

**Wesley Theological Seminary
Course of Study School
2024**

COS 224 Administration and Polity
Online – Asynchronous – January 8 - February 3, 2024
In Person Online Class (ZOOM) February 16-17, 2024
Faculty: Rev. Dr. Timothy R. Baer
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Objectives and Goals

This course focuses on developing the student's competency as an administrator in a United Methodist congregation. Students will be able to:

1. Articulate a biblical and theological understanding of polity;
2. Understand and explain the polity of The United Methodist Church, including conferencing, oversight, and discipline;
3. Articulate the nature of stewardship biblically and theologically;
4. Identify techniques and develop skills as effective administrators of local churches, including financial management.

Required Texts:

Dale, Robert D., *Pastoral Leadership*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1986)

Warner, Lacey C., *The Method of Our Mission*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 2014)

Weems, Lovett H., Jr., *Leadership in the Wesleyan Spirit*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999)

The Book of Discipline, 2016, (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House)

Supplemental Texts (not necessary but helpful):

Dudley, Carl S., *Effective Small Churches in the Twenty-first Century*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003)

Everist, Norma Cook, *Church Conflict: From Contention to Collaboration*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004)

Frank, Thomas Edward, *The Soul of the Congregation: An Invitation to Congregational Reflection*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000)

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Reading Assignments:

Reading required texts should be completed prior to the first day of class.

Please Note:

The subject matter of Church Administration and United Methodist Polity is exceedingly broad. In order to effectively engage the whole, I have identified a number of fundamental components which we will address through focused conversations, information sharing, lectures, and assignments. There is no large comprehensive course paper. Rather, there is a series of smaller, targeted, focused assignments. Each assignment has a point possibility which when added cumulatively will equal a total of 100 points for the course. Letter course grades will be based on points accumulated.

Instructions:

All papers should be completed using 12 point font, double spacing, and one inch margins. Also please:

- *show evidence of reading the book or the assignment as well as integrating your personal reflections and thoughts in response to the writer's comments;*
- *provide clear articulation of concept or idea addressed;*
- *answer the question adequately and fully with specific illustrations;*
- *include personal reflections and insights where requested;*
- *follow prescribed length in response to each question;*
- *follow prescribed format and style guidelines for paper.*

Online (Asynchronous):

Assignment 1a: (Due January 8, 2024)

Prepare a short paper (detail below) which you will share with the whole class via posting to Blackboard by January 8th. That week, class engagement/discussion will be prompted by questions posed by Dr. Baer. As we (entire class) will not have met each other at this point, this will enable all of us to get a feel for leadership/administration in our respective ministry settings.

1. Describe your setting:

Provide detail creating a verbal picture of your setting. Describe location, facilities (*property, sanctuary, educational space, office space, etc.*), membership, community setting, worship and small group attendance, as well as other data or descriptions that make it possible to picture your church(es). Be specific! **(2 pages) (5 points)**

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Assignment 1b: (Due January 15, 2024)

Prepare a short paper (detail below) which you will share with the whole class via posting to Blackboard by January 15th. That week, class engagement/discussion will be prompted by questions posed by Dr. Baer.

1. Dr. Lovett Weems talks of “ministry by wandering about” (MBWA). In the administration of your church(es), what observations (internal and external) would be critical to know, especially as you plan and execute a strategy for leading/administering the church(es). Observe relational and visual cues for what is happening in the church(es) as well as the community, and who is a part of it. Be specific in your description. **(2 pages) (5 points)**

Assignment 2: (Due January 22, 2024)

Via Blackboard starting January 22nd, Dr. Baer will kick-off this week’s conversation focused on how our United Methodist Church is organized. Recognizing Dr. Lacey Warner and Dr. Lovett Weems, Jr. reminder to us that our United Methodist system of organization is grounded in Biblical and theological understanding, we will converse about the heart of our governance. **(5 points)**

Assignment 3: (Due January 29, 2024)

Via Blackboard starting January 29th, Dr. Baer will kick-off this week’s conversation focused on Administration, Management, Leadership, and Responsibilities considerations as they intersect with leading a Local Church. **(5 points)**

PLEASE NOTE: THE FOLLOWING PAPERS WILL BE SUBMITTED BUT NOT POSTED FOR CLASS DISCUSSION !!!

