



ANSWERING GOD'S CALL

THCH 8302 - THE CHURCH, LAW, AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

February 23-25, 2026

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

M 1-9 pm, T 8 am - 4 pm, W 8 - noon

Dr. Lloyd Harsch

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Mission Statement

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Leavell College prepare servants to walk with Christ, proclaim His truth, and fulfill His mission.

Course Description

Students will evaluate case studies involving past and current United States Supreme Court cases that relate to the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. Attention will be given to the tension between the Free Exercise Clause and the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment and how this affects ministry in the local church. This course will help church leaders identify and respond effectively to constitutional issues faced by the contemporary church and their ethical implications.

Student Learning Outcomes

In order to understand and interpret Christian theological heritage and Baptist distinctives for the church, students, by the end of the course, should:

1. Be able to apply their knowledge and understanding of the formation and development of the U. S. Supreme Courts holdings regarding Religious Liberty to current legal challenges.
2. Value the heritage and importance of Religious Liberty for both Church and State.
3. Be able, with the help of resources, to accomplish the following:
 - Practice the historical method and historiography in order to interpret Christian theological heritage for the local church.
 - Place court cases and concepts within their proper historical context.

Required Textbooks

Black, Amy E., gen. ed. *Five Views on the Church and Politics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015. ISBN: 978-0-310-51792-4

Valeri, Mark. *The Opening of the Protestant Mind: How Anglo-American Protestants Embraced Religious Liberty*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2023. ISBN: 9780197663677

Williams, Daniel K. *The Politics of the Cross*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2021. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7851-9

White, Thomas, Jason G. Duesing, and Malcomb B. Yarnell III. *First Freedom: The Baptist Perspective on Religious Liberty*. 2d Edition. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016. ISBN: 978-1433644375

Recommended Texts

Flowers, Ronald B., Melissa Rogers and Steven K. Green. *Religious Freedom and the Supreme Court*. 6th Ed. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008. ISBN: 978-1602581609

Grudem, Wayne. *Politics According to the Bible: A Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Modern Political Issues in Light of Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-310-33029-5

Course Requirements

A. Text Reviews: Each student will write separate reviews of the Valeri and Williams texts. The reviews will be written as though for an academic magazine or journal. It should:

- 1) identify each book's main thesis or purpose,
- 2) give a brief summary of the contents,
- 3) include an evaluation of the work's strengths and weaknesses,
- 4) compare and contrast the texts with each other.

All quotations and direct references to sections in the book should be indicated by page numbers within parentheses. Citations or paraphrases from other sources should be noted and documented using either footnotes or endnotes. Reviews should be 3-5 pages in length, single-spaced. **Due February 23, 2026.**

B. Text Comparison: Each student will write a single review comparing and contrasting the Black and White texts. The reviews will be written as though for an academic magazine or journal. It should follow the same writing guidelines as for the text reviews. **Due February 23, 2026.**

C. Book Review: Each student will write a review of a book from the Bibliography. Choice of book must be approved by the professor. No duplications will be allowed. Books will be assigned on a first come first served basis. The review will follow the above Text Review

guidelines 1-3. Reviews should be 2-3 pages in length, single-spaced. Students will present their review during class as a basis for discussion. **Review presentations will begin on the first day of class, February 23, 2026.**

Recommended books for review are indicated by ** in the bibliography.

D. Research Paper: Each student will write a research paper on a topic related to the class. Topics **must** be approved by the professor. The paper must be double spaced and follow Turabian, eighth edition, for style. However, **do not use** chapters to separate sections of your paper (chapters require a new page for each new chapter and the project is not long enough to justify this). Use section headings instead. The appendix should come before the bibliography and be single spaced. The text of your paper (not counting table of contents, appendix, or bibliography) should be 12-15 pages in length (no more, no less). Use 5 - 10 sources with a minimum of three (3) books (do not use only Internet sources). A late paper will be assessed an initial **10 point penalty**. Each calendar day after the due date (excluding Sunday) an **additional 10 point penalty** will be assessed. Projects will be graded on clear organization, spelling, and grammar as well as content. Examples of Turabian form will be available in Canvas. **Research papers are due March 31, 2026.**

Grading Scale

Text Review 1	15%
Text Review 2	15%
Text Comparison	15%
Book Review	10%
Participation	5%
Research Paper	<u>40%</u>
	100%

Grades will be assigned on the basis of the NOBTS grading scale.

Technical Assistance

For assistance regarding technology, consult ITC (504-816-8180) or the following websites:

1. Selfserve@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the Selfserve.nobts.edu or My.nobts.edu site (Access to online registration, financial account, online transcript, etc.)
2. Canvas@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the NOBTS Canvas Learning Management System (Faculty/Students/Staff) Canvas.NOBTS.edu.
3. [Video Conferencing Help Desk](#) - Email for technical questions/support requests with the Video Conferencing NOBTS classrooms (On and Off-Campus)
4. TelephoneHelpDesk@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the NOBTS On-Campus Phone system.

5. ITCSupport@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests in the Flex classrooms and for general technical questions/support requests. If you are not sure who to contact, use this email address!
6. [504.816.8180](tel:504.816.8180) - Call for any technical questions/support requests. (Currently available Mon-Thurs 7:00am-9:00pm & Fri 7:00-7:00pm Central Time)
7. www.NOBTS.edu/itc/ - General NOBTS technical help information is provided on this website.

Writing Style Guide

Writing assignments should follow the NOBTS/Leavell College Manual of Form and Style (revised August 2019). To access this manual on the seminary website, please use the following link:

<https://www.nobts.edu/writing/guidelines.html>

Plagiarism on Written Assignments

NOBTS has a no tolerance policy for plagiarism. Plagiarism in certain cases may result in expulsion from the seminary. See the NOBTS Student Handbook for definition, penalties, and policies associated with plagiarism.

Emergency Plan

In case of hurricane or any other emergency, go to the seminary web site for information: www.nobts.edu. The administration will communicate information that relates to the seminary: the nature of the emergency, instructions for responses, evacuation, contingency plans, duration of the emergency, and plans to return to campus and/or resume the schedule.

In addition, check Canvas for instructions related to this class. Because this class is available on Canvas, there should be minimal disruption unless the emergency affects electrical power and connection to the Internet.

In any emergency, communication is important, and our best means of staying connected is through the seminary's web site and Canvas.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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