Course Orientation:

Description: The global problem of religion and violence appears to be a recent one, but in fact, the intersection of religion and violence is an age-old phenomenon. This course examines some of the ways religion and violence have been and are linked across the world and throughout the human experience. We will consider religious justifications for violence, religious restraints upon violence, and religious responses to violence. We will look at a range of classical and contemporary religious texts justifying violence, diverse theories addressing the relationship between violence and religion, mythic and historic backgrounds to that relationship, and modern cases documenting the intersection of religion and violence. In the final third of the course, we will collaboratively investigate the Islamic State (IS) phenomenon. Each week of the course is enhanced by a key problem/engaging question that will be explored through active learning techniques.

Course Objectives: By the end of the course, students will be able to
- Distinguish religious texts justifying violence
- Identify and apply different theories accounting for the relationship between religion and violence
- Assess the IS phenomenon

Learning Outcomes:
- Students will compare and contrast classical and contemporary religious texts
- Students will critically evaluate different theories linking religion and violence and assess their utility
- Students will classify and interpret Regina Schwartz’s theories linking violence to identity in the Hebrew Bible
- Students will apply Mark Juergensmeyer’s observations concerning the commonalities of religious terrorist groups to the IS case

Required Texts

Additional required article-length readings, including readings for the IS Project, will be posted on Canvas.
Assignments and Grading:

1.) Exam #1 (Take-Home: theory and its applications) due by 11:59pm, Tues., 9/25 to turnititin.com via Canvas (15% of final grade)

2.) Exam #2 (In class: Schwartz) on Tues., 10/16 (15% of final grade)

3.) IS Project and Presentations: Beginning in the 9th week of the course, immediately after Exam #2, we will turn our attention to investigating the Islamic State phenomenon. As part of this project, students will choose specific aspects of the IS phenomenon on which they will focus and which they will research. Students will post relevant articles and updates on their research to a class discussion board (5% of final grade); some of the articles will be assigned to and discussed in the class in the 13th and 14th week. During the 15th week of the course students will present on their findings (10% of final grade) and will submit a 500-word written brief on their research during finals week, no later than Wednesday, Dec. 5 (10% of final grade). Total: 25% of final grade (more details will be provided).

4.) Juergensmeyer/IS Essay: Students will submit a 1500 word (minimum) essay applying Juergensmeyer’s theories to the IS phenomenon as described by McCants; due by 11:59pm Wednesday, Dec. 5: 25% of final grade (more details will be provided).

5.) Class Attendance and Instructor’s Assessment of Participation (20% of final grade)

   Each student will endeavor to attend all class sessions on time and participate actively in class discussions and learning activities. 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 two components: up to 10 attendance points will be based on the scale below; up to 10 participation points will be assessed by the professor at his discretion, accounting for habitual tardiness, quality of class participation, engagement, attentiveness, and other factors:

   0-2 absences=9-10 points; 3 absences=8 pts.; 4 abs.=7 pts.; 5 abs.=6 pts.; 6 abs.=4 pts.; 7 abs.=2 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.

| 93-100 A | 90-92 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. |
| 88-89 B+ | 83-87 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. |
| 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. |
| 70-77 C | 60-69 D | “Ds” are awarded for barely passing to below average work, usually riddled with errors and seriously deficient in fulfilling the assignment. |
| 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 and activities based on the readings.

- **ALL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS** are due to turnitin.com via Canvas as indicated. In the interest of fairness, deadlines are firm and will not be extended except in case of emergencies. 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. **NOTE** the following PENALTIES and exceptions:
  - EXAM #1 (Take-Home) will be penalized **five percentage points** for each day late, or part thereof, up to a maximum of 30 points deducted.
  - Because the deadline falls during Finals Week, the JUERGENSMEYER/IS ESSAY and the IS RESEARCH BRIEF will each be penalized **TEN percentage points** for each day late, or part thereof, until Dec. 8, up to a maximum of 30 points deducted per assignment; they will not be accepted after Dec. 8.
  - **NOTE:** No assignments will be accepted after Dec. 8, for any reason.

- **STANDARDS** for citation and referencing must be adhered to. I recommend MLA style (see [http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/Documentation.html](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 acceptable as references for the IS Project but use them with caution and suspicion: if you do use them, citations must include full url details and date accessed.

