

Judge rules against female seminary professor: Sheri Klouda and Southern Baptist

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A federal judge in Texas has ruled against a former professor at a prominent Southern Baptist seminary who said she was dismissed because of her gender.

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary was within its rights when it decided not to renew the contract of Sheri Klouda in 2006, said U.S. District Judge John McBryde of Fort Worth. The judge said the case was akin to a church's decision to fire its pastor and therefore outside the purview of the civil courts.

Klouda, hired as a professor of biblical languages in 2002, had sued for fraud and breach of contract, arguing that she had an oral agreement that the seminary would keep her on. Seminary president Paige Patterson said "my response is simply one of gratitude to God and to a host of people."

Klouda's case highlights the tension over the role of women in the largely conservative Southern Baptist Convention. Patterson, elected Southwestern's president in 2003, has said that those who teach future ministers should themselves be eligible for the pastorate. *-Religion News Service, Associated Baptist Press*