

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST HISTORY ONLINE HSFT-8462.SP15

The Rev. Dr. Meg Richardson
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course begins with an examination of the (alleged) antecedents to Unitarianism and Universalism in pre-Reformation Europe. We begin with development of Unitarianism in Poland, Transylvania, and England, then on to that of North American Unitarianism through its classical age, the Transcendentalist development, and the various crises of identity and purpose that develop into and through the late 19th and 20th centuries. Then we turn our attention to Universalist ascendancy, decline, and then consolidation with Unitarianism. Careful attention will be paid throughout to the Unitarian/Universalist social location in relationship to class, race, and gender identities, and how these sometimes enabled and sometimes impaired social justice advances.

Students will have an opportunity to explore the Unitarian Universalist heritage through sources ranging from primary sources to anecdote, with an emphasis on articulating contemporary experience in the context of historical identity and experience.

REQUIRED READINGS:

Every effort has been made to coordinate readings for this class to the Required Reading List of the UUA's Ministerial Fellowship Committee.

Books to acquire and read (that are a part of the MFC required reading list):

Charles Howe, *For Faith and Freedom: A Short History of Unitarianism in Europe* (1997) ISBN-10: 1558963596 \$16.00 <http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?SKU=6102>

David Robinson, *The Unitarians and the Universalists* (1985) ISBN-10: 0313209464 from \$15.82
<http://www.addall.com/New/submitNew.cgi?query=0313209464&type=ISBN&location=&state=CA&dispCurr=USD>

Ross, Warren, *The Premise and the Promise* (2001) ISBN: 9781558964181 \$24.00
<http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?SKU=6148>

There will be some additional shorter readings posted on Moodle.

REQUIREMENTS FOR ONLINE WORK:

Introduction Essay

For this assignment, students will write a personal essay to introduce themselves and answer the following questions:

What is your history with Unitarian Universalism? Is there a place that is significant to your faith journey, and why? Who is an individual who has been an important influence to your spiritual development, and how?

In addition, students should briefly discuss their backgrounds, their professional goals and how they would like to use what they learn in this class. Students have the option to either email the essay directly to the instructor, or to post it in the forum (the latter is encouraged, as this will give other class members a chance to get to know you as well). This essay should be brief and is due **Wednesday, Feb. 4th.**

Readings, Discussion, Help:

There is required reading for each week, click on “Readings” from within the Unit Summary.

There will be two opportunities to discuss the readings with the class each week. One will be the “Question for Unit X” “forum” which will invite you to respond to a discussion type question relating to the unit context, and which will allow you to see and respond to other people’s responses (this is an asynchronous forum—in other words, add to it when you feel like it, and the discussion will accumulate throughout the week).

The second “forum” (similar in format) is “Help with Reading.” Post here any questions of clarification or expansion you have regarding the materials you have been studying. The requirement for online participation is that you make something that averages out to at least one posting for each unit, but these postings can be of any nature (a response to the discussion question, a response to someone else’s discussion, a question posed in the Help forum, or a response to someone’s question in the Help forum). It is my hope that you will post when you are engaged, rather than out of obligation. This is our opportunity to engage in a dynamic, collaborative approach to history.

To make sure you are getting what you need out of the readings, check out each unit’s “Learning Outcomes for Readings.” You can self-test your comprehension of the reading against these, and, if you need any additional help, post your question or dilemma to the Help Forum. In addition, I would like to assign students as partners or in small groups, for discussion of the readings, by Skype, Google Hangout, or over the phone (free phone calls available in the US through Google) .

LIVE CHAT:

There will be four live chats scheduled during the semester. I will try to vary the times as much as possible to allow those with different schedules to participate. I hope as many people participate who can, but this will not be a requirement given possible conflicts. Topics for these chats will be driven by the interests of those who happen to be in the room.

FINAL PROJECT:

There will be one final project which is your choice of the following, due the final week of class. I invite you to email me to discuss topics and ideas for the project as you begin to think about it.

The Gifts of History

In eight to ten pages of double spaced type, describe a problem or controversy currently experienced within the Unitarian Universalist movement and what historical influences inform that controversy. First outline your problem or controversy. Then describe the historical background that leads to the current situation. Finally: suggest a historical resource that might help alleviate the problem. For example, your current controversy might be Unitarian Universalist congregations that are reluctant to grow. You might trace this to the anti-evangelical roots of American Unitarianism. You could then suggest the growth strategies of the Eliot administrations as a corrective. The goal of this paper is to demonstrate that you can apply historical information to a current problem in a constructive fashion.

Your Personal Ministry

In eight to ten pages of double spaced type, demonstrate that you understand how it is that history informs the religious leadership that you would choose for yourself. First describe your ministry: either the ministry in which you engage now, or the ministry to which you aspire. Then explain what historical precedent there is for your chosen form of ministry in our Unitarian Universalist tradition. For example, perhaps you see your ministry to be work with the mentally ill. What precedent is there for this in our history?

How is that history helpful? What are the historical barriers to working with that population as a Unitarian Universalist? Perhaps you want a traditional parish ministry. In that case, what kind of a parish minister will you be? Will you be an Emersonian—someone who sees the job of minister as interpretation? Or are you closer to Theodore Parker, and his ministry of social justice? Upon which historical influences will you draw in your ministry?

Other

A Traditional Academic Paper of Your Choice on a Related Topic