

Course of Study School of Ohio at MTSO

COS 224 - United Methodist Administration and Polity

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Course of Study, Fall 2025

I. Course Description

This course focuses on developing the student's competency as an administrator in a United Methodist congregation.

II. Student Learning Outcomes

The following learning outcomes are articulated by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

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.

III. Course Overview

This course will invite deeper understanding of United Methodist polity and the principle of connectionalism and their impact upon to the nature of the church, membership, congregational life, mission and ministry, chain of conferences, agencies, property, judicial administration and ecumenism as reflected in The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church and The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church. The desired outcome is that these two resources will become working handbooks for mission and ministry for UM students.

Additionally students will be able to:

1. Form a missional vision of vital ministry for The United Methodist Church within multi-cultural and multi-faith contexts.
2. Demonstrate critical theological reflection that is biblically faithful, historically grounded, contextually relevant, and integrated with life in ministry in The United Methodist Church.
3. Exhibit effective ministry skills relevant to intended areas of service within The United Methodist Church.
4. Be aware of available resources for networking and ministry within The United Methodist Connection

As a result of this course, students will have engaged the following learning goals:

- 1) Articulate a biblical, theological and historical understanding of UM polity.
 - 2) Understand and explain the polity of The United Methodist Church, including:
 - a. Connectionalism
 - b. Covenant
 - c. Conferencing,
 - d. Itineracy
 - e. Credentialling
 - f. The Nature of Call and Orders
 - g. Supervision
 - 3) Articulate the nature of stewardship biblically and theologically.
 - 4) Identify techniques and develop skills as effective administrators, including financial management.
 - 5) Be equipped to employ The UM Book of Discipline and The UM Book of Resolutions as working handbooks for mission and ministry. To:
 - a. understand the process by which leaders are selected
 - b. gain a knowledge of the selection, deployment, evaluation and termination of clergy
 - c. become aware of the required structure and alternative organization of the local church
 - d. examine connectionalism in relationship to church property
 - e. understand the judicial structures, the appeal and review process
 - f. gain an awareness of the role and functioning of the general agencies
 - g. understand the role of caucuses and special groups
 - h. perceive the nature of ecumenical relationships
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IV. Course Requirements

A. Textbooks

The Holy Bible

The United Methodist Hymnal

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2024 (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 2024)

The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church 2024 (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 2024)

Lacey C. Warner, *The Method of Our Mission: United Methodist Polity and Organization* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2014)

Articles and excerpts from books may be posted on Populi.

B. Frequently used websites

www.umc.org The official website of The United Methodist Church

www.gbhem.org General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

www.gcfa.org General Council on Finance and Administration

www.umc.org/decisions Archives of Judicial Council decisions

C. Assignments/Assessment of Student Learning

- 1) **Community and Creativity** – God has created us to be co-creators with God and with others. We honor God and the covenant community when we cooperate with one another in joyfully creating a transformed world in the name of Jesus Christ. For each substantive and thoughtful question/comment submitted in ‘real time’ on the Dashboard the ‘questioner/commenter’ will receive 1 point toward their grade. – **10 points/ Due – the last day of class**

- 2) **Vision for Ministry in the UMC** - Prior to our first in person class share your vision for ministry in the UMC in no more than 100 words on the class dashboard. - **10 Points/Due – No later than the day before the first day of class**

- 3) **The organization of the UMC (local setting)**
 - a. **Part #1** - Prior to beginning your reading/viewing assignments, write a 3-5 page statement describing the organization of your current ministry setting, articulating your biblical, theological, missional and practical understanding of administration and polity in the United Methodist tradition, and assessing how the organization of the United Methodist Church helps or hampers the ministry of your ministry setting. – **20 Points/Due – No later than the day prior to our first class session**
 - b. **Part #2** – Write a 4 - 6 page reflection comparing and contrasting your pre- reading/pre-class understanding to your post-reading/post-class understanding of administration and polity. Ask yourself, “How has this material and instruction invited me to think differently about my initial assessments? What new/different ways will I approach administration and the use of UM polity within my local church for the purpose of greater ministry effectiveness? What did I find to be the most helpful insight for service in my current appointment? Why? What did I find to be the least helpful insight for service in my current appointment? Why?” – **20 Points/Due- One week after the last class session**

ASSIGNMENT 3 includes two parts - #1 and #2. THIS TWO-PART ASSIGNMENT SERVES AS A MEASURE OF PERSONAL GROWTH AND ORGANIZATIONAL UNDERSTANDING IN A “PRE” AND “POST” CLASS MANNER.

