

Unitarian Universalist history is a tapestry woven from diverse, sometimes disparate threads. This course is designed to give you a chance to study the tapestry. It is an opportunity to discern those threads and events within Unitarian Universalist history that speak to you, which inform your ministry.

The course is divided into fourteen units. Each unit includes several assigned readings in addition to additional readings, which you may pursue at your leisure. In addition there is a brief mini-lecture included to provide a contextual overview for each unit. This is a graduate level course, and the expectation is that students will devote 7-10 hours per week to it. Students are expected to complete assigned readings, to review the mini-lecture, and to post their thoughts within the class discussion each week. I expect students to post at least 3 original comments as well as a one-page reflection paper upon one or more of the assigned readings each week. In addition students will research and write a ten to fifteen page research paper on the topic of their choice to be submitted the final week of class.

The professor logs on each day to review postings, and to respond as needed. I will review and comment on reflection papers within each unit. Please feel free to e-mail me directly if you have concerns regarding the class. I do not comment on every posting, because this is a graduate level seminar. Students are allowed the freedom and the responsibility to shape the discussion according to their common interests.

This course is modeled to provide students with a fluid rather than a static sense of Unitarian Universalist history. Through our shared exploration of origins, key figures and events, the common themes we will visit familiar insights and hopefully discover new vital meanings that inform our movement today.

### **Unit 1: Renaissance Humanism**

Many of the humanist values of modern liberal religion have their origins in the Renaissance. We will explore some of the key events, ideas, and figures from this period. This unit explores several Religious Humanists of the late fifteenth through the sixteenth centuries whose thoughts and insights helped inform early Unitarian theologies.

### **Unit 2: Dissent and Reform in Sixteenth Century Europe**

What made the Radical Reformation “radical”? What were its defining characteristics? This unit identifies and contextualizes early Unitarian, Anabaptist, and proto-Universalists within the discourses of religious reform that shaped political and social life in sixteenth century Europe. Unitarianism (and to a lesser degree Universalism) have their roots in what is characterized as the Radical Reformation. We will explore some of the major groups (Anabaptists, Polish Brethren) and focus on the early antitrinitarians, especially Michael Servetus.

### **Unit 3: Socinianism and Religious Freedom in Europe and Great Britain**

The first faith communities in which Unitarianism took root were the Polish Minor Church (the Socinians) and the Transylvanian Unitarians. This unit traces the emergence of Unitarianisms in Eastern Europe and how these ideas and beliefs spread west to England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

### **Unit 4: Arminianism and Puritanism in England and North America**

This unit will explore the link between continental Unitarianism and its distinct origins in England. We will also look at the thought of Joseph Priestley and the important influence of the Enlightenment on liberal theology. These European movements informed the evolution of Puritanism in New England, which evolved into Unitarian, Universalist, and Congregationalist churches of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

### **Unit 5: Universalism in North America**

This unit traces the eighteenth and early nineteenth century emergence of Universalism in the United States. It explores developments within the Great Awakening, whose best known voice is that of Jonathan Edwards, and the lesser known but more important to our narrative theology of universal salvation espoused by John Murray and Hosea Ballou.

### **Unit 6: Classical Unitarianism in America**

The final split between the liberals and orthodox of New England occurred during what came to be known as the Unitarian Controversy. We will trace the events leading up to this break, as well as some of the important early leaders of institutional Unitarianism: Henry Ware and William Ellery Channing.

### **Unit 7: Transcendentalism**

Transcendentalism is one of our movement's most important contributions to theology, philosophy and literature. Who were the Transcendentalists? What was their dispute between more traditional Unitarianism? What beliefs did they share?

### **Unit 8: Faith & Conscience: Abolition, Women's Rights, and Native Americans**

Abolition is one of our movement's most important contributions to theology, philosophy and literature. Women's rights and the sovereignty of gender roles were challenged and debated among Unitarians and Universalists. How would liberals and people of conscience respond to the "Indian Question" within the westward expansion of Euro-American settlement in the United States? These matters and others nurtured the development of the social gospel movement of the late nineteenth century, and bridged the gulf between faith and social action for religious liberals.

