Course Description
This course is an introduction to the history, principles, and practices of Baptist congregational life and mission. Students are expected to acquaint themselves with a general understanding of Baptist history and polity. The specific focus in this course will be understanding Baptist history in the context of the polity and practices of the American Baptist Churches in the USA.

Course Objectives
1. To gain an understanding of the historical beginnings of Baptist thought and practice in North America.
2. To understand the life and faith of Baptist polity from historical, contemporary/practical and theological perspectives.
3. To be able to clearly articulate how Baptists are:
   - A Redeemed People: Believing in Soul Freedom
   - A Biblical People: Believing in Bible Freedom
   - A Worshipping People: Believing in Church Freedom
   - A Passionate People: Fighting for Religious Freedom
   - A Missional People: Taking the Gospel to all Corners of the Earth
   - An Interdependent People: Believing in Associations and Ecumenism
   - A Caring People: Reaching Out to Neighbors and the World
   - An Inclusive People: Being No Respecters of Persons
4. To become articulate regarding the inclusion of women in ordained, authoritative ministry.
5. To become familiar with Regional and National requirements and processes for licensure and ordination in your Baptist denomination(s).
6. To meet with denominational judicatory officials in order to discuss your calling and plans for ministry, fulfillment of denominational requirements, and future placement.
7. To gain practical insight into the work of being a leader (clergy or lay) in a local Baptist congregation.

Required Texts

In addition choose one of the two following books:

**If you are not African-American, I recommend instead:**

**Required Pamphlets and Booklets**

**Baptist Joint Committee Resource Publications.** [www.bjconline.org](http://www.bjconline.org)

Contact the Baptist Joint Committee before the course begins and ask to receive their free newsletter, *Report from the Capital,* which is published 10 times each year. Phone 202-544-4226 or go to bjconline.org/report-from-the-capital

**Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Resources.**

- **Baptist Myth Series.** The Baptist History and Heritage Society, the Center for Baptist Studies of Mercer University, and the Whitsitt Baptist Heritage Society jointly publish these. They are available at the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Product Store web site: [www.thefellowship.info](http://www.thefellowship.info) or phone 888-801-4223.

  - Baptists are Anti-Intellectual
  - Baptists are Scientific Creationists
  - Baptists are Inerrantists
  - Baptists Don’t Believe in Social Justice
  - Baptists are Anti-Ecumenical
  - Baptists are Racists
  - Baptists are Not Peacemakers
  - Baptists are Anti-Catholic

**Recommended Reading**


Course Requirements

No late work will be accepted for credit. Carefully note posting dates/times for each assignment. For your own sake, please remember with weekly assignments, there is no time to get behind.

Grading Points Totaling 100

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Photo, Introductory Statement, Responses to Peers</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Baptist Beginnings Post, Responses to Peers</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Priesthood of Believers Essay, Responses to Peers</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Soul Freedom Post, Responses to Peers</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Baptism Post, Responses to Scenarios, Responses to Peers</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Generation Joshua Critique, Responses to Peers</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Denominations Post, Responses to Peers</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Answers to 6 Questions, Responses to Peers</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Off for Thanksgiving. (continue work on final projects if possible)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Adoniram Judson Post</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due Friday, Dec 4, 4:00 p.m. Ordination/Licensure Outline and Timeline 8
Due Tuesday Dec 15, 2:00 a.m. Sermon or Elective Class 20 100

Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100-95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>94-90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>89-87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>86-83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>82-80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>79-77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>76-73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>72-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>69-67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>66-63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>62-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59 and below</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Course Schedule and Online Assignments

Week 1 begins Monday September 28 – Baptist Identity, Distinctives, and Ideals

Download to Moodle by Wednesday, September 30, 2:00 a.m. CDT (Central Daylight Time):
1. A photo of yourself
2. Write an Introductory Statement about yourself, including:
   *how you became a Baptist (or why you are considering becoming Baptist)
   *what questions you hope to have answered in this course
   *what you see to be the strengths in being Baptist
   *what challenges you perceive Baptists are facing or will face with new generations
   This statement must not exceed 500 words.
3. Respond to the postings of two peers by Friday, October 2, 2:00 a.m. CDT.
   Responses must not exceed 250 words.

Important Reminders

*Remember: when you are instructed to post by 2:00 a.m. Wednesday, that means two
hours after midnight Tuesday. All times are listed in the Central Time Zone.
*I suggest you write your posts in word processing and then copy and paste them into Moodle.
*Tip: 500 words is a brief response. The postings you provide during this course are to be written in formal writing style, and are not to be composed of “stream of consciousness writing.” These are academic responses. The brevity of the response will require careful thought in order to say something of substance. This is an exercise which will assist you in ministry. Most newsletter articles you will write in ministry are of this length.
*Tip: A peer posting should include significant engagement with the content of a peer’s Posting.
*Do not allow yourself to get behind. The class goals are designed to be attainable week by week. You will want to keep an eye on the end of course assignments and do some preliminary work on them along the way. You also may read ahead when you have the time, particularly with Grenz and Christie. You will note that I have lightened your workload for Thanksgiving Week (you are welcome!)

