

**Syllabus: Unitarianism in Transylvania**  
**Course ID: HS 4005**  
**Instructor: Rev. Sándor Kovács PhD**  
**Associate Professor**  
**Protestant Theological Institute – Cluj/Kolozsvár**  
[sandorkovacs@unitarius.org](mailto:sandorkovacs@unitarius.org)

### **Course description**

Welcome to the **Unitarianism in Transylvania** course. This course will examine the history of the Unitarians in Transylvania and Central Eastern Europe from the development of the antitrinitarian movement to the last quarter of the 20th Century. The lecture-discussion course focuses on the ecclesiastical and political changes regarding Transylvanian Unitarianism. We will explore the history of Transylvania from the present days back to the previous centuries. Covering four centuries of history the participants will have the possibility to understand the religious and ethnical pluralism of the “land beyond the forests,” and the uniqueness of Unitarianism in Europe.

### **Learning outcomes**

There are three purposes of this course:

1. to introduce the rich history of Transylvanian Unitarianism;
2. to show how “Transylvania” can challenge the way of thinking about religious leadership;
3. to deepen the relationship with Unitarian Universalists over the seas.

### **Schedule**

#### **Unit 1 (February 11) – Do we need to think alike?**

- The sentence is attributed to Francis David, what is behind it?
- What do you know about Transylvania? If you have been there please bring items which connect you to Transylvania.
- We are going to locate Transylvania on a map
- The Unitarians living in Transylvania: numbers, statistics, maps
- Parishes and districts. Congregational polity. Church governing policies
- The Unitarian symbol – ways of interpretation, origin
- Liturgy
- Ministerial training

Reading: No reading is required for the first meeting.

#### **Unit 2 (February 25)– Trauma or dilemma: the communist dictatorship**

- Cohabitate or collaborate for your survival?
- What does “resistance” look like in a communist country
- The risks of ministry
- Communist strategies of repression
- A Unitarian martyr mirror
- Facing the past, problems of reconciliation

Reading: Judit Gellérd: *Prisoner of Liberté*. Uniquet (2004). ISBN-13:978-0914914181

#### **Unit 3 (March 4) – The glorious 19th and 20th Centuries, or the Golden Age**

### **for the Unitarians of Transylvania from 1830s to 1920s**

- Representative Man/Woman
- Connections with English speaking Unitarians in Britain and North America
- The beginning of collateral visits
- A Transylvanian Unitarian at Harvard
- The Alabaster Village (Francis Balazs)

Reading: Wilbur – *Our Unitarian Heritage*. Chapter XXVI

<http://pacificuu.org/wilbur/ouh/book.html>

### **Unit 4 (March 11) – Transylvanian Unitarians under the Habsburg rulers (1693-1867)**

- Political status of Transylvania
- Measures against Unitarians
- Being totally marginalized
- Stories of exceptional courage

Reading: Wilbur – *Our Unitarian Heritage*. Chapter XXV

<http://pacificuu.org/wilbur/ouh/book.html>

### **Unit 5 (March 18) – Being accused and oppressed by Calvinist princes (1605-1693)**

- strategies to convert the Unitarians
- the fatal consequences of politics
- Polish Socinians in Kolozsvár
- Religious disputes in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century

Reading: Wilbur – *Our Unitarian Heritage*. Chapter XXIV

<http://pacificuu.org/wilbur/ouh/book.html>

### **Unit 6 (April 1) – History of the Székely Sabbatarian: Jews or Székelys?**

- clarification of the term: Sabbatarian or judaizer
- their history
- the last Sabbatarian village in Transylvania: Bözödújfalú
- conversion to Judaism
- Was Francis David a judaizer?

Reading: Shay Fogelman: Discovering Europe's non-Jews who kept the faith

<http://www.haaretz.com/weekend/magazine/discovering-europe-s-non-jews-who-kept-the-faith-1.387208>

### **Unit 7 (April 8) – The Rakowian Catechism: Its influence on Transylvanian Unitarianism**

- What are catechisms for?
- Hungarian Unitarian catechisms in the 17<sup>th</sup> century
- Polish-Hungarian connections, joint efforts to reform society

Reading: Thomas Rees: The Racovian Catechism... [please read the Historical Introduction] <https://archive.org/details/racoviancatechis00reesuoft>

### **Unit 8 (April 15) – The edict of Torda**

- the idea of toleration in the 16<sup>th</sup> century
- Islamic politics concerning religion in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Hungary and Transylvania

- The edict of the Pasha of Buda and the edict of Torda - Similarities and differences
- The politics of John Sigismund the first and last Unitarian king. Between history and mythology

Reading: Dr. Susan Ritchie: *The Pasha of Buda and the Edict of Torda: Transylvanian Unitarian/Islamic Ottoman Cultural Enmeshment and the Development of Religious Tolerance*. Journal of Unitarian Universalist History; 2005, Vol. 30, p36.

Mihály Balázs: *Tolerant Country – Misunderstood Laws. Interpreting Sixteenth-Century Transylvanian Legislation Concerning Religion* Hungarian. In: Historical Review 2, no. 1 (2013): 85–108

### **Unit 9 (April 22) – The life and work of Francis David**

- Francis David: the Unitarian saint
- Narratives about Francis David
- Facts about Francis David
- Arch heretics in Transylvania: Jacobus Palaeologus, Johannes Sommer
  - Their life work and theology
- Their influence on David
- The tragedy of David
- The role of Giorgio Biandrata in establishing the Transylvanian Unitarian Church

Reading: Wilbur – *Our Unitarian Heritage*. Chapter XXIII.

<http://pacificuu.org/wilbur/ouh/book.html>

### **Unit 10 (April 29) – The beginning of antitrinitarianism in Transylvania**

- Miguel Serveto (Michael Servetus) and the *Restitutio Christianismi*
- The influence of Serveto on Francis David
- The *Restitutio Christianismi* in Transylvania, the fate of a rare book

Reading: Peter Hughes: *In the Footsteps of Servetus: Biandrata, Dávid, and the Quran*.

In: Journal of Unitarian Universalist History (Volume XXXI /2006-2007, p. 57-63).

### **Unit 11 – Discussions – Student generated topic**

### **Unit 12 – Discussions - ibidem**