

# STEVEN COLLIS

Clinical Professor of Law | Faculty Director—Bech-Loughlin First Amendment Center  
University of Texas School of Law | 727 E. Dean Keeton St., Austin, TX 78705  
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## ACADEMIC POSITIONS

### University of Texas School of Law

Clinical Professor of Law

Founding Faculty Director—Bech-Loughlin First Amendment Center, 2020–Present

Founding Faculty Director—Law & Religion Clinic, 2020–Present

### Stanford Law School

Research Fellow, Constitutional Law Center, 2019–2020

### University of Denver Sturm College of Law

Adjunct Professor, 2016–2019

Taught full survey course on religious freedom law

## EDUCATION

### University of Michigan Law School—J.D., *magna cum laude*, 2009

- Order of the Coif
- *Michigan Law Review*
- *Michigan Journal of Race and Law*
- Highest grade in class: Religious liberty law, Entertainment Law

### Virginia Commonwealth University—M.F.A., Creative Writing, 2006

- Three-year fully funded graduate teaching assistantship
- Taught undergraduate courses on rhetoric, persuasive and creative writing, and composition
- President—VCU's Graduate Writers Association

### Brigham Young University—B.A., English, *University Honors*, 2003

- Robert K. Thomas Scholarship from BYU's Honors Program
- Edwin M. & Dessie W. Thomas Memorial Award for top English majors at BYU

## TEACHING INTERESTS

**Primary:** Law & Religion, First Amendment, Constitutional Law, Civil Procedure

**Secondary:** Remedies, Torts, Professional Responsibility/Ethics

## CLERKSHIP

**Judge Timothy M. Tymkovich**, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit, 2010–2011

## SCHOLARSHIP AND PUBLICATIONS

*The Constitutional (In)significance of the Religious Nones* (working paper).

*The Lost Dignity of the First Amendment* (working paper).

*The Underenforcement of Prisoner Religious Exercise Rights* (working paper).

*Abandoning Exemptions Language* (working paper).

*Public Employee Religious Exercise and the Establishment Clause* (working paper).

*Examining the Free Exercise Floodgates* (working paper).

*Defining “Religion” in the Culture Wars* (working paper).

HABITS OF A PEACEMAKER (forthcoming 2024) (teaching how to engage in civil discourse).

*The Time Has Come for a Cultural Shift*, DESERET NEWS (Feb. 8, 2023) (oped).

*The Reckless Misrepresentation of the School Prayer Case*, DESERET NEWS (July 5, 2022) (oped).

PRAYING WITH THE ENEMY (Shadow Mountain Press 2022) (religious persecution in North Korea).

*Stop Asking the Supreme Court to Resolve the LGBTQ+, Religious Conflict*, DESERET NEWS (June 17, 2021) (oped).

THE IMMORTALS (Shadow Mountain Press 2021) (history of military chaplains in WWII).

DEEP CONVICTION (Shadow Mountain Press 2019) (exploring history of free exercise law).

[\*Generally Applicable Law & the Free Exercise of Religion\*](#), 95 NEB. L. REV. 1 (2016) (w/Douglas Laycock).

*Cardoza v. United of Omaha: Tenth Circuit Focuses on Plain Language of ERISA Plan to Uphold Benefit Calculation*, 90 D.U. L. REV. ONLINE 179–183 (July 2013).

*Religious Accommodation: Five Steps to Avoid Liability After the Abercrombie Decision*, THE NATIONAL LAW REVIEW (August 5, 2015).

*A Narrow Path to Diversity: The Constitutionality of Rezoning Plans and Strategic Site Selection of Schools After Parents Involved*, 107 MICH. L. REV. 501–539 (2008) (Note).

## ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS

“The Lost Dignity of the First Amendment,” Conference on Fairness for All, World Food Prize Hall of Laureates, April 2023.

“The Four Chaplains and Charles W. David, Jr.,” Alan S. Brown Scholars Lecture, National Museum of American Jewish Military History, March 2023.

“The Constitutional (In)significance of the Religious Nones,” St. John’s University Law School, March 2023.

“The Immortals and the Sinking of the *Dorchester*,” American Jewish Archives/National Underground Railroad, February 2023.

“The Development of Religious Liberty Clinics,” Stanford Law School, March 2023.

“The Paradox of Losing the Self,” Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation Annual Banquet, February 2023 (recipient—Charles W. David, Jr. Distinguished Service Award).

“The Immortals and the Sinking of the *Dorchester*,” McGowan Theatre, National Archives Museum, February 2023.

