



Polity Intensive Class at Unitarian Universalist General Assembly

Polity FTHS-4077-01

1.5 or 3.0 Units

Starr King School for the Ministry ~ Graduate Theological Union

Summer 2021

Instructor Information

The Rev. Dr. Meg Richardson

mrichardson@sksm.edu

925-951-3048 (cell)

Availability: Please identify yourself and leave a message if you call my cell, as I will not be able to pick up during our class sessions.

Meeting Dates and Times

Cyberspace June 23-27, 2021

This class will follow the schedule for the Unitarian Universalist Association's General Assembly, which is subject to change and is available here:

<https://www.uua.org/ga/program/schedule>

Wednesday, June 23:

9:00 am PST Orientation

10:30 am PST Milwaukee Spotlight

2:00 pm PST Class Meeting and Small Group Exercise on Zoom

3:00 pm PST Opening Celebration – watch on your own or sharing the screen after our meeting

5:00 pm PST General Session – watch on your own or share the screen on Zoom

Thursday, June 24:

8:00 am PST Daily Grounding Worship

10:00 am PST Class Meeting Part I (half hour)

10:30 am PST General Session – watch on your own or share the screen on Zoom

1:30 pm PST Class Meeting Part II (half hour)

2:00 pm PST Featured Speaker and Programming

4:00 pm PST Service of the Living Tradition – watch on your own or share the screen on Zoom

Friday, June 25:

8:00 am PST Daily Grounding Worship

10:00 am PST Class Meeting Part I with Jonipher Kwong

10:30 am PST General Session

1:30 pm PST Class Meeting Part II with Jonipher Kwong

2:00 pm PST Featured Speaker and Programming

4:00 pm PST Synergy Bridging Worship

Saturday, June 26:

8:00 am PST Daily Grounding Worship

10:00 am PST Class Meeting Part I

10:30 am PST General Session – watch on your own or share the screen on Zoom

1:30 pm PST Class Meeting Part II

2:00 pm PST Featured Speaker and Programming

4:00 pm PST Ware Lecture

Sunday, June 27:

9:00 am PST Sunday Worship

10:15 am PST Starr King Panel – Class Time on Zoom

Noon PST General Session – watch on your own or share the screen on Zoom

2:00 pm PST Closing Celebration – watch on your own or share the screen on Zoom



COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Unitarian Universalist Polity Immersion Class will be an online synchronous immersion experience, June 23-27 at the Unitarian Universalist Association's General Assembly. Students will discover the mechanics of governance by observing Unitarian Universalist polity in action. We will attend plenary sessions, business mini-assemblies and worship services, as well as meet as a class to process our observations, learn the history of congregational polity in contrast to other polity paradigms, and discern the theological and cultural contexts for our polity. We may also use case study methods to dissect recent actions of the General Assembly, using video from earlier General Assemblies. We will evaluate how polity acts as it is translated from the church to a national setting: informed by social justice, our polity can have global impact. The General Assembly theme this year "Circle Round for Justice * Healing * Courage" will guide our interpretation of Unitarian Universalist polity rooted in justice, healing from White Supremacy Culture, and courage for a radical and inclusive vision. General Assembly will be a laboratory for our lived faith as it becomes bylaws: through these reflections we will develop strategies to translate our Principles and Purposes into action, to become more effective religious leaders, as well as resources for our congregations and communities. For Unitarian Universalists, democracy is in the details. Students will be responsible for their own General Assembly Registration.

This course addresses Starr King School for the Ministry Thresholds 1,4 and the UUA's Ministerial Fellowship Committee's Competency 6.

This year, the course will be offered with variable credit: 1.5 credits is the default amount, and students may arrange to register for 3.0 credits by emailing the Registrar at SKSMRegistrar@sksm.edu and copying mrichardson@sksm.edu. Projects and research paper topics should be arranged, by email, before the completion of General Assembly on June 28.

Students will be responsible for their own General Assembly Registration.

Starr King students are eligible to apply for a Davidoff Fund Scholarship grant of \$700. The deadline for the application is mid March, and the form is available online through <https://www.sksm.edu/admissions/financial-aid/> on the Starr King website.

Starr King Students may also wish to apply for Personal Growth and Learning Grants through the Dean of Students Office. <https://www.sksm.edu/resources/student-handbook/financial-aid/personal-growth-learning-expenses/>

In addition, students who meet certain criteria are eligible for scholarship money from the UUA. Information is available at <http://www.uua.org/ga/registration/financialaid/scholarships>

From the UUA website:

General Assembly planners are committed to the goal of making the General Assembly accessible to the maximum number of attendees possible.



*New **this year**: financial aid for General Assembly will be distributed via self-selection. If you need to take advantage of sliding scale pricing, please use one of the cost reduction options available during registration. Quantities available will increase as donations are received.*

Please also note that a payment plan is available at checkout; you may pay \$25 when you register and pay down your balance over time.

