

**MN 555 Polity and Program of the PCUSA**  
**Course Description**  
**University of Dubuque Theological Seminary**  
**Summer 2025**

**Instructor: Rev. Dr. Richard J. Shaffer Jr.**  
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### **Course Description**

This eight week course provides an overview of the polity of the Presbyterian Church (USA), both in principle and in practice. Particular emphasis will be on the use of the constitution in the local congregation as well as the other councils. The class will include lectures, discussions, case studies, and outside assignments.

### **Course Objectives**

This course is designed to:

- Equip students to become competent moderators of Session.
- Help students become knowledgeable interpreters of Presbyterian polity for the local congregation.
- Increase student's awareness of the denomination's broader missional purposes.
- Instill in students an appreciation for our connectional nature.

### **Course Requirements**

- Regular and thoughtful participation in all class discussions.
- Timely completion of assigned readings.
- Attendance at one presbytery meeting (or one session meeting if it is unfeasible to get to a presbytery meeting) during the course.
- An analysis of the observed governing body meeting.
- Timely submission of written assignments, including the final assignment.
- Evaluation will be based on class participation, evidence of knowledge of required reading, and quality of submitted work.

## **Required Texts**

P.C. (U.S.A.) *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Part I, The Book of Confessions* [current edition with index].

P.C. (U.S.A.) *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Part II, The Book of Order* [current edition, 2023-2025]

Goodwiller, Gregory A., [A Guide to Parliamentary Procedure in the Presbyterian Church \(U.S.A.\)](https://www.pcusa.org/sites/default/files/pcusa_guide_partliamentary_procedure_2nd_edition_2022.pdf) [this is found as a PDF document at chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgclefindmkaj/https://www.pcusa.org/sites/default/files/pcusa\_guide\_partliamentary\_procedure\_2nd\_edition\_2022.pdf]

Gray, Joan S. and Tucker, Joyce, [Presbyterian Polity for Church Leaders \(Fourth Edition\)](#)

Wilton, Carlos E., [Principles of Presbyterian Polity, Updated Edition](#), Geneva Press

## **Books Not Required but Recommended for Further Study**

Beattie, Frank A., [Companion to the Constitution: Polity for the Local Church](#)

Chapman, William E., [History and Theology in the Book of Order: Blood on Every Page](#)

Olsen, Charles, [Transforming Church Boards Into Spiritual Communities](#)

Robert, Henry M., [Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, Most Recent Edition](#)

Rogers, Jack, [Presbyterian Creeds, A Guide to the Book of Confessions](#)