

PRESBYTERIAN POLITY, CM 217-2

SYLLABUS and SCHEDULE

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

January Term, 2013

Clifton Kirkpatrick, Professor

Course Description:

In this experiential approach, students learn to think theologically and systemically as they apply the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to specific issues and practices at the congregational, presbytery, synod, and general assembly levels. Attention will also be given to ministry and administration in the Presbyterian tradition based on the theology of the church in the Book of Order.

Objectives--at the conclusion of the course students:

- Will have a basic theological understanding of the ecclesiology on which the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is based.
- Will be prepared to offer excellent leadership and participation “in government and discipline” in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), “serving in governing bodies of the church.”
- Will be able to moderate sessions, shape congregational life, and lead the worship and sacramental life of congregations in conformity with the Constitution of the PCUSA.
- Will be familiar the basic principles of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and be prepared for the Standard Ordination Examinations in Church Polity.

Course Evaluation:

Successful completion of the course requirements (below) will measure proficiency in achieving the various objectives above. Overall class performance on the standard ordination exams of the PCUSA in Church Polity and Worship and Sacraments will be another indicator of how well these objectives have been met. Students will also respond to the seminary’s online evaluation form for this course at the end of the semester. However, you are encouraged to communicate your evaluative observations about your experiences of the course to the instructor at any time, in the spirit of the learning community.

Course Requirements:

Practice Ordination Exams: To prepare students for the denominational examination process, 25% of the class grade will be based on completion of parts of Polity Exams from past Presbyterian Standard Ordination Examinations in Polity. These will be assigned in class sessions. These are to be emailed to the professor (at ckirkpatrick@lpts.edu no later than 9:00 pm on Jan. 15, Jan. 17, Jan. 21, and Jan. 23.

Another 25% of the class grade will be based on a three part final exam assigned in the last session of the course (or students may submit a copy of the PCUSA exam in Church Polity being taken on January 25, 2013 and their responses as their final exam for the class). Exams are found on the seminary website at http://www.lpts.edu/Content/Documents/Library/Church_Polity.pdf.

One section of an exam will be assigned as a take-home assignment at four different class periods. The student is urged to stick with the time limits in the practice exams (one hour for each section) in order to learn to pace yourself for the actual exam. Completed exams are submitted to the professor electronically.

Agendas and Moderating (5% of course grade)) based on the ability to prepare an agenda collaboratively with the student serving as clerk and to moderate sub groups of the class as if they were a session meeting. These agendas are to be sent electronically to all members of your sub-group (session) and to the professor no later than 9:00 pm the evening before that session group meets.

Serving as Clerk (5% of course grade) based on the ability to record clearly and simply the proceedings of a particular sub-group (session). These minutes are to be sent electronically to all members of your sub-group (session) and to the professor no later than 9:00 pm the evening before the session group meeting that will approve them.

Participation in class (15% of course grade) demonstrating: a) ability to read, reflect on, and apply the assigned readings to the class discussion and b) ability to play a positive role in group discussion.

Pinpoint Responses to Reflection Questions through 50 Word Sentences (25% of course grade)
For each session after the first a reflection question is listed on the schedule to focus our discussion around a key aspect of our polity and worship. Students will record their response to the reflection question for each week through one 50 word sentence. (See description by Professor Charles Cohen of the University of Wisconsin at the end of this syllabus.) We will often begin our class meetings or our “session” meetings by sharing aloud our sentences with one another and reflecting upon them together. The sentences should be emailed to the professor no later than 9:00 pm on the evening prior to each class so that they can be posted on CAMS in advance to facilitate class discussion. These 50 word sentences count for 25% of the course grade.

Academic Honesty.

All work turned in to the instructor is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Use of another’s language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, and may result in failure of the course. Multiple occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues relating to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center. For the Seminary policy, see The Code of Student Conduct, 6.11; the Student Handbook, p. 19.

Inclusive Language.

In accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible’s images for God. See for further assistance,

http://www.lpts.edu/Academic_Resources/ASC/avoidinggenderbiasinlanguage.asp

Special Accommodation.