- 4) **UMC Polity Project** - Choose a project topic AND complete the “peer feedback” forms:
- a. Create and present a project to be used in your ministry setting explaining some facet of United Methodist polity from the *Book of Discipline* OR one resolution from the *Book of Resolutions*. Be mindful of your local context and potential impact to your church and community by choosing a facet which addresses particular local concerns, activities, mission or outreach. – **30 Points/Due – Prior to our second weekend class session**
- AND**
- b. Use as a point of constructive critique with your group and submit to me a “peer feedback” form for each of your fellow students AND one critiquing your own work in response to their presentation. – **10 Points/Due - One week after the last class session**
- Each student will engage ‘presentation day,’ on their own. Prior to the last day of IN PERSON class each student will research, create, record and upload/send for engagement by their presentation team a 30 minute BOD/BOR presentation. Team assignments will be listed on the Dashboard. Each person in the assigned presentation team will view all the presentations of their fellow team members and provide feedback. Please employ the “Peer Feedback” tool as you engage the presentations of your colleagues. Send the completed “Peer Feedback” tool to both the presenter and to the instructor no later than one week after the last class session.

D. Course Requirements

- a. 10 hours of face-to-face instruction on the MTSO campus (Sept. 12–13)
- b. 4 hours on Zoom (Oct. 10–11)
- c. 6 asynchronous hours utilizing Populi.

E. Course Schedule

- Class #1 (ON YOUR OWN) – Prior to the first in-person session
 - o Share and respond to each other’s ‘Vision for Ministry in the UMC’,
 - Class #2 (IN PERSON) – Friday September 12, 2025
 - o Opening worship
 - o UM Polity – a Primer
 - o The History and Formation of UM Polity
 - Class #3 (IN PERSON) – Saturday September 13, 2025
 - o Local Church Administration: Traditional Models/Accountable Board Structure
 - o Conferencing/Conferences and Agencies
 - o Covenant Community, the Nature of the Call, Credentialing and Orders
 - o Superintendency
 - Class #4 (ZOOM) – Friday October 10th from 6 to 8PM and Saturday October 11th from 1 to 3PM
 - o Local Church Administration: Stewardship and Finance
 - o Presentation Wrap-up
 - o Closing Worship
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V. **COSSO Academic Honor Policy**

The Course of Study School of Ohio requires that all material submitted by a student in fulfilling his or her academic requirements be the original work of the student.

Violations of academic honor include any action by a student indicating dishonesty or lack of integrity in academic ethics. Violations in this category include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly passing off work of another as one's own.

Cheating includes seeking, acquiring, receiving or passing on information about the content of an examination prior to its authorized release or during its administration. Cheating also includes seeking, using, giving or obtaining unauthorized assistance in any academic assignment or examination.

Plagiarism is the act of presenting as one's own work with the work of another whether published or unpublished (including the work of another student). A writer's work should be regarded as his or her own property. Any person who knowingly uses a writer's distinctive work without proper acknowledgement is guilty of plagiarism.

A student found guilty of a violation of the academic honor code, after a review of the case, may be subject to one or more of the following sanctions: (1) warning; (2) failing grade for the assignment and/or course; (3) probation; (4) suspension; (5) dismissal from the Course of Study School of Ohio. In severe or repeat cases (regardless of the sanctions) a letter will be sent to the student's District Superintendent and Board of Ordained Ministry representative.

VI. **COSSO Attendance Policy**

National policy from the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) states that a student is expected to attend every class session. Unexcused absences may be cause for loss of credit or dismissal from the school. A student missing 20% or more of the classroom work shall not receive credit for the class. In the event of extenuating circumstances which require the student to miss up to 20% of the synchronous course time (whether in-person or on Zoom), the student should contact both the instructor and the Director prior to the start of the class to get approval and discuss make-up work. (Extenuating circumstances include emergency situations, illness, and dire circumstances, for example. Students are to provide back-up coverage at the local church while attending COS classes.)

Students attending online are required to show their faces the entire class time in order to be considered present, unless internet bandwidth issues or emergency circumstances (e.g., a power outage) necessitate turning off one's camera or calling in to class by phone. You are expected to attend class as you would in a face-to-face classroom (e.g., not driving). During asynchronous class time, faculty may monitor time used in posting and responding to colleagues to track your participation.

Cancellation and Withdrawal: Student must notify the COSSO office if they will be unable to attend class for which they are registered. Although there is no penalty when withdrawing more than two weeks in advance of the beginning of a term, registration fees are nontransferable and

nonrefundable. A \$50.00 late withdrawal fee is charged for all withdrawals within two weeks of the start of a class. All tuition and housing payments are applied to a future term.

Students withdrawing after the start of a term will be assigned a grade of AW (Administrative Withdrawal) and will be responsible for the full \$300.00 tuition amount. Any annual conference scholarship applied to the student billing record becomes the student's responsibility and is due by the end of the term. Housing payment is non-refundable.

NO SHOWS: Except in cases of immediate and dire emergencies, if a student misses any class without notifying the COSSO office, tuition and housing fees are due immediately, a \$50.00 no show fee is charged, and the student will receive an "F" in the class.