

WILLIAM J. CHRISS, J.D., PH.D.

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Dr. Bill Chriss is a trial and appellate lawyer who handles complex lawsuits and appeals, especially in insurance, commercial, property damage, and personal injury cases. He has tried to verdict and handled on appeal several multi-million-dollar cases, including one of the early Texas mold cases (2004), and over the last 25 years he has handled hundreds of significant cases involving a variety of legal and constitutional issues. He currently serves as chair-elect of the Appellate Section of the State Bar of Texas and is a former chair of the Insurance Law Section, having been selected by the State Bar to produce a webcast on handling Hurricane Harvey insurance claims for Texas lawyers with clients from affected areas. It was viewed by over 1,700 lawyers, at that time the second highest webcast viewership in State Bar history. He also chaired the Texas Pattern Jury Charge Committee-Business, Consumer, Insurance & Employment and served on that Bar committee for many years.

Dr. Chriss is one of the few Texas lawyers and judges to have been elected to membership in the American Law Institute (ALI), publisher of the *Restatements of the Law*. He recently served as editor in chief of *The Journal of Texas Insurance Law*, as co-editor in chief of the *Appellate Advocate* published by the Appellate Section of the State Bar of Texas, and as Dean of the Texas Center for Legal Ethics, which promotes the highest levels of ethics and professionalism among Texas lawyers. In 2016, Texas Chief Justice Nathan Hecht presented to him the Ethics Center's statewide Chief Justice Jack Pope Professionalism Award honoring an appellate lawyer or judge who epitomizes the highest level of professionalism and integrity.

Dr. Chriss is also a historian, political scientist, religious scholar, and published author. He was nominated for the Rhodes Scholarship and attended Harvard Law School where he became one of the youngest members of his J.D. graduating class at the age of 23. He also holds graduate degrees in theology, history and politics, including a Ph.D. in history from The University of Texas. While maintaining his busy law practice, Dr. Chriss has also taught Judicial Politics, Political Philosophy, History, and Constitutional Law within the Texas A&M University system. An authority on legal ethics and the Texas Constitution, he has written several articles for scholarly journals and his first book, *The Noble Lawyer*, was published by Texas Bar Books in 2011, while his second book, *Six Constitutions over Texas*, will be published by Texas A&M University Press in 2024.

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EDUCATION

J.D., Harvard Law School, Cambridge, Mass, June 5, 1980

- Mark DeWolfe Howe Fellowship in Legal History

Ph.D., History, University of Texas at Austin, December 20, 2014 (legal and political history)

- Dickson Allen Anderson Endowed Doctoral Fellowship in American History

M.A., English (literature Studies), Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, December 11, 2021

M.A., History and Politics (Political Science), Texas A&M University-Kingsville, August 4, 2006

M.A., Applied Orthodox Christian Theology, St. John of Damascus Institute of Theology,
University of Balamand, July 21, 2004

B.A. with High Honors, Government, University of Texas at Austin, August 15, 1977

- Magna Cum Laude, Phi Beta Kappa
- Rhodes Scholarship Nominee, University Scholar, Junior Fellow (Constitutional History)

LAW REVIEWS

The Journal of Texas Insurance Law, Editor in Chief (2013- 2016)

The Appellate Advocate, Co-editor in Chief (2015-2017)

PROFESSIONAL AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES (Abridged)

- Governing Council of the Appellate Section of the State Bar of Texas (2013–2016, 2020–present; Secretary, 2020-2021, Treasurer, 2021-2022, Vice Chair, 2022-2023, Chair-elect 2023-2024)
- Governing Council of the Insurance Section of the State Bar of Texas (2005–2007, 2009–present; Chair-elect, 2018-2019; Chair 2019-2020)
- American Law Institute (Member, 2013–present)
- Committee on Pattern Jury Charges of the State Bar of Texas—Business, Consumer, Insurance & Employment (2009–present; Vice-chair, 2015-2018; Chair, 2018-2022)
- Board of Trustees of the Texas Supreme Court Historical Society (2008–2014, 2016-2019, 2022-present)
- State Bar of Texas Grievance Committee (Chair, Panel 3, District 11A Grievance Committee, 1995–97; District 11A Chair, 1997–99)
- Texas Board of Legal Specialization Advanced Civil Trial Advisory Panel and Subcommittee on Lawyer Discipline (1997–98)
- President, Corpus Christi Bar Association (1994).

