



**GENERAL BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND MINISTRY
DIVISION OF ORDAINED MINISTRY
STANDARDS FOR COURSES IN UNITED METHODIST STUDIES**

I. GENERAL PURPOSE

A. To help the student understand the United Methodist tradition:

1. In context of the cultures from which it has emerged and with which it interacts;
2. In the light of its sources (catholic, evangelical, reformed), its antecedent organizations, the world family of Methodist churches, and the ecumenical Christian community.

B. To help the student interpret the United Methodist tradition so as to:

1. Participate responsibly in the life and leadership of The United Methodist Church;
2. Critically appropriate and effectively communicate the tradition;
3. Actively engage in the ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.

C. To help the student relate historical understanding and theological reflection to the mission and ministry of the contemporary church through:

1. A knowledge of the rationale and ordering of United Methodist structures;
2. Understanding the nature of authority and power in the church;
3. Commitment to an ongoing process of renewal.

D. To help the student utilize resources for the study of United Methodist history:

1. By exposure to a variety of reliable sources, making every effort to introduce students to primary sources;
2. Through use of United Methodist Studies: Basic Bibliographies.

II. ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

A. A minimum of two semester hours or three-quarter hours in each of the fields of United Methodist history, doctrine, and polity (for six credits hours total.) If the six-credit hour total is fulfilled through two three-credit courses, care shall be taken that each area of study receives equal weight in regard to instruction, readings, and coursework.



B. Courses shall be offered for credit toward graduation when taken in a theological seminary.

C. Courses shall be taken for a letter grade.

D. UMC University Senate Guidelines

Current University Senate guidelines state that all UM and approved non-UM seminaries must offer the three UM studies courses (History, Doctrine, Polity) every academic year. The University Senate Guidelines can be accessed through the GBHEM website. The relevant paragraphs can be found in Appendix B, starting on page 40, but specifically the section “Other Considerations” on page 48.

III. LEARNING GOALS

The examples given in the learning goals below are illustrations only. The examples and learning goals are not meant to be exhaustive, nor are they intended to constitute a course syllabus.

A. UNITED METHODIST HISTORY LEARNING GOALS

1. Context: To be familiar with the background and continuing context (social, historical, cultural, and religious) within the tradition originated and developed in England and America.
2. Content: To examine the formative events, person, issues, and movements.
 - a) Origins: to understand formative factors in the rise of various facets of the tradition.
 - b) Organization: to understand the development of religious societies and local churches, leadership and governance, connectionalism and itineracy dissent and reform, divisions and unions.
 - c) Church Life: to understand patterns of personal piety, public worship, sacramental practice, ministry of laity and clergy, and forms of Christian witness in faith and action.
 - d) Outreach: to understand the rationale and programs developed for missions, education, evangelism, and social action.
 - e) Scope: to understand Methodism as part of global and ecumenical Christianity.



3. Interpretation

- a) Critical Analysis: to develop an appreciation for critical historical methodology (questions of “how?”, “why?”, and “what does it mean?”).
- b) Resources: to be familiar with the various interpretations of the tradition and the basic bibliography (historic and current).

B. UNITED METHODIST DOCTRINE LEARNING GOALS

1. To understand United Methodist doctrine and theology:

- a) Origins in John Wesley and those sources upon which he drew (e.g. the ancient church, Anglicanism, Puritanism, Pietism, and mysticism);
- b) Development in the various heritages (denominational, racial, and ethnic);
- c) Expression in the doctrinal standards in the Book of Discipline.
- d) To reflect on and appropriate this tradition personally; to reclaim, interpret, and communicate it for the sake of the community and its identity; and to make its resources available for church renewal and for ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.

2. To understand the distinctive emphases of this heritage, such as:

- a) The primacy, universality, and transforming power of grace, with a pattern of growth in the Christian life involving prevenient, justifying, regenerating, and sanctifying grace.
- b) The continuing relevance of historic Wesleyan emphases (e.g. Christian experience and Christian perfection).
- c) Methodism’s distinctive combination of free-church and catholic ecclesiologies within a disciplined and sacramental fellowship.
- d) The integrity of Christian faith as involving growth in both personal spirituality and social responsibility, resulting in the transformation of both the individual and society.
- e) The sources and criteria of United Methodist theology-Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason with Scripture as primary but interrelated with the other three and interpreted with their aid.

3. To develop theological understanding of ministry, (lay, diaconal, and ordained) and the sacraments in the United Methodist tradition.

4. To relate the United Methodist heritage to the ecumenical movement (e.g. BEM, COCU, World Methodist Council, Bilateral dialogues and agreements).



5. To understand how United Methodist theology draws from and contributes to contemporary theological movements (e.g. ethnic, feminist, liberation, new-evangelical, and process theologies).
6. To employ this tradition, as exemplified in the General Rules and Social Principles, to address issues that challenge the church and society today.

C. UNITED METHODIST POLITY LEARNING GOALS

1. To examine the development of United Methodist polity from a historical and theological perspective:
 - a) To understand the implicit and explicit structural expressions of ecclesiology.
 - b) To become familiar with the nature and implications of connectionalism and itineracy for ministry.
 - c) To understand the annual conference as the basic unit of The United Methodist church.
 - d) To study and understand the covenantal relationship between ministers (lay, diaconal, and ordained) in The United Methodist Church.
2. To use the Discipline and the Book of Resolutions as working handbooks for mission and ministry:
 - a) To understand the process by which leaders are selected.
 - b) To gain a knowledge of the selection, deployment, evaluation, and termination of clergy.
 - c) To become familiar with the decision-making process at all levels of the church.
 - d) To become aware of the required structure and alternative organization of the local church.
 - e) To examine connectionalism in relationship to church property.
 - f) To understand the judicial structures, the appeal and review process.
 - g) To gain an awareness of the role and functioning of the general boards and agencies.
 - h) To understand the role and caucuses and special groups.
 - i) To perceive the nature of ecumenical relationships.