

**SYLLABUS**  
**887: SACRED CEREMONIES AND CELEBRATIONS**  
**1 Day Required Residency**  
**FACULTY: Rev. Jane Simmons, Th.D.**  
**Date Revised: 1/16/13 for Fall 2013**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In the natural cycles of human existence, from the joy of birth to the mystery of death, important changes occur throughout all of our lives. Celebrants and ministers have the honor of bearing witness to these pivotal moments. Ritual deepens the experience of these life events, supporting significant transition and rites of passage. The power of ritual lies beyond words, bringing participants into meaningful connection with the Sacred through the collaborative creation and facilitation of uniquely designed ceremony. In this course, students will research, plan, outline and lead traditional and non-traditional sacred ceremonies and celebrations. All ceremonies created during the course will be shared with every member of the class to keep. During the one-day residency, students have the opportunity to design, present/lead the sacred ceremony that they have prepared. This course is required for all persons on the Spiritual Direction Track, and is highly recommended for those who apply for ordination.

**FACULTY BIOGRAPHY**

Rev. Dr. Jane Simmons is an ordained Unity minister, and holds a doctoral degree in Theology from Holos University Graduate Seminary. She is currently the International Teen Ministry Coordinator for Unity Worldwide Ministries and is adjunct faculty for Unity School's Spiritual Education and Enrichment program. Having served in three Unity churches in Canada and the United States, Jane has created and presided over ceremonies as diverse as weddings, holy unions, memorials, baptisms, christenings and vow renewals. In addition, she has conducted hand fasting and commitment celebrations as well as blessing ceremonies for infants, homes, pets, blended families, churches and places of business. As a speaker, retreat leader, Q Effect Coach and HeartMath® Qualified Instructor, Jane has facilitated numerous transformative workshops and seminars as well as trainings and conferences for New Thought spiritual educators. She is the author of *I of the Storm for Teens*, the co-author of *Who Have You Come Here to Be: 101 Possibilities for Contemplation*, and has written curriculum for both the teen and adult I of the Storm books. Jane has been a contributor to several publications, including *Time of Family* curriculum, *Unity Magazine* and *Natural Healer Magazine*.

**FACULTY CONTACT INFORMATION**

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Address: 1016 SW Lakeview Blvd, Lees Summit, MO 64081  
Conference Call #: 218-339-4600 - Access Code: 190488#

**COURSE DELIVERY STYLE & PLAN OF ACTION**

This course uses a balance of experiential methods and scholarly reference materials. In the residency, experience in planning and conducting ritual, celebration and ceremony is gained under the supervision of the instructor. A reflection paper describing the experience is required. The reading and writing assignments are accomplished through distance learning utilizing occasional conference call discussions. Students may proceed as follows:

1. Contact the instructor by email.
2. Obtain the required textbooks and other materials.
3. Read the Syllabus, Instructor's Supplemental Information Document, Outline of Assignments, and Assignment Schedule and clarify any questions that arise regarding individual plan of action for the course.
4. Submit all assignments and attend all telephone conferences according to the Assignment Schedule that follows.
5. Contact the instructor if there are problems or questions.

## **RESIDENTIAL REGISTRATION**

Register with the HU Bursar, Marilyn McGehee (888-272-6109) for the residency portion of the course.

## **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Students will:

- Research the approach, background, and scholarly premise of traditional and non-traditional sacred ceremonies and celebrations choosing from a variety of possibilities including, but not limited to:
  - weddings
  - adult baptisms
  - infant christenings
  - memorial services
  - vow renewals
  - holy unions
  - commitment ceremonies
  - pet blessings
  - rites-of-passage
  - releasing ceremonies
  - blessing ceremonies
  - honoring of the seasons
- Develop skills in preparing and officiating at celebrations
- Demonstrate ability to design and facilitate a sacred ceremony
- Discuss official regulations related to performing various ceremonies
- Participate in conference calls for a collegial exchange with one another to gain additional insights and ideas about ritual, ceremony and celebration

## **MATERIALS AND TEXTS**

### **Required Materials and Texts:**

1. Beck, Renee and Metrick, Sydney Barbara, **The Art of Ritual: Creating and Performing Ceremonies for Growth and Change**, Celestial Arts, 2003. Available from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)
2. Van Gennep, Arnold, **The Rites of Passage**, The University of Chicago Press, 1960. Available from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)
3. Farmer, Steven D. Ph.D., **Sacred Ceremony: How to Create Ceremonies for Healing, Transitions, and Celebrations**, Hay House, Inc. 2002. Available from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)
4. Huntley, Karyl, **Real Life Rituals**, Spiritual Living Press, 2005. Available from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)
5. **Instructor's Supplemental Information Document**. Emailed by faculty to each student at beginning of semester.