PROFESSIONAL LICENSES, HONORS, AND AWARDS (Abridged)

Recipient: 2017 Texas Bar Standing Ovation Award for continuing legal education.

Recipient: 2016 Texas Center for Legal Ethics Chief Justice Jack Pope Award presented to an appellate lawyer or judge who epitomizes the highest level of professionalism and integrity.

Recipient: 2006–2008, University of Texas Dickson Allen Anderson Endowed Doctoral Fellowship in American History

Recipient: 2005 Texas Bar Foundation’s Dan R. Price Award for excellence in legal writing, commitment to clients, and service to the profession

Board Certified: Civil Trial Law and Personal Injury Trial Law, Texas Board of Legal Specialization

Texas Superlawyer, 2020-present (Insurance Coverage, Appellate, General Litigation)

Fellow, American College of Coverage Counsel, 2022-present

Martindale-Hubbell: AV-rated and listed in *The Bar Register of Preeminent Lawyers*

Licensed: State Bar of Texas, U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, U.S. Supreme Court

EMPLOYMENT (Abridged)

William J. Chriss, P.C., 2009–present
(now of counsel to The Snapka Law Firm)
Corpus Christi, Austin, and San Antonio, Texas
Trial and appellate lawyer

Texas Center for Legal Ethics and Professionalism, 2007–2009
Austin, Texas
Executive Director and Dean of Curriculum and Instruction

William J. Chriss, P.C., 1998–2007
(Solo practitioner)
Corpus Christi and Austin, Texas

PUBLISHED WORKS (Abridged)

Six Constitutions over Texas: Texas’ Political Identity, 1830-1900 (College Station: Texas A&M Univ. Press, 2024).

“Insurance Appraisal in Texas and its Place in Coverage Litigation,” *St. Mary’s Law Journal* 50, no. 1 (Spring 2019) 101-148.

“Six Constitutions over Texas, 1836-1876,” *Journal of the Texas Supreme Court Historical Society* 8, no. 3 (Spring 2019) 38-59.

“Chief Justice Jack Pope of Texas: Common Law Judge,” (book chapter) *Common Law Judge: Selected Writings of Chief Justice Jack Pope of Texas* (Austin, Texas Supreme Court Hist. Society, 2014) 322-354.

“The External Aspect of Legal Ethics, Hot Coffee, and the Noble Lawyer: Attacks on the Profession and Their Massive Ethical and Social Damage,” *Trinity Law Review* 19, no. 1 (Fall 2013) 13-58.

The Noble Lawyer: The Truth about Attacks on Democracy’s Chosen Profession, 1976–2008 (Austin: Texas Bar Books, 2011).

“Law” (book chapter), *American Centuries: The Ideas, Issues, and Values That Shaped U.S. History, Volume 4: 19th Century*, Karen Ordahl Kupperman, John Demos, et al., eds. (New York: Facts on File, 2011).

“Personhood and the Right to Privacy in Texas,” *South Texas Law Review* 48, no. 3 (Spring 2007) 575-611.

“Commentary on the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct Governing the Duties between Lawyer and Client” (with John F. Sutton, Jr.), *Texas Lawyers’ Professional Ethics*, 4th ed. (State Bar of Texas, 2007).

“Coverage for Ensuing Water Damage under Texas Property Insurance Policies,” *South Texas Law Review* 46, no. 4 (Summer 2005) 1247-1281.

REPORTED APPELLATE CASES (as lead counsel-abridged):