Assignment 4: (Due January 22, 2024)

What is United Methodist “conferencing”? What are its strengths? What are its weaknesses? What are the implications for the church(es) you lead and for you as an administrator in the United Methodist connection? **(3-4 pages) (10 points)**

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Assignment 5: (Due January 22, 2024)

Review Part IV (pp. 93-103) and Part VI, Chapter I (pp. 147-221) of the ***The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2016***. Pay close attention to the paragraphs that relate to the mission of the church. Answer the following:

- a. What is the mission of the church?
- b. In what ways is your leadership/administration congruent and/or non-congruent with the mission?
- c. In what ways is your church(es) fulfilling and/or not fulfilling the mission? Be specific!
- d. What are the implications for the future? **(2 pages) (10 points)**

Assignment 6: (Due January 22, 2024)

With the mission of the church as foundational:

- a. What is the vision where you serve – for you as leader as well as those who you lead?
- b. With mission and vision in mind, and understanding your setting, write two SMART goals for the next 12 months (*SMART goals are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely*). Answer the who/what/when questions in your goals.
- c. Explain how these goals are faithful to the mission and vision.
- d. What resources are available to help you implement the vision? Include connectional and community resources.
- e. How will “success” be evaluated/measured/adjusted. Be specific!
(3-4 pages) (10 points)

Assignment 7: (Due February 16, 2024)

Property issues often cause problems. Review Part VI, Chapter 6 (pp. 733–776) of ***The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2016***.

- a. What did you learn about the responsibility of the trustees and/or the requirements for property administration that you did not previously know?
- b. Are your trustees functioning according to the guidelines and direction of the ***Discipline***? What are the differences? Be specific!
- c. As administrator, how will you lead the church into compliance? Be specific! **(2-3 pages) (10 points)**

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Assignment 8: (Due February 16, 2024)

Dr. Robert Dale reminds us that as administrator of a local church, the congregation looks to you for leadership when it comes to finances. What is your understanding of Biblical stewardship and your theology of finance? How do/will you preach; teach; communicate; model; Biblical stewardship? Be specific.
(3 pages) (10 points)

Assignment 9: (Due February 16, 2024)

Conflict is inevitable in the local church.

- a. Reflect on your personal “history with conflict.”
- b. How have you coped with/responded to conflict in the past?
- c. What is your default response (that which you do without thinking)?
- d. What insights have you gained about yourself and about potential strategies for dealing with conflict in your church(es) in the future?
(2 pages) (10 points)

In-Person Class:

A weekend of in-person class will be held on February 16-17, 2024. This will be via ZOOM. The links will be sent once they are available.

Grading:

Assignments – 80%
Attendance and Participation – 15%
Final Exercise – 5%

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Criteria for Evaluating Course Work:

Regardless of whether you write a paper, answer an essay question, voice an oral presentation, or create any original project, the academic context requires that certain minimal requirements characterize your work. While there are subjective components in the grading process, most professors are concerned that you become well educated in four basic qualities of excellent academic work.