Financial Support is available for those experiencing financial hardship, for Emerging Adults (18-24), and for those who identify as Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC). Funds collected via voluntary contribution during GA registration are distributed in the same year they are donated.

Additional funds may be available from the [Lifespan Faith Engagement Office](#).

In addition, some congregations have applied to the UUA for grant money to support their delegates.

The scholarship money available through Starr King School for Ministry and through the UUA is completely independent of registration for this class.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

During this course, students will be able to

- Observe Unitarian Universalist governance in action.
- Study how Unitarian Universalists have organized and expressed themselves through Polity to address injustice.
- Develop and apply leadership skills, including pastoral, organizational and social change, in a Unitarian Universalist faith community.
- Examine Unitarian Universalist engagement from multicultural, counter-oppressive perspectives.
- Examine the history and nature of Polity in Unitarian Universalism.

UU Polity Wonk Bingo

Purposes	Workshop	Vote	Cat on Keyboard	Caucus
Resolution	Democracy	Delegate	Bylaw	Affirm
Networking	Stewardship	FREE LIBERAL RELIGION	Mic	Statement of Conscience
Mute please?	Youth	Moderator	White Supremacy	Covenant
Spirit	Mission	Glitch	Credentials	Principles

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LEARNING OUTCOMES

After successfully completing this course, students will be able to

- Participate in Unitarian Universalist governance.
- Articulate how Unitarian Universalist Principles and Purposes are expressed through Polity.
- Develop and apply leadership skills, including pastoral, organizational and social change, in a Unitarian Universalist faith community.
- Identify various religious models of Polity, especially Congregational Polity.
- Use Polity to address injustice and promote social change within Unitarian Universalism.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance at General Assembly business sessions and worship, major events such as the Ware Lecture, and classroom discussions are mandatory. Classroom discussions will be held during the mid-day “breaks” and there will be at least one additional panel, most likely scheduled during Sunday worship’s “coffee hour.” You will have the option of attending the General Assembly events either on your own, or with the class in our Zoom Room. You must register for General Assembly, in addition to the class, in order to be able to attend General Assembly events, through the UUA website at www.uua.org. The preliminary schedule is now available at <https://www.uua.org/ga/program>.

It is not easy to participate in five full days of online meetings. Many of the events are recorded by the UUA, and class meetings may also be recorded for the class Moodle, an online learning management system. If a student finds they need a break, it may be possible to attend a required event asynchronously.

The following syllabus information is required by the Graduate Theological Union, the Association of Theological Seminaries and the Department of Education:

- Academic Conduct <https://www.sksm.edu/current-students/statement-academic-integritymisconduct/>
- Plagiarism <https://www.sksm.edu/plagiarism/>
- Notice to Students About Your Privacy (FERPA) <https://www.sksm.edu/academics/policy-statements/ferpa-familyeducational-rights-and-privacy-act/>
- Disability Policy <https://www.sksm.edu/resources/student-handbook/starr-kingpolicies/students-with-disabilities-policy/> If you require accommodations for a disability or special needs, please email the instructor directly at mrichardson@sksm.edu to arrange this.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Students will post daily on the class Moodle. Before the first day of General Assembly, the assignment is to write their personal introduction to the class. The first day students will post the results of their small group exercise, and then students are encouraged to post a brief “snapshot” of something they wish to capture from that day’s events, so that all the posts create a mosaic of our General Assembly experience.

Final Paper or Project:

For **1.5 credits**: Reflection paper of approximately 750 words, or an equivalent project, to be submitted by July 23, 2021.

For **3.0 credits**: Research paper of approximately 15 pages or an equivalent project, to be submitted by July 23, 2021.



GRADING

This course is offered Pass/Fail in accordance with Starr King's counteroppressive pedagogy. If a student requires a letter grade for any reason, please contact the Registrar at Registrar@SKSM.edu and cc mrichardson@SKSM.edu before the beginning of the course.

Students will be graded 30% on demonstrated preparation, 40% on class participation, and 30% on the final paper or project.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Students must complete the following readings **IN ADVANCE**. These are all readings required by the UUA's Ministerial Fellowship Committee. They may be found, in PDF form:

http://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/requirements_mfc_appendix.pdf

[*UUA Bylaws and Rules*](#)

[*Ministerial Fellowship Committee Policies and Rules*](#)

[*UUMA Guidelines and Code of Professional Practice*](#)

[*Conrad Wright, Congregational Polity \(1997\)*](#)

[*UUA Commission on Appraisal Preliminary Report on Class*](#)

There will be additional supplemental readings and resources on the class Moodle.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Wednesday: Power, Authority and Social Change: What is Polity?

Thursday: Microcosm, Mesocosm and Macrocosm: How does Polity work beyond congregations?

Friday: The Call to Minister and Rites of Passage: Where is Polity?

Saturday: Ministerial Guidelines, Covenant and Misconduct: How does Polity support Leaders?

Sunday: Worship and Right Relations: Parting thoughts on Polity?