Crites v. Mullins, 697 S.W.2d 715, 12 Media L. Rep. 1111 (Tex. App.-- Corpus Christi, 1985)-**libel**; *Hukill v. H.E.B. Food Stores, Inc.*, 756 S.W.2d 840 (Tex. App.—Corpus Christi, 1988)-**premises liability and civil procedure**; *Carrillo v. Fruehauf Corp.*, 838 S.W.2d 573 (Tex. App.—San Antonio, 1992, rev’d 848 S.W.2d 83); *Fruehauf Corp. v. Carrillo*, 848 S.W.2d 83 (Tex., 1993)-**product liability and civil procedure**; *Tucker v. Terminix Intern. Co., L.P.*, 975 S.W.2d 797 (Tex. App.—Corpus Christi, 1998)-**evidence and procedure**; *Kerstetter v. Pacific Scientific*, 210 F.3rd 431 (5th Cir. 2000)-**federal preemption and aviation law**; *Fiess v. State Farm*, 202 S.W.3d 744 (Tex. 2006) (amicus) - **insurance and property damage**; *Christi Bay Temple v. Guideone Specialty Mut. Ins. Co.*, 330 S.W.3d 251 (Tex. 2010) - **insurance, civil procedure, and religious freedom**; *LCS Corrections Services Inc. v. Lexington Insurance Co.* 800 F.3d 664 (5th Cir. 2015) – **insurance coverage**; *Beldon Roofing Co. v. Sunchase IV Homeowners’s Ass’n, Inc.*, 494 S.W.3d 231 (Tex. App.-Corpus Christi 2015, no pet.) – **arbitration**; *Virlar v. Puente*, 613 S.W.3d 652 (Tex. App.—San Antonio 2020, pet. granted)—**medical negligence, Texas constitutional law**; *Pay and Save, Inc. v. Canales*, Cause No. 04-20-00125 (Tex. App.—San Antonio 2022, no pet.)—**premises liability**

TEACHING EXPERIENCE (Abridged)

Adjunct Professor of History, Texas A&M University at Corpus Christi, 2010, 2016

Adjunct Professor of Political Science, Texas A&M University at Kingsville, July 2006

Adjunct Professor of Political Science, Public Administration, and History, Texas A&M University at Corpus Christi, January 2002–May 2006

- Courses: The U.S. Constitution and Federalism, Political Theory and Ideologies, American Political Thought, Legislative Process, Administrative Law (graduate level), Judicial Politics, The Roots of Freedom, Texas History

PROFESSIONAL PAPERS, CONFERENCES, and PUBLIC APPEARANCES (abridged):

Insurance and Property Damage Law :

- “The Duties and Liabilities of Public Adjusters and Those Who Deal with Them,” *Advanced Insurance Law Course*, State Bar of Texas (June 28, 2018).
- “How to Handle Hurricane Harvey Claims,” panelist, Webcast, State Bar of Texas (September 5, 2017).
- “Legislative Update, Including New Hail and Insurance Laws,” panelist, Webcast, State Bar of Texas (August 30, 2017).
- “Insurance Law-*Stowers* Doctrine Update,” *Advanced Insurance Law Seminar*, State Bar of Texas (June 8, 2017).
- “Insurance and Medical Records,” panelist, *2016 Litigation Update Seminar*, State Bar of Texas (January 26, 2017).
- “Insurance Law Update,” *Annual Page Keeton Litigation Conference*, University of Texas School of Law CLE (Oct. 28, 2016).
- “Preparing for deposition in Insurance Cases,” *Annual Advanced Insurance Law Seminar*, State Bar of Texas Insurance Law Section (June 10, 2016).
- “Mediation of Construction Defect Cases,” panelist, *Annual Advanced Construction Law Seminar*, State Bar of Texas Construction Law Section (March 4, 2016).
- “Duties and Liabilities of Public Adjusters,” *South Texas Insurance Seminar*, State Bar of Texas Insurance Law Section (Feb. 26, 2016).
- “Insurance Law Update,” Webcast panelist, State Bar of Texas (Feb. 10, 2016).
- “Rights and Liabilities of Public Adjusters,” *2015 Annual Advanced Insurance Law Seminar*, University of Texas School of Law CLE (November 13, 2015).
- “Annual Insurance Law Update,” *Page Keeton Annual Litigation Conference*, The University of Texas School of Law CLE (October 30, 2015).
- “Thirty Tips for Trying Insurance Cases,” panelist, *Advanced Insurance Law Seminar*, State Bar of Texas (June 12, 2015).
- “Ethical Traps to Avoid as an Insurance Lawyer, 2014 *Advanced Insurance Law Seminar*, University of Texas School of Law CLE (November 13, 2014).
- “Annual Insurance Law Update,” *Page Keeton Annual Litigation Conference*, The University of Texas School of Law CLE (October 24, 2014).
- “Homeowner’s Policies: Liability and Property Coverages-Update on Key Provisions,” coauthor. *Advanced Insurance and Tort Claims Course*. University of Houston

Law Center (June 12 & 19, 2008).

