

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

RLG 5149: Religion, Violence & Conflict: Fall 2022 (in conjunction with REL3148)

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 11a-12:15p in **CBC 140** and Thursdays, 12:30p-1:45p in **CBC 254**

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Course 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 to which students will respond in individual journal entries; these questions will be further explored in class through active learning techniques. Graduate students will also conduct independent research on relevant topics of their choosing in consultation with the professor.

Course Learning Objectives:

By the end of the course, students will be able to

- Distinguish and analyze religious texts justifying violence
- Identify and apply different theories accounting for the relationship between religion and violence
- Recognize religious violence when and where it occurs
- Decipher and assess the IS phenomenon
- Critically examine and assess a relevant research topic, producing a final research paper

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the course, students will be able to

- Recognize the complex interconnections among historical, religious, social, political, and cultural factors that lead to religious violence.
- Analyze from several perspectives the experiences of people involved in religious violence.
- Reflect on and respond to religious violence and its global impact in the present and their own lives.

This syllabus is subject to change with written notice from the professor.

Statement Regarding Academic Freedom:

Academic freedom and responsibility are essential to the integrity of the University. The principles of academic freedom are integral to the conception of the University as a community of scholars engaged in the pursuit of truth and the communication of knowledge in an atmosphere of tolerance and freedom. The University serves the common good through teaching, research, scholarship/creative activities, and service. The fulfillment of these functions rests upon the preservation of the intellectual freedoms of teaching, expression, research, and debate. We affirm that academic freedom is a protected right in addition to a faculty member's constitutionally protected freedom of expression and is fundamental to the faculty member's responsibility to seek and to state truth as he/she sees it. Students are encouraged to employ critical thinking and to rely on data and verifiable sources to interrogate all assigned readings and subject matter in this course as a way of determining whether they agree with their classmates and/or their instructor. No lesson is intended to espouse, promote, advance, inculcate, or compel a particular feeling, perception, viewpoint or belief.

Required Texts

- Fritz Graf, "Violence," *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsay Jones, 2nd ed., vol. 14 (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005): 9595-9600 (available [electronically](#) via the Green Library)
- Mark Juergensmeyer and Margo Kitts, eds., *Princeton Readings in Religion and Violence* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011) ISBN: 9780691129143; \$29.95 list (also available as an [e-book](#) via the Green Library)
- Regina M. Schwartz, *The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), ISBN 9780226742007; \$28 list
- Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, 4th ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017), ISBN: 9780520291355; \$29.95 list (also available as an [e-book](#) via the Green Library)
- William McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State* (NY: Picador, 2016, reprint), ISBN: 9781250112644; \$16 list
- Oren Baruch Stier and J. Shawn Landres, eds., *Religion, Violence, Memory, and Place* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), ISBN 9780253218643; \$26 list

Additional required article-length readings, **including readings for the IS Project identified by students**, will be posted on Canvas.

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 below and converted to final letter grades for the course.

Grade Range	Criteria
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 80-82 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.
78-79 C+ 70-77 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.
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.

Assignments and Grading:

- 1.) Student Discussants: All students will select from assigned readings in a week of their choosing and will present a 5-minute overview and orientation to the week's readings to encourage class discussion (**5% of final grade**).
- 2.) Journal Entries: All students will submit brief written/audio/video responses to the key problem/engaging questions on the weekly readings posted in the syllabus for weeks 2-13. These responses are private and are read/heard/viewed only by the professor, and students are free to submit whatever they wish in response to the posted questions so long as they display some evidence of having completed the reading assignments and consist of a minimum of a paragraph (at least five sentences) each in written or audio/visual form. Each Journal Entry is worth one point, up to a maximum of 10 points (there are a total of 12 Journal Entry opportunities) and is due by **11:59pm on Sunday nights (10% of final grade)**. NOTE: The professor will use these Journal Entries to help shape class discussion and may refer to them in general terms in class, possibly asking students to elaborate on their individual entries, but any personal comments will of course be held in confidence.
- 3.) Take-Home Exam #1: **due in Canvas by 11:59pm, Sat., 10/1 (10% of final grade)**.
- 4.) Take-Home Exam #2 (Schwartz) **due by 11:59pm, Sat. 10/22 (10% of final grade)**.
- 5.) IS Project and Presentations: Beginning in the 11th week of the course, we will turn our attention to collaboratively investigating the Islamic State phenomenon. As part of this project, students will work together dissecting the IS phenomenon and identifying specific aspects of it requiring further investigation; such investigation will lead to a final group report to a hypothetical government agency seeking insight and recommendations on how to address the IS phenomenon. Students will identify and share relevant articles and updates on their research in collaborative class discussions; some of the articles will be assigned and discussed in class in the 13th and 14th week. During the 15th week of the course students will present on their findings during class (5% of final grade) and will submit a 500-word written brief on their research, due by **Saturday, Dec. 3** (5% of final grade). **Total for the IS project: 10% of final grade** (more details will be provided).
- 6.) Research Paper: 4,500-7,000 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 *Religion, Violence, Memory, and Place* (hereafter, RVMP) and research a topic related to it in some way (historical or theoretical background, further developments, alternative memorializations, etc.).
 - Initial Proposals (1-2 pages of narrative, plus preliminary bibliography using MLA style) are due by **11:59 pm on Sat., 9/17 (5% of final grade)**. Students may be required to submit revised proposals, which are due no later than **11:59 pm on SUN., 10/2**.
 - Student Presentations: Each student will prepare a 10-minute oral presentation on his/her research project for delivery and discussion during the last regular grad class meeting on **12/1** (if necessary, class time may be extended to accommodate all student presentations): **10% of final grade**.
 - Final Papers are due no later than **11:59 pm on WEDNESDAY Dec. 7 (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.