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center (kmapes@lpts.edu) during the first

two weeks of a semester and should speak with the instructor as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructor.

Citation Policy

Citations in your papers should follow the Seminary standard, which is based on these guides:

Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

The Chicago Manual of Style, 15th ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center.

Attendance Policy:

According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructor of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session.

Required Books

Book of Order 2011-2013, The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Part II.

This publication is also available online at <http://www.pcusa.org/oga/publications/2009-2011-boo.pdf>. (However, for preparation for the Standard Ordination Exams and for future use, it is important to be familiar with using the hard copy of this part of the Constitution.)

Gray, Joan S. and Tucker, Joyce C. *Presbyterian Polity for Church Leaders* (4th edition). Geneva Press, 2012.

Readings on CAMS or Online

Since we have a new Form of Government in the PCUSA most publications related to the new polity are online or available through Presbyterianleader.com. The readings from these sources are noted in the schedule for each session. These readings can be found either on CAMS or on the web (web addresses are provided).

Other books you should have in your library:

Robert, Henry M., III, et al. *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised in Brief*. Da Capo Press; 2nd edition (2011) ISBN: 9780306820199.

The Book of Common Worship, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993.

The Book of Confessions, Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), part 1.

50 Word Reflections

In advance of each class session students will be asked to prepare reflection of no more than fifty words in response to a basic question related to the topic of that day. These reflections will often be shared at the beginning of each class session. They should be shared with the professor electronically no later than 9:00 pm on the evening before each class. A description of this methodology is found as an endnote to this syllabus.ⁱ

Presbyterian Polity
Class Schedule, Topics, Readings, and Reflection Assignments
January Term 2013
(Meeting from 1:30 pm to 4:20 pm each day)

Session 1 – January 14, 2013

Theme: **Introduction to Presbyterian Polity, One Another, and the Roles of Session in Discerning God's Will**

Components: Getting acquainted with one another and our Presbyterian journeys
Overview of course syllabus, assignments, and schedule
Introduction to Lambeth Bible Study
Assignment of Moderating and Clerking Duties
Book of Order Jeopardy
Overview of the Vision and Structure of the Constitution
Introduction to Constitutional Resources
Review Ordination Examinations for Polity
Agendas and Meeting Planning
Parliamentary Procedure
Tricks of the trade in moderating meetings

Readings: Book of Order: Preface, Table of Contents and Index
Gray and Tucker, introduction and pp.1-10, 116-129.
Sawyer, "Tricks of Trade for Moderating"
Wolfe, "Parliamentary Procedures in the PCUSA,"
http://www.pcusa.org/media/uploads/oga/pdf/parliamentary_procedure.pdf
Ellison, "Parliamentary Procedure for Presbyterians"
Lambeth Bible Study Method
OGA, Handbook on Standard Ordination Examinations,
<http://www.pcusa.org/media/uploads/prep4min/pdfs/ordination-exams-handbook.pdf>

First Take Home Practice Ordination Polity Exam assigned (Limit yourself to one hour for doing each exam)

Session 2 – January 15, 2013

Theme: **Basic Foundations and Vision of the Church and its Mission in our Constitution**

Components: Basic Principles and Theological Foundations for our Polity
From a Polity for Governance to a Polity for Mission
Introduction to the concept of a Missional Polity
Connections to our Confessions
Introduction to the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity
Contribution of Presbyterian Polity to Trust, Community and Mission Renewal
Leadership and Reformed Polity

- Readings:** Foundations of Presbyterian Polity (read both the Foundations themselves and the article on CAMS under that title)
Book of Confessions: Nicene Creed, Westminster Shorter Catechism, and Brief Statement of Faith
OGA, "The Missional Church and the New Form of Government"
Barber and Wright, "The Approved New Form of Government"
Hooker, "Missional Polity"
Kirkpatrick and Valentine, *Presbyterian Leadership* (Chapter 2, "Resources from our Tradition")
<http://web.pensions.org/Publications/pensions/Home/Forms%20&%20Publications/Books%20&%20Brochures/pub-505.pdf>
- Reflection:** Based on the principles articulated in our Books of Order and Confessions, what biblical image of the church would best reflect a Presbyterian understanding of our ecclesiology and why?

