

Starr King School for the Ministry
Unitarian Universalist Theologies
3 Credits, Spring, 2019

Professor: Rev. Sofia Betancourt
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Final Syllabus

Course Description:

This reading-intensive online course grounds its exploration in the fundamentals of liberal theology, through a survey of Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist voices. Its main purpose is to engage those considering Unitarian Universalist ministry in the practice of theological reflection while exploring some of the historical, philosophical, and theological contexts shaping Unitarian Universalism as we know it today. This course is intended to provide a deep engagement with modern Unitarian Universalist theologies and is not intended to replace a class in systematic theology. Students will be expected to complete the reading, write a brief weekly reading response, and participate in dialogue about personal and spiritual responses to the topics each week. Students may choose to skip submitting reading responses for two of the weeks during the semester. All students are required to submit a final essay on their personal theology during the final weeks of the course.

Prerequisites: It is strongly recommended that you take either A) a systematic theology class before taking UU theologies **or** B) UU History either before or concurrently with this course.

A note about the readings: *This course is designed to get you through your theological reading requirements from the MFC list in one semester. As a result we are very focused on reading and reading responses. I encourage you to take good summary notes for later study prior to seeing the MFC.*

There is a high level of reading required for this class. Trust me that taking it on consistently will greatly improve your MFC preparation in the future. Utilize the lectures to help you prioritize your reading in weeks when you are tight on time. Also check your local library to see if you can borrow some of these texts in electronic form to reduce book costs. *We are not adding to an already full semester by scheduling online discussions.* This course is asynchronous to allow as many folks with differing schedules to participate as possible. Please see the introductory letter for suggestions on finding a study partner for weekly conversation.

Required Texts: All required texts are on the current MFC reading list.

Razor, Paul, *Faith Without Certainty: Liberal Theology in the 21st Century* (Boston: Skinner House Books, 2005).

List Price: \$18.00, also available as an ebook \$7.99

Henry Nelson Wiemann, *The Source of Human Good* (Wipf and Stock, 1946 – reprint 2008)

List Price: \$37.00 (there are many used copies of this online for as little as \$3. Try abebooks.com)

William Jones, *Is God a White Racist?: A Preamble to Black Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997)

List Price: \$30.00, also available as an ebook \$29.99

Sharon Welch, *A Feminist Ethic of Risk, Revised Edition* (Fortress Press, 2000)

List Price: \$25.00, also available as an ebook \$23.75

Anthony Pinn, *The End of God-Talk* (Oxford University Press, 2012)

List Price: \$25.95, also available as an ebook \$9.99

Learning Objectives:

Students are expected to:

- Gain a working vocabulary for the academic study of liberal theology in general, and Unitarian Universalist theologies specifically;
- Acquire a basic understanding of 19th and 20th century Unitarian Universalist theological perspectives in the United States;
- Engage course materials in conversation with contemporary Unitarian Universalist ministry; and
- Articulate their own theological positions in conversation with Unitarian Universalist thinkers.

Requirements:

Students are required to:

- Complete all course readings and be prepared to participate in thoughtful, compassionate, and constructive discussion;
- Post ten out of twelve weekly reflections in a timely manner and engage in peer discussions of others' work; and
- Write a 5 page final paper articulating their personal theological positions in conversation with course materials.
- Please contact the instructor regarding accessibility, including any special needs or considerations.

Grading:

Grading for this course will be based on:

- Timely posting of weekly assignments; – 45%
- Thoughtful class participation; and – 40%
- Personal theology final paper. – 15%

Reading Assignments: The instructor reserves the right to modify the schedule and assigned readings to achieve course objectives.

Final Essay: DEADLINE 11:59pm on May 5, 2019.

Post your paper to the weekly response paper forum for the second to last week of class AND send it by email to the professor at sbetancourt@sksm.edu. *Please email in MS Word format or equivalent, not as a .pdf file.*

Prepare a 5-page exploration of your personal theology in conversation with the theologians we have studied in class. Use citations. Any format is fine – choose one and be consistent. These papers should draw on the traditional categories of theological study as understood through the work of Rebecca Parker’s “Under Construction” from week one. These essays will be posted to moodle for discussion as a class in our final week. THERE ARE NO EXTENSIONS FOR THIS ASSIGNMENT.

Week One: Class Introduction

- Paul Rasor, *Faith Without Certainty*, particularly read Intro – 108, 165-189.
- Moodle: Rebecca Parker, "Under Construction: Knowing and Transforming our Unitarian Universalist Theological House"

Week Two: Classical Unitarian and Universalist Theologies

- Moodle: Selections from: Hosea Ballou, *Treatise on Atonement*"
- Moodle: William Ellery Channing, *"Unitarian Christianity"*
- Moodle: Ralph Waldo Emerson, *"Divinity School Address"* with responses
- Moodle: Theodore Parker, *"The Transient and the Permanent in Christianity"*

Week Three: An Interpretation of the Social Gospel

- Moodle: Clarence Skinner, *"The Social implications of Universalism"*

Week Four: Religious Humanism

- Moodle: Curtis Reese, *Humanism*

- Moodle: John H. Dietrich, "Unitarianism and Humanism"
- Moodle: Humanist Manifesto I

Week Five: James Luther Adams and Unitarian Christianity

- Moodle: James Luther Adams, "Why Liberal?"
- Moodle: James Luther Adams, "The Liberalism that is Dead"
- Moodle: James Luther Adams, "The Changing Reputation of Human Nature"
- Moodle: James Luther Adams, "Theological Bases of Social Action"

Week Six: Religious Naturalism and Process Theology

- Selections from Henry Nelson Wiemann, *The Source of Human Good*
- Moodle: Charles Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, "Six Common Mistakes About God"

Week Seven: Theology and Religious Education

- Moodle: Selections from Sophia Lyon Fahs, *Today's Children and Yesterday's Heritage*
- Moodle: Selections from Thandeka: "What Moves Us," *A Tapestry of Faith*, UUA

Week Eight: READING WEEK, NO CLASS (week of March 25th)

Week Nine: William Jones

- William Jones, *Is God a White Racist: A Preamble to Black Theology*

Week Ten: Sharon Welch

- Sharon Welch: *A Feminist Ethic of Risk*

Week Eleven: Anthony Pinn and Black Humanism

- Anthony Pinn: *The End of God-Talk: An African American Humanist Theology*

Week Twelve: Re-engaging Christianity on New Terms

- Moodle: Selections from Rebecca Parker and Rita Nakashima Brock, *Saving Paradise*
- Moodle: Selections from Scotty McLennan, *Christ for Unitarian Universalists: A New Dialogue with Traditional Christianity*

Week Thirteen: Personal Theology and the Context of Call to Unitarian Universalist Ministry

- Working on Student Papers

Week Fourteen: Engaging Each Others' Personal Theologies