### **Unit 9: Women in Ministry and Social Change**

Many of the important leaders of the Nineteenth Century Women's movement were affiliated with Unitarianism and Universalism. Recent feminist scholarship has shed much light on their lives and accomplishments. We will explore some of this exciting new research.

### **Unit 10: Progressives from 1865-1920**

Though this period is often overlooked in the stories of our movement, the second half of the Nineteenth Century saw many theological and institutional changes as the denominations move westward. Many of these changes are embodied in the story of the Iowa Sisterhood, a group of liberal women ministers in the Midwest. This unit traces these themes as well as those of Spiritualism, Humanism, World Religions, and Progressive philosophies which influenced both Unitarians and Universalists during this era.

### **Unit 11: Crisis of Liberalism**

Industrialism and World War I are two of the events that shook liberal religion in the early decades of the Twentieth Century, provoking such diverse theological movements as the Social Gospel, Humanism, and Neo-orthodoxy. We will discuss the role of Unitarians and Universalists in fostering and responding to these movements.

### **Unit 12: Merger, Consolidation and Polity**

The middle decades of the century saw institutional change within each denomination, as well as a movement toward consolidation of the two movements. We will explore the events leading up to this historic merger event in the history of our tradition.

### **Unit 13: Race Matters**

The Civil Rights movement was an important event in the lives of many Unitarian Universalists and in the institutional life of the young denomination itself. We will look at UU involvement in the Civil Rights movement as well as other struggles for justice, and discuss the Black Empowerment controversy.

**Unit 14: Body, Faith, and Reason: Who Are We at Fifty?** Contemporary issues of ecology, gender, race, religious liberalism in the global village have challenged our movement. How have we responded? How do congregations respond today? What wisdom do we as contemporary liberals whose religious legacy traces five hundred years of dissent have to share?

### **Books for online UU History include:**

*Green Living: The E-Magazine Handbook for Living Lightly On The Earth* By The Editors of E/The Environmental Magazine, Plume Press, 2005, ISBN: 978-1-452-28857-3

*The Larger Faith* by Charles A. Howe, published by Skinner House Books, 1993, ISBN 1-55896-308-1

*Unitarian Universalism and the Quest for Racial Justice*, Unitarian Universalist Association, 1993, ISBN: 1-55896-318-9

*Blessing the World What Can Save Us Now*, Rebecca Ann Parker, edited by Robert

Hardies, Skinner House Press, 2006, ISBN 1-55896-515-7 *Prophetic Sisterhood*, by Cynthia Grant Tucker. Authors Choice Press, 2000, ISBN 0-595-00681-7

*The Premise and the Promise*, by Warren Ross. [Available through the UUA]

*The Transcendentalists*, by Perry Miller, Harvard University Press, MA, 1950, ISBN: 0-674-90333-1

*Three Prophets of Religious Liberalism: Channing, Emerson, Parker*, introduced by Conrad Wright, Unitarian Universalist Association, Boston, 1980 (4th printing)

Wilbur's *Our Unitarian Heritage* is also required, but it is available on the course web site. (You do not need to order it.)

**Optional:**

*Emerson: The Mind on Fire*, Robert Richardson Jr., University of California Press, Berkeley, 1995 ISBN: 0-520-20689-4

*An American Reformation: A Documentary History of Unitarian Christianity*, Edited by Sydney Ahlstrom and Johathan Carey, Wesleyan University Press, 1985, ISBN: 0-8195-5080-9 (this is for hardback, would prefer paperback, if available)

Charles A. Howe, *For Faith and Freedom* (Boston: Skinner House, 1997) (available from UUA Bookstore)

Phillip Hewett, *Racovia: An Early Liberal Religious Community* (Providence, RI: Blackstone Editions, 2004) (available through [www.BlackstoneEditions.com](http://www.BlackstoneEditions.com))

**Please note:** You may order most texts from the [UUA Bookstore](http://www.UUABookstore.com) by calling (+800) 215-9076, and books may often be found via [www.bookfinder.com](http://www.bookfinder.com)