

**DS624 Theology and Doctrine in the United Church of Canada
United Church of Canada Denominational Studies (2.0 credits)**

Vancouver School of Theology

Class dates: January 19 & 26; February 9 & 23; March 9 & 23; April 6
9 am – 12 pm.

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Purpose

This course is designed to contribute to the educational preparation of learned church leaders for the ministry of nurturing the living faith of communities in the United Church of Canada (UCC). Course material concentrates on theology, doctrine and policy in the UCC. Participants will work with theologies and doctrines both historic and emerging, including theology as intellectual quest and as personal commitment, and theology becoming church doctrine, theology and church leadership, and theology toward societal and world issues.

Learning Outcomes

Competencies are approved when you are able to demonstrate...

- an ability to distinguish and articulate various operative theologies animating the lived faith of congregations in the United Church
- a grasp of United Church four subordinate standards, *Twenty Articles of Doctrine* (1925), *A Statement of Faith* (1940), *A New Creed* (1968, revised 1980, 1995) and *A Song of Faith* (2006), how they are arrived at, and how they evolve in the changing context and mission of the church.
- an ability to show how commissioned reports (e.g. *The Authority and Interpretation of Scripture*, *Mending the World*, etc.) articulate the theology of the church in a timely and contextual way.
- an understanding of the responsibility of the church leader in living one's own theology while teaching the theologies and doctrines of the church.
- an ability to demonstrate the dialectic of engagement and non-attachment in constructing theologically and doctrinally-based arguments with depth and clarity.

Format

The class will meet during spring term, 2022 via Zoom.

This is a required course for United Church MDiv, DipCS, Testamur, and Admissions students.

Prerequisites: Normally students have completed at least one graduate course in Theology or equivalent (TH500 or equivalent).

Required Text NOT AVAILABLE AT UBC BOOKSTORE please order online

- ¶ Don Schweitzer, Rob Fennell and Michael Bourgeois, eds., *The Theology of the United Church of Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2019).
- * E – Reading Package: most of the readings will be available on the Canvas site for the course in .pdf format or online links.
- § Comparison of Faith Statements in the United Church of Canada (1925-2006) will be distributed in the first class.
- A few readings and other materials related to the course will be distributed in class.

Course Policies

1. **Attendance** The course requires 80% attendance minimum
2. **Reading and assignments** You are expected to read all required assignments before class and to complete all assignments as outlined in the syllabus within the specified dates of the course and term.
3. **Academic honesty** You are expected to adhere to VST's requirements for academic honesty as published in the Student Handbook.
4. **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.
5. **Assignment and Course Evaluation**
6. **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 final evaluation for an assignment can be APP or NAPP after a re-write. 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.
7. **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. 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.
8. VST is committed to creating safe space and an inclusive learning environment. If you have a diagnosed or suspected learning disability, chronic condition, mental health concern, or physical requirement which you anticipate may impact your participation in this class, you are encouraged to discuss your needs with the instructor and the Dean within the first week of classes.

Expectations and Assignments

1. **Class 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.

2. **Four Short papers:** 500-800 words, each worth 15% of the course grade from **January 26th through April 6th**, **due in class on the day that topic will be discussed**. These topics are in this syllabus. Each paper should discuss one doctrine or topic with which you are dealing, how it has been confessed or understood in the four faith statements/ subordinate standards, reading materials and your statement of faith along with reason(s) and implication(s) what is at stake in this doctrine or topic. You are invited to discuss it in your own context or experience. Short papers should be typed in a single space format, Times New Roman, 12pt font and 1- inch margins.
3. **One Final Paper – Your own faith statement or creed:** six to eight pages, 1,800 – 2,400 words, double spaced, worth 25% of the course grade **due on Thursday, April 14**. In the first two to three pages, 600 – 1,000 words, you are invited to write your own faith statement or creed; You may include elements of your short papers, if appropriate, your learnings throughout the course and confessing your own faith in your specific context. Critically reflect upon the readings such as UCC’s subordinate standards, reports and statements, class discussion and presentations used to create your own faith statement or creed. And then you are invited to explain or comment on your statement or creed in four or five pages, 1,200 – 1,500 words. Final paper should be typed in a double space format, Times New Roman, 12pt font and 1- inch margins.
4. **Audit students** are required to do all the reading and participate in the class discussions and exercises.
5. **Certificate students** are required to do all the reading, participate in the class discussions and exercises, and do the journal, handing in the sections of the journal in the class. Certificate students write five journals, each journal 500-800 words. Written assignments should:
 - Demonstrate the ability to thoughtfully engage the material and reading for the class
 - Give a personal reflection on the reading and material covered

