

Religious Freedom Essentials for Ministry Leaders (1 credit)

Thursday, April 4, 6:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.; Friday, April 5, 6:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.

Saturday, April 6, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

This course will survey the legal principles that safeguard religious freedom, including their theological, philosophical, and historical underpinnings, as well as new developments affecting churches and ministries. It is designed to equip ministry leaders committed to maintaining a biblical confession with a greater understanding of the policy and legal environment so they can navigate shifting circumstances with wisdom and sound judgment.

Classes

Class 1: Introduction: theology and history of religious freedom; overview of U.S. legal framework (constitutional and statutory) protecting religious freedom.

Class 2: Employment law issues in ministry; freedom of association and the autonomy of religious institution; freedom of religious expression.

Class 3: Government funding and religious organizations; government regulation of places of worship and other religious institutions; tax issues involving religious expression and other ministry functions; special issues involving religious institutions in litigation; current conflicts in the courts between religious liberty and other societal values.

Reading

Assigned readings include articles, book excerpts, government publications, and legal case decisions, including (sample list):

- John S. Redd, “The Earth is the Lord’s: A Biblical Theology of Religious Liberty,” in *Set Free: Restoring Religious Freedom for All*, edited by Art Lindsey and Anne R. Bradley (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2019) (excerpts); E. Gregory Wallace, “The Religious Origins of Religious Freedom in Western Thought” in *Set Free* (excerpts)
- Virginia Statute on Religious Freedom (1786)
- *Westminster Confession*, Chapters 20 and 23 (Original and American versions)
- Luke Goodrich, *Free to Believe: The Battle Over Religious Liberty in America* (Multnomah 2019) (excerpts)
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, *Compliance Manual on Religious Discrimination* (January 15, 2021) (excerpts)
- *Our Lady of Guadalupe v. Morrissey-Berru* (U.S. Supreme Court 2020) (excerpts)
- *Tax Guide for Churches and Religious Organizations* (IRS 2015)
- *303 Creative LLC v. Elenis* (U.S. Supreme Court 2022) (excerpts)

Writing

A final paper (6-10 pages) will be assigned, on a topic of the student's choice or responding to several prompts. One short paper (1-2 pages) summarizing class readings will be assigned.

Grading

Reading report, 10%; short writing assignments, 10%; final writing assignment, 60%; class participation, 20%.

Contact

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