Read by Thursday, October 1
Maring and Hudson, Chapter 1, Identifying Baptists. (18 pages)

Read before Monday October 5
Grenz, Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry. Chapters 1-4 (98 pages)
Leonard, Chapter 4

Practical Experience to be completed by the End of the Course:
1. If you are not currently in a pastoral ministry position, contact your pastor and request the opportunity to assist or preside over a communion service this fall.
2. In addition, ask a pastor to walk you through a baptismal service, including providing you with the opportunity to practice baptizing. Ask the pastor to share her/his helpful hints, procedures, written guidelines, how they decide if and when a person is ready for baptism, war stories, etc.
3. Please contact me if you are not allowed to do either of these assignments in your current church context. The seminary will help you find a place to complete this assignment.

Week 2 begins Monday, October 5 – Baptist Beginnings

1. Read Leonard Introduction and Chapters 1 – 3
2. Download to Moodle by Wednesday, October 7, 2:00 a.m. CDT:
   Post a statement of up to 500 words describing how Baptist beginnings are being fulfilled and/or not fulfilled in contemporary Baptist churches.
3. Respond to the postings of two peers by Friday, October 9, 2:00 a.m. Responses must not exceed 250 words.
4. Read Grenz Chapters 5 – Epilogue (92 pages)
5. Fieldwork:
   If you are not currently ordained, contact your pastor and call your Regional Representative to discuss licensure and ordination requirements. If possible, arrange a meeting to discuss these items. (Regional folks like to place people they “know” – it is your responsibility to “become known” through intentional meetings and volunteer activities in your region.) Post to Moodle an outline, including timeline, detailing how and when you will complete what processes. Due Friday, December 4, 4:00pm.
Week 3 begins Monday, October 12 – Priesthood of All Believers, Soul Freedom and Redeemed People

1. Read Shurden Chapter 2 (10 pages)
2. Read Parker Chapter 2 (18 pages)
3. Download to Moodle by Wednesday, October 14, 2:00 a.m.:
   Write an essay of up to 500 words which you might write in a church newsletter explaining the Baptist distinctive of Priesthood of All Believers. Do you believe this is an endangered principle among Baptists? If so, why and should anything be done to preserve it?
4. Respond to two peer postings to the question above by Friday, October 16, 2:00 a.m.
   Observe the 250 word maximum for the two postings.
5. Read Christie Introduction – Chapter 13 (121 pages)

Week 4 begins Monday, October 19 - Biblical People, Bible Freedom

1. Read Shurden Chapter 1 (13 pages)
2. Read Parker Chapters 3 and 5 (10 pages and 12 pages)
3. Read pamphlets from the “Myth” series:
   - Baptists are Anti-Intellectual
   - Baptists are Scientific Creationists
   - Baptists are Inerrantists
4. Post to Moodle by Wednesday, October 21, 2:00 a.m. Respond to the following statement, 500 word maximum. “Soul freedom teaches us that every person has both the freedom and responsibility to determine what s/he is going to do about God. Some critics state it is irrational to consider scripture as final authority on matters of faith and practice. Westerners, Americans in particular, have been regarded as being extremely individualistic so as to harm community.” Tell us what you think and how you might lead a church to promote personal faith and “unity in the community”.
5. Respond to two peer postings to the above statement by Friday, October 23, 2:00 a.m., 250 word maximum for each posting.
6. Read Christie Chapters 14-26 (128 pages)

Week 5 begins Monday October 26 – Two Ordinances

1. Read Maring and Hudson Chapter 8 (27pages)
2. Read Leonard Chapter 6
3. Post to Moodle by Wednesday October 28, 2:00 a.m.:
   Respond to the following questions, 500 word maximum: “What is and isn’t baptism? What happens in baptism (what is occurring?) Who is baptism for? What guidelines might be used to determine if a person is ready for baptism? Must we baptize? Is there more than one mode (method) of baptism which should be taught and/or practiced in the Baptist church?
4. Post to Moodle by Friday, October 30, 2:00 a.m. Respond to at least one of your peers with a response of up to 250 words.
5. You will receive a scenario related to the Baptist ordinances on Monday. Post your scenario and your response to it in less than 500 words by Sunday, November 1, 2:00am.
6. Post to Moodle by Tuesday, November 3, 2:00am, your response to one of your peers’ scenarios, in less than 250 words.
Week 6 begins Monday November 2 – Religious Freedom, Contemporary People

1. Read Shurden Chapter 4 (10 pages).
2. Read Parker Chapters 6 & 7 (20 pages).
3. Peruse the Baptist Joint Committee website: www.jbconline.org. Be sure to watch the interview of the late James Dunn by Bill Moyers. Pay special attention to information about the relationship of religious groups with public schools.
4. Post to Moodle by Thursday November 5, 2:00 a.m. a thorough review of the Generation Joshua website: www.generationjoshua.org. Seek out additional information on the organization via internet research. Critique Generation Joshua from a Baptist perspective. Include a summary which reflects how you personally concur and/or struggle with the vision of Generation Joshua. Integrate your learnings from your readings and review of the Baptist Joint Committee.
5. Respond to two peer critique postings by Saturday November 7, 2:00 a.m. 150 word maximum for each of the two postings.

