Course Description DS510 – Presbyterian Heritage, Polity & Practice
Spring Term 2016
Weekend Format

Instructor – The Rev. Dr. Ross A. Lockhart

“But everything should be done decently and in order.”
- 1 Corinthians 14:40

PURPOSE

To introduce students to the heritage, polity (governance) and practice of life and ministry within The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

COMPETENCE OBJECTIVES

1. To gain an appreciation for the heritage of the PCC, as well as a working knowledge of the polity (governance) and practice (mission) of the church, especially The Book of Forms (the “constitution” of the PCC): its theological and biblical basis, its historical development, its purpose and its practical application in the work of the church.
2. To understand and be able to apply the rules and procedures of the Book of Forms to a number of real life situations which arise in congregations and courts of the church including the minister’s role as Moderator of Session.
3. To be able to articulate the major themes and principles of the Book of Forms and other recently legislated policies and procedures.
4. To gain an appreciation for the mission of the PCC in a post-Christendom Canadian context

FORMAT

The class will meet over two weekends:

Thursday, February 4, 6 to 9 pm, Friday, February 5, 9 am to 5 pm, Saturday, February 6, 9 am to 5 pm.

Thursday, February 18, 6 to 9 pm, Friday, February 19, 9 am to 5 pm, February 20, 9 am to 5 pm.

There will be special guests invited to speak to the class throughout the term on life and leadership within the PCC.

CONTENT

The course will begin with a brief overview of the Presbyterian heritage in Canada in order to offer a better background for the unique nature of our Presbyterian
governance rather than a congregational or episcopal model. The Book of Forms will be a main focus of our time together: its background, its theological and biblical basis, its rules for Congregations, Sessions, Presbyteries, Synods and General Assembly. Students will read The Book of Forms and its Appendices, participate in role-play and discussions of its content, and complete three take-home quizzes on where to find answers to questions that might arise in the life of the church. It will also contain an introduction to some more recent policy revisions and additions to the rules of the church related to such issues as women in ministry, freedom of conscience, human sexuality and reconciliation with First Nations people.

In the course of this work together we will make frequent use of The Book of Forms, the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly and such policy statements as: Leading with Care: A Policy for Ensuring a Climate of Safety for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults (2005), Growing in Christ: Seeing the Image of God in Our Neighbour: A Policy for Dealing with Allegations of Racial Harassment (2009), and the Policy for Dealing With Sexual Abuse and Harassment (2010 edition). All of these documents should be ordered by the students or downloaded prior to the first class.

EXPECTATIONS OF THE STUDENT

- Students will attend a minimum of 80% of class time
- Students will complete all required readings and participate in class discussions and role plays
- Students will complete 3 take home quizzes on The Book of Forms
- Each student will write an eight to ten page term paper outlining the history, scriptural, subordinate standard links, polity and missional implications of one of the following topics: PCC & Creation, PCC & Evangelism, PCC & Human Sexuality, PCC & First Nations, PCC & Women, PCC & Global Mission

EVALUATION

Students will be evaluated on the basis of class attendance and participation, evidence of completing all reading assignments, successful complete of 3 quizzes, and the timely completion of a term paper due by March 31, 2016.

Class Outline

**Thursday, February 4, 6 to 9 pm**

**From Calvin to Canada:** An overview of our Presbyterian Heritage to 1875

Please read *Enduring Witness*, pp. 1 – 145.

**Whose Church is it anyways?** Church Union debates to 1925
Please read *Enduring Witness* pp. 146-223.

**Friday, February 5, 9 am to 5 pm**

**Burning, Yet Not Consumed** – The Continuing Presbyterian Church in Canada to today

Please read *Enduring Witness* pp. 224-275.

**The Medium is the Message:** Introduction to Presbyterian governance

A study of the Book of Forms – *Session and Congregations*

Please read *The Book of Forms* Sections 1 – 175.

Guest Speaker – Clerk of Session

Homework Assignment: Take Home Quiz #1

**Saturday, February 6, 9 am to 5 pm**

*The Presbytery & Synod*

Please read *The Book of Forms* Sections 176-276.

Guest Speaker: Presbyter

Homework Assignment: Take Home Quiz #2k

**Thursday, February 18, 6 to 9 pm**

Polity, Mission and Leadership

**Friday, February 19, 9 am to 5 pm**

*General Assembly & The Judicial Process*

Please read *The Book of Forms* Sections 277-434.

Guest Speaker: General Assembly Commissioner
Homework Assignment: Take Home Quiz #3

Saturday, February 20, 9 am to 5 pm.

Wednesday, March 11 – Appendices

Please read *The Book of Forms* Section 444 to Appendix J 13.

**Reformed and Reforming** – Ministering in the Presbyterian Church in Canada

---

**Select Bibliography**


Moir, John S. *Enduring Witness, A History of The Presbyterian Church*


PCC, The Book of Forms.

PCC, The Social Action Handbook

PCC, Statements of policy on Leading with Care, Racial Harassment, First Nations and Sexual Abuse and Harassment, all available at www.presbyterian.ca


Attendance
Attendance is specified by VST requirements, which requires 100% attendance for weekend courses. Attendance will be expected for all six days.

For on-campus students, this means attending class on time with no more than 2 allowable absences for any reason. For distance students, this means listening to all the recorded lectures and participating in all of the online forums/discussion groups, with no more than two allowable absences from the online forums/discussion groups.

Assignment and Course Evaluation
Course evaluations at VST combine a letter grade system with a competence model of assessment. Individual assignments within a course are given narrative evaluations, that is, APP (Approved) or INC (Incomplete) or NAPP (Not Approved) with narrative comments, based on the competencies and expectations set for that assignment. No number or letter grades or weights of assignments are calculated for assignments. One re-write is allowed on any assignment which is INC or NAPP within a course. The re-written assignment is due two weeks after the work is returned. The final evaluation for an assignment can be APP or NAPP after a re-write.
In all cases, all work for the course, including any re-writes, is due by the last day of term unless an extension for medical reasons is granted by the Dean. The final grade for a course is reported both as a letter grade and as a narrative evaluation on the basis of a student’s overall fulfillment of the competencies and expectations of the course, which are stated in the course syllabus. No number grades are assigned. Final grade designations are: A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-; NAPP. No re-writes are allowed to improve a letter grade given as a final grade for a course.

Policy on Late assignments
Submission of assignments on time is a part of academic, professional and pastoral competence and a part of every course at VST. All assignments in courses are due on the dates specified in the syllabus for each course. Failure to submit an assignment on time will be noted in the narrative evaluation of an assignment. Repeated failure to submit assignments on time may affect the final grade for the course.

Five written assignments are due this term on the dates specified. If three or more assignments for the course are submitted late, the final grade will be reduced by one mark (a B+ becomes a B). In any case where two or more assignments are more than one week late, additional reductions may be taken in the final grade.