PITTSBURGH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY **COURSE NO.** EF 410

THE CONTENT OF THIS DESCRIPTION IS NOT A LEARNING CONTRACT AND THE INSTRUCTOR IS NOT BOUND TO IT. IT IS OFFERED IN GOOD FAITH AND INTENDED AS A HELPFUL GUIDE TO THE STUDENT.

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TITLE: Polity of the Presbyterian Church USA **TERM:** January 2026-27

PROFESSOR: Trent Hancock **CREDIT HOURS:** 3

REGISTRATION: LIMITED TO: _____ UNLIMITED X
AUDITORS: _____ NO AUDITORS X

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
An introduction to the essential elements of Presbyterian polity (the *Book of Order*) in light of the confessional and theological foundations (the *Book of Confessions*) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The course will explore ways an understanding of Presbyterian polity can support, guide, and enhance the practice of ministry in diverse congregational settings. In addition, students will be introduced to basic parliamentary procedure and the role of the moderator in planning and facilitating session meetings. This course is designed to prepare Presbyterian students for the ordination examination in church polity of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

CLASS OBJECTIVES:
This course will provide an introduction to Presbyterian polity. Topics include:

- The content and ethos of the *Book of Order*, especially part F – The Foundation of Presbyterian Polity; part G – Form of Government; and part D – Rules of Discipline
- The historical development of Presbyterian polity
- The confessional and theological foundations of Presbyterian polity
- Polity issues raised by recent conflicts in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
- Polity and the practice of ministry
- *Robert's Rules of Order* for Presbyterian moderators

PREREQUISITES: None

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS/READING:
Book of Confessions: The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Part I.
Available as on online resource
Book of Order 2025–2027: The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Part II.
Available as on online resource
Goodwiller, Gregory. *A Guide to Parliamentary Procedure in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*. Louisville: Office of the General Assembly, 2014. Available as an online resource.
Handbook on Ordination Exams in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).Available as an online resource.
Wilton, Carlos E. *Principles of Presbyterian Polity*. Updated edition. Louisville: Geneva Press, 2022. ISBN: 9780664266738. $22.46 ($9.99 Kindle) on Amazon.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING:
Discussion board
Reflection paper
Case study responses
A session meeting visit

ATTENDANCE: Required.