The final grade for the course will be based on evaluations in three areas:

1. Completion of the reading assignments, informed participation in class discussions (15%)
2. Four short papers, each 15% (60%)
3. Final paper - faith statement or creed (25%)

Course Schedule

January 19 (Class 1): Introduction and Faith Statements

Each Christian community is called upon to confess its faith and express its mission for its time and place. What was the context of each faith statement?

What were the motivations for church union? What were the founding visions of the UCC?

What issues did William Scott face on his faith journey; what issues were missing? Write those issues and see how they were dealt in the history of the UCC.

Required Reading

- ¶ “Introduction” – John H. Young
- § Comparison of Faith Statements in the United Church of Canada (1925-2006), 1.
- UCC, *Our Words of Faith: Cherished, Honoured, and Living* (Toronto: United Church of Canada, 2010). https://ecumenism.net/archive/docu/2009_ucc_our_words_of_faith.pdf
- UCC, Theology Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee, “A Background Document on Essential Agreement.”

Case Study: William Scott’s Mission and Ministry

- Hyuk Cho, “Partnership in Mission: William Scott’s Ministry in Korea,” *Touchstone* 31, no 1 (February 2013): 57-66 and ¶ Chapter 10, pages 251-2.
http://touchstonecanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Touchstone_Feb__2013.pdf

Suggested Reading

- * George C. Pidgeon, *Nation Building: A Review of the Work of Home Missions and Social Service* (Toronto: Board of Home Mission and Social Service, 1917).
- * UCC, “Christianizing the Social Order: A Statement Prepared by a Commission Appointed by the Board of Evangelism and Social Service,” *Record of Proceedings of the 6th General Council* (1934), 235-48.
- UCC, “The Formation of The United Church of Canada,” *The Manual* (2021), 12-15.
- https://united-church.ca/sites/default/files/the-manual-2019_0.pdf
- Statistics Canada, “Canadian Demographics at a Glance,” second edition (2016), 6 & 27.
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/91-003-x/91-003-x2014001-eng.pdf>

January 26 (Class 2): “We are not alone” – Scripture and Revelation

Do you view the Bible as *the* source of revelation? Why or why not? What do you think of a self-revealing God who continues to communicate with humanity? In the *Twenty Articles of Doctrine*, what is the understanding of revelation and how has it changed in the history of the UCC? Does the Wesleyan “Quadrilateral” understanding of our relationship with God resonate with your discerning process?

Required Reading

- ¶ 2. Scripture and Revelation in The United Church of Canada – Robert C. Fennell
- § Comparison of Faith Statements (1925-2006), 3.

- * Michael Bourgeois, “Awash in Theology: Issues in Theology in the United Church of Canada,” in *The United Church of Canada: A History*, edited by Don Schweitzer (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2012), 259-77.
- * UCC, Commission on World Mission, “The Idea of Revelation, Report of the Commission on World Mission,” *Record of Proceedings of the 22nd General Council* (1966), 353-355. See Class 6, “World Mission: Report of the Commission on World Mission.”
- * UCC, Committee on Christian Faith, “Revelation and Authority of the Bible,” *Record of Proceedings of the 22nd General Council* (1966), 509-11.

Case Study: Only Jesus?

- How do you understand the scripture: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6)?

Suggested Reading

- UCC, Committee on Theology and Faith, *The Authority and Interpretation of Scripture: A Statement of The United Church of Canada* (Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 1992).
https://ecumenism.net/archive/docu/1992_ucc_authority_interpretation_scripture.pdf

February 9 (Class 3): “We believe in God” – Trinity, Christ and Holy Spirit

What do you think of the image of Trinity as dance (*Perichoresis*) and its implication of it to the concept of relationship? Can we apply it to human relationships? If so, how? How has your/UCC’s understanding of Jesus been changed in relationships with other faiths? What roles does the Holy Spirit play in how God relates to the world and to us? *A Song of Faith* sings of the Spirit “animating all matters and energy, moving in the human heart.” If so, how?

