

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

RLG 5149: Religion, Violence and Conflict: Fall 2014

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2-3:15pm in Chem & Physics 111

+ Tuesdays, 3:30-4:45pm in GC 273A

Dr. Oren B. Stier

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Hours: TTh 12:30-1:30, and by appointment

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Complete syllabus as of 12/25/14; available via religion.fiu.edu

Course Orientation:

Description: This course examines some of the various ways religion, violence, and conflict are linked. We will consider religious justifications for violence, religious restraints upon violence, and religious responses to violence. We will look at classical and contemporary religious texts justifying violence, theories addressing the relationship between violence and religion, mythic and historic backgrounds to that relationship, modern cases of religion and violence, and cases in which communities have responded to violent incidents memorially. Towards the end of the course, we will investigate the ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) phenomenon.

Course Objectives: By the end of the course, students will be able to

- Compare and contrast religious texts justifying violence
- Understand theories of sacrifice and other explanations for the relationship between religion and violence and assess their utility
- Describe and summarize theories linking violence to identity in the Hebrew Bible
- Apply Mark Juergensmeyer's theories concerning the commonalities among religious terrorist groups to the ISIS case
- Conduct analytical research on a topic related to the relationship between religion, violence, and conflict

Required Texts

- Fritz Graf, "Violence," *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsay Jones, 2nd ed., vol. 14 (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005): 9595-9600. **PDF on Blackboard.**
- Mark Juergensmeyer and Margo Kitts, eds., *Princeton Readings in Religion and Violence* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011) ISBN: 9780691129143
- Regina M. Schwartz, *The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), ISBN 0226742008
- Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, 3d ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), ISBN: 0520240111
- René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979) ISBN: 9780801822186
- Oren Baruch Stier and J. Shawn Landres, eds., *Religion, Violence, Memory, and Place* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), ISBN 0253218640

Additional required article-length readings, including readings for the ISIS Project, will be posted on Blackboard.

Assignments and Grading:

Exam #1 (take-home) due by 11:59pm, **Friday, Feb. 20**, to turnitin.com via Blackboard (10% of final grade)

Exam #2 (take-home) due by 11:59pm, **Sunday, Mar. 8**, to turnitin.com via Blackboard (10% of final grade)

Class Presentation on Assigned Reading (10% of final grade)

For the weeks in which an additional grad reading is listed in the syllabus, each student will serve as *class discussant* for that graduate hour. Class discussants will prepare notes on the assigned readings ahead of time and raise key points, discussion topics, important background issues, and questions *in order to facilitate class discussion*. Class discussants will also prepare a **handout** (outline, series of questions, or whatever is appropriate) in **advance** and distribute to the class and professor. In all cases a key component of the presentation should be how the assigned reading does or does not advance our understanding of the relationships between religion, violence, and conflict. Discussants are not expected or required to lecture but rather should aim to complement the work of the professor.

Research Paper: 5,000-7,000 words, totaling 45% of final grade (see following breakdown)

- Consultation with the professor is required. Whenever possible, the term paper should fit into the student's wider academic trajectory. If that is impossible or undesirable, the student should select one chapter from RVMP and research a topic related to it in some way (historical or theoretical background, further developments, alternative memorializations, etc.).
- Proposals (1-2 pages of narrative, plus preliminary bibliography using MLA or APA style) are due no later than **11:59 pm** on Monday, **Mar. 23** (5% of final grade). Some students may be required to submit a revised proposal, which is due no later than *Monday, Apr. 6*.
- Student Presentations: Each student will prepare a 10-15 minute oral presentation on his/her research project for delivery and discussion during the last two regular class meetings, **4/14** and **4/21** (if necessary, a third session of presentations will be scheduled during the class's final examination time slot, 2:15-4:15 on **4/28**): 10% of final grade.
- Final Papers are due no later than **11:59 pm on Sunday, May 3** (30% of final grade). **Please note that, due to the late due date, no extensions will be permitted and no late papers accepted. Students failing to submit final papers by the deadline will receive either an IN or an F for the course, depending on the circumstances.**

Take-home Final Examination, due by 11:59pm on **Thursday, Apr. 16** (15% of final grade)

Class Attendance and Participation (10% of final grade)

Each student will endeavor to attend all class sessions on time and participate actively in class discussions. Attendance and tardiness will be noted; regular participation in class discussions/activities is an expectation of the course. The attendance/participation grade will be based on the scale below; the professor reserves the right to adjust this grade in consideration of habitual tardiness, quality of class participation, attentiveness, and other factors:

0-2 absences=10 points; 3 absences=9 pts.; 4 abs.=8 pts.; 5 abs.=7 pts.; 6 abs.=5 pts.; 7 abs.=3 pts.; 8 abs. or more=0 points for attendance grade.