### **Recommended Materials:**

1. Bell, Catherine, **Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions**, Oxford University Press, 1997. Available from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

**In addition, at the one-day residential, the instructor will provide a display of various additional supplemental texts for student use. These texts will serve as reference material for students to utilize as they create a draft ceremony outline.**

## HOLOS FACULTY-STUDENT COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Students and instructor communicate frequently via email, and phone conferences create a collegial forum for sharing ideas among class participants. Telephone conferences and calls with instructors are the student's expense. Faculty will inform students of any time periods that they are not available for email or phone communication. Students should inform instructors if they will not be available for scheduled phone conferences. Students should allow three days for a response after emailing an instructor. If no response has been received after three days, re-send the email, call the instructor and leave a voice message. If a response still has not been received after two more days, forward email communications with the instructor to the Dean of Faculty. Further action will be determined by the Dean of Faculty.

### WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT FORMATS

- All written assignments must be **Microsoft Word** documents sent by email as attached files.
- Power point presentations may also be used to present illustrations and enhancements for submitted ceremony.
- All papers should be **double-spaced**.
- **FONT:** Times, Times New Roman, or Helvetica.
- **E-MAIL SUBJECT LINE:** Always include your name and the Assignment number in the subject line of your e-mail and on the title page of your assigned papers.
- **END NOTES:** All referenced material must be cited using *Chicago Manual of Style* endnotes. Include the Author's name, the publication name, the publisher, the date of publication, and the page number.
- **FILE NAME: When you save your document,** you MUST use the following format to name your Word file or your file will be returned so that you can add the proper file name and format. The document you attach to your e-mail should be in the following format:

**SmithJ\_887#1.doc. (Last Name, First Initial\_Course Number, #Assignment Number.doc)**

### OUTLINE OF ASSIGNMENTS & PERCENTAGE OF COURSE

1. Assignment #1 – 20% Attend residency at Unity Village
2. Assignment #2 – 10% (a) Submit reflection paper; (b) Submit draft outline of ceremony
3. Assignment #3 – 10% Submit peer reviews of ceremonies
4. Assignment #4 – 30% Submit 15-20 page scholarly paper
5. Assignment #5 – 05% Participate in conference call #1
6. Assignment #6 – 10% Submit revised ceremony outline
7. Assignment #7 – 10% (a) Attend ceremony of choice; (b) Submit report on ceremony experience
8. Assignment #8 – 05% Participate in conference call #2

### DETAILS OF ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments are based on a 20 Week Semester. Fall Semester begins the second Monday of September. See Holos website calendar for specific Semester dates. **The instructor will send an assignment calendar at the first of the semester.**

#### ASSIGNMENT #1

**Attend residency at Unity Village**

**Percentage of Grade: 20%**

**Learning Outcomes of Assignment:** Students will:

- Research the approach, background, and scholarly premise of traditional and non-traditional sacred ceremonies and celebrations choosing from a variety of possibilities including but not limited to:
  - weddings
  - adult baptisms
  - infant christenings
  - memorial services
  - vow renewals
  - holy unions
  - commitment ceremonies
  - pet blessings
  - rites-of-passage
  - releasing ceremonies
  - blessing ceremonies
  - honoring of the seasons
- Demonstrate ability to design and present or lead a sacred ceremony.

**Required Texts and/or Materials:** Students will utilize a variety of texts from:

- required materials list
- instructor's supplemental texts and/or materials displayed at one-day residency
- resources from the Instructor's Supplemental Information Document

**Assignment Description:** Students attend the one-day residency at Unity Village.

Prior to the residency, students will:

- read the Instructor's Supplemental Information Document supplied by instructor, to become familiarized with ceremony background material before attending residency
- choose ceremony/celebration to work with

During the residency, students will:

- create outline of chosen ceremony
- present ceremony outline to fellow class members
- present or practice leading portions of ceremony with fellow class members

## **ASSIGNMENT #2**

**(a) Submit reflection paper**

**(b) Submit draft outline of ceremony**

**Percentage of Grade:** 10%

**Learning Outcomes of Assignment:** Reflect on the experience of attending the residency; develop the ability to design and present/lead a sacred ceremony.