“The Constitutional (In)significance of the Religious Nones,” Stanford Law School, January 2023.

“The Fundamentals of Religious Liberty Law,” Marquette University, November 2022.

“The State of Religious Liberty Law,” University of Texas School of Law, November 2022.

“Government Employees and the Establishment Clause,” University of Texas School of Law, October 2022.

“Government Employees and the Establishment Clause,” Brigham Young University, June 2022.

“Defining Religion in the Culture Wars,” American Association of Presidents of Independent Colleges and Universities, Feb. 2022.

“The Puritan Mistake and the Sinking of the *Dorchester*,” Brigham Young University, Oct. 2021.

“Closing the Free Exercise Floodgates,” University of Texas Law School, Oct. 2021.

“Defining Religion in the Culture Wars,” Brigham Young University, Aug. 2021.

“Effective Religious Liberty Clinics,” Notre Dame Law School, June 2021.

“Exploring the Free Exercise Floodgates,” Stanford Law School Scholarly Workshop, Jan. 2021.

“Free Speech and Economic Justice,” Panelist, University of Texas Law School, Oct. 2020.

“Religious Freedom in a Pandemic,” J. Reuben Clark Law Society, Sept. 2020.

“Revisiting *Smith* in *Fulton*,” Panelist, University of Texas Law School, Aug. 2020.

“Clarifying Statutory Remedial Discretion,” University of Chicago Law School, Dec. 2019.

“Optimizing Judicial Remedial Discretion,” Stanford Law School, Nov. 2019.

“The Common Purpose of the Religion Clauses,” Wichita State University, Sept. 2019.

“Anti-Establishment and Free Exercise Law,” Brigham Young University—Idaho, Aug. 2019.

“The Nature of Free Exercise Claims,” University of Washington Law School, May 2019.

“The Future of Religious Freedom in the United States,” Brigham Young University, Aug. 2018.

“Achieving True Religious Freedom,” Presentation to the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Aug. 2018.

“Developments to the Church Plan Exemption in ERISA Litigation,” Western Pension & Benefits Council, Apr. 2018.

“Establishment Clause Principles,” Presentation to Presidential Advisors from the Republic of Georgia on behalf of U.S. State Department, Jan. 2018.

“Free Exercise Exemptions in the Constitutional Framework,” Colorado Christian University, Nov. 2017.

“History of the Free Exercise Clause,” Presentation to Diplomats from the Republic of Georgia on behalf of U.S. State Department, Sept. 2017.

“Religion Clauses in Schools,” International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Brigham Young University, July 2017.

“Understanding the Religion Clauses,” Conference of the Muslim Lawyers Association, May 2017.

“Law, Religion, Equality, and Dignity,” Emory Law School, Nov. 2016.

## LITIGATION EXPERIENCE

### **Holland & Hart LLP**

Associate, 2011–2016

Equity Partner, 2017–2020

Member—Complex Civil Litigation and Employment Groups

Chair—Nationwide Religious Institutions and First Amendment Group

- Represented religious and other institutions from across the religious spectrum in matters related to the Free Exercise Clause, the Establishment Clause, RFRA, RLUIPA, the ministerial exception, speech law, §1983, state law equivalents, etc.
- Managed teams of junior lawyers, partners, and summer associates
- Supervised and trained many junior lawyers and summer associates
- Represented clients as first chair in federal/state trial and appellate courts throughout the United States

- As first chair, tried two dozen jury and bench trials, presented oral arguments in numerous trial courts, in the Ninth and Tenth Circuits, and in the Colorado Court of Appeals

## **FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

Conversational Korean

## **INTERESTS**

Enjoy mountain biking, college football, gardening, literature, writing, skiing, camping and hiking, fishing, and wrestling with my kids.

## **SERVICE, PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS, & COURT ADMISSIONS**

**Service:** Lead—Free Speech and Academic Freedom Working Group at the University of Texas; Chair and past program committee chair—AALS Law & Religion Section; Member—Texas Law Experiential Education Committee and Teaching Committee; Faculty Advisor—Texas Law J. Reuben Clark Law Society.

**Memberships:** American Bar Association, Colorado Bar Association, William E. Doyle Inn of Court, Defense Research Institute, Faculty of Federal Advocates, Chair—J. Reuben Clark Law Society International Religious Freedom Committee.

**Admissions:** First Circuit, Ninth Circuit, Tenth Circuit, Colorado, U.S. Supreme Court, Texas.