



Birmingham Theological Seminary
2200 Briarwood Way
Birmingham, Alabama 35243
(205) 776-5650

Baptist Church History Syllabus

Semester: Fall 2025

Day & Time: Mondays, 5:30-7:30 PM

Professor: Dr. Ben Birdsong

Email: ben@benbirdsong.com

Course: HT1307 Baptist Church History

Room: Virtual

Credits: 2

Phone: 205-907-6623

Course Description: This course presents a survey of the origins and development of the Baptist Church. We will be focusing on the formation of major Baptist denominations in America and their development.

Course Objectives:

- Name and discuss major events and major contributions of main persons in the history of the Baptist church.
- Understand major theological developments in the history of the Baptist church.
- Explain the various positions regarding Baptist origins.
- Differentiate and understand the various historical streams that compose the Baptist tradition.
- Defend the historical doctrinal understanding of Scripture in Baptist history.
- Be spiritually enriched through an encounter with the work of great Christians in the history of the Baptist church.

Required Texts:

- Chute, Anthony L., Nathan A. Finn, and Michael A. G. Haykin. *The Baptist Story: From English Sect to Global Movement*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015. (346 Pages)
- Croft, Wayne E., Sr. *A History of the Black Baptist Church: I Don't Feel No Ways Tired*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2020. (146 Pages)
- Kidd, Thomas S. and Barry Hankins. *Baptists in America: A History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. (252 Pages)

Collateral or Recommended Texts:

- Bass, S. Jonathan. *Blessed Are the Peacemakers: Martin Luther King, Jr., Eight White Religious Leaders, and the Letter from the Birmingham Jail*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001.

- Bush, L. Russ and Tom J. Nettles. *Baptists and the Bible*. Revised and expanded ed. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1999.
- Du Bois, W. E. Burghardt, ed. *The Negro Church*. Atlanta: Atlanta University Press, 1903.
- Early, Joseph, Jr. *Readings in Baptist History: Four Centuries of Selected Documents*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2008.
- Fallin, Wilson, Jr. *The African American Church in Birmingham, Alabama 1815-1963: A Shelter in the Storm*. Routledge, 1997.
- Garrett, James Leo. *Baptist Theology*. Macon: Mercer University Press, 2009.
- George, Timothy and David Dockery, eds. *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2001.
- Lincoln, C. Eric and Lawrence H. Mamiya. *The Black Church in the African American Experience*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1990.
- Lumpkin, W. L., ed. *Baptist Confessions of Faith*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1969.
- Maples, James Hoyle, Jr. *Forgotten But Not Gone: The Origin, Theology, Transmission, and Recurrent Impact of Landmarkism in the Southern Baptist Convention (1850-2012)*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2018.
- Nettles, Tom. *The Baptists: Key People Involved in Forming a Baptist Identity*. Three volumes. Rossshire: Christian Focus, 2005 (vol 1), 2006 (vol 2), and 2007 (vol 3)
- Nettles, Tom J. And Russell D. Moore, eds. *Why I Am a Baptist*. Nashville: B&H Books, 2001.
- MacBeth, H. Leon. *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990.
- MacBeth, H. Leon. *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987.
- Pinn, Anne H. and Anthony B. Pinn. *Introduction to Black Church History*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002.
- Tisby, Jamar. *The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019.
- Woodson, Carter Goodwin. *The History of the Negro Church*. Washington, D. C.: The Associated Publishers, 1921.

Course Requirements and Assessments:

In preparation for class discussion, reading assignments should be completed before the class that they are noted on the syllabus.

All papers should be submitted in Microsoft Word Document format by email to ben@benbirdsong.com by the end of the class period on the due date.

Personal Spiritual Development Paper will be a 500-1,000 word personal reflection paper on the student's own personal faith journey and the role of denominational tradition in shaping his or her faith. The paper should explain the work of God, theology, and denominational tradition in the student's calling and faith journey up to the present. This paper will be discussed with the class on the second class meeting and will be submitted to the professor at the conclusion of the class.

Weekly Reading Reflections will be a single-page response to the week's assigned readings. Summarize the main points of the reading that impacted you and discuss how the ideas/themes of the reading have shaped today's church or have been forgotten by today's church. These reading reflections are due to the professor via email at the beginning of class.

Baptist Distinctives Research Paper will be a 10-12 page paper. Each student will select a Baptist distinctive from the list below as the focus of their paper:

- Regenerate Church Membership\
- Believer's Baptism
- Congregational Polity
- Local Church Autonomy
- Religious Freedom

Distinctives should be defended using the Bible. Papers should include an overview of the historical expression of the selected Baptist distinctive, as well as an explanation of the significance of the distinctive in Baptist thought and its implications for the church today. The paper should include at least 8 additional sources, not including the primary texts used for this class.

