

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST HISTORY
DS680 - Hybrid Course
Spring 2019
Methodist Theological School in Ohio
Rev. Susan Ritchie, PhD

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Course Description:

The course begins with an examination of the (alleged) antecedents to Unitarianism and Universalism in pre-Reformation Europe. We then trace the theological and then institutional emergence of Unitarianism out of the Radical Reformation. The Unitarian churches in Poland, Transylvania, and England will be considered in detail with attention to issues of sameness and difference in their development and declines. Special focus will be given to the relationship of these communities to their Jewish and Islamic contemporaries. We will also look at the universalism of 18th century England, and the current state of Unitarianism in Europe. Then we cross the ocean to examine the emergence of Unitarianism from developments within Puritan Congregationalism. We explore the uniquely North American institution of Universalism as response to the same cultural setting. Next, we will explore the major themes and developments of North American Unitarianism through its classical age, the Transcendentalist development, and the various crises of identity and purpose that develop into and through the late 19th and 20th centuries. Then we turn our attention to Universalist ascendancy, decline, and then consolidation with Unitarianism (perhaps the most misunderstood aspect of Unitarian/Universalist history). Careful attention will be paid throughout to the Unitarian/Universalist social location in relationship to class, race, and gender identities, and how these sometimes enabled and sometimes impaired social justice advances.

Some special topics: Unitarian Pirates (yep! For real!), History of Unitarian and Universalist Death Practices; U/U and UU in relationship to Christian Identity; History of the Role of Ministry in U/U/UU; Anti-clericalism; Denominational Conflicts, and more!

But don't let the above description bore you! Our focus throughout will be on lively and usable history; history that helps us understand and celebrate our own agency, and our lives inside of the living tradition.

Format

Full semester online course, with the addition of one intensive in residence period of three full days, 9AM- 5PM March 29-31, 2019. Please contact Prof. Ritchie (sritchie@mtso.edu) for help with travel plans, accommodations, and meals if you are traveling from out of town.

We can offer private, single occupancy rooms with a double bed, flatscreen TV, WiFi, and bath shared with just one other room for \$28. We also offer free transportation to campus from the Columbus, Ohio airport. Meals during the intensive are provided free of cost. Student enjoy our beautiful campus, our pond and labyrinth, beautifully maintained buildings, as well as the opportunity to bond with other UU students over meals and around the firepit.

Readings

Links to digital files for all readings will be posted under each individual "Lesson" - this list is provided for your additional convenience, but purchase of any of these materials is not necessary for the completion of required reading.

Charles Howe, *For Faith and Freedom: A Short History of Unitarianism in Europe* (1997), excerpts.

Susan Ritchie, *Children of the Same God: The Historical Relationship Between Unitarianism, Islam, Judaism and Islam* (Boston: Skinner House, 2014), excerpts.

David Robinson, *The Unitarians and the Universalists* (1985). Posted with full permission from the copyright holder.

Daniel Buchanan, "Tares in the Wheat: Puritan Violence and Puritan Families in the Nineteenth Century Liberal Imagination," *Religion and American Culture* 8:2 (Summer 1998): 205-236.

William Ellery Channing, "Unitarian Christianity" (1819).

Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Divinity School Address" (1838).

Theodore Parker, "The Transient and Permanent in Christianity" (1842).

Ann Lee Bressler, "Calvinism Improved," *The Universalist Movement in America 1770-1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001): 9-23.

Hosea Ballou, "Treatise on Atonement" (1805).

William Ellery Channing, "Likeness to God" (1828).

Clarence Russell Skinner, *The Social Implications of Universalism* (1915)

James Luther Adams, "The Changing Reputation of Human Nature" (1932)

Curtis W. Reese, "Humanism" (1926)

John Dietrich, "Unitarianism and Humanism" (1927)

Warren Ross, *The Premise and the Promise* (1999) excerpts.

