

MN 555 ~ POLITY AND PROGRAM OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)

Instructor: Scott A. Nesbitt
3 credits, letter grade only
(Summer 2007)

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, 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)

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- 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
 - Complete the assigned reading during the indicated time period
 - Timely submission of written work
 - Attendance at one presbytery meeting (or one session meeting if it is completely unfeasible to get to a presbytery meeting) during the semester
2. The Grading Scale is described in the seminary catalog
3. Evaluation will be based on class participation and evidence of knowledge of required reading. There will be weekly discussions, written assignments, and a final exam. During the course of the semester several assignments will be standard ordination exam style papers. Analysis of the observed governing body meetings are required, as well as agendas for session meetings and congregational meetings, and a plan for church officer training.

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 a due date.
2. Work must be your own, unless the assignment was a team project.
3. See the UDTS Student Handbook for the policy on plagiarism.
4. See the UDTS Catalog for the Inclusive Language Policy.
5. This syllabus, course calendar, and other documents are subject to change during the semester.
6. 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.

Presbyterian Polity
COURSE SCHEDULE
Summer, 2007

Week 1 - 2007

Lecture: Introduction to course: requirements, purpose, organization

Discussion: "What is Polity and Its Purpose?"

Reading Assignment:

Gray - Forward, Introduction, 1

Beattie - Preface, Introduction, 1 (and appropriate appendix/appendices)

Week 2 - 2007

Lecture: Principles

Discussion: *Book of Order*, G-1.0000 - 4.0403

Reading Assignment:

Gray - 1, 9

Beattie - 13 (and appropriate appendix/appendices)

Book of Confessions - 3.18 - .20; 5.001 - .014; 6.002, .006, .112, .173 - .176; 7.001 - .003, .113 - .115; 8.01 - .04, .20; 9.01 - .05, .40

Chapman - entire book

*Rogers - pp. 1-36

Week 3 - 2007

Lecture: The Particular Church, Membership

Discussion: *Book of Order*, G-5.0000 - 5.0502, 7.0000 - 8.0701

Reading Assignment:

Gray - 2, 12

Beattie - 2, 3, 4, 5 (and appropriate appendix/appendices)

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 - 2007

Lecture: Officers and Ordination, Part I

Discussion: *Book of Order*, G-6.0000 - .0503

Reading Assignment:

Gray - 3, 4, 5, 7

Beattie - 6 (and appropriate appendix/appendices)

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

*Rice - the entire book

Week 5 - 2007

Lecture: Officers and Ordination, Part II

Discussion: *Book of Order*, G-14.0000 - .0804

Reading Assignment:

Gray - 3, 4, 5, 7 (Review)
Beattie - 7 (and appropriate appendix/appendices)

Week 6 - 2007

Lecture: Parliamentary Procedure and the Session

Discussion: *Book of Order*, G-10.0000 - 10.0401

Reading Assignment:

Gray - 6, 8, 11

Beattie - 10, 11, 12 (and appropriate appendix/appendices)

Wolfe, *Parliamentary Procedures*

* Olsen - entire book

Week 7 - 2007

Lecture: Other Governing Bodies

Discussion: *Book of Order*, G-9.0000 - .0902, 11.0000 - 13.0203

Reading Assignment:

Gray - 10, 12

Book of Confessions - 6.173 - .176

Week 8 - 2007

Lecture: Various Ecclesial Relationships

Discussion: *Book of Order*, G-15.0000 - 18.0401

Reading Assignment:

Book of Confessions - 6.127 - .130

Week 9 - 2007

Lecture: Worship, Part I

Discussion: *Book of Order*, Directory for Worship Preface, W-1.0000 - 3.6205

Reading Assignment:

Beattie - 8, 9 (and appropriate appendix/appendices)

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"

Week 10 - 2007

Lecture: Worship, Part II

Discussion: *Book of Order*, W-4.0000 - 7.7001

Reading Assignment:

Book of Confessions - Nicene and Apostles' Creeds

*Rogers - pp. 231 - 170, chapters 3 & 4

Week 11 - 2007

Lecture: Discipline

Discussion: *Book of Order*, Rules of Discipline (and skim the appendices)

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Reading Assignment:

Gray - 13

Beattie - 14, 15 (and appropriate appendix/appendices)

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

Week 12 - 2007

Review, test and feedback

Wherever an asterisk appears (), assignments from non-required texts are recommended.*