Biographical Presentation will be a creative and engaging oral presentation of 5-7 minutes explaining the significance of a figure in Baptist history from the list below (if you want to present a person not on this list, email the professor a proposal with the name and reason you want to study this person). We understand that due to the fall that there are no perfect people so each presentation should include both the positives and negative impacts of the person's life and ministry.

An informative handout is required, and other visual aids are encouraged if they add to your presentation (multimedia presentation tools are great, but do not show video clips). On the back of the handout, provide a list of references you used in gathering information (list at least three reliable academic sources other than texts assigned for this class). Be prepared to field questions from the professor and other students at the end of the presentation.

NOTE: You should send a list of three people in order of your preference to the professor by email no later than September 22nd. Requests will be granted on a first come, first serve basis, so earlier requests will receive preference. If you include a name not on the list below, include a brief explanation of the reason this person is worthy of a presentation in a Baptist History class.

Possible presentation subjects:

- Ralph David Abernathy
- Isaac Backus
- James P. Boyce
- R. H. Boyd
- John A. Broadus

- John Bunyan
- Lott Carey
- William Carey
- John Clarke
- John Clifford
- John Cotton
- Harry Emerson Fosdick
- Andrew Fuller
- Richard Furman
- John Gill
- Thomas Grantham
- Thomas Helwys
- Herschel Hobbs
- Benjamin Keach
- William Kiffin
- Billy Kim
- Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Hanserd Knollys
- John Leland
- George Liele
- Basil Manly
- E. C. Morris
- E.Y. Mullins
- Fred Shuttlesworth
- John Smyth
- John Spilsbury
- Charles Spurgeon
- Shubal Sterns
- A.H. Strong
- Gardner Taylor
- Roger Williams

Final Exam of short-answer and essay questions will be administered in order to gauge the student's level of comprehension of the material covered throughout this course in the readings, lectures, and presentations. This exam will be open book and open notes and will be taken online to be submitted by 9:00 PM on the final day of class.

GRADING WEIGHT & COMMENTS

COURSE REQUIREMENT	GRADE WEIGHT	COMMENTS
Weekly Reading Reflections	15% of Grade	Due to the professor by email the beginning of class weekly.
Spiritual Development Paper	10% of Grade	Due Monday, September 15 th .
Baptist Distinctives Paper	30% of Grade	Due Monday, November 3 rd .
Biographical Presentation	25% of Grade	Presentation Dates to Be Assigned
Final Exam	20% of Grade	Due via Google Forms Link at 9 PM CST on December 8 th .

BTS Format, Style, and Writing Standards:

All research papers must be formatted in accordance with Turabian Chicago standards including the title page. All papers are to be #12 font Times New Roman and Double-Spaced. Any paper not conforming to these standards will automatically be dropped one letter grade. Please see the BTS Turabian Style Guide for more information on turning in papers and assignments.

The BTS Turabian Style Guide and other resources are available on the BTS Writing Center webpage: <https://www.btswritingcenter.net/>

In addition, the Writing Center runs 2-3 Writing Workshops every semester. They are very helpful and highly recommended.

BTS Plagiarism / Generative AI Policy

In addition to the BTS plagiarism policy, BTS is implementing a new Generative AI policy. Unless clearly directed by the instructor, the students should submit their own work, independent of artificial intelligence tools. Use of generative AI to write papers or to write significant portions of assignments is considered an ethical violation of our Student Code of Conduct and to be a violation of general academic integrity, which could result in a zero on the assignment and/or a lowered letter grade for the course by the professor. If determined to be an egregious violation, it could lead to further sanctions administered through the Academic Committee, including expulsion from BTS.

Course Schedule:

DAY	DATE	AGENDA/TOPIC	DUE ON THIS DAY/DATE
Monday	9/8	Class Introduction Syllabus Review	
Monday	9/15	Role of Denominational Tradition in Personal Faith Development Baptist Identity and Beginnings General Baptist Origins Particular Baptist Origins	Personal Spiritual Development Paper Reading (Chute, Finn, and Haykin, Chapter 1)
Monday	9/22	Baptist Distinctives Particular Baptists in the Seventeenth Century English Baptists Particular Baptists American Baptists Particular Baptists in the Eighteenth Century	Reading (Chute, Finn, and Haykin, Chapter 2-4 and 13) Reading (Kidd and Hankins, Chapter 1)
Monday	9/29	Baptist Beginnings in America Triennial Convention ^[SEP] The Great Awakening ^[SEP] The American Revolution	Reading (Chute, Finn, and Haykin, Chapter 5) Reading (Kidd and Hankins, Chapters 2-4)
Monday	10/6	Periods of Decline and Revival in the 18th and 19th Centuries Northern Baptists Southern Baptists Landmarkism The Great Revival	Reading (Chute, Finn, and Haykin, Chapters 6-7) Reading (Kidd and Hankins, Chapter 5)
Monday	10/13	Baptists in the American South	Reading (Chute, Finn, and Haykin, Chapter 8) Reading (Kidd and Hankins, Chapters 6-7)
Monday	10/20	Fall Break	No Class
Monday	10/27	The Black Church Origins of the Black Baptist Church Black Baptist Associations and Conventions	Reading (Croft, Entire Book)
Monday	11/3	Paper Project Focus Day	Baptist Distinctives Paper Due
Monday	11/10	Formation of the Southern Baptist Convention National Baptists	Reading (Chute, Finn, and Haykin, Chapter 9)

