 8 Discussion

Gray, 2, 12

Book of Confessions. 3.16 - .18; 5.124 - .141, .243 - .244; 6.127 - .130, .140 - .145; 8.22 - .24; 9.06, .19, 31

Week 4 - Beginning September 29, 2006

OFFICERS

Book of Order, Form of Government, 6

Freedom of Conscience assignment G-1 .0301 and G-6.0108

Week 5 - Beginning October 6, 2006

OFFICERS, ORDINATION

Book of Order, Form of Government, 6, 14 Discussion

Gray, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7

Book of Confessions, 5.142 - .168; 6.054, .173, .186; 7.155, .261; 8.20; 9.39 - .40

Week 6 - Beginning October 13, 2006

OFFICERS, ORDINATION (continued)

Book of Order, Form of Government, 6, 14 Discussion

Gray, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7

AUTHORITATIVE INTERPRETATION

First Case Studies Assigned

Report of the Theological Task Force on The Peace, Unity, and Purity of the Church

Presented to the General Assembly 2006 (on PCUSA Website)

Week 7 - Beginning October 20, 2006

THE SESSION

Book of Order. Form of Government, 10

Presbytery Guidelines for Minutes Discussion

Gray, 6, 8, 11

*Olsen, entire book

Week 8 - Beginning October 27, 2006

THE MORE INCLUSIVE GOVERNING BODIES and MEETINGS

Book of Order. Form of Government, 9, 11 - 13 Discussion

Gray, 10, 12

Introduction to Parliamentary Procedure Lecture

Wolfe, Parliamentary Procedures ...

Book of Confessions. 6.173 - .176

Week 9 - Beginning November 3, 2006

RELATIONSHIPS

Ordination Exam Question Assigned

Book of Order, Form of Government, 15 - 18 Discussion

Book of Confessions. 6.127 D 130

Session and Congregational Meeting Agendas Due

Week 10 - Beginning November 10, 2006

WORSHIP

Book of Order, Directory for Worship Discussion

Second Case Studies Assigned

Gray 14

Book of Confessions. 3.21 - .23; 4.066 - .082, 096 - .098; 5.023 - .027, .116, .135, .169 - .232; 6.112 - .119, .149 - .168; 7.091 - .097, .265 - .287; 8.26; 9.36, .48 - .52.; 5.246 - .248; 6.131 - .139; 7.130; 9.47,

Brief Statement of Faith

Nicene and Apostles D Creeds

*Rogers, pp. 231 - 170, chapters 3 & 4 *Session and Presbytery Reports due*

Week 11 - Beginning November 17, 2006

DISCIPLINE

Book of Order, Rules of Discipline Discussion

Gray, 13

Book of Confessions. 3.15, .28; 5.036 - .042, .080 - .085, .093 - .105, .165; 6.101 - .107, .169 - .172; 9.12 - .14

Church Officer Training Plans due

Week 12 - Beginning November 24, 2006

REVIEW and Feedback

Your philosophy of Polity Discussion

**Assignments from non-required texts are recommended.*