

**ONLINE - FALL 2014**  
**Dynamic Unitarian Universalist Youth Ministry**  
Instructors: *Megan Dowdell and Betty Jeanne Rueters-Ward*  
STARR KING SCHOOL FOR THE MINISTRY

**Course Description:**

This lively and interactive on-line course grounds participants in the social, emotional, theological and programmatic aspects of youth ministry. Geared particularly toward Unitarian Universalists, but open to all backgrounds, this course seeks to embody a vision of youth ministry that is a vibrant, robust, and flexible part of every congregation and community. Topics of instruction include leadership and spiritual development, professional support for adults who work with youth, adolescent development, and intergenerational community-building. Students will be guided in developing a critical analysis of different models of youth ministry and programming. Recommended for all religious leaders, both new and old to youth ministry.

**Course Commitments and Expectations:**

This course relies on the thoughtful participation of each participant; all will be expected to engage actively in on-line discussions and activities, in addition to completing all reading and written assignments. Over the span of the semester, participants will generate a culture of peer support as well as their own personal philosophy/theology of youth ministry for use in professional and academic contexts.

**Student Learning Objectives:**

At the end of the semester, students will have learned to:

- Articulate a personal theology/philosophy of youth ministry
- Trace the history of UU youth movement and/or other faith-based youth ministries
- Reflect on practical experience in youth ministry
- Critically evaluate resources for youth ministry and intergenerational community
- Understand the psychosocial, emotional, and sexual development of adolescents
- Develop peer and collegial support for youth ministry in professional settings

**Educating to Counter Oppressions:**

The course instructors share a vision in which counter-oppression efforts are infused in every part of youth ministry. This course will examine assumptions about age, leadership, and authority and employ a collaborative approach to shared ministry with youth. We will explore course topics using a critical analysis of multiple identities and oppressions, primarily race, ability, gender/gender expression, and sexual orientation. In reading and discussing the first-hand accounts of youth, we will draw from a diverse pool of voices and experiences. Students will be encouraged to examine their own social location as it affects their ministry with youth.

**Course Requirements:**

Class Participation

*Every week,*

Complete reading assignments.

Post in an online discussion and comment on at least one posting by a peer.

Participate in activities offered by instructors and peers.

Connect with your small group.

Engage in praxis (immersion) component.

*During the first month,*

In-depth consultation with instructor

Begin praxis experience.

Plan team-based learning project.

Draft a preliminary theology/philosophy of youth ministry.

*During the final month,*

In-depth consultation with instructor.

Complete a self-evaluation of your praxis experience.

Complete a group self-evaluation of your team project.

Revisit your theology/philosophy of youth ministry.

### Praxis Requirement

Practice in youth ministry is an essential part of this course. Students will work with instructors and peers to develop a tailored praxis opportunity of 25 hours. Please see the praxis hand-out for more details.

### Team-Based Learning Project

Youth ministry is never done alone. Team-based learning is also a key component of this course. Students will be matched with a small group or team, which will serve as a source of peer support and a team for the team-based learning project. Each team will be assigned a week related to a topic at the beginning of the semester, given a preliminary set of related readings, and a due date. They are responsible for creating a multimedia presentation (using resources from the Moodle platform, as well as their own research) that responds to the topic. Please see project hand-out for more details and requirements.

### Theology/Philosophy of Youth Ministry

Write a statement of your theology/philosophy of youth ministry.

Consider being creative in both content and form.

### **Course Schedule:**

#### **Week One, beginning August 31: Get Acquainted with Moodle**

- Log on to Moodle site
- Create/edit your Moodle profile, add a photo
- Introduce yourself to your peers in the discussion forum

#### **Week Two, beginning September 7: Introduction to the Course**

- Expectations and Syllabus Overview
- Why Youth Ministry?
- Reflect on your personal experience of being a youth

#### **Week Three, beginning September 14: Foundations of Youth Programming**

- How and Where Youth Ministry Happens
- Models of Youth Ministry and Youth Programming
- Components of Balanced Youth Programs

#### **Week Four, beginning September 21: Theology and Philosophy of Youth Ministry**

- Overview and Analysis of Liberal Religious Education Philosophy
- What is “Youth Empowerment”?
- Visions of Multi-generational Community