Required Reading

- ¶ 1. The Triune God – Catherine Faith MacLean
- ¶ 5. The Christology of The United Church of Canada – Don Schweitzer
- ¶ 6. The Holy Spirit – Adrian Jacobs
- § Comparison of Faith Statements (1925-2006), 2, 4 & 6.
- UCC, Committee on Theology and Faith, *Reconciling and Making New: Who is Jesus for the World Today?* (Toronto: United Church of Canada, 1998) and *Record of Proceedings* (2000), 383-405, 1177-78.

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Case Study: A conversation between Rev. Bill Phipps and the Ottawa Citizen

- “Is Jesus God?” (November 2, 1997). <http://web.ncf.ca/dq579/modtranscri.html>

Suggested Reading

- UCC, Division of Mission in Canada, Committee on Christian Faith, “The Lordship of Jesus” (*Record of Proceedings of the 27th General Council* (1977), 419–447).
<http://ucctheology.pbworks.com/The-Lordship-of-Jesus>
- UCC, Committee on Inter-Church and Inter-Faith Relations, *In Whose Name?: The Baptismal Formula in Contemporary Culture – Roman Catholic/United Church of Canada Dialogue* (Toronto: United Church of Canada, 2001) https://www.cccb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/The-Baptismal-Formula-in-Contemporary-Culture_.pdf

February 23 (Class 4): “We trust in God” – Creation, Sin and Redemption

Why is a “holistic approach” (p. 92) to God’s creation important? If creation was good, where did evil come from? Reflect on the significant policy shift(s) of the understanding of sin and redemption in the UCC. What is the “institutional sin” (p. 117) and how has the church tried to build right relationships?

Required Reading

- ¶ 3. The Good Creation: From Classical Theism to Ecotheology – Harold Wells
- ¶ 4. Sin and Redemption in the United Church of Canada – Sandra Beardsall
- § Comparison of Faith Statements (1925-2006), p. 7.
- * Stan McKay, “An Aboriginal Christian Perspective on Integrity of Creation,” in *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices Identity in the United States and Canada*, ed. James Treat (New York: Routledge, 1996), 51-55.
- UCC, “1986 Apology to Indigenous Peoples, the 1988 Response and the New Crest” <https://united-church.ca/sites/default/files/apologies-response-crest.pdf>
- * UCC, “That All May be One: Policy Statement on Anti– Racism,” *Record of Proceedings of the 37th General Council* (2000), 112–117.
- UCC, “Apology to Members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two-Spirit, Trans, and Queer (LGBTQ) Communities.” Papers of the Executive of General Council, United Church of Canada, 15-17 November 2014.

Case Study: Building Community

- * Excerpt from Northrop Frye, *Divisions on a Ground: Essays on Canadian Culture*, ed. James Polk (Toronto: Anansi, 1982).

Suggested Reading

- * UCC, “Sexual Orientations Life Styles and Ministry,” *Record of Proceedings of the 32nd General Council* (1988), 95-112.

March 9 (Class 5): “We are called to be the Church” I – Church, Ministry and Sacraments

What does it mean to say “We are called to be the Church”? What is the mission of the church in your context? What are the values of practising Christianity in a religiously pluralistic and

culturally diverse society such as Canada? Did the UCC have a “double standard” (p. 215) in its mission toward non-Anglo and non-white groups? What is the role of sacramental theology in the UCC?

Required Reading

- ¶ 7. Ecclesiology: “Being The United Church of Canada”–Gail Allan and Marilyn Legge
- ¶ 8. What Are People For? In Christian Life, Discipleship, and Ministry–HyeRan Kim-Cragg
- ¶ 9. Sacraments and Sacramentality in The United Church of Canada–William S. Kervin
- § Comparison of Faith Statements (1925-2006), 9, 10 & 13.
- * UCC, “The Biblical, Theological, Liturgical, and Ecumenical Implications of the Use of Inclusive Language with Reference to God,” *Record of Proceedings of the 31st General Council* (1986), 337-346.
- UCC, “Sacraments Elders” (2016). https://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/handbook_sacraments-elders.pdf

Case Study: TBA

Suggested Reading

- UCC, Committee on Inter-Church and Inter-Faith Relations, *In Whose Name: The Baptismal Formula in Contemporary Culture* – Roman Catholic/United Church of Canada Dialogue (Toronto: United Church of Canada, 2001) https://www.cccb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/The-Baptismal-Formula-in-Contemporary-Culture_.pdf
- UCC, Report to the 39th General Council 2006, “Living Faithfully in the Midst of Empire” (2007), 1-35.
- UCC, *Moving Toward Full Inclusion: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in The United Church of Canada*, 2nd edition (2014).