How the Course will Work; Requirements for online work

There is required reading for each week, listed in that week's "Lesson" tab on Populi. There will be an opportunity to discuss the readings each week listed in the same "Lesson" as a "Discussion," which will invite you to respond to a discussion type question relating to the Lesson context, and which will allow you to see and respond to other people's responses (this is an asynchronous Discussion –in other words, add to at any time during the week's lesson, and the discussion will accumulate throughout the week). On the Discussion menu tab you will also see "Questions and Help." Post here any questions of clarification or expansion you have regarding the materials you have been studying.

The requirement for on-line participation is that you make something that averages out to at least one posting for each Lesson, but these postings can be of any nature (a response to the discussion question, a response to someone else's discussion, a question posed in the Help Discussion, or a response to someone's question in the Help Discussion). All post must be made

within the time frame of the one week's duration Lesson (posts made after the next lesson has opened will not be considered). Working ahead into future weeks' Lessons is fine.

To make sure you are getting what you need to out of the readings, check out each lesson's "Learning Outcomes for Readings." You can self-test your comprehension of the reading against these, and, if you need any additional help, post your question or dilemma to the Help Discussion.

Projects and Grading

A Final Research Project: 3000-4500 word research paper on any aspect of UU History that you would like to pursue in more depth. Propose topic choice with Rev. Ritchie by May 1. Papers are due May 20 by 5 PM Eastern time--submit to sritchie@mtso.edu.

Online participation over the duration of the entire course—44%
Participation in intensive face to face intensive three-day weekend—20%
Proposal for Final Research Project - 1%
Final research project -35%

Please see Student Handbook for sections providing policy details on the following:

ADA—MTSO seeks to remove barriers to inclusion in its learning communities. Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs at the beginning of the semester. Please contact the Director of Student Services to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Any accommodation must be agreed upon prior to the due date of the affected course requirement.

Class attendance—Regular attendance is expected in all classes. During unavoidable absences, students are responsible for missed work. An excessive number of absences may result in grade reduction or course failure, despite successful completion of all assigned work. In most cases, a student will not be allowed credit for a course if he or she is absent for 25% of the class sessions.

Electronic Devices—Turn mobile devices off or "vibrate only" during class. Browsing the Internet or engaging in email or social network conversations during class is discouraged. Instructors have the right to impose grading penalties for disruptions due to electronic devices.

Human Subjects Research—Research by MTSO faculty, students, or affiliated personnel that collects non-public information from and/or about living individuals or contemporary organizations/groups for purposes of publication or public presentation (including class assignments) must be approved by the Human Subjects Research Committee. MTSO faculty, students, or affiliated personnel should err on the side of caution and apply for committee approval of any activity that may fit this description.

Inclusive Language—In accordance with MTSO's policy on inclusive language, all students are expected to use gender inclusive or gender neutral language in their writing and in the classroom discussions when referring to human beings.

Incompletes—To receive a course grade of Incomplete, students must submit the petition form from the Registrar with all signatures to the Dean's Office before the last day of regularly scheduled classes. See Student Handbook for intensive term deadlines. Any petition submitted

without a due date for outstanding work will be denied. If work is not complete by the due date the Registrar will record the grade of F for the course.

Pass/Fail—The decision to exercise this option must be made before the end of the second week of the course by completing the appropriate form available through the Registrar. To receive a grade of "pass" the student must do at least the equivalent of C minus work in the course.

Plagiarism—Plagiarism is a serious matter of academic, professional, and personal integrity. All students at the masters level are expected to understand the requirement to provide attribution when the work of others is used. Students are also expected to be familiar with and understand the school's policy on Academic Misconduct found in the Student Handbook. If a student has questions about attribution, citation, and how to avoid plagiarism they should consult the course instructor, the school's writing instructor, or library staff. When in doubt it is better to provide attribution even if one is uncertain about the proper citation form. Plagiarism is a form of academic misconduct that results in disciplinary actions per the Student Handbook that may range from failing an assignment or course to expulsion.