

Rev. Dr. Justin Sabia-Tanis to Be Appointed Inaugural Occupant of the Wilson Yates Chair in Theology and the Arts

Rev. Dr. Justin Sabia-Tanis joined United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities in 2019

SAINT PAUL, MN, UNITED STATES, June 5, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities](#) is elated to announce that [Rev. Dr. Justin Sabia-Tanis](#) is being appointed as the first-ever occupant of the [Wilson Yates Chair in Theology and the Arts](#). Until now, he has served faithfully as the McVay Associate Professor of Christian Ethics and Social Transformation and as Director of the Social Transformation Program.

Before joining United, Rev. Dr. Sabia-Tanis served as a congregational minister in Boston, Honolulu, and San Francisco, and was Director of Leadership Development for Metropolitan Community Churches, after which he joined the United Church of Christ (UCC). Rev. Dr. Sabia-Tanis' ministry includes community organizing and advocacy. He has served as managing director at the Center for LGBTQ and Gender Studies in Religion (CLGS) as well as communications director for the Hawai'i Equal Rights Marriage Project, the National Center for Transgender Equality, and Out & Equal Workplace Advocates.



Justin Sabia-Tanis Appointed to Wilson Yates Chair in Theology and the Arts



UNITED
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
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Education for Transformation

He received his PhD in Interdisciplinary Studies from Graduate Theological Union in 2017, his

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Rev. Dr. Justin Sabia-Tanis

DMin from San Francisco Theological Seminary in 2003, and his MDiv from Harvard Divinity School in 1990. His teaching experience spans courses at the University of Arizona, Pima Community College, Iliff School of Theology, and Pacific School of Religion.

As an eminent academic and theologian, Dr. Sabia-Tanis' scholarship has deepened the study of the intersection of art and LGBTQ+ religious identity. He recently completed writing “Queer Spirituality, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Identity in Contemporary Visual Art,” to be released later this year by Bloomsbury Academic. Dr. Sabia-Tanis also

wrote the groundbreaking book “Transgendered Ministry, Theology and Communities of Faith” (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2003; Wipf & Stock, 2018) and authored a chapter in “Transbiblical: New Approaches to Interpretation and Embodiment in Scripture” (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2025).

In 2024, he gave a lecture in the art gallery of Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church in Minneapolis, MN, on the life and art of Keith Haring. Dr. Sabia-Tanis is himself an artist, and he hones and cultivates the creative expression of the artist-theologians enrolled in his courses.

In his announcement of the news to United students, Dr. Kyle Roberts—Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs—connected Rev. Dr. Sabia-Tanis' education and qualifications to the field of theology and the arts. “Dr. Sabia-Tanis appreciates and champions the legacy of Dr. Yates and the leadership of United in the area of arts and theology,” Dr. Roberts asserted. “He also advocates for the intersection of the arts with movements for social justice and will bring to his teaching and leadership a synergy of theology and arts, along with his contributions to the education of social transformation at United.”

Rev. Dr. Molly T. Marshall, President, commended the news for this esteemed member of the faculty. “The wide-ranging scholarship of Dr. Justin Sabia-Tanis will elevate this position as the arts serve as a medium for social transformation.”

Established in 2025 by generous gifts from friends, alums, and former United faculty, the Wilson Yates Chair in Theology and the Arts is an endowed faculty position named after Rev. Dr. Wilson Yates, President Emeritus and Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Religion, Society, and the Arts. Yates joined United's faculty in 1967, became Dean in 1988, and was made President in 1996. He retired from the seminary in 2005, having led and innovated in theology and the arts, deepened scholarship, and integrated the subject as a pillar of United's academic programs.

Rev. Dr. Yates celebrated the news and is eager to see Rev. Dr. Sabia-Tanis installed into the chair. He reflects, “I am very excited about Justin's selection for this role. His studies at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley will provide an important background to this work. Justin

brings a solid understanding of the relationship to the arts in theology, the church, and everyday life. It is not incidental that he is also a practicing artist.”

On his appointment to the chair, Rev. Dr. Sabia-Tanis shares, “United has valued and integrated the arts since our founding. They are critical to how our students are formed, and in the ministries and projects they will lead when they graduate. I am so honored to move into this important role at United and continue the incredible legacy of Wilson Yates. And I’m looking forward to the ways this program will evolve and grow in the coming years.”

The installation of Dr. Sabia-Tanis into the Wilson Yates Chair in Theology and the Arts will be formally celebrated at Fall Convocation on Thursday, September 24, 2026.

Nathanial Totten

United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities

+1 651-255-6138

[email us here](#)

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