

**TENTATIVE (7.10.10)**  
**Writing the Rites: Liturgy and the Church Year**  
**LS 4309**  
**Starr King School for the Ministry**  
Fall Semester 2010

**9:40 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Monday**

**Fireside Room**

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Phone: 510-845-6232

Office Hours: By appointment

Limit: 15

**I. Description:**

This course will provide religious leaders with tools to create meaningful, multi-vocal worship in the UU congregational setting. In class and in the community we will be creating and leading traditional and transformational worship for people at all ages and stages. Students will gain an understanding of the psychology and spirituality of ritual and liturgical forms within an historic context. In addition to the Sunday service, we'll create a calendar and write ceremonial rites to prepare for the leadership of weddings, memorials and other special religious occasions.

**II. Course Aims and Learning Objectives:**

***Aims***

This course will include a lot of writing. In and between sessions students will be writing for the various elements that make up Sunday services, and traditional rites of the Unitarian Universalist community. Students will explore the necessary rhythms of writing for professional sustainability.

Students will share their writing with others and be expected to offer, and receive, affirmation and critique. We will create a community of hope expressed in written and spoken words.

***Learning Objectives:***

By the end of this course, students will:

- Have a portfolio of writing samples for various religious occasions;
- Understand the history and intentions of various liturgical rites and increase in their confidence and ability to lead congregations through familiar and new rituals;
- Be able to adapt written material from a variety of sources with attention to the integrity of the original and the issues of appropriation and fair use;
- Find meaningful tools for incorporating writing into a public and pastoral ministry.

### **III. Format and Procedures:**

Sessions will include lecture, discussion and ritual. Students will be responsible for the creation and leadership of rituals in the class and community, including the December 14, 2010 SKSM Chapel service.

### **IV. Assumptions**

The class will be designed with a context of Unitarian Universalist congregational settings and the worship/liturgical life of communities of diverse expression of leadership, we will consider how the preparation, implementation and reflection of teaching as a skill and teacher as a role comes to life.

### **V. Course Requirements:**

1. Weekly class attendance and participation in exercises, conversation and assignments  
\*two or more absences (or 3+ partial class attendance days) will require a meeting to discuss the students ability to complete the course and may result in a need for the student to drop or fail the course.

2. Course readings:

(a) Required texts:

**(price ranges via Amazon.com 8/4/10):**

Three Plays: Our Town, The Skin of Our Teeth, and The Matchmaker (Perennial Classics) [Paperback] Thornton Wilder (Author)

Publisher: Harper Perennial Modern Classics (January 2, 2007)

ISBN-10: 0060512644

ISBN-13: 978-0060512644

(other editions are fine!)

price: \$6.32-\$10.87

The Power of Stories: A Guide for Leading Multi-Racial and Multi-Cultural Congregations [Paperback] Jacqueline Lewis (Author)

Publisher: Abingdon Press (April 2008)

ISBN-10: 0687650690

ISBN-13: 978-0687650699

price: \$10.78-\$14.40

Great Occasions: Readings for the Celebration of Birth, Coming-Of-Age, Marriage, and Death [Paperback] Carl Seaburg (Editor)

Publisher: Skinner House Books (January 1, 2003)

ISBN-10: 0933840098

ISBN-13: 978-0933840096

price: \$7.18-\$15.60

The Worship Workshop: Creative Ways to Design Worship Together [Paperback] Marcia McFee (Author)

Publisher: Abingdon Press (July 2002)

ISBN-10: 0687046343

ISBN-13: 978-0687046348  
price: \$1.73-\$13.50

**(b)** Supplemental reading in the form of handouts or web-based resources may be offered, including selections from:

Von Ogden Vogt – on The Primacy of Worship and the Abraxan Essay  
<http://www.cres.org/pubs/abraxas.htm#essay>

**(c) Optional Texts:**

Singing the Living Tradition [Hardcover] Unitarian Universalist Association (Author)

Publisher: Unitarian Universalist Assn (March 1, 1994)

ISBN-10: 1558962603

ISBN-13: 978-1558962606

price: \$18.99-\$35.00

Singing the Journey: A Supplement to Singing the Living Tradition [Paperback] Unitarian Universalist Association (Author)

Publisher: Unitarian Universalist Assn (June 13, 2005)

ISBN-10: 1558964991

ISBN-13: 978-1558964990

price: \$13.48-\$18.00

Upper Room Worshipbook: Music and Liturgies for Spiritual Formation, Revised Edition [Perfect Paperback] Elise S. Eslinger (Author, Editor)

Publisher: Upper Room (July 1, 2007)

ISBN-10: 0835898741

ISBN-13: 978-0835898744

price: \$8.49-\$11.56

### **3. Assignments**

Written assignments are due in class/on-line as noted

Engage in daily writing practice between sessions and write monthly letter to instructor

Meet with peer/group for critique and feedback

Research paper presented in class

Leading rituals in class (and participation in planning or leading Tuesday Chapel service 12/14/10)

### **V. Grading Procedures**

It is expected that most students will be following the SKSM student handbook guidelines and the Pass/Fail option. Students requesting a grade will be evaluated on the timely completion of all assignments and the quality of work presented.

### **VIII. Tentative Course Schedule**

#### ***Unit 1***

Session 1 – To End and to Begin  
Introducing the course, the writers, the practices  
“Oh Had I A Golden Thread”

Session 2 –Rites in Community  
In class group presentations: Weddings and Funerals  
Complete reading of “Our Town”

Session 3 – Ritual Language and Sources  
Discussion: Apophasis and Catophasis in Unitarian Universalist Worship  
Complete reading of Abraxas and Von Ogden Vogt  
UUnique or not: celebrations of congregations with water, flowers and fire

Session 4 – Death and Dying – Guest presenter(s)  
Writing as Spiritual Care  
Discussion: Leading Memorials and Funerals in historic and contemporary contexts

## ***Unit 2***

Session 5 – Bread and Stories  
(reading from Great Occasions)  
Complete readings: Communion (from Great Occasions) and the Power of Stories  
Flower and Water Communion (group presentations)

Session 6 – Weddings, Unions, Divorce and Anniversaries  
(Research Papers Due)

no class – reading Week

Session 7 – Song and Prayer  
Complete reading of the Worship Workbook  
In class sound track and song writing exercise  
Attribution and Ethics discussion

Session 8 – Membership, Stewardship, Leadership and Gratitude  
Presentations on issues and rites in congregational life

## ***Unit 3***

Session 9 – Children, Youth, Families  
Baptism, Child Dedication, Coming of Age, Bridging

Session 10 – Callings: Ordinations, Installations, Retirements  
Rites of Vocation collage exercise

Session 11 – Writing in the Public Sphere  
The role of minister in reporting, promoting, affirmation and opposition... with words

***Unit 4***

Session 12 – Reimagining Worship and Ritual  
Preparing for Chapel

Session 13 – In Memoriam  
Memorial Services due

Session 14 – To Begin and to End  
Benediction