DAY	DATE	AGENDA/TOPIC	DUE ON THIS DAY/DATE
		Baptist World Alliance	Reading (Kidd and Hankins, Chapters 8-9)
Monday	11/17	The Southern Baptist Convention through 1925 Baptists and the Civil Rights Movement	Reading (Chute, Finn, and Haykin, Chapters 10-11) Reading (Kidd and Hankins, Chapters 10-11)
Monday	11/24	Thanksgiving Break	No Class
Monday	12/1	The Southern Baptist Convention since 1925 ^[1] Baptists in 20th Century America Baptists Around the World	Reading (Chute, Finn, and Haykin, Chapter 12) Reading (Kidd and Hankins, Chapters 12-14)
Monday	12/8	Final Exam- Online	Final Exam is due at 9 PM CST on 12/8.

Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to demonstrate punctuality and attend all class sessions. Any absences should be communicated to the professor beforehand. Students may miss up to three classes with impunity.

Class Policies and Procedures:

- BTS highly recommends using handwritten note taking methods in class and keeping computer usage to a minimum.
- Other electronics should be used sparingly.
- All assignments must be submitted by email by 11:59 (CDT/CST) on the due date.
- Late assignments will incur a -3 point deduction per weekday after the due date, except in cases of emergency communicated to the professor.
- Missed tests/exams may only be made up with an excused absence, preferably in advance of class. Excused absence tests/exams must be made up before the final day of the semester.

Video Conference Policies and Procedures:

- Please utilize the BTS “Best VC (Video Conference) Practices” information for the course.
- Laptops/Desktops are the preferred method of attending a video conference course. Information will be shared on the screen, so phones will be less useful.

- In Video Conference, it is preferable for the student to keep their video on (when possible) so that students and faculty may engage with one another. Extended periods of dark screen will result in follow-up and potential removal from class.
- Other electronics should be used sparingly.

Course Bibliography / Extended Bibliography

Baker, Robert A. *The Southern Baptist Convention and Its People 1607-1972*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1974. This is an older work, yet it dives deeper into the history of the Southern Baptist Convention from its beginnings to 1972.

Bass, S. Jonathan. *Blessed Are the Peacemakers: Martin Luther King, Jr., Eight White Religious Leaders, and the Letter from the Birmingham Jail*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001. A history of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" and the role of white and black churches in responding to the Civil Rights Movement in the city of Birmingham, Alabama.

Bush, L. Russ and Tom J. Nettles. *Baptists and the Bible*. Revised and expanded ed. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1999. A work that clearly defines how Baptists use the Bible to define their beliefs and practices.

Chute, Anthony L., Nathan A. Finn, and Michael A. G. Haykin. *The Baptist Story: From English Sect to Global Movement*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015. This is a recently-written history of the Baptists that helps to make the historical events come alive in a clear way and also explores the implications of Baptist history on today's church.

Croft, Wayne E., Sr. *A History of the Black Baptist Church: I Don't Feel No Ways Tired*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2020. Croft provides an excellent introduction to the history of the Black Baptist Church tracing early leaders, movements, and denominational developments.

Du Bois, W. E. Burghardt, ed. *The Negro Church*. Atlanta: Atlanta University Press, 1903. This book is a report of a social study compiled by Atlanta University highlighting the history, growth, and development of the Black church including a focus on the Black Baptist Church.

Early, Joseph, Jr. *Readings in Baptist History: Four Centuries of Selected Documents*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2008. A great collection of selected texts from Baptist history.

Fallin, Wilson, Jr. *The African American Church in Birmingham, Alabama 1815-1963: A Shelter in the Storm*. Routledge, 1997. A history of the African American Church in Birmingham, Alabama.

Garrett, James Leo. *Baptist Theology*. Macon: Mercer University Press, 2009. A clear work on Baptist theology that helps define the reasons why Baptists believe what they do.

George, Timothy and Denise George, eds. *Baptist Confessions, Covenants, and Catechisms*. Nashville: B&H, 1996. This is a great collection of Baptist confessions, covenants, and catechisms spanning the breadth of Baptist history.

