

# Bexley Seabury

BEXLEY HALL SEABURY WESTERN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY FEDERATION

**Course title:** ML 335: Constitution and Canons  
**Term offered:** Fall 2020  
**Course duration:** September 8 – November 15  
**Instructor:** Thomas Ferguson  
email: tferguson@bexleyseabury.edu

Email is the best way to reach me. Since this is a fully online course, please contact me to arrange a time to talk by telephone or videoconference with any questions, comments, or concerns about the course.

A little about me: I received my PhD in the History of Christianity from the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in 2002. I have taught adjunct in Anglican Studies, Church History, and Constitution & Canons at the Episcopal Theological School at Claremont, the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, Union Theological Seminary in New York, and Wartburg School of Theology in Dubuque, Iowa. I served for several years as Academic Dean at Bexley Seabury Seminary Federation, where I taught Episcopal/Anglican history and theology. From 2001-2011 I served first as Assistant Ecumenical Officer and then as Ecumenical Officer for the Presiding Bishop.

## Course Description

This course is a fully online course, offered for 1 unit of academic credit. This course is only offered on a Pass/Fail basis.

This course is intended to be an introduction to the polity and governance of The Episcopal Church. By the end of the course, each student will have an overview of the ecclesiology of The Episcopal Church and an understanding of the Constitution and Canons.

Topics to be covered include:

- Overview of the Constitution and Canons
- Title IV and clergy discipline
- Property and finance
- Marriage, divorce, and remarriage
- Polity / church structure and governance
- Legal and ethical responsibilities of clergy as mandated reporters

Students who complete this course will know

- The basic polity, structures, and procedures of Episcopal Church governance
- The substance of the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church.

Demonstrated competency in the Constitution and Canons is one of the canonical requirements for those seeking ordination as deacon or priest in The Episcopal Church. Successful completion of this course will fulfill the certification requirements in Title III, Canon 6, Section 5 (g) (2) and (3) and Title III, Canon 8, Section 5 (h) (2) and (3).

The Bexley Seabury Seminary faculty has made a commitment to be more intentional and specific about addressing racism in every course and to hold ourselves accountable to that commitment. In this course, we will attend to this commitment through case studies which express issues of systemic racism in the church as part of both weekly discussion and the take-home final examination.

### **Course Goal and Outcome:**

Goal: Be familiar with the polity, structures and procedures of the governance of The Episcopal Church and the substance of the Constitution and Canons, including Title IV, clergy accountability, and responsibilities as mandated reporters; and be able to apply the Constitution and Canons appropriately to ministry settings.

Outcome: General knowledge of significant developments and persons in church history, in the Anglican Communion, and of the history, polity and canons of the Episcopal church; and an ability to bring historical insight to bear on contemporary ecclesial, communal, and public issues. (MDiv Curricular Outcome 1.2)

Assessment: Final Exam

### **Learning Methodology**

The Constitution and Canons are living documents, regularly updated, amended, and changed. They deal with the lived experience of the life of faith: marriage, death, misconduct, financial matters, and ordination, among others.

The methodology of this course will be to apply the Constitution and Canons to practical situations. We will do this through praxis-based examination of case studies in weekly discussion sessions, as well as a take home final examination that will consist of applying relevant sections of the Constitution and Canons to case studies drawn directly from the practice of ministry.

### **Required Books and Resources:**

The Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church. Available as PDF download from <https://extranet.generalconvention.org/staff/files/download/23914>.

James Dator and Jan Nunley, Many Parts, One Body: How the Episcopal Church Works.

The relevant section from the 2004 Windsor Report for Session 6 will be posted online.

### **Course Assignments and Expectations:**

There are two requirements for this course. All participants will be asked to complete the following requirements:

**A. Online participation:** Each week I will post an online discussion question. Each student is required to participate by **posting at least once** in the weekly online discussion, **and by responding at least once** to another student's post. Your posts/comments should be **no more than 150 words**: they are not meant to be essays, but your thoughts and reflections on the discussion question posted. Think of them as the kind of comment you would make in class. **Students must participate in the discussion during the week the relevant material is covered.**

### **B. Take-Home Final Exam:**

Each student taking this course to fulfill the required training in Constitution & Canons will also complete a take-home final exam. This exam will be available after the last class session is completed on October 25 and may be completed at any time between October 25 and November 15. **You should email the final exam directly to me at [revtcfergus@gmail.com](mailto:revtcfergus@gmail.com) by the end of the day on November 15.**

Online discussion counts towards 50% of your Pass/Fail grade. The take-home final exam counts towards 50% of your Pass/Fail grade.