**Week Five, beginning September 28:** Unitarian Universalism and Youth

- History of UU Youth Movements
- Youth in Congregations – Results of Contemporary Survey and Research, Mosaic Report
- Institutional Memory, Organizational Change and Youth

**Week Six, beginning October 5:** Adolescent Development

- Physical Growth and Sexual Development
- Cognitive and Intellectual Development
- Social and Affective Development
- Moral Development
- Spiritual, Religious, and Faith Development

**Week Seven, beginning October 12:** Leadership Development and Youth

- Collective Decision-Making
- Partnership between Adults and Youth
- Youth Leadership in the Congregation

**Week Eight, beginning October 19 (READING WEEK):** Mid-term Evaluation

**Week Nine, beginning October 26:** Group Dynamics

- Stages of Community Building in Youth Groups
- Conflict Resolution
- Engaging Different Learning Styles
- Supporting Youth in Crisis
- Stages of Community Building in Youth Groups

**Week Ten, beginning November 2:** Collegiality, Policy and Professional Concerns

- Team Youth Ministry
- Supervision and Support for Youth Advisors
- Creating Safety in Youth Programs
- Codes of Ethics
- Evaluating Your Ministry With Youth

**Week Eleven, beginning November 9:** Spiritual Development and Youth

- Contemporary, Traditional and Alternative Worship Styles: Participant Observation
- Unitarian Universalist Identity Development
- Issues of Cultural Appropriation in Worship
- Personal and Group Spiritual Practice
- Youth Ministry and the Arts

**Week Twelve, beginning November 16:** Faith in Action

- Social Justice Resources and Activities for Youth Groups
- Anti-Oppression and Anti-Racism Initiatives

**Week Thirteen, beginning November 23:** Identity, Privilege and Oppression

- Age Dynamics
- Community Differences
- Mattering and Marginality, Resilience and Resistance
- Specialized Support for Queer Youth, Youth of Color, and Youth with Disabilities

**Week Fourteen, beginning November 30:** Bridging the Lifespan

- Transitioning Youth
- Support for Youth Bridging into Young Adulthood
- Building a Youth-Friendly Congregation and Community

**Week Fifteen, beginning December 7:** Celebration, Evaluation, and Closing

### Sources for Learning:

#### *Guest Presenters*

Guest presenters are an integral part of this course. Students will have access to experienced leaders in youth ministry who will provide content and dialogue. Assignments will be tailored to build upon guest contributors.

#### *Readings*

Course readings to include:

- **Arnason, Wayne and Scott, Rebecca. *We Would Be One: A History of Unitarian Universalist Youth Movements* (Skinner House, 2005)**
- Erslev, Kate Tweedie. *Full Circle: Fifteen Ways to Grow Lifelong UUs* (Unitarian Universalist Association, 2004)
- Hoertdoerfer, Patricia and Muir, Fredric, ed. *The Safe Congregation Handbook: Nurturing Healthy Boundaries in Our Faith Communities* (Unitarian Universalist Association, 2005)
- Hurd, Tracey. *Nurturing Children and Youth: A Developmental Guidebook* (Unitarian Universalist Association, 2005)
- Mosaic Project (UUA.org)
- Consultation on Youth Ministry reports (UUA.org)
- Schwendeman, Jill M. *When Youth Lead: A Guide to Intergenerational Social Justice Ministry* (Unitarian Universalist Association, 2007)
- Smith, Christian and Melinda Lundquist Denton. *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford University Press, 2005)
- Tain, Shell. “Youth Advisors’ Handbook: Second Edition” (Unitarian Universalist Association, 2003)
- “Crossing the Bridge from Youth to Young Adulthood: Designing and Implementing a Bridging Ceremony in Your Congregation” (UUA Young Adult and Campus Ministry Office, 2004)
- UUA Youth Office. “The Youth Group Handbook” (Unitarian Universalist Association, 2006)
- “Deep Fun: A compendium of YRUU Games” (UUA Youth Office, 2005)
- *Essex Conversations: Visions for Lifespan Religious Education* (Skinner House, 2001)