

Polity Immersion Class at General Assembly
June 22 – 26, 2011
Professor Susan Ritchie
Charlotte, North Carolina, Convention Center

SUMMARY

This course explores the past and present of Congregational Polity as practiced in Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist contexts. How have changing cultures and theologies of leadership, authority, accountability and church shaped (and been shaped by) our institutions? How does our polity advance (and where does it retard) issues of social justice? Our setting at General Assembly will allow us to move beyond mere history towards an understanding of what it takes to be an effective and responsible political actor in contemporary UU settings.

LOGISTICS

We will take a full day of classroom work on Thursday; otherwise we will be alternating between attending General Assembly events and then gathering together to share our observations. You will have the option of attending the GA events either on your own, or with the class. If you attend with the class, Susan is working on getting us some seating we can share together up front near or with the UUA Board. You will need to register for General Assembly in addition to the class in order to be able to attend GA events. You can do that at the UUA website at www.uua.org. Also at that site are options for housing. You can make your housing arrangements through the uua options, or on your own. If you would be interested in sharing a room, please let me know and I will do all I can to connect you with a fellow student.

READINGS

Students will be expected to have completed the following readings before arriving. This list represents all of the required readings on polity for the UUA Ministerial Fellowship Committee. They are all available in electronic form at:

<http://www.uua.org/leaders/leadership/ministerialcredentialing/16224.shtml>

UUA Bylaws and Rules

Ministerial Fellowship Committee Policies

Ministerial Fellowship Committee Rules

UUMA Guidelines and Code of Professional Practice

Conrad Wright, *Congregational Polity* (1997)

SAMPLE TOPICS

- What Is Congregational Polity? What our Historical and Current Deviations from It?
- Ordination and Fellowshiping of Ministers—History, Current Practice, and What Not to Wear
- The Role/Authority of the Minister
- The Role/Authority of the Laity
- The History of Administrative Organization
- The History of our Democratic Governance: Associations and Conventions

Unitarians and Universalists: Comparative Politics and Consolidation Issues
The Current UUA: As an Administrative Organization
The Current UUA in Governance
How General Assembly Works (and how it doesn't Work!)
GA Controversies (and Phoenix 2012)
Current Issues/Crises/Opportunities

SCHEDULE

Wednesday, June 22

8:30 AM-Noon (totally optional—let me know if you are interested) Shadow Susan while she does her work as a UUA Board member –meet UUA officers (likely to involve a Board meeting, and other duties to be determined)

7:00-9:00 PM Attend GA Plenary I (on your own)

Thursday, June 23

8:00-8:30 AM (Optional) attend GA Plenary II

9:00-Noon; 1PM-5PM Polity Class; location to be announced with your registration

7:30PM-9:00PM Attend GA Service of the Living Tradition either as a class or on own

Friday June 24

8:30-10:15 AM attend GA Plenary II (either as a class or on your own)

10:45 AM-Noon and 2:45 pm-4:00 PM Polity Class, Convention Center location TBA

Otherwise, GA programs/public witness event as you choose

Saturday June 25

8:30-Noon Attend GA Plenary IV (either as a class or on your own)

1:00 PM-2:15 PM Polity Class, Convention Center location TBA

2:45-6:00 PM Attend GA Plenary V (either as a class or on your own)

8:00 -9:00 PM Attend Ware Lecture (either as a class on your own)

Sunday June 26

9:00 AM-1:00 PM Attend Sunday Worship, then Plenary VI (either as a class or on your own)

1:00 PM- 2:00 PM Final Polity Class debrief, Convention Center location TBA

2:00 PM- 5:00 PM Attend final Plenary (Optional) (either as a class or own your own)

REQUIREMENTS

Readings as outlined above; attendance at events and class time as outline above; participation in class; a very tiny final project, the format of which to be negotiated during class (the goal of this will simply be to briefly capture some of what you learned at GA, this is not a monster paper or a research project, just some notes) and due a month after we leave General Assembly.