Session 3 – January 16, 2013

- Theme:** **Congregations: The Basic but not Sufficient Form of the Church**
- Components:** Introduction to the Form of Government
The Mission of the Congregation
Organizing Congregations and Fresh Expressions of Christian Community
Categories and Ministries of Members
Baptism and the Ministry of Members
Meetings and Responsibilities of Congregation
Review of First Ordination Exam
Overview of the Rules of Discipline
- Readings:** The Form of Government, Chapter One, "Congregations and Their Membership"
Rules of Discipline, especially Chapters D-1, D-2, and D-10
Geckler, "Sixteen Changes Most Impacting the Local Church"
Gray and Tucker, pp. 130-143
Dorothy Bass, "The Great Reversal" (to be distributed in class)
Charles Wiley, "Ordinary and Extraordinary Discipline,"
<http://www.pcusa.org/media/uploads/theologyandworship/pdfs/ordinary-extraordinary-discipline.pdf>
- Reflection:** In your own words what does the Form of Government's mean when it claims that the local congregation is the "basic" but "not sufficient" form of the church?

Take home polity exam 2 assigned to students.

Session 4 – January 17, 2013

- Theme:** **Teaching and Ruling Elders and Deacons in their Life Together in Congregations**
- Components:** The complimentary roles of teaching and ruling elders, and deacons in congregations

Development of Profiles for Deacons, Ruling Elders, Teaching Elders, and Teaching Elders serving in Validated Ministries
Ministerial limits and prerogatives
Ordination, Calling, and “The Essential Tenets of the Reformed Faith”

Readings: Form of Government, Chapter 2, “Ordered Ministry, Commissioning, and Certification”
Directory for Worship, W-4.4000, “Ordination, Installation, and Commissioning”
PCUSA, *Advisory Handbook on Preparation for Ministry*, pp. 10-54
<http://www.pcusa.org/media/uploads/prep4min/pdfs/handbook.pdf>
Gray and Tucker, pp. 11-46 and 58-72
Ellison, “Selecting and Preparing Ruling Elders and Deacons”
Youngs, “The Role of Teaching Elders”

Reflection: Identify two responsibilities that ruling and teaching elders share in common and one that is distinct for each?

Session 5 – January 18, 2013

Theme: The Councils of the Church, beginning with the Session

Components: The role of Councils
Changes to councils because of the new Form of Government
Principles of Administration
Independent yet Interdependent Councils
Role of the Session governing and guiding the spiritual life and mission of the congregation

Readings: Form of Government, 3.01 – 3.0205, “Councils of the Church,”
Gray and Tucker, pp. 47-57 and 73-88
OGA, “The Session and the New Form of Government: Building a Community of Faith, Hope, Love, and Witness”

Reflection: How is the session to measure its faithfulness in leading the congregation in its life and mission?

Take home worship exam 3 assigned to students.

Session 6 – January 22, 2013

Theme: The More Inclusive Councils: Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly and the Church Ecumenical

Components: The role of presbytery, synod and General Assembly
Establishing, amending and interpreting the Constitution
The General Assembly as a program agency and as a governing body
Being Presbyterian and Ecumenical
Transferring to and from and Uniting with Churches of Other Communion

Mock Presbytery meeting to consider Constitutional Amendments before the Presbyteries

- Readings:** Form of Government, chapter 3.03-3.0503, chapter 5, and chapter 6
Gray and Tucker, pp. 88-99
Kirkpatrick, *Is There a Future for the PCUSA?*
OGA, "The Assembly in Brief"
Book of Amendments to the PCUSA Constitution from the 220th General Assembly,
http://www.pcusa.org/media/uploads/oga/pdf/amendments_220_part1.pdf and
http://www.pcusa.org/media/uploads/oga/pdf/amendments_220_part2.pdf
Joe Small, "The Travail of the Presbytery"
Wright, "Presbyterian Commitment to Ecumenism"
- Reflection** What was the most significant action taken at the 220th General Assembly, and what was the most significant item of business before the Assembly that upon which it failed to take definitive action?