**Fulfillment of BOTH requirements – weekly online discussion and the final exam -- is required to receive academic credit.**

Auditors and those seeking CEU credit must complete both requirements if they are taking this course to fulfill an ordination requirement.

Completion of course evaluation is required for students taking the course for academic credit.

### **Course Grading and Feedback:**

This is a Pass/Fail course. Completing the online discussion component and accurately applying the relevant portions of the Constitution and Canons to case studies in the final exam will result in successfully completing the course. The rubric for the Final Exam is attached at the end of this syllabus.

I respond normally within 24 hours to online discussion forums, and return assignments within a week of the end of the semester.

### **A Word about Assessment:**

Bexley Seabury Seminary regularly evaluates the quality of our programs using a variety of data, including documents that are deposited into student portfolios. These portfolios consist of designated student work (artifacts) from each course, along with the instructor's graded artifact and a scored rubric that assesses the work in light of desired curricular outcomes. The designated assessment artifact for this course is the take-home final exam.

We use your portfolio to assess student learning (in the aggregate) and the effectiveness of our curricula in reaching desired goals and objectives. This process does not involve any further evaluation of your work for grading purposes. No identifying information will be included in any evaluation or report provided to our accreditors or other outside parties. For further information, see the Student Handbook. You may also talk with your instructor, your advisor, the Assessment Coordinator (Lelia Fry, [lfry@bexleyseabury.edu](mailto:lfry@bexleyseabury.edu)), or the Academic Dean, (Terry DeLisio, [tdelisio@bexleyseabury.edu](mailto:tdelisio@bexleyseabury.edu)).

### **Course Schedule**

There are readings assigned for each class session. My introductory comments, which I will post each week, will provide the background to that reading.

#### **Session 1 (September 8-13): Overview**

Student and instructor introductions; historical background.

#### **Session 2 (September 14-20): Constitution of The Episcopal Church**

Read: Constitution of The Episcopal Church; Dator & Nunley, Ch. 2

#### **Session 3 (September 21-October 4): Organization: Title I and Title II**

Read: Title I and II; Dator & Nunley, Ch. 3

This session is 2 weeks long since Title I goes on and on for a bit.

#### **Session 4 (October 5-11): Ministry: Title III**

Read: Constitution and Canons, Title III; Dator & Nunley, Ch. 4

#### **Session 5 (October 12-18): Disciplinary Processes: Title IV**

Read: Title IV; explore [titleiv.org](http://titleiv.org) website

#### **Session 6 (October 19-25): Anglican Communion Governance & Structure**

Read: The Windsor Report (2004), pp 41-63; Dator & Nunley, Ch. 5

**Online Final Exam:** All students must complete the take-home final exam by November 15. The take-home exam will be available October 25, after the conclusion of our online sessions. This is a timed, open-book exam. You will be asked to apply relevant and applicable sections Constitution and Canons for particular case studies. Once you have reviewed the materials, block out a time period of 2 ½ hours in which to take the exam.

ALL STUDENTS IN BEXLEY SEABURY COURSES ARE EXPECTED TO BE FAMILIAR WITH THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION THAT IS PROVIDED ON CANVAS:

- ACADEMIC POLICIES AND FORMS;
- REQUESTS FOR WITHDRAWALS, EXTENSIONS, AND INCOMPLETES;
- TECHNOLOGICAL REQUIREMENTS AND ASSISTANCE,
- WRITING GUIDELINES AND ASSISTANCE;
- COURSE NETIQUETTE;
- PROHIBITION OF PLAGIARISM

**Constitution and Canons  
Final Examination Rubric**

Criterion	Proficient/Pass	Non Proficient/Fail
Application of relevant sections of Constitution and Canons.	The response identifies, cites, and applies appropriate sections of the Constitution and Canons to the question.	The response applies incorrect or irrelevant elements of Constitution and Canons to the question; or, solely relies on authorities other than the Constitution and Canons to address the question.
Areas of Pastoral Response	The response notes relevant pastoral elements that need to be addressed in addition to Constitution and Canons issues.	The response does not note any relevant pastoral dimensions; or, notes pastoral dimensions that are not applicable or relevant.

All components of the rubric must be met.