**Assignment Description:** Students will:

- (a) submit 3-5 page reflection paper, describing the experience of attending residency, creating and presenting/leading the ceremony
- (b) submit ceremony draft outline for peer review via email to instructor and all students in the class

## **ASSIGNMENT #3**

**Submit peer reviews of ceremonies**

**Percentage of Grade:** 10%

**Learning Outcomes of Assignment:** Develop discernment and skills in preparing ceremonies

**Required Texts and/or Materials:** Copies of Assignment #2 draft ceremonies from classmates

**Assignment Description:** Students will:

- (a) review submitted ceremonies
- (b) share written feedback in the body of the ceremony using Peer Review Outline provided by instructor
- (c) upon completion of feedback, email peer reviewed ceremonies to instructor and all students in the class

#### ASSIGNMENT #4

**Submit 15-20 page scholarly paper**

**Percentage of Grade:** 30%

**Learning Outcomes of Assignment:** Research the approach, background, and scholarly premise of traditional and non-traditional sacred ceremonies and celebrations.

**Required Texts and/or Materials:**

1. Beck, Renee and Metrick, Sydney Barbara, **The Art of Ritual: Creating and Performing Ceremonies for Growth and Change**, Celestial Arts, 2003. Available from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)
2. Van Gennep, Arnold, **The Rites of Passage**, The University of Chicago Press, 1960. Available from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

**Recommended Materials:**

1. Bell, Catherine, **Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions**, Oxford University Press, 1997. Available from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

**Assignment Description:** Write a 15-20 page scholarly paper researching and exploring the following:

- Origin, purpose and role of ritual
- Types of ritual
- Elements of ritual
- Phases/stages of ceremony
- Categories of ritual classification
- Sacred symbology
- Applications of ritual, citing traditional and non-traditional ceremonies

#### ASSIGNMENT #5

**Participate in conference call #1**

**Phone number:** 218-339-4600

**Access Code:** 190488#

**Percentage of Grade:** 05%

**Learning Outcomes of Conference:** Develop discernment in preparing and officiating at celebrations

**Required Texts and/or Materials:** None

**Description of Conference:** During the call, students will engage in collegial exchange with one another to gain additional insights and ideas about ceremony and celebration.

#### ASSIGNMENT #6

**Submit revised ceremony outline**

**Percentage of Grade:** 10%

**Learning Outcomes of Assignment:** Develop discernment and skills in preparing ceremonies

**Required Texts and/or Materials:** Peer reviews and instructor feedback

**Assignment Description:** Students will revise ceremonies taking into account scholarly research, peer review and instructor feedback and email the updated final version to the instructor to be shared with all class members.

#### ASSIGNMENT #7

- (a) Attend ceremony of choice
- (b) Submit report on ceremony experience

**Percentage of Grade:** 10%

**Learning Outcome of Assignment:** Develop discernment and skills in preparing ceremonies

**Required Texts and/or Materials:** None

**Assignment Description:** Students will:

- (a) attend a ceremony of choice, preferably one not previously experienced
- (b) submit a 3-5 page reflection paper, documenting the experience, noting observations

### ASSIGNMENT #8

**Participate in conference call #2**

**Phone number:** 218-339-4600

**Access Code:** 190488#

**Percentage of Grade:** 05%

**Learning Outcomes of Conference:** Students will use the conference call for a collegial exchange with one another to gain additional insights and ideas about ceremony and celebration.

**Description of Conference:** Students will process and share their experiences and insights in researching, creating and leading sacred ceremonies.

### FINAL ASSIGNMENT

Complete and return the course evaluation form you will receive in February. You will receive notification of your final course grades only after you have submitted an evaluation for all courses you completed this semester. Students who plan to take an Incomplete in a course must wait until finishing a course before returning the evaluation form for the course.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR THIS COURSE

**GRADING:** Part of the grade is based on how clearly and creatively you design the assignment. An “A” is assigned to work that is exceptionally clear, well organized, and contains original thought. A “B” is assigned to papers that are not exceptional but are well written and indicate an adequate understanding of the material.

**Conference Calls:** There are two telephone conference calls during the semester. During each call, students will engage in collegial exchange with one another to gain additional insights and ideas about ceremony and celebration. Participation in both telephone conference calls is an important aspect of the final grade.

**Grade of Honors:** We encourage students to strive for honors in all that they do. However a grade of Honors is reserved for work that significantly exceeds the level of excellence required for an "A" or "B".

**Grade of Unsatisfactory:** Students who fail to adequately satisfy the requirements or who do not demonstrate graduate level competency in the course will receive an Unsatisfactory grade. An Unsatisfactory grade in a Core course will require re-enrollment in the course.