

TENTATIVE SYLLABUS

As of March 2014

Unitarian Universalist Leadership in Context

Unitarian Universalist Religious Leadership in Congregation and Community Contexts

That's the strangest thing about this life, about being in the ministry. People change the subject when they see you coming. And then sometimes those very same people come into your study and tell you the most remarkable things. From *Gilead: A Novel*, by Marilynne Robinson

RSFT 4010

3 Units

*Sunday, August 17 – Thursday, August 21 9 am – 5 pm (*change from the GTU listing)

Session one will take place at a local congregation (TBA) all other sessions will be held in the Fireside Room, Starr King School for the Ministry

Instructor: The Rev. Michelle Favreault, Assistant Professor of Liberal Religious Education and Liturgy

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Office Hours: by appointment only

I. Description:

This course will introduce students to the rich tapestry of Unitarian Universalist parish life and leadership. Participants will consider the joys and challenges of the day to day work that supports worship each week. From the personal power and authority of the pastor to the governance and organizational dynamics of community life, we will explore roles and relationships in the complex system of parish ministries. We will examine the roles and responsibilities and theologies that inform contemporary Unitarian Universalist conceptualizations of religious leadership, both ministerial and lay. Our focus will be on community and congregation case studies as we consider generational, cultural and traditional frame works that inspire and inhibit religious leaders to understand their authority and their accountabilities as agents for change. **This course is the M.Div. UU Ministry Core Intensive.**

II. Course Aims and Objectives:

Aims:

This course will provide students seeking fellowship and ordination in Unitarian Universalist ministry develop an understanding of the myriad roles and responsibilities that clergy have as faithful leaders. By the end of this course, students will have an increased understanding of the organizational and human uses of power and authority. The course will introduce students to the importance of collegial relationships through interactions in class (and on site) with clergy and religious professionals serving in parish and community settings.

Learning Objectives:

Through engagement with texts, written assignments and class activities, students will: Develop skills for analyzing contextual theologies and institutional patterns; Understand the distinct roles of clergy as pastor, teacher, priest, prophet, manager, supervisor, historian, visionary and worship leader while developing skills to empower lay leaders and religious professionals in discerning roles, relationships and accountability; Expand knowledge resources available for continuing education as well as appropriate sources for coaching and mentoring. Understand the credentialing, search and settlement system for parish leadership in the UUA.

III. Format and Procedures:

Sessions will include guest presenters, case studies, guided discussion, activities and ritual.

IV. Assumptions

The class will be designed with a context of Unitarian Universalist settings. The instructor will assume that students have completed reading assignments as noted and participate in discussion referencing the reading assigned for the class.

V. It is expected that most students will be following the SKSM student handbook guidelines and receive a narrative evaluation while registered under the Pass/Fail option. Students requesting a grade will be evaluated on the timely completion of all assignments and the quality of work presented, in relation to course objectives. (Further guidelines for letter grading here: <http://www.psr.edu/grades>)

VI. Course Requirements:

1. Full class attendance and participation in exercises, conversation and assignments
2. An introductory reflection paper on “my theology of ministry and leadership” that references your selections from required reading a and b. 500-700 words
3. An in class response to an in class case study (to be explained on the first day of class)
4. A final integrative project designed in consultation with the instructor. DUE SEPTEMBER 15.

5 Course Readings

A - A Church Leadership Book:

choose from

The Growing Church: Keys to Congregational Vitality Edited by: Thom Belote

ISBN: 9781558965591 Publisher: Skinner House Books

Price: \$12.00

OR

Serving with Grace: Lay Leadership as a Spiritual Practice Author: Erik Walker Wikstrom

ISBN: 9781558965621 Publisher: Skinner House Books Price: \$12.00

B - A Novel or Autobiography:

*choose one

Marilynne Robinson, **Gilead**

Description: “This winner of the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for fiction is an absolute must-read for pastors. John Ames, an aging pastor in Gilead, Iowa, writes a collection of letters for his seven -year-old son, who he knows will have little memory of him. Ames reflects on the legacy of his father (a Christian pacifist) and grandfather (a violent abolitionist), and how their ministries defined his own life and ministry, their families, and Gilead itself. It all makes for a novel that is sacred, gritty, and utterly American. Robinson's themes of legacy, family, and the nature of the pastoral calling are unforgettable. ‘Love is holy because it is like grace— the worthiness of its object is never really what matters.’”