- ◆ 1. Demonstration of an empathetic understanding of the content of texts and resources. Your topic should not only be well researched in the library, through interviews and observations, and/or from assigned readings and class discussions, but you should be able to provide a fair description and a clear understanding of texts and resources. This is apparent in the ability to describe and discuss precisely and accurately what an author has written or a speaker has said. Evaluation, response, and critique follow accurate representation of another's ideas—earn the privilege of criticizing a viewpoint by showing that you really understand it.
- ◆ 2. Clear critical thinking that provides appropriate specific evidence for conclusions. Use the most precise historical, empirical, or contemporary data or information to support the claims of your thesis and paragraphs. Conclusions follow from and are supported by evidence. Be sure that your evidence is relevant, accurate, and detailed. Adherence to clear critical thinking, relevant and accurate evidence, and logical organization constitute sound arguments. Even creative writing requires logical relationships among ideas to assist your readers in following the plot or main point.
- ◆ 3. Creativity that moves beyond reporting someone else's ideas. Your creative addition to academic discourse might include questioning, evaluating, applying, criticizing (positively or negatively), developing, or responding. You might see a connection between two or more ideas. You might see information from a unique perspective. The minimal requirement of academic work is correctly repeating what is read or discussed. Excellent work moves beyond repetition to unique insights, organization, correlations, and theses. Work to find your own scholarly and professional voice.
- ◆ 4. Grammar, spelling, and form. Excellent written work is conscious of proofreading and good communication. Oral presentations are equally accountable for careful expression. A brilliant thesis can be lost in a paper or project that obscures its ideas with careless communication. Your readers and listeners should not have to guess what you mean—help them by speaking and writing well.

Grading:

The instructor assumes that everyone in the class is capable of the work required to receive a “B” grade for each assignment. The following interpretations of the meaning of

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each grade have been developed to help class members review their work to identify strengths and problems.

- ◆ A “B” means that the basic elements of the assignment have been faithfully included, the argument is internally coherent, and clearly articulated.
- ◆ A “B+” means the assignment is also well crafted.
- ◆ An “A-“ means that the assignment is not only well crafted, but it also probes the issues with considerable insight.
- ◆ An “A” means the assignment is well crafted, reveals considerable insight, and moves beyond the range of the student’s prior knowledge to begin to construct new perspectives and meanings for the subject. In other words, it shows the student’s imagination at work; it has a creative edge.
- ◆ A “C+” means that the assignment lacks clarity or focus, tends to reveal more the writer’s opinions than the results of the writer’s analysis, and lacks reflective insight into the issues being discussed.
- ◆ A “C” means that the assignment does not move beyond the reporting of information from readings and/or class discussions to engaging them with issues being discussed; it may indicate inappropriate or misuse of data and readings.
- ◆ A “C-“ means that despite some moments of focused discussion and insight, major gaps exist in the development of the argument or discussion.
- ◆ An “F” means the individual needs to see me immediately.
- ◆ Grades will be reduced a step (e.g. from B to a B-) for assignments handed in after the start of class, and a full letter grade for any assignments 24 hours past due. Assignments over 48 hours past due will be lowered two letter grades. We need to talk if an assignment is over 72 hours past due. Please note only two unexcused absences are allowed before grade is lowered one step. Final course grades are mailed to the student, GBHEM in Nashville and the student’s conference representative by September 30. Grades are not posted on-line.

Inclusive Language:

In both oral and written contributions to the course, students are expected to be conscious of the power of language in theology. Inclusive language respects both gender and racial diversity, and students should demonstrate awareness that language about persons and God expresses values and impacts theological ideas in the details of race and gender connotations. Both gender and race are socially-constructed categories, and changing language is part of bringing justice to theological discourse.

Academic Policies:

- ◆ **Attendance:** Students are expected to attend all classes in their entirety. Faculty members have the authority to set attendance policies for particular courses and those policies will be included in the course syllabus. Deviation from the attendance policy may result in reduction of grade or loss of credit for the course.
- ◆ **Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is regarded as a serious offense and will result in substantial penalties, including the possibility of academic dismissal. The faculty

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regards the following as form of plagiarism or dishonesty: • Copying from another student's paper • Giving or receiving unauthorized assistance to or from another student during an examination • Using unauthorized material during an examination • Borrowing or presenting as one's own (i.e. without proper attribution) the composition or ideas of another.

Please refer to your Wesley Student Handbook (on-line) for more information about Wesley's academic policies or contact the Course of Study office 202-885-8688.