Take home worship exam 4 assigned to students.

Session 7 – January 23, 2013

Theme: Decently and In Order

Components: Administrative Review
Finances and Property
Trustees and Incorporation
Ethics for Church Leaders
Alternatives for Conflict Resolution

Readings: Form of Government, Chapter 4, "Church and Civil Authority,"
Standards of Ethical Conduct (on CAMS)
Gray and Tucker, pp. 100-115
Victoria Curtiss, "Guidelines for Communal Discernment" (on CAMS)
"Church Finances and Property" (on CAMS)
"Polity Resources for Dealing with Conflict and Discipline" (on CAMS)

Reflection: Identify one aspect of our polity that fuels church conflicts and one that alleviates them.

Session 8 – January 24, 2013

Theme: Worship and Sacraments in Presbyterian Polity

Components: The Centrality of Word and Sacrament in Reformed Worship
Overview of the Directory for Worship
Worship, Sacraments and the Confessions
Introduction to the Book of Common Worship
Discuss Worship Exam

Readings: Directory for Worship

Selected portions of Book of Confessions dealing with Worship and Sacraments
(use the index to find references to baptism and Lord's Supper)

Gray and Tucker, pp. 144-161

Martha Moore-Keish, "How Shall We Worship," in Joseph Small, editor,
Conversations with the Confessions, pp. 187-206

The Sacrament of Baptism, David Gambrell, PresbyterianLeader.com

The Sacrament of Communion, David Gambrell, PresbyterianLeader.com

Bring your PCUSA Book of Common Worship to class with you

Reflection: Identify by confession and paragraph number two sections in the *Book of Confessions* that most helpfully articulate the Reformed doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper.

Take home final polity exam (in three parts) will be distributed (or students may submit the PCUSA exam being taken on January 25, 2013 for their final exam). Completed exams are due electronically to the professors by noon on February 1, 2013.

ⁱ Charles L. Cohen on the 50-word assignment: "A single-sentence exercise with a finite word limit counters students' proclivity for aerating their prose with superfluities. Given at most fifty words, students must distill their arguments' fundamentals and phrase them concisely, for, as my syllabus warns, the fifty-first word and its successors face a terrible fate. (I have been known to cut out extraneous verbiage and turn the tattered remnant into a paper airplane—a practice proved sound pedagogically if not aerodynamically.)

Fifty words might appear too many—the contests cereal companies run, after all, ask for only twenty five—but I prefer giving students sufficient rope. For one thing, the fifty-word limit allows them to cope with the assignment, which often requires complicated responses. For another, it weans them from dependency on simple declarative sentences and challenges them to experiment with multiple clauses. Some can handle compound-complex sentences, but most require—and appreciate—tutelage in them. Nor are fifty words too few; no student has ever complained about an inability to pare down the verbiage. Had Goldilocks stumbled into my section instead of the Three Bears' den, she would have found the word limit "just right."

Consider, for example, the assignment that I recently gave students in History/Religious Studies 451, entitled "Constructing a hypothesis": "Using the maps in the front of the packet, compare the distribution of churches within Anglo-America east of the Mississippi River in 1750 with the distribution in 1850 and, in one sentence NOT EXCEEDING 50 words (need I say more?), hypothesize the reasons for the difference." To complete the exercise, students must examine a series of maps, aggregate data presented graphically and convert it into written form, analyze that data and develop a hypothesis to explain patterns they may have found. They must attend carefully to the material (not the least of the minor assignment's benefits is its capacity to monitor students' preparation), read the maps against each other, and offer a succinct but accurate conclusion, thereby rehearsing several critical skills simultaneously.

The quality of the responses varied, as one might expect, but the best submission hit the mark exactly, intellectually and, at fifty words, quantitatively: 'The maps show a relative decline in Anglican and Congregational Churches in relation to the growth of other churches between 1750 and 1850, which reflects the shift towards the disestablishment of state churches and the demand for a constitutional guaranty of religious freedom that occurred during the American Revolutionary Settlement.' Even more impressive, English is not the writer's native language."ⁱ