

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST HISTORY

**Rev. Dr. Susan Ritchie, Visiting Professor of Unitarian Universalist History
Starr King School for the Ministry
Online course, Fall 2010**

Contact info:

RevRitchie@aol.com

740-657-8081

Course Description:

The course begins with an examination of the (alleged) antecedents to Unitarianism and Universalism in pre-Reformation Europe. We move on to trace the theological and then institutional emergence of Unitarianism out of the Radical Reformation. The Unitarian churches in Poland, Transylvania, and England will be considered in detail with attention to issues of sameness and difference in their development and declines. Special focus will be given to the relationship of these communities to their Jewish and Islamic contemporaries. We will also look at the universalism of 18th century England, and the current state of Unitarianism in Europe. Then we cross the ocean to examine the emergence of Unitarianism from developments within Puritan Congregationalism. We explore the uniquely North American institution of Universalism as response to the same cultural setting. Next: the major themes and developments of North American Unitarianism through its classical age, the Transcendentalist development, and the various crises of identity and purpose that develop into and through the late 19th and 20th centuries. Then we turn our attention to Universalist ascendancy, decline, and then consolidation with Unitarianism (perhaps the most misunderstood aspect of Unitarian/Universalist history). Careful attention will be paid throughout to the Unitarian/Universalist social location in relationship to class, race, and gender identities, and how these sometimes enabled and sometimes impaired social justice advances.

Required Readings

There is quite a bit, but hopefully not an overwhelming amount, of required reading for this course. As a hopefully humane gesture, every effort has been made to coordinate readings for this class to the Required Reading List of the UUA's Ministerial Fellowship Committee (which was co-authored by Paul Rasor and myself, so be cautious in your complaints about it!).

Books to acquire and read (that are a part of the MFC required reading list):

Charles Howe, For Faith and Freedom: A Short History of Unitarianism in Europe (1997)
Ross, Warren, The Premise and the Promise (2001)

Book that we will read that will be posted within the course site:

David Robinson, The Unitarians and the Universalists (1985)

There will be some additional shorter readings posted on the course site for some units.