March 23 (Class 6): “We are called to be the Church” II

– Mission and Relationship with Others

The Report on *World Mission* (1966) led to a paradigm shift in the UCC relationships with other faith communities. How was it possible to make such a “radical change”? Why were the policies between domestic and overseas missions different? Do you agree that the church’s overseas mission policies were more progressive? Why?

Required Reading

- ¶ 10. Practising God’s Mission beyond Canada – Hyuk Cho
- ¶ 11. The United Church’s Mission Work within Canada and Its Impact on Indigenous and Ethnic Minority Communities – Loraine MacKenzie Shepherd
- * UCC, “World Mission: Report of the Commission on World Mission,” *Record of Proceedings of the 22nd General Council* (1966), 350-355, 421-437.
- * UCC, “Seeking to Understanding “Partnership” for God’s Mission Today,” *Record of Proceedings of the 32nd General Council* (1988), 614-622.

- UCC, Inter–church and Inter–faith Committee, “Mending the World: An Ecumenical Vision for Healing and Reconciliation” *Record of Proceedings of the 36th General Council* (1997), 195–227.
https://ecumenism.net/archive/docu/1997_ucc_mending_the_world.pdf
- UCC, Ethnic Ministries Re-visioning Task Group, “A Transformative Vision for the United Church of Canada.” 39th General Council (August 2006).

Case Study: Cultural Sensitivity

- Christmas Boxes: A Story from Nicaragua by Leslie Harrison

Suggested Reading

- UCC, Division of World Outreach, “Gender Justice and Partnership Guidelines” (1998).
- UCC, Inter–church and Inter–faith Committee, “Bearing Faithful Witness: United Church–Jewish Relations Today,” *Record of Proceedings of the 37th General Council* (2000). https://ecumenism.net/archive/docu/1997_ucc_bearing_faithful_witness.pdf
- UCC, Division of World Outreach. “To Seek Justice and Resist Evil: Towards a Global Economy for All God’s People,” *Record of Proceedings of the 37th General Council* (2000).
- UCC, Inter–church and Inter–faith Committee, “*That We May Know Each Other: United Church –Muslim Relations Today,*” *Record of Proceedings of the 38th General Council* (2003).
- UCC, Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee, “Honouring the Divine in Each Other United Church–Hindu Relations Today” (2013).
Hyuk Cho, “To Share in God’s Concern for All’: The Effect of the 1966 Report on World Mission,” *Touchstone* 27, no 2 (May 2009): 39-46.
<http://touchstonecanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/May-2009-article4.pdf>
- UCC, “Reviewing Partnership in the Context of Empire” (2009).
- UCC, “Intercultural Ministries: Living into Transformation,” Executive of the General Council (March 24-26, 2012).

April 6 (Class 7): “Thanks be to God!”

What are your greatest hopes and fears as you prepare for your ministry? How is the doctrine of eschatology related to these? How has the UCC vision changed from being a “national church” to a “justice-seeking/justice-living Church”?

Required Reading

- ¶ 12. The End of the World as We Know It? (Eschatology) – Michael Bourgeois
- ¶ Conclusion – In Conclusion ... a Work in Progress
- § Comparison of Faith Statements (1925-2006), 14.
- UCC, Permanent Committee on Programs for Mission and Ministry, “Towards 2025: A Justice Seeking/Justice Living Church” (2012).

- * Douglas John Hall, “Many Churches, Many Faiths, One Planet” in *Waiting for Gospel: An Appeal to the Dispirited Remnants of Protestant “Establishment”* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), 159-174.
- Statistics Canada, “Canadian Demographics at a Glance,” second edition (2016). <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/91-003-x/91-003-x2014001-eng.pdf>

Case Study: Are we victims of our own success?

- * Excerpt from Christian Smith, *Souls in Transition: The Religious Spiritual Adults* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).