George, Timothy and David Dockery, eds. *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2001. George and Dockery provide short and helpful biographies of selected Baptist theologians.

Kidd, Thomas S. And Barry Hankins. *Baptists in America: A History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. A current history book of the Baptists in America that makes the historical accounts come alive.

Lincoln, C. Eric and Lawrence H. Mamiya. *The Black Church in the African American Experience*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1990. Covering the role of Black church in African American society as well as the development of the Black Baptist Church, this book is an effective resource drawing the religious and sociological connections between the church and culture.

Lumpkin, W. L., ed. *Baptist Confessions of Faith*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1969. A book of Baptist theological confessions along with a commentary of each.

Maples, James Hoyle, Jr. *Forgotten But Not Gone: The Origin, Theology, Transmission, and Recurrent Impact of Landmarkism in the Southern Baptist Convention (1850-2012)*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2018. Dr. Maples explores the beginnings, theology, and impact of Landmarkism on the Southern Baptist Convention.

Nettles, Tom. *The Baptists: Key People Involved in Forming a Baptist Identity*. Three volumes. Rossshire: Christian Focus, 2005 (vol 1), 2006 (vol 2), and 2007 (vol 3). An extended work in Baptist history and the people who came to shape it.

Nettles, Tom J. And Russell D. Moore, eds. *Why I Am a Baptist*. Nashville: B&H Books, 2001. This is a collection of essays from different leaders in the Baptist church about why they believe in the theology, mission, and vision of the Baptist church.

MacBeth, H. Leon. *Men Who Made Missions*. Nashville, Broadman Press, 1968. MacBeth has gathered stories from broader church history of people who influenced missions and the missionary zeal of the Southern Baptist Convention.

MacBeth, H. Leon. *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990. This is a book of original sources for *The Baptist Heritage* that provides additional insight into the texts that MacBeth covers in his classic work.

MacBeth, H. Leon. *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987. In this classic work, MacBeth tells the story of the Baptists through four centuries of history.

Pinn, Anne H. and Anthony B. Pinn. *Introduction to Black Church History*. Minneapolis:

Fortress Press, 2002. This book chronicles the development of the Black Baptist Church as well as other denominations within the African American church.

Tisby, Jamar. *The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019. Tisby chronicles the racial interactions between the white and black church throughout history in the United States, including the Baptist and Black Baptist Church, and offers ideas on a way forward for racial unity in the church.

Wallace, O. C. S. *What Baptists Believe*. Nashville: The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1934. A short book about basic Baptist beliefs compiled by the Southern Baptist Convention.

Woodson, Carter Goodwin. *The History of the Negro Church*. Washington, D. C.: The Associated Publishers, 1921. A historical survey of the growth and development of the African American Church.

GRADING CRITERIA AND ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

A to A-	B to B-	C to C-	D to D-
Correct spelling and grammar/punctuation	Minor errors in spelling or grammar/punctuation	Multiple errors in spelling or grammar/punctuation per page	Difficult to read due to English writing errors
Smooth writing that provides for effective and efficient reading	Writing is acceptable, but not as organized and coherent	Writing is not smooth, sometimes confusing and inconsistent	Writing lacks clarity, focus, structure, and is incoherent
Person and format are proper for assignment	Person and format are inconsistent	Person and format are not appropriate	Person and format are totally inappropriate
Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are appropriately used, cited, and clearly supports main argument	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are appropriate but need more depth and use of critical thinking	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are inadequate for main argument and do not reflect understanding	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are improperly used, over used, under used, or cited in error
Paper completely conforms to Turabian's <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper generally conforms to Turabian's <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper somewhat conforms to Turabian's <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper does not conform to Turabian's <i>Manual for Writers</i>

BTS Outcomes Evaluation

Outcome	Rank	Rationale (one sentence)
Scripture	5	Students will engage with scripture as it shapes the history of the Baptist church and defines Baptist church doctrine.
Reformed Theology	5	Students will understand the development of reformed theology through the lens of Baptist church history.
Local Church	5	Students will consider how the issues and challenges of Baptist church history apply to the local church today.
Wisdom	4	Students will grow in their personal wisdom and character development as they learn from the examples of figures from Baptist church history.
Discipleship	4	Students will grow in their own discipleship methods as they understand how discipleship methods helped to shape Christians in past generations.
Communication	4	Students will grow in their communication skills as they present figures from Baptist church history to the class.
Worldview	5	Students will grow in their understanding of a biblical worldview as they see how figures from Baptist church history applied biblical truth to their own lives.
Leadership	5	Students will grow as church leaders from seeing the leadership successes and failures of Christians throughout Baptist church history and as they seek to apply the lessons of history to their current ministry contexts.