

**DS525 “Practicing the Faith”: Polity and Governance in the United Church of Canada
UNITED CHURCH DENOMINATIONAL STUDIES 1.0 credit**

Instructor: Janet Gear
Fall 2009

Purpose

The goal of this course is preparation for learned and able leadership in the United Church of Canada. Using pressing issues within the church as a starting place, the course will provide opportunity to study and reflect together the polity and practices of church governance. There will be a focus on practical issues which call for knowledge of UCC polity. We will review *The Manual* and other UCC policy documents as well as case studies. Within the context of external and internal challenges to the church, the class will provide an overview of the conciliar governance system and preparation for leadership within that system.

This is a required course for United Church MDiv, DipCS, and Admissions students.

Learning Outcomes

Competencies are approved when you are able to demonstrate . . .

- an ability to describe, interpret and analyze, both orally and in writing, current issues facing the United Church
- an ability to locate relevant sections of *The Manual* in response to questions and issues
- an ability to describe and analyze the authority and function of the courts (Council/Board, Presbytery/District, Conference, General Council) of the church
- an ability to critically and constructively articulate how UCC polity supports or hinders practices of church mission and ministry
- knowledge of the expectations of ministerial leadership as it pertains to UCC ethical stances, duty of care, authority and power of ministry personnel, oversight and discipline, sexual identity and sexual conduct
- knowledge of official document keeping procedures

Format

This 1.0 credit class will meet for a ten hour intensive over two days during fall semester. The course is taught as a seminar with instructional input, including guest lecturers. Participation is through active listening, collegial group work, in-class discussions and presentations. Preparation for the course includes pre-reading and writing (200-500 words). A final paper/project (6-8 pages) will be due by the end of the term.

Prerequisites: DS523

Expectations of the student

- 100% attendance of the class
- appropriate preparation for participation in class activities and discussion
- pre-reading and writing and post-reading and writing assignments as detailed in syllabus

Required Reading

- *The Manual*. Toronto: The United Church Publishing House, 2007 (on line at: http://www.united-church.ca/files/manual/2007_manual.pdf or order from UCRD on-line \$18.95)
- Reading Packet of selected documents, articles and reports related to UCC polity available at UBC bookstore
- UCC website references as noted in the syllabus
- books and articles will be placed on reserve in the VST library for your use