



Grace Communion Seminary

CM510 Polity of Grace Communion International

Short Syllabus

Instructor: Greg Williams, D.Min.

Note: The best way to contact the course instructor is via the GCS online system: log into the course, and in the right-hand column go to the block labeled “message my professor.”

GCS Mission Statement

“Equipping the Saints for Pastoral Ministry.” We are committed to equip the saints for pastoral ministry through quality graduate-level distance education programs in biblical, theological, ministerial and pastoral studies informed by Trinitarian Incarnational faith.

Course Description: Polity of Grace Communion International

This course is designed to help students understand denominational life and polity within Grace Communion International. We will give the student an overview of the church’s history, its leaders, and its theological journey. The primary objective of the class is to help the student get a better understanding into the culture and organizational structure of Grace Communion International and then to ably function within the denominational system. The expected number of class hours is 143.

Required Textbooks

Cowan, Steven (General Editor); Toon, Peter; Taylor, L. Roy; Patterson, Paige, Waldron, Samuel. *Who Runs the Church? Four Views on Church Government*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004. ISBN: 978-0-310-24607-7 (sells for about \$16)

Tkach, Joseph. *Transformed by Truth*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1997. ISBN: 1-57673-181-2 (sells for about \$5)

Williams, Greg; Shallenberger, Rick; Nebel, Tom. *A Giant Step Forward: The Next Chapter for Grace Communion International*. Available digitally on Amazon.

Recommended Texts

Barrett, David. *The Fragmentation of a Sect*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-648-81500-8 (sells for about \$10). ISBN: 978-0-19-986151-4 (sells for about \$30).

Berkley, James D. *Leadership Handbook of Management and Administration*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker House, 1997. ISBN: 978-0-8010-9040-0 (sells for about \$17).

Feazell, J. Michael. *The Liberation of the Worldwide Church of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001. ISBN: 0-310-25011-0 (sells for about \$13).

Student Learning Outcomes (see appendix for further details)

1. Students will identify the impact and imprint of Trinitarian Incarnational theology on Grace Communion International.
2. Students will survey church polities across the age of the church and identify the particular polity traits of GCI.
3. Students will study of key transformative events that have led to and shaped the present day configuration of GCI.
4. Students will analyze GCI's historical and current use of broadcast, print and social media.
5. Students will study the historical and current culture and administration of GCI

Required Assignments

1. **Read (or listen to, as appropriate) the lectures.** Lectures will be posted in writing, video, or audio each Monday for the first ten weeks of the course. See the *Academic Catalog* for study suggestions.
2. **Read the textbooks.** They total about 722 pages, or about 70 pages each week. *Stay ahead of the reading as posted in the syllabus*, as reading the texts is essential to the course.
3. **Read, view or listen to, as appropriate, the additional learning materials posted on the weekly assignment list.**
4. **Participate in the online discussions.** In classroom courses, part of the learning process takes place through discussion and interaction with other students. In an online class, this is done through comments posted on a discussion forum. Each week, you must

post at least one comment of your own *and* post a response to at least one other person’s comment. *This participation is required* and counts for 20 percent of the final grade.

5. Write a three-page Reaction Paper to Cowan’s *Who Runs the Church*. Include your current relationship with GCI and describe 1) where you see GCI fitting in the range of polities described in Cowan’s book and 2) what led to your conclusion. The paper will be double-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman font. This paper counts for 15 percent of the final grade.

6. Write a two-page Reaction Paper to your personal interview. Make an appointment with either a Presbyterian Elder or Pastor of a Congregationally-led church and interview them about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of their church polity. The paper will be double-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman font. This paper counts for 10 percent of the final grade.

7. Write a two-page Reaction Paper to your selection of three assigned GCI videos. Describe your view of the identity and culture of GCI based on the content of the update videos. The paper will be double-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman font. This paper counts for 15 percent of the final grade.

8. Write a two-page reaction paper to Tkach’s *Transformed by Truth*. The paper will be double-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman font. This paper counts for 10 percent of the final grade.

9. Write a seven-page Final Project. Based on the studies of this class (in particular, the content of *A Giant Step Forward*) you will write a seven-page Final Project describing the past and present cultural and administrative qualities of GCI, and including your perception of what the future may hold for GCI. The paper will be double-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman font. For a guide to formatting your paper, see “How to Format a GCS Paper,” posted at <http://www.gcs.edu/course/view.php?id=23>. This paper counts for 30 percent of the final grade.

Estimated hours and grade weighting

Assignment	Hours*	Percentage of grade
Lectures	10	
Reading discussions and making responses	10	20
Reading the textbooks	48	
Reading and viewing GCI website materials	10	
Writing Reaction Paper 1: Interview	5	10
Writing Reaction Paper 2: Tkach	5	10
Writing Reaction Paper 3: Cowan	10	15
Writing Reaction Paper 4: Videos	10	15
Writing Final Project	35	30
Total – about 14 hours each week	143	100

Course Schedule

Week	Read	Assignment Due
1. What is Polity?	Cowan: Part 1; Williams: Intro; Tkach chapter 1	Forum participation
2. HWA and Doctrinal Roots of WCG	Williams: chapter 1; Tkach: 7-9	Forum participation
3. Doctrinal Transformation	Cowan: Part 2; Williams: chapters 3-5	Forum participation
4. Freedom in Christ	Cowan: Part 3; Tkach: 2-6; 10-12	Forum participation Tkach Reaction Paper due
5. Revolution of Praxis	Cowan: Part 3; Williams: chapters 6-9; View 3 assigned GCI website videos	Forum participation Interview Reaction Paper due
6. Structural Reconfiguration and Theological Realignment	Cowan: Part 5; View 3 assigned GCI videos	Forum participation
7. Mass Media	View 3 assigned GCI videos	Forum participation Cowan Reaction Paper due
8. Sociology and Culture	“My Journey,” by Lorenzo Arroyo; View 3 assigned GCI videos	Forum participation
9. Governance and Ethics	View 4 assigned GCI videos	Forum participation Videos Reaction Paper due
10. Looking into the Future	View 4 assigned GCI videos	Forum participation
Two weeks after last class		Final Project due