

Unitarian Universalist congregations are grounded in polity - their authority rests in the congregation itself, rather than in an outside entity. This course will describe organizational structures common to congregations of various sizes, relate governance practices to structure, staffing, and size, and provide models and tools related to congregational polity and authority. Students will compare and contrast four structural models: hierarchical, independent, interdependent/collaborative, and team. Each model will be considered in terms of lines of authority, staffing practices, and leadership. Participants will post brief final projects, of 1 - 2 written pages if students decide to write an essay, or poetry, music, calligraphy, photography, collage, or other artistic media.

Reading list

Required

Commission on Appraisal (2007). Interdependence: Renewing Congregational Polity (1997). Boston: UUA.

Durall, Michael (2004). The Almost Church: Redefining Unitarian Universalism for a New Era. Tulsa, OK: Jenkin Lloyd Jones Press. ISBN 0-9755389-0-X. [Jenkin Lloyd Jones Press at All Souls Unitarian Church, 2952 South Peoria Avenue, Tulsa OK 74114]

"Governance for Unitarian Universalist Congregations" (2005). URL: www.uua.org/documents/congservices/governance.pdf

Wright, Conrad (1989). Walking Together: Polity and Participation in Unitarian Universalist Churches. Boston: Skinner.

Optional (select one)

Carver, John (2006). Boards That Make a Difference: A New Design for Leadership in Nonprofit and Public Organizations (3rd ed). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. ISBN 0-78797-616-4.

Buck, John, and Villines, Sharon (2007). We the People: A Guide to

Sociocratic Principles and Methods. Washington, DC: Sociocracy.info.
ISBN 978-0-9792827-0-6.

Unit 1

Reading: Interdependence, vii - 78.
Wright, ix - 71.

Students will introduce themselves and post digital photos as we begin to create a learning community. They will consider the history of congregational polity among Unitarians, Universalists, and Unitarian Universalists, and will respond to the recommendations of the Commission on Appraisal about congregational governance.

Unit 2

Reading: Interdependence, 79 - 173
Wright, 73 - 166

Students will examine issues and concerns related to congregational polity, including the influence of individualism and autonomy and the role of authority. They will respond to the final recommendations of the Commission on Appraisal.

Unit 3

Reading: Durall, xi - 88
"Governance for Unitarian Universalist Congregations"

Students will consider governance issues in relation to congregational size, and develop models of assessment and evaluation. They will respond to Michael Durall's statement, "The challenge facing both local congregations and the Association today is not to reorganize committees or ponder an assortment of methods for congregational governance. The summons is to redefine Unitarian Universalism for a new era."

Unit 4

Reading: Lecture notes on organizational models: 1) hierarchical and
2) independent

Students will examine two models for congregational structure, and consider the implications of these models for their own congregations, districts or nonprofit

organizations. They will use critical reflection to assess the costs and benefits of these two models.

Unit 5

Reading: Lecture notes on organizational models: 3) collaborative and 4) team
Either Carver, xi - 129
or Buck and Villines, 7 - 133

Students will examine two models for congregational structure, and consider the implications of these models for their own congregations, districts or nonprofit organizations. They will use critical reflection to assess the costs and benefits of these two models. They will consider **either** policy governance for UU congregations, districts or organizations, **or** sociocracy as a governance/structural model.

Unit 6

Reading: **Either** Carver, 130 - 234
or Buck and Villines, 133 - 261

Students will continue to evaluate **either** policy governance for UU congregations, districts or organizations, **or** sociocracy as a governance/structural model. They will analyze a case study to determine "fit" in terms of governance and structural models.

Unit 7

Reading: Lecture notes

Students will consider the implications of congregational polity for authority, structure and governance related to organizational size, mission, and staffing. They will post case studies of congregations, districts or nonprofit organizations, and will comment on each other's work.

Final project

Participants will post brief final projects, of 1 - 2 written pages if students decide to write an essay, or poetry, music, calligraphy, photography, collage, or other artistic media.