Week 7 begins Monday November 9 – Autonomy, Church Freedom, Associational Relationships

1. Read Shurden Chapters 3 and 8 (20 pages).
2. Read Parker Chapter 4 (10 pages).
3. Read Maring and Hudson Chapters 2-7 and 9 (170 pages).
4. Read pamphlets from the “Myth” series: 
   Baptists are Anti-Ecumenical
   Baptists are Anti-Catholic
5. Post to Moodle by Thursday November 12, 2:00 a.m., 1,000 word maximum:
   Openings Statement, which sets the framework –
   “In seminary classrooms across the country, there are frequently moments where students and professors engage in dialog regarding the ‘sad lack of unity in Christ’s church.’ Denominations are referred to ‘as a necessary evil’; and comments are made regarding, ‘If only we could break down the walls…”’

   From a Baptist perspective:
   “Why are separate denominations necessary and inevitable?

   What are some of the things, in terms of what Baptists understand to be required of them as faithful and obedient Christians, which make it necessary for Baptists to maintain a separate identity?

   What are some of the shared convictions and concerns which make it possible for Baptists to cooperate with other denominations in a common Christian witness?”

   Include a summary which reflects how you personally concur and/or struggle with Baptist theology in this area. Critically reflect on the role of denominations in what some might call a postmodern era. Integrate your learning from the readings.

6. Respond to two peer postings by Saturday, November 14, 2:00 a.m., 150 word maximum for each of the two postings.

Week 8 begins Monday November 16 – Inclusive, Caring, Missional
1. Read either the Collier-Thomas or the McKinney textbook.
2. Read pamphlets from the “Myth” series:
   - Baptists are Not Peacemakers
   - Baptists Don’t Believe in Social Justice
   - Baptists are Racists
3. Peruse your denominational website to study issues of social justice, women in ministry, inclusivity, and missions from your denomination’s perspective.
4. Post to Moodle by Thursday November 19, 2:00 a.m. your answers to the following questions with a 1,000 word maximum:
   a. What are your earliest memories in terms of women functioning in the ministry? What women have ministered to you pastorally in your life? How has this impacted your ongoing perspective?
   b. To what extent have you perceived the presence of women in ministry to be a function of feminism and political correctness in your denomination, church and personal experience? To what extent do you agree with your denominational and churches’ position regarding the equal gifting and practice of ministry by all persons?
   c. What challenged your thinking from Grenz’s writing? What was made clearer for you? What questions do you still have?
   d. What painful experiences have you had that are a direct result of the women in ministry issue?
   e. What is a male minister’s responsibility regarding this issue?
   f. What steps are you going to take as a result of your learning?
5. Respond to two peer postings by Sunday, November 22, 2:00 a.m. with a 500 word maximum for each of the two postings

**Week 9 begins Monday November 23.** You are off this week for Thanksgiving. If you have time you may choose to work on your final assignments and/or get ahead on your reading.

**Week 10 begins Monday November 30 – Back to Baptist Beginnings: Adoniram Judson**

1. Read Christie Chapters 27 – Epilogue (128 pages)
2. Post to Moodle by Saturday, December 5, 2:00 a.m. with a 500 word maximum:
   a. How does Adoniram Judson relate to current Baptist churches?
   b. How do you see the role of international missions changing to meet contemporary challenges?
3. Due Friday December 4, 4:00pm, your ordination/licensure outline and timeline.

**Week 11 begins Monday December 7 – FINAL PROJECT**

**DUE TUESDAY DECEMBER 15, 2:00 a.m.**

Select an issue in Baptist Polity (any issue we have covered in this course) and prepare a 10 page typed, double spaced, passionate, biblical sermon for your own congregation on the topic. Either post the manuscript to Moodle or send a DVD of your sermon to me at 6690 County Road F41, Oscoda MI 48750-9608.

Optional Assignment: In lieu of the sermon, prepare a 3-5 week adult or youth Sunday School elective on Baptist Polity, which you will plan to present in your congregation. Either post the course outline and content manuscript, or mail a DVD of the actual class sessions.

**ALSO DUE Tuesday, December 15, 2:00 a.m.**
A final statement regarding the completion of:
1. Presiding over communion, and
2. Practicing baptism

My sincere thanks to Dr. Ricky Freeman, Dr. Jim Wolfe, and especially Dr. Karen Walker-Freeburg for sharing great contributions to the development of this course over the past seven years.