“Late Notice and Beyond: First and Third Party,” coauthor. *5th Annual Advanced Insurance Law Course*. (March 28, 2008) State Bar of Texas (March 27-28, 2008).

“*Fiess v. State Farm*: What Now,” panelist *4th Annual Advanced Insurance Law Course*. State Bar of Texas (March 29, 2007).

“Wind and Flood Insurance Policies.” *3rd Annual Insurance Law Course*. State Bar of Texas (CLE). (March 31, 2006)

“Pollution, Asbestos, and Toxic Soup,” panelist. *Texas Insurance Law Symposium*. South Texas College of Law. (January 27, 2006)

“Ensuing Loss Debate,” *Annual Insurance Law Symposium*, South Texas College of Law (January 27, 2005).

“Property Damage Litigation and the Economic Loss Rule,” *28th Annual Page Keeton Civil Litigation Conference*, The University of Texas School of Law (October 29, 2004).

“What’s New in Personal Lines,” panelist. State Bar of Texas Insurance Section CLE. (June 24, 2004)

“Mold and Construction Defects,” panelist. State Bar of Texas CLE for Attorneys. (23 April 2004)

“Insurance Coverage Issues Raised by House Bill 4.” *House Bill 4 Seminar*, State Bar of Texas CLE. (2004)

“Products Liability and Property Damage,” *27th Annual Page Keeton Products Liability & Personal Injury Law Conference*, The University of Texas School of Law (October 30-31, 2003).

Course Director, *Residential Construction Law Seminar*. The University of Texas School of Law (2003).

Trial Tactics, Appeals, and Procedure:

“Proof of Damages in a Property Damage Case,” *10th Annual Damages in Civil Litigation Seminar*, State Bar of Texas (February 1, 2018).

“Lessons from the Life and Career of Chief Justice Jack Pope, 1913-2017” *Annual Advanced Appellate Law Seminar*, State Bar of Texas (September 7, 2017).

“Ethical Issues in Trucking Cases,” *Truck Accident Seminar*, State Bar of Texas (November 12, 2015).

“The Noble Lawyer,” *Presentations to Law Students*, University of North Texas Dallas School of Law (April 16-17, 2015)

“Ethics in Handling Appeals,” *Advanced Appellate Seminar*, The University of Texas School of Law CLE (September 4, 2014).

“Qualifying, Disqualifying, and Examining Expert Witnesses” Seminar provided by private contract to Office of the Attorney General of Texas. (August 28, 2006).

“How to Try a Property Damage Case,” panel participant/commentator. *Annual Insurance Law Seminar*. University of Texas School of Law CLE and State Bar Insurance Section (November 11, 2004).

“Winning Jury Trials.” *One Day Practice Courses* (Created and co-presented the course). University of Texas School of Law CLE (September 17, 2004).

Ethics & Professional Responsibility:

- “Ethics Lessons from the Life and Career of Chief Justice Jack Pope, 1913-2017” *Corpus Christi Bar Ass’n Luncheon*, Corpus Christi Bar Association (July 11, 2018).
- “Clients Who Misbehave,” *Annual Admiralty Conference*, University of Texas School of Law CLE (September 29, 2017).
- “Client Intake,” *Annual Car Crash Seminar*, The University of Texas School of Law CLE (August 17, 2017).
- “Clients Who Misbehave,” *Annual Admiralty Conference*, University of Texas School of Law CLE (August 26, 2016).
- “Managing Client Expectations” *Annual UT Car Crash Seminar*, University of Texas School of Law CLE (July 29, 2016).
- “Ethical Considerations: Closing a Law Practice.” *Soaking Up Some CLE Seminar*, State Bar of Texas (May 12, 2016).
- “Disqualification of Attorneys,” panelist, *Webcast*, State Bar of Texas (April 14, 2016).
- “Ethics and Dealing with the Difficult Client,” *Annual Admiralty Conference*, The University of Texas School of Law CLE (October 17, 2014).
- “Ethics and Managing Client Expectations,” *Annual Car Crash Seminar*, The University of Texas School of Law CLE (July 31, 2014).
- “Good Faith, Fair Dealing, and Other Contractual and Fiduciary Issues that Arise in the Interpretation of Partnership and LLC Agreements,” (with Byron Egan and Robert Keatinge), *Partnerships and Limited Liability Companies Conference*, The University of Texas School of Law (July 23, 2009).
- “Who’s Your Master?: The Practical and Ethical Tension between Answering to the Insurer Who Pays the Bills or Answering to the Client” (with Anne Blume, Chicago, Illinois), Plenary Session, Midwinter Meeting, *ABA Forum on the Construction Industry and Construction Litigation* (Miami, January 16, 2009).
- “The Ethics of Striking Back: The Noble Lawyer, The Noble Judge, and Attacks on the American Judiciary.” *Annual Judicial Conference of the 5th Administrative Region of Texas* (May 2, 2008).
- “The Noble Lawyer and Liberty and Justice for All: How We Got to This Point in the Public Mind and the Ethics of Striking Back (The Past as Guide to the Present),” *Annual Awards Banquet*. Dallas and Ft. Worth Inns of Court (January 7, 2008); *Rockwall County Bench/Bar Conference* (April 18, 2008).
- “The Ethics of Striking Back: The Noble Lawyer and the Rehabilitation of the Profession,” *Statewide and nationally publicized Webcast*. State Bar of Texas (January 9, 2008);
- The Noble Lawyer: Ethics and Professionalism Viewed from the Perspective of the Bar Throughout History,” *2008 Changes and Trends Affecting Special Needs Trusts: A Guide for Attorneys, Financial Advisors and Trust Officers*. University of Texas School of Law and The Wealth Management and Trust Division of the Texas Bankers Association (February 1, 2008);
- “The Noble Lawyer: The Past as Guide to the Present,” *Guide to the Basics of Law Practice Course* required of all new lawyers (Austin). Texas Center for Legal Ethics and Professionalism (February 8, 2008);
- “The Ethics of Striking Back: The Noble Lawyer and the Rehabilitation of the Profession,” *Statewide Webcast re-broadcast by popular demand*. State Bar of Texas (February 22, 2008);
- “The Ethics of Striking Back: The Noble Lawyer and the Rehabilitation of the

- Profession,” *Joint Session of Professional Responsibility Classes*. Texas Tech University School of Law (February 28, 2008);
- “The Noble Lawyer and Liberty and Justice for All: How We Got to This Point in the Public Mind and the Ethics of Striking Back,” *Department of Defense Healthcare Law Conference*. U.S. Army Medical Command, Department of Defense (March 4, 2008);
- “The Noble Lawyer: The Past as Guide to the Present,” *Guide to the Basics of Law Practice Course* required of all new lawyers. Texas Center for Legal Ethics and Professionalism (various locations, 2007-2008).
- “Lawyers, Ethics, and Financial Institutions.” *Meeting of Dallas Lawyers Representing Financial Institutions* (June 14, 2007).

Legal History:

- “Six Constitutions of Texas, 1836-1876 and Beyond,” Panel: *The History of Texas’s Constitutions, 1827 and Beyond* (with Manuel Gonzales Oropeza), 123rd Annual Mtg. of the Texas State Historical Ass’n. (February 28, 2019).
- “American Origins of Judicial Independence: The Constitution and Federalist Papers,” *Symposium on Judicial Independence: Its Past and Future*, State Bar of Texas (August 31, 2017).
- “The Bible, the Texas Supreme Court of 1908, and the Radical Contingency of Belief,” Panel: *The King James Bible, the Texas Supreme Court, and the Preservation of Records; A Historical tie with a Twist* (Commentator upon David Furlow and Laura Saegert), 119th Annual Mtg. of the Texas State Historical Ass’n. (March 6, 2015).
- “In the Arena: Texas Supreme Court’s Steady Rein on Railroads and Big Business,” Panel: *Riding the Bull: The U.S. and Texas High Courts and Big Business, 1877-1900* (with Paul Kens, Robert Wooster, and H.W. Brands), 112th Annual Mtg. of the Texas State Historical Ass’n. (March 8, 2008).
- “Judges as Political Orators: The 1860 Secession Debate Between Justices O.M. Roberts and James H. Bell,” Panel: *The Texas Supreme Court and the Coming of the Civil War* (with James Paulsen and Hon. Thomas R. Phillips, ret.), 109th Annual Meeting of the Texas State Historical Society (March 4-5, 2005); [other panelists: Texas Supreme Court Chief Justice Thomas R. Phillips (ret.) and Prof. James Paulsen of South Texas College of Law.]