Grading Criteria:

All student work will be assigned numerical grades, corresponding to the following letter grades, according to the criteria below. Final grades will be calculated according to the percentages outlined above and converted to final letter grades for the course.

98-100 A+	"As" are awarded for excellent to exceptional work, free of technical and stylistic errors, showing sustained thought and engagement with the material on an appropriate but impressive academic level.
93-97 A	
90-92 A-	
88-89 B+	"Bs" are awarded for good to very good work, with some occasional errors, but nonetheless clearly indicating a good grasp of the material and assigned task.
83-87 B	
80-82 B-	
78-79 C+	"Cs" are awarded for average to above average work, meeting minimal standards but marked with errors, and exposing gaps in student performance and/or fulfillment of the assignment.
73-77 C	
70-72 C-	
68-69 D+	"Ds" are awarded for barely passing to below average work, usually riddled with errors and seriously deficient in fulfilling the assignment.
63-67 D	
60-62 D-	
Below 60 F	"Fs" are awarded for unacceptable work.

Course Regulations and Expectations:

- READINGS must be completed by the date for which they are assigned. Careful preparation of readings is essential for success in this course! Students will be expected to actively participate in class discussions of the readings.
- ALL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS are due to turnitin.com via Blackboard as indicated. In the interest of fairness, deadlines are firm and will not be extended except in case of emergencies. Late assignments without authorized extensions will be penalized **five percentage points** for each *day* late, or part thereof, up to a maximum of 30 points deducted. **Late assignments will not be accepted after April 30, with the exception of the Research Paper, due May 3. Keep electronic and paper** copies of all written work. For your own protection, keep a copy of your *turnitin.com* **electronic receipt** (confirmation of assignment submission) until you have received your final grade for the course.
- STANDARDS for citation and referencing must be adhered to. I recommend MLA style (see <http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/Documentation.html> and follow the link to MLA style), but APA style is also acceptable. Students should use in-text MLA or APA style abbreviated parenthetical references, *i.e.*, (Schwartz 90) or (Schwartz, 1997, p. 90), respectively, and must provide full, accurate bibliographic information in a reference list at the end of the assignment. Points will be deducted for failure to use a proper referencing style.
 - INTERNET sources are **not acceptable** as references, with the exception of electronic journals and other academic resources (in which case you must provide full urls and dates accessed).
 - ALL written assignments must be typed, formatted in 10-12 point standard fonts, **double-spaced**, with one-inch margins.
 - SPELLING, grammar, neatness, clarity, style, organization, etc. all *DO* count! Poor writing will affect your grade. Strive for clarity and use your computer's spell-check program wisely.
 - RE-WRITE and revise your essays *before* turning them in; do not ask to do so afterwards. Ask yourself, Is this clear? Am I communicating my thoughts well? Would a friend in another class understand what I am saying?

- PLAGIARISM and any and all forms of academic dishonesty will *not* be tolerated. Plagiarism is stealing someone else's words or original ideas. Plagiarism occurs in three forms:
 1. Written work that is entirely stolen from another source;
 2. Using quotations from another source without properly citing them; and
 3. Paraphrasing from another source without proper citations.
- In all cases, to avoid plagiarism, students must properly cite the source material. Only commonly known facts and concepts, general material learned in the course of research and study, and students' original ideas do not require citation.
- Students are expected to understand the definition of plagiarism. See the University Code of Academic Integrity at <http://www.fiu.edu/~oabp/misconductweb/2codeofacainteg.htm> if you need further clarification. Offenders will receive a grade of F for the plagiarized assignment, and possibly the course, and may be reported directly to the Office of Academic Affairs.
- For useful guidelines, go to the **Plagiarism Prevention** section on the FIU Library's website: <http://libguides.fiu.edu/plagiarism>.
- NOTE: Students are not permitted to submit the same work (i.e. paper) for different professors/courses. However, students may extend a certain research project originally conducted for one course in this course. This can only be done if the paper topic is approached and covered from a different angle, utilizing fresh research. The approval of the professor must be sought prior to undertaking the research.
- ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY in class are required. Tardiness is disruptive and will be noted, and regular, repeated tardiness will be counted towards a grade deduction. If you know you will be absent for any reason, please inform the professor *before* the class you will miss. Strive for perfect attendance! Absences will be deemed excused (and not counted towards the attendance grade) only in cases of documented medical or other emergency. Please refer to the attendance and participation grading scale above for more information.

