

Course Syllabus
DS525 UCC Studies: Polity for a New Day
Vancouver School of Theology
January Interterm 2026

Instructor:	Hyuk Cho
E-mail:	hcho@vst.edu
Office Location:	VST room 420
Office Hours:	Please feel welcome to come and talk with me. To make an appointment, check with me at class or by email to arrange a mutually convenient time.
Class Dates and Times:	January 5(Mon.) – 8 (Thur.), 2026, 2:00 pm to 4:30 pm and UCC Retreat, January 9–10 (optional)

❖ **Course Description**

The purpose of this course is to prepare the leaders for ministry with an understanding of the institutional structure and current issues of policies and practices in the community of faith settings of the United Church of Canada and to have a working knowledge of the covenantal relationships within the structure of our denomination. During the course, *The Manual* (2025) and other UCC policy documents will be used to explore the ways that a governing body of the community of faith currently functions.

❖ **Competencies Related to Outcome**

After successfully completing this course, students should be able to:

- describe, interpret and analyze, both orally and in writing, current issues facing the United Church with relevance to its polity and governance.
- locate relevant sections of The Manual (and other documents) in response to questions and issues.
- describe and analyze the authority and function of the councils of the church.
- constructively articulate how UCC polity supports or hinders church mission and ministry practices.
- knowledge of the expectations of ministerial leadership as it pertains to UCC ethical standards, standards of practice, duty of care, authority and power of ministry personnel, oversight and discipline and sexual conduct.
- knowledge of official document keeping procedures.

❖ Class Format

This 1.0 credit class will meet January 5–8, from 2–4:30. The course is taught as a seminar with instructional input. Participation is through active listening, collegial group work and in-class discussions.

❖ Expectations and Assignment

1. **100% attendance in class**
2. **Informed participation:** Class sessions are an important part of the learning experience. Because discussion is a key part of the class and nurtures an engagement with course materials, your questions and comments are valued and will be a factor in the overall grade. To this end, it is expected that you will have done the readings and be prepared to contribute.
3. **Inclusive language:** In speaking and writing, inclusive language is expected when making reference to humans and a variety of metaphors are anticipated when making reference to God.
4. **A Final paper** (typed and double-spaced, approximately 1500 words). Attend at least one Church Council or governing body meeting of an active community of faith in the United Church of Canada and observe what organizational structure is assumed by the church. In light of local church structure options identified in *The Manual*, describe the organizational dynamics of the community of faith and how a governing body of the community of faith currently functions. Describe the role of the Paid Accountable Minister and lay leaders of the governing body in that process and the type of leadership that the leaders offer, the challenges and opportunities now facing this faith community, and some thoughts on how your understanding of congregational leadership is evolving. Discuss in what ways the polity of UCC helps and/or hinders its mission and ministry. Detailed instructions on how to write the paper will be given during the class. A final paper will be due by the end of the spring term.

❖ Pre-class Reading Assignment

Students are required to complete pre-class reading assignments before the class. Course reading package will be available in pdf format on Populi created for the class. Other reading materials will be available through the links on the United Church website or posted on Populi.

❖ Course Schedule

Day 1: Monday, January 5

United Church's Ecclesial Roots and Evolution of Institutional Structure

["Declarations and the Formation of the UCC," *The Manual* \(2025\), 9–15.](#)

[Congregations and Councils of the United Church](#)

* Organization of the UCC (1925-2018)

[United Church Governance Structure](#)

Day 2: Tuesday, January 6

Congregational Structures – Organizational

United Church Manual (2025), 54–74 & 112–25.

Procedures for Holding a Meeting and Decision Making, *The Manual*, 191–5.

Self-Assessment of Community of Faith, *The Manual* G.1.2.2.

Congregational Board of Trustees Handbook (2021)

Ministry & Personnel Committee (2019)

Day 3: Wednesday, January 7

Stewardship – Financial and Institutional

United Church Manual (2025), 125–9.

Financial Handbook for Congregations (2017)

Theology of Giving Study Resource (2023)

Narrative Budget

Copyright Guide for Congregations (2014)

What Do the Archives Want? (2019)

Sample Records Schedule (2019)

Day 4: Thursday, January 8

Ecclesial Interventions and Interchurch Relations

United Church Manual (2025), 140-186.

Dispute Resolution (2019)

* Commitment to Becoming an Anti-racist Denomination (2020)

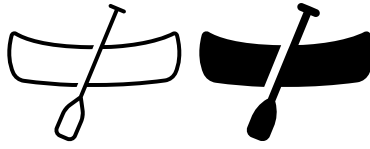
Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy and Procedures (2023)

Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice for Ministry Personnel (2023)

Commitment to Becoming an Anti-Racist Denomination (2020)

Interchurch Relations

[Toward 2035](#)



6015 WALTER GAGE ROAD
VANCOUVER, BC V6T 1Z1
CANADA

1-866-822-9031
INFO@VST.EDU