



Contemporary Issues in Public Policy: Church-State Relationships, Religious Liberty, and Freedom of Conscience

Ph.D. ETHC9490

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

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President, Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission

Seminar Coordinators:

- Phillip Bethancourt, Ph.D., Executive Vice President of the ERLC
- Andrew Walker, Th.M. Director of Policy Studies (doctoral candidate in Christian Ethics, SBTS)

All correspondence and questions related to the class should be directed to Andrew Walker: awalker@erlc.com. Questions regarding NOBTS should be addressed to Dr. Jeffrey Riley: jriley@nobts.edu. All student inquiries will be replied to within 48 hours.

Location TBD:
Washington D.C.
May 21-25

- Students need to arrive for class to begin by 1 PM on May 21.
- Class will conclude by 2 PM on May 25.
- Students will be responsible for all costs related to travel, housing, and food.

Mission Statement

The mission of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is to equip leaders to fulfill the Great Commission and Great Commandments through the local church and its ministries.

Core Value Focus

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary has five core values: Doctrinal Integrity, Spiritual Vitality, Mission Focus, Characteristic Excellence, and Servant Leadership. The seminar supports the core values of Spiritual Vitality and Doctrinal Integrity by introducing students to authors whose lives and writing convey a vital and contagious devotion to God. Connecting with such a company of disciples enlarges and enriches our understanding of the doctrine of the communion of saints and requires that our theological reflections engage the light drenched



environment of the Spirit of God where abundant life is generated and nurtured. The core value focus for the 2017-18 year is ***Servant Leadership***: “*We follow the model of Jesus and exert leadership and influence through the nurture and encouragement of those around us.*”

Curriculum Competencies

The seven basic competencies that guide the NOBTS curriculum are Biblical Exposition, Christian Theological Heritage, Disciple Making, Interpersonal Skills, Servant Leadership, Spiritual and Character Formation, and Worship Leadership. It could be argued that a solid and comprehensive exposure to the devotional classics contributes to the development of all these competencies. Fundamentally, however, the seminar supports Christian Theological Heritage and Spiritual and Character Formation. The rudiments of spiritual formation are identified and elucidated as they are perceived and practiced across the broad range of Christian history. The seminar could be described as an exercise in heritage based praxis: learning from spiritual mentors past and present how to walk with God and why this is the most crucial task of the church.

Seminar Description

This seminar is an examination of selected issues in contemporary public theology. This course will focus broadly on religious liberty and its application to several arenas of public policy. It will analyze the biblical, doctrinal, historical, and practical aspects of applying Christian theology and ethics in the public square.

This seminar will incorporate classroom lecture, discussion, guest speakers, panels, and site visits in Washington, D.C. relevant to class material.

Students should dress business professional for the week unless otherwise noted.

Student Learning Outcomes

- To evaluate the biblical and theological dynamics that help formulate a distinctly Christian framework for religious liberty.
- To assess historical foundations and contemporary debates surrounding religious liberty.
- To assist participants in understanding the centrality of religious liberty to evangelical public theology and social ethics.



- To apply Christian reflection on the centrality of religious liberty to contemporary public policy debates.
- To navigate the challenges of communicating Christianly within liberal democracy.

Responsibilities of Seminar Participants

1. PRE-SEMINAR REQUIREMENTS

a. Reading (35%) Read in their entirety each of the following books (3,204 pages). A signed reading statement indicating the percentage of material read, along with an annotated bibliography of the books, is due to the professor on the **first day the seminar meets**, and should be uploaded onto Blackboard.

- Ahdar, Rex, and Ian Leigh. *Religious Freedom in the Liberal State*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. (471 pages)
- Corvino, John, Ryan T. Anderson, and Sherif Girgis. *Debating Religious Liberty and Discrimination*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. (262 pages)
- Forster, Greg. *The Contested Public Square: The Crisis of Christianity and Politics*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008. (249 pages)
- Guinness, Os. *The Global Public Square: Religious Freedom and the Making of a World Safe for Diversity*. Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2013. (240 pages)
- Hamburger, Philip. *Separation of Church and State*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004. (528 pages)
- Hertzke, Allan D., and Timothy Samuel Shah, eds. *Christianity and Freedom: Historical Perspectives*. Vol. 1. 2 vols. Cambridge Studies in Law and Christianity. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016. (402 pages)
- Maclure, Jocelyn, and Charles Taylor. *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience*. Translated by Jane Marie Todd. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011. (110 page)
- Neuhaus, Richard John. *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988. (264 pages)
- Smith, James K. A. *Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017. (224 pages)
- Smith, Steven D. *The Rise and Decline of American Religious Freedom*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014. (171 pages)
- Williams, Roger. *On Religious Liberty: Selections from the Works of Roger Williams*. Edited by James Calvin Davis. Cambridge: Belknap Press: An Imprint of Harvard University Press, 2008. (283 pages)

b. Summary and Evaluation of one assigned book (10%).



Each student shall write a book interaction on one of the assigned books. This interaction should summarize the book in 300-400 words, followed by a 1000-word evaluation of the book's strengths and weaknesses. This summary and evaluation should be completed and uploaded onto Blackboard prior to the first day of the seminar.

c. Term Paper Outline (5%)

Each student will prepare a brief outline (2-page maximum) detailing key aspects of their proposed term paper. Prior to preparing this outline, each student must have their paper topic approved. This bullet-pointed outline should include the paper's rationale (why it should be written), the paper's thesis (what it is arguing), and the paper's methodology (how it will make its argument). This outline should be completed and uploaded onto Blackboard prior to the first day of the seminar.

2. SEMINAR REQUIREMENTS

Class Attendance

Attendance at all seminar sessions in their entirety is mandatory. You may be excused for infectious disease or circumstances such as would warrant a last-minute excuse from a preaching assignment.

Class Discussion

Throughout the class sessions, seminar members will be called on to contribute to or lead the discussions of reading done and the issues raised. Failure to be prepared at any session (with the expected completion of reading, of alert and intelligent discussion of research, or of alert interaction with other students with regard to their research) will severely diminish the overall course grade.

3. POST-SEMINAR REQUIREMENTS

a. Term Paper (50%) Seminar students will compose a research paper of approximately 25-30 pages on a subject of their choosing within the broader scope of the seminar. The topic for the paper must be approved before students prepare their term paper outline. **Students will be**



expected to give a five to ten-minute brief overview of their research paper to fellow students during the class. The term paper should conform to the guidelines of *Turabian*, 8th edition. The term paper is **due by 4 PM CT on June 22**, and should be uploaded to Blackboard upon completion.

Seminar Grade

The overall grade will be assigned by the professor reflecting the quality of each participant's completion of the requirements listed above. Grades below B are not acceptable for credit in a Ph.D. program.