

Course ID: RALS-1100
Decolonizing UU Liturgy:
Transforming Ritual Space Through Embodied Worship
Meeting Times & Place: Thursdays 2:10-5:00 in Fireside Room
Instructor: Rev. Dr. María Cristina Vlassidis Burgoa
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Why do we do what we do? As Unitarian Universalists, we have a rich history of merging diverse religious traditions, celebrating annual holidays and rites of passage, creating meaningful worship services, participating in rituals and ceremonies to express our principles and values, and bringing our communities together to offer inspiration, support, and healing. In this introductory course, we will apply a multicultural lens to the study of Unitarian Universalist history and theology and learn about how those roots continue to influence and shape our UU liturgy. We will explore the role of the liturgist as worship creator, spiritual guide, prophetic voice, and community builder. Using an intersectional/multicultural approach, we will reflect on the various meanings of “tradition” and interrogate the ethical dimensions of the process of creating, adapting, and embodying liturgical elements, within the context of cultural authenticity. How can the liturgist contribute to affirming and promoting a journey towards spiritual wholeness? Towards building a diverse multicultural Beloved Community and dismantling systems of oppression?

Learning Objectives:

1. Understand the History of the merger of Unitarians and Universalists and their respective cultural differences.
2. Understand Unitarian Universalist Theological diversity.
3. Understand the role of the liturgist and its ethical implications.
4. Be able to apply an intersectional/multicultural/culturally appropriate approach to creating and adapting services and rituals.
5. Be able to work individually and collaboratively in developing a portfolio of various worship services and rituals.

Class Requirements:

1. Regular class attendance and active participation.
2. Three five-page reflection papers.
3. Class presentation

4. Portfolio of services and rituals covering the span of congregational life: Child dedications, coming of age, naming ceremonies, weddings, memorial services, healing services, garden blessings, animal companion memorials, holiday celebrations, among others.

September 5: History: Where do Unitarian Universalists come From?

September 12: Theology: What Holds UUs Together?

September 19: Ritual Theory/Ritual Practice

September 26: The Role of the Liturgist as Agent of Transformation

October 3: Decolonizing UU Worship Space & Liturgy

October 10: Alabanza! Latinx Liberation Theology & Embodied Liturgy

October 17: When the Spirit Says Sing! A Multicultural Perspective on Musical Liturgy

October 24: Reading Week

October 31: Independent Study Project

November 7: Life Cycles & Rites of Passage

November 14: Taking it to the Streets: Prophetic Interfaith Liturgies Without Walls

November 21: Class Presentations

November 28: Thanksgiving

December 5: Class Presentations and Closing Ritual

Required Readings:

1. Malidoma Patrice Some, *Ritual: Power, Healing, and Community*
2. Wayne Arnason & Kathleen Rolenz, *Worship that Works: Theory and Practice for Unitarian Universalists*
3. UUA Commission on Appraisal, *Engaging Our Theological Diversity*

<https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/documents/coa/engagingourtheodiversity.pdf>