

F.O.R.C.E. STUDY GUIDE - RELIGIOUS CLAUSE

Content-based Questions

- 1 The video introduces two clauses: the “Free Exercise Clause” and the “Establishment Clause.” Both clauses are about the government's relationship to citizens' religion.
 - a. Which one says that the government cannot tell people how to worship?
 - b. Which one says that the government cannot give preferential treatment to any religion over others, or over non-religion?

2. Does “freedom of religion” mean that a citizen has the right to do whatever they want to, if their religious beliefs call for it? Can Americans tell people that they are damned to eternal Hell? Can Americans stone a sinner to death, like they did in Old Testament times? Why or why not?

3. When the Constitution was written, these religion clauses referred almost exclusively to different denominations within Christianity, and in fact, mostly Protestant denominations. Almost everyone that the Founders were considering and aiming to protect, were Christian Protestants. **TRUE or FALSE:** Therefore, those protective clauses do not apply in contemporary times to non-Christian believers. This amendment justifies and permits the government treating Muslims, Atheists, Jews and other non-Christians differently than Protestant Christians.

4. What is the difference between the terms “public sector” and “public square”?

5. In the famous recent case against Hobby Lobby, a privately-owned business that refused to include birth control services in its employee health benefits, which way did the Supreme Court decide? On what basis did the dissenting justices disagree?

Engaging the Material

1. Imagine yourself taking a job with Hobby Lobby and then finding out your health coverage will not cover contraception because the owners of the company do not approve, on religious grounds, of contraception. How would you feel? Should a potential employee have the right to find out about things like that before accepting a job?

2. What do you think about Senate hearings for a Supreme Court justice, during which many of the questions asked are about the candidate's personal faith? Going to church? And so on.... Are those questions appropriate? If so - why? If not - why not?

3. If an elected leader has strong personal religious values of "right" and "wrong," is it right or wrong for them to try to build those values into laws? Think of some examples of such values and create two or three hypothetical - or REAL - situations in which a legislator or elected executive branch leader either does or does not separate their personal values from the law they are enacting to apply to all Americans.

Some possible examples could include:

- Abortion
- Euthanasia
- Drinking alcohol
- Polygamy
- Interracial marriage
- Murder
- Death penalty

Content-Based Answer Guide

1.A: Free Exercise Clause

B: Establishment Clause

2. No - citizens may be limited to do whatever they want, if their religious beliefs call for it, due to laws of general application. These laws apply to everyone, regardless of religion. Citizens cannot punish others, such as stoning an individual to death as it was done in the Old Testament.

3. False; the government must protect all religious and non-religious groups.

4. Public sector is the government; Public square is a non-governmental venue, in which citizens exchange ideas and opinions (basically everyone else).

5. The Supreme Court sided with Hobby Lobby because the company was a privately held, for-profit corporation; Hobby Lobby had the right to not cover birth control because it went against their religious beliefs (religious freedom). The dissenting justices disagreed because the Supreme Court had extended religious freedom protections to the commercial profit-making world for the very first time.