Theodore Parker, **My Experience as a Minister**

Description: The 19th century Unitarian minister and tireless social prophet writes a long letter to his home congregation as he is dying, describing his life in ministry. Free electronic version available: <http://books.google.com>

Nadia Bolz-Webet, **Pastrix: The Cranky, Beautiful Faith of a Sinner & Saint**

Description: Heavily tattooed and no holds barred, Nadia, a former stand-up comic, sure as *hell* didn't consider herself to be religious leader material—until the day she ended up leading a friend's funeral in a smoky downtown comedy club. Surrounded by fellow alcoholics, depressives, and cynics, she realized: These were her people. Maybe she was meant to be their pastor.

Mark Morrison-Reed, **In Between: Memoir of an Integration Baby**

Description: A “frank personal account of growing up black during the era of the civil rights movement. The author wrestles with racism, the death of Martin Luther King, black radicalism, his interracial family, and his experience as one of the first black Unitarian Universalist ministers.”

C. the course expectations include significant reading in advance for each session as noted in the class outline below: links to most articles are already included. Final materials/revised syllabus will be sent to enrolled students by August 1.

Sunday: Congregational Life and Leadership

We will meet at 9 am at a local congregation for coffee and introductions. After attending worship together, we will break for lunch then reconvene for conversation on life in ministry.

In advance:

1. Familiarize yourself, if you are not already thoroughly versed, in the process of UU Ministerial Credentialing. One resource is “**Preparing for Unitarian Universalist Ministry,**” in the Starr King Student Handbook 2013-2014, Appendix I: 157-176.

<http://sksm.edu/studentforms/index.php>

2. **A Summary History of Ministerial Credentialing, Fellowshiping and Discipline In the American Congregationalist, Unitarian, and Unitarian Universalist Traditions** Prepared by Susan Ritchie

http://www.uua.org/documents/mpl/credentialing/history_min_cred.pdf

Read: Gordon McKeeman: **Ministry, for Such a Time as This, Berry Street Address**, 1993: <http://www.uuma.org/Page/BSE1993>

Monday: Congregations...and Beyond

We will meet at SKSM for morning and afternoon sessions exploring the issues of leadership within congregation and community contexts. Up for consideration: generational issues in community life, generational shifts in religious experience. We'll also look at vocational paths for UU clergy outside the parish and consider institutional support for entrepreneurial leadership “beyond congregations.”

Please read:

Unitarian Universalist Lay Community Ministry: Guidelines for Covenantal Relationships with UU Congregations, Organizations and Parish Ministers found at <http://www.uuscm.org/Default.aspx?pagelD=1691261>

And, become familiar with the video and article on the “**congregations and beyond initiative**” <http://www.uua.org/vision/beyond/>

Tuesday: Collegiality, Accountability and Power

Our morning session at SKSM will include time for small group work and a morning viewing of the film: ***Raw Faith*** (feel free to bring family or friends). In the afternoon we will immerse in Case Studies.

To Read: **The Friendless Pastor**, Mark Brower, March 2014 Christian Century

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2014/march-online-only/friendless-pastor.html>

Read Lessons 6 (“**Navigating the Landscape of Privilege: Unearned Power**”), 7 (“**Discerning Race/ Discerning Power**”), and 8 (“**Power at Work in your Congregation**”) from Mark Hick’s curriculum, *Building the World We Dream About*: <http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/btwwda/>

Read Tim Wise, “**Appreciation and Accountability**” at: <http://www.timwise.org/appreciation-and-accountability/>

Wednesday: Between Sundays: The Work and Worth

Throughout the day, we will spend time in discernment on the questions: “Who are You and Whose are You?” Be sure to bring a journal and an open heart.

To read:

“Whence We Come and How, and Whither” Deborah J. Pope-Lance

191st Berry Street Essay, Delivered at the Ministerial Conference June 22, 2011, Charlotte, NC

Cynthia Grant Tucker, "Introduction"; "Tending Church Families"; "Woman's Place in a Manlier Ministry," **Prophetic Sisterhood: Liberal Women Ministers of the Frontier, 1880- 1930** (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990): 1-12; 63-73; 147-158.

Thursday: Living Leadership Lessons

We will wrap up our week of study with a discussion of professional ethics and personal power in the practice of ministry. In person and "virtual" visits from clergy in various "types" of ministry and at different stages of formation will round out our time in the classroom.

To read in advance: [the "Ethical Standards and Code of Professional Conduct"](#) of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers' Association: www.uuma.org