

UU History for Lay Leaders II: Historical Perspectives on Contemporary Concerns

This course inverts chronology, borrowing from the historical philosopher Michelle Foucault's statement: "All history is a history of the present." We will look at seven contemporary concerns within Unitarian Universalism as a movement. We will examine how these are linked to the principles and practices, and to historical precedents within Unitarian Universalism. Students will select an issue that reflects their own concerns, and consider how their roles as lay leaders within their congregations inform their responses.

- Unit 1 Economics and Class Matters
- Unit 2 Economics and Class Matters
- Unit 3 Race Matters
- Unit 4 Race Matters
- Unit 5 Participant Choice
 - Earth Matters
 - Gender Matters
 - Affectional Orientation Matters
 - War and Peace
- Unit 6 Participant Choice
- Unit 7 Faith and Action Matter

Book list

Required:

Bowens-Wheatley, Marjorie, and Nancy Palmer Jones (Eds.)(2003)
SoulWork: Anti-Racist Theologies in Dialogue. Boston: Skinner.
ISBN 1-55896-445-2.

Gilbert, Richard S. (2001). How Much Do We Deserve? An Inquiry into Distributive Justice. Boston: Skinner House. ISBN 1-55896-416-9.

"In Their Own Words," Berkeley, CA: Starr King School for the Ministry.
<http://www.skism.edu/research/publications.php>.

Unitarian Universalism and the Quest for Racial Justice (1993). Boston: UUA. ISBN 1-55896-318-9.

Weaving the Fabric of Diversity. UUA. UUA Bookstore.

Optional:

Kailey, Matt (2005). Just Add Hormones (2006). Boston: Beacon Press. ISBN 0-80707-959-6. [Gender identity]

Pearce, Fred (2006), When the Rivers Run Dry: Water—The Defining Crisis of the Twenty-First Century...Boston: Beacon. ISBN 0-80708-573-1. [Environmental concerns]

Stout, Linda (1996). Bridging the Class Divide and Other Lessons for Grassroots Organizing. Boston, MA: Beacon Press. ISBN 0-8070-4309-5. [Class issues and community organizing]

Welcoming Congregation (1990). Boston: UUA. ISBN 1-55896-190-9. [Affectional orientation and gender identity]

Zinn, Howard (Ed.)(2002). The Power of Nonviolence: Writings by Advocates of Peace. Boston: Beacon Press. ISBN 0-80701-407-9. [Peace and nonviolence]

Unit 1: Economics and Class Matter

Reading assignment: Gilbert, pp. vii - 111

UU minister the Rev. Richard Gilbert wrote that a spiritual dimension should serve as the foundation of a "contemporary ethic of distributive justice, informed by freedom, equity, and community." He examined the tensions created by what he called "the iron law of maldistribution" and economic disparities in the United States. Students will consider human rights and economic rights, and respond to the question, "What is a fair share?"

Unit 2: Economics and Class Matter

Reading assignment: Gilbert, pp. 113 - 197

Richard Gilbert examined policy implications for the United States in the 21st century, where economic disparities are greater than they were during the Great Depression of the 1920s and 1930s. Students will consider his arguments, and respond to the question, "How much do we deserve?"

Unit 3: Race Matters

Reading assignments:

William Ellery Channing on slavery and labor, published by the
American Unitarian Association in 1835

Dickerson, Dennis C. "Black Leader in a White Denomination:
Whitney M. Young and the Unitarians."

Wheatley and Jones, pp. ix - 125

The American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church in America grappled with issues of slavery, abolition and Jim Crow within the context of a government and culture of apartheid. Native American populations were decimated and their cultures destroyed. People of African descent were brought to the United States via the "middle passage," to create and support the economic system that made the United States one of the most powerful countries in the world. Students will review historical documents in which ministers addressed these issues, and respond to the question, "How did our forebears attempt to reconcile their religious beliefs with the practices of slavery in the United States?"

Unit 4: Race Matters

Reading assignments:

"In Their Own Words"

Unitarian Universalism and the Quest for Racial Justice

Wheatley and Jones, pp. 127 - 231

Unit 5: Participant Choice

Reading assignment: Select a text from the "optional" list. This text will serve as the reading assignment for Units 5 and 6.

Students will select one of the following issues as the focus of their work in Units 5 and 6:

- Earth Matters
- Gender Matters
- Affectional Orientation Matters
- War and Peace

Students will use texts from the optional list to explore how Unitarians, Universalists, and Unitarian Universalists have addressed the issue they have selected. They will respond to the question, "How has my faith tradition dealt with this issue in the past?"

Unit 6: Participant Choice

Students will continue working on the issue they selected, and respond to the question, "How might my congregation, district or organization deal with this issue right now?"

Unit 7: Faith and Action Matter

Reading assignment: Weaving the Fabric of Diversity

When he served the Unitarian church in Evanston, IL, James Vilas Blake wrote, "Love is the spirit of this church, and service its law." Leaders of the First Unitarian Universalist Church in San Diego, CA modified Blake's words to read, "Love is the spirit of this church, and service is its prayer."

Students will consider the implications of these two readings, and respond to the question, "How does the concept of 'service' as "law" or "prayer" inform the mission of my congregation, district or organization?"