- ALL written assignments must be typed, formatted in 11-12 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](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. a paper or essay) for different professors/courses. However, students may continue and extend a specific research project originally conducted for a different 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, and the student must provide the professor with a copy of the prior work.

- 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 Major Topics and Reading Assignments:**

- NOTE: Readings must be completed prior to the first class meeting of the indicated week.

| Week 1  | 8/21-8/23 | Introductions/Orientation  
| Problem: What Are Our Presuppositions?  
| Readings: Course syllabus; Graf, “Violence;” Juergensmeyer & Kitts, 1-4 |
| Week 2  | 8/28-30  | Religious Justifications for Violence: Classical Primary Texts  
| Problem: Are Religions Inherently Violent?  
| Reading: Juergensmeyer & Kitts, 5-44 |
| Week 3  | 9/4-6    | Religious Justifications for Violence: Contemporary Primary Texts  
| Problem: Who Speaks for Religion?  
| Reading: Juergensmeyer & Kitts, 55-92 |
| Week 4  | 9/11 9/13 | Video: Bill Moyers Journal: 9/11: For the Record (in class)  
| Problem: Why Do We Sacrifice?  
| Theory: Thinking about the Religious Role in Violence I (Durkheim; Hubert & Mauss, Freud)  
| Reading: Juergensmeyer & Kitts, 93-126 |
| Week 5  | 9/18-20  | Theory: Thinking about the Religious Role in Violence II (Burkert, Marx, Jay, Scarry, Baudrillard)  
| Problem: Why Do We Fight?  
| Reading: Juergensmeyer & Kitts, 141-151; 174-209 |
| Week 6  | 9/25 no class 9/27 | Outside class activity: Exam #1 (Theory) due by 11:59pm  
| Biblical Identity and Violence I  
| Problem: When Is Too Much Not Enough?  
| Reading: Schwartz, ix-38 |
| Week 7  | 10/2 no class 10/4 | Outside class activity: TBA  
| Biblical Identity and Violence II  
| Problem: What’s Wrong with Being Nationalistic?  
<p>| Reading: Schwartz, 39-119 |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>10/9-11</td>
<td>Biblical Identity and Violence III</td>
<td>In what ways are Schwartz’s theories relevant today?</td>
<td>Schwartz, 120-176</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>10/16-18</td>
<td><strong>In-class Exam (Schwartz) on 10/16</strong></td>
<td>Terror and God</td>
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<td>Problem: How Do We Study Religious Terrorism?</td>
<td>Reading: Juergensmeyer, xi-15; Rapoport TBA</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>10/23-25</td>
<td>Cultures of Religious Violence</td>
<td>Problem: Can We Ever Justify Violence?</td>
<td>Juergensmeyer, xi-15; Rapoport TBA</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>10/30-11/1</td>
<td>The Logic of Religious Violence</td>
<td>Problem: Terrorists or Militants?</td>
<td>Juergensmeyer, 19-146</td>
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<td>11/6</td>
<td>The Mind of God</td>
<td>Problem: Does God Desire Violence?</td>
<td>Juergensmeyer, 149-301</td>
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<td>11/8 Special Lecture</td>
<td><strong>11/8: Guest Lecture</strong>: Dr. Thomas Kühne, Clark University,</td>
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<td>“Comradeship and the Holocaust” (Location TBA)</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>11/13-15</td>
<td>The IS Case</td>
<td>Problem: Is IS at Odds with Modernity?</td>
<td>McCants</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>11/20</td>
<td>The IS Case (continued)</td>
<td>Problem: TBA (student-defined)</td>
<td>McCants</td>
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<td>11/22 no class</td>
<td>IS articles TBA (selected by students)</td>
<td>Reading: IS articles TBA (selected by students)</td>
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<td><strong>NO CLASS on 11/22 due to Thanksgiving</strong></td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>11/27-29</td>
<td>IS Presentations/Discussions; Course Conclusions</td>
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<td>Reading: IS articles TBA (selected by students)</td>
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**Finals Week:**
- **Class meets if necessary**

**Juergensmeyer/IS Essay and IS Research Brief due by 11:59 pm, Weds., 12/5**

- **There is no final examination in this course, but class presentations may be held during our scheduled final exam time slot, if necessary.**

**Week 15**

- **12/4: 12-2p**

**Week 16**

- **Finals Week**

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