Schedule of Lecture/Discussion Topics and Readings:

- NOTE:
 - Readings must be completed *in time* for the first class meeting of the indicated week.
 - Asterisks (*) indicate important dates outside of class meetings

Week 1	1/13-15	Introductions/Orientation <i>Reading:</i> Course syllabus; Graf, "Violence;" Juergensmeyer & Kitts, 1-29
Week 2	1/20-22	Religious Justifications for Violence: Classical Primary Texts <i>Reading:</i> Juergensmeyer & Kitts, 30-54 Guest Lecture on 1/20: Mr. Dan Alvarez Additional Grad Reading: TBA
Week 3	1/27-29	Religious Justifications for Violence: Contemporary Primary Texts; Theory: Understanding the Religious Role in Violence (Durkheim; Hubert & Mauss) <i>Reading:</i> Juergensmeyer & Kitts, 55-114 Additional Grad Reading: Girard, 1-118
Week 4	2/3-5	Theory: Understanding the Religious Role in Violence I (Freud, Girard, Burkert, Bloch) <i>Reading:</i> Juergensmeyer & Kitts, 115-166 Additional Grad Reading: Girard, 119-222
Week 5	2/10-12	Theory: Understanding the Religious Role in Violence II (Bataille, Marx, Jay, Scarry) <i>Reading:</i> Juergensmeyer & Kitts, 167-200 Additional Grad Reading: Girard, 223-318
Week 6	2/17-19	Theory: Understanding the Religious Role in Violence (Baudrillard, Nandy); Biblical Identity and Violence <i>Reading:</i> Juergensmeyer & Kitts, 201-222; Schwartz, ix-38 Additional Grad Reading: RVMP, 1-36 (Landres & Stier; Friedland & Hecht) Exam #1 (Take-home) due by 11:59pm, Fri. 2/20
Week 7	2/24-26	Biblical Identity and Violence, continued <i>Reading:</i> Schwartz, 39-142 Additional Grad Reading: RVMP, 37-70 (Robert and Webber)
Week 8	3/3-5	Biblical Identity and Violence, concluded <i>Reading:</i> Schwartz, 143-176 Additional Grad Reading: RVMP, 71-112 (Pesantubbee, Oldenhage, and Keshgegian) Exam #2 (take-home) due by 11:59pm, Sun., 3/8
	*3/10-12	Spring Break
Week 9	3/17-19	Cultures of Religious Violence: Christian, Jewish, and Islamic <i>Reading:</i> Juergensmeyer, xi-84 Additional Grad Reading: RVMP, 113-149 (Foard; Longman & Rutagengwa)
Week 10	*3/23 3/24-26	Cultures of Religious Violence: Sikh, and Buddhist <i>Reading:</i> Juergensmeyer, 61-118 Paper Proposals Due by 11:59 pm on 3/23 Library Session on 3/26 (tent.) Additional Grad Reading: RVMP, 150-176 (Herrero Brasas and Jacobs)

Week 11	3/31-4/2	The Logic of Religious Violence I <i>Reading:</i> Juergensmeyer, 121-218 <i>Additional Grad Reading:</i> RVMP, 177-234 (Chidester, Rey, and Young)
Week 12	*4/6 4/7-9	The Logic of Religious Violence II; ISIS Project Preparation <i>Reading:</i> Juergensmeyer, 219-249; ISIS reading <i>TBA</i> <i>Revised Paper Proposals (if required) due by 11:59 pm on 4/6</i> <i>Additional Grad Reading:</i> N/A: Grad Research Roundtable
Week 13	4/14-16	ISIS Presentations/Discussions (led by undergraduates) <i>Reading:</i> <i>TBA</i> (selected by student groups) <i>Additional Grad Reading:</i> N/A: Grad Research Presentations <i>Take-home Final Exam due by 11:59 pm, Th., 4/16</i>
Week 14	4/21-23	ISIS Presentations/Discussions (led by undergraduates) <i>Reading:</i> <i>TBA</i> (selected by student groups) <i>Additional Grad Reading:</i> N/A: Grad Research Presentations
Week 15	4/28-30 <i>Finals week</i>	<i>Additional Grad Reading:</i> N/A: Grad Research Presentations (if necessary, during final exam slot, <i>2:15-4:15pm on 4/28</i>)
Week 16	*5/3	<i>Research Papers due by 11:59 pm on Sun., 5/3</i> <i>NOTE: No late papers will be accepted</i>

- THIS syllabus is a contract. It outlines everything you need to know for this course. Please make sure you have read it through carefully.