

UU Music Leadership Credentialing Course

Music Leaders as Theologians: Embodying the Work of Change

July 31, 2018
Portland, Oregon

Syllabus

Co-Instructors

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- Consultation and advising available by appointment

Description

This course is designed to support the role and best practices of the music leader in a multiracial, multicultural, and theologically diverse Unitarian Universalist congregation. As a doorway for deepening the congregation's commitment to the inherent worth and dignity of every congregant, the course supports music leaders in helping the congregation to explore, name, and integrate its values in service of compassion, justice, and inclusion. We will explore such questions as: What is the music leader's role in communicating and embodying the core messages of Unitarian Universalism? How are music leaders called to enter into the current conversations and actions in our Unitarian Universalist movement around dismantling white-supremacy culture in our institutions? How can music leaders model participating in these conversations and actions with depth, curiosity, humility, and joy? Through this course, participants and facilitators will explore how music, as a key element in congregational life, sparks the reflection, growth, and community so necessary for these times.

Goals of the Course

Participants will come away from this course with:

- A lived experience of the rewards and challenges inherent in an intentionally multiracial, multicultural spiritual community
- Increased self-understanding and knowledge of the skills and habits of mind that are necessary to support a multiracial, multicultural congregation/community
- Familiarity and engagement with the current movement to dismantle white-supremacy culture within the Unitarian Universalist faith

- A naming and claiming of the unique role that music leaders can play in this movement, helping to transform their congregations and communities into multiracial, multicultural settings
- A plan of action for exploring next steps in this realm where music, antiracism, and multiculturalism meet
- Resources for assessing their congregation’s multicultural competencies and for addressing resistance to the work
- A “community of accountability and encouragement” within which to continue exploring, growing, and applying what they learn
- An understanding of how race/ethnicity is experienced differently across racial/ethnic groups

Course Materials: Readings, Videos

Videos:

1. “Decentering Whiteness in Worship ... Continuing the Conversation”
Julica Hermann de la Fuente, Dr. Glen Thomas Rideout, Christine Rivera, and Erika Hewitt
<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/decentering-whiteness-worship-webinar>
2. “UUs, Music, and Appropriation with DeReau K. Farrar and Dr. Glen Thomas Rideout”
The VUU [UU talk show] Episode #196
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vW8kiCkbA-8>
3. “Director of Music DeReau Farrar Offers Testimony”
DeReau Farrar, Music Director, First Unitarian Church of Portland, Oregon
<http://www.firstunitarianportland.org/director-music-dereau-farrar-offers-testimony/>

Readings

1. Michael Hornsby, “Choosing a Stubborn Love,” *UU World* Spring 2018:
<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/choosing-stubborn-love>
2. Short chapter on theology (to be sent by May 10)

Pre-Course Assignments

1. Journal:

Watch the videos and read the selections. Then journal about your responses and how these resources make you feel. These reflections are for you, so you can be honest and free-flowing. For every response, keep asking “Why do I feel this way?” in order to take the self-reflection deeper. You can use the following questions as prompts:

- What questions arise in you?
- What worries do you have?
- What hopes, inspirations, or creative ideas do they offer?
- What context do you have already for this work?
- How do your own assumptions, experiences, and relationships play into your responses?

2. Reflection Paper: Theology and Music

Grounding your decisions and behavior is essential for doing high-quality multicultural work. Watch the following video of Opening Worship from the UUMA Ministers' Association CENTER Institute (January 2018). Engage with the role that the music leader plays in helping people understand theologically why this work of multiculturalism and antiracism is important.

You can find the video here: <http://www.uuma.org/?page=2018InstituteMon>

After watching and listening, write a two-page essay (approximately 1,000-1,500 words). In your essay, consider the interweaving of theology and music in the Opening Words and Music of this worship service, from the moment when Dr. Glen Thomas Rideout begins singing "Though you've broken your vows a thousand times," to the reading that follows it, through the congregational singing of "Come, yet again, come." These questions can help guide your reflection:

- What is the Unitarian Universalist theological message conveyed in this section of the worship service?
- How do the musical choices amplify the theological message? You might consider such musical elements as the accompaniment, the voices—who, how many, etc.—the dynamics, the pitch, and more ...
- How does this message and its presentation embody and encourage the building of multicultural, antiracist Beloved Community?
- Please draw on and refer explicitly to the videos and readings that we asked you to ponder in the journaling exercise.

Do you have questions about how we frame the work of "doing theology"? Watch this short video by Meadville Lombard School of Theology's Professor of Theology, Michael S. Hogue: <https://vimeo.com/257056334/918ad088e3> Password: Tt6Ne8vG

Feeling Inspired? [optional]: What else strikes you about the use of music and message in this whole opening worship service from the UUMA Institute 2018? What is the rhythm of the different languages (spoken word, sung words or syllables, silence, instrumentals ...)? How does the use of these different languages support Unitarian Universalism's core

message, as you understand it? What benefits result from using music to open hearts and affirm the efficacy of justice?

3. Email your Reflection Paper by July 1, 2018.

- Convert your essay into a SINGLE .PDF document.
- Send your essay to: Rev. Nancy Palmer Jones (revnpj@yahoo.com)

4. Review your writing just before you come to class:

Please revisit your journaling and your reflection paper just before you join us on Tuesday, July 31. Come to class prepared to share responses to these questions:

- Have your emotions, thoughts, and/or behaviors shifted or changed in any way since you first encountered these resources and wrote these pages? What prompted these shifts, if any?
- If no shifts have occurred, why do you think that might be?

During Class

I. Support and Discernment Team

During the class, the facilitators will help you connect with a small group (no more than three persons) with whom you will pledge to encourage each other and hold each other accountable. After the class, you and your partners will meet at least twice, likely over the phone, to explore, practice, bridge, translate, and grow your own and your congregation's competency as a multiracial, multicultural faith community. We hope your team makes a strong connection, perhaps even checking in with each other during the 2018 UUMN conference that follows our class time.

II. Experiential Learning: Music Leaders as Theologians

During our in-person gathering in Portland, we will be using experiential learning strategies to engage the content *while* you grapple with your personal and congregational context. After the Portland gathering, you will be given instructions about how to engage your congregation and its leadership in similar ways. Again, specific instructions will be given during our time together.

Post-Gathering Work

1. Small-Group Discussions

After our in-person meeting in Portland, students will work with their “Support and Discernment Team” to deepen individual and group learning. The team will create its own meeting schedule and will meet virtually at least two times before submitting your final assignment. Additional details will be made available during the class.

2. Praxis Assignments

Based on the engagement and experiential learning during the in-person segment of the course, each student will be asked to replicate a series of experiential exercises that model how music opens a pathway for both self-knowledge and exposure to the ideals embedded in multicultural liturgy and worship.

All post-gathering work must be completed by January 11, 2018.

Assignments for Post-Gathering will be outlined and distributed during the Portland In-Gathering.