7.) Class Attendance and Instructor's Assessment of Participation (**10%** of final grade).

Class meets every Tuesday and Thursday unless otherwise noted. Beginning in week 2 of the course, students will receive a ½ point for timely attendance each day class meets, *up to a maximum of 10 points*. Students arriving late to class (more than 5 minutes late or after attendance is taken, whichever comes first), departing early, or otherwise disrupting the class will receive **no points** for that day's attendance component. ***In addition***, for the weeks in which an additional grad reading is listed, each student will serve as *discussant/facilitator* **once or twice** (depending on class size). Designated students 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*. Discussants should focus on 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.

Course Regulations and Expectations:

- READINGS must be completed by the first 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 in Canvas by the stated deadlines unless otherwise indicated. *As a courtesy, all assignments will stay open for 24 hours, one day past the posted due date, to allow for late submissions with no late penalty. This grace period will not be extended.* Students who are unable to submit assignments by the conclusion of the grace period, for any reason, must contact the instructor prior to the deadline; late assignments will be accepted on a case-by-case basis, with a penalty, at the discretion of the instructor.
 - *Keep **electronic** copies of all written work!* For your own protection, verify all electronic submissions before logging out of Canvas.
 - ***NOTE: No assignments will be accepted after Dec. 8, for any reason.***
- STANDARDS for citation and referencing: I recommend MLA style (see this [page](#) and follow the links as necessary). Students should use in-text MLA style abbreviated parenthetical references, *i.e.*, (Schwartz 90), 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. I use rubrics to assess your work and will share them with you in advance of the assignment due dates.
 - 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](#) 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.
- 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 impact the attendance portion of the grade; regular, repeated tardiness will be counted towards an additional 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! Please refer to the attendance and participation assignment above for more information.

Schedule of Major Topics, Problems and Reading Assignments:

- NOTE: Readings must be completed *prior to* the class meetings of the indicated week.

WEEK	DATES	TOPICS & REQUIREMENTS
Week 1	8/23 8/25	Introductions/Orientation <i>Problem:</i> What Are Our Presuppositions? <i>Readings:</i> Course syllabus; Graf, "Violence;" Juergensmeyer & Kitts, 1-4
Week 2	8/30 9/1	Religious Justifications for Violence: Classical Primary Texts <i>Problem:</i> Are Religions Inherently Violent? <i>Reading:</i> Juergensmeyer & Kitts, pp. 5-44 (Introduction to Part 1 through chapter 7: Thomas Aquinas) Additional Grad Reading: RVMP (Landres & Stier; Friedland & Hecht)
Week 3	9/6 9/8	Religious Justifications for Violence: Contemporary Primary Texts <i>Problem:</i> Who Speaks for Religion? <i>Reading:</i> Juergensmeyer & Kitts, pp. 55-92 (chapter 9: Michael Bray through chapter 13: 9/11 Conspirator) Grad Hour: Research Workshop in the Green Library (GL 280) Additional Grad Reading: RVMP (Robert, Webber)
Week 4	9/13 9/15	Theory: Thinking about the Religious Role in Violence I (Durkheim; Hubert & Mauss, Freud) <i>Problem:</i> Why Do We Sacrifice? <i>Reading:</i> Juergensmeyer & Kitts, pp. 93-126 (Introduction to Part II through chapter 16: Sigmund Freud) <i>Video:</i> 9/11: For the Record (during class on 9/15) Paper Proposals Due by 11:59 pm on 9/17
Week 5	9/20 9/22	Theory: Thinking about the Religious Role in Violence II (Burkert, Marx, Jay, Scarry, Baudrillard) <i>Problem:</i> Why Do We Fight? <i>Reading:</i> Juergensmeyer & Kitts, pp. 141-151; 174-209 (chapter 18: Walter Burkert and chapters 21 Karl Marx through 24: Jean Baudrillard) Additional Grad Reading: RVMP (Pesantubbee)
Week 6	9/29	No class on 9/27 due to Rosh Hashanah Biblical Identity and Violence I <i>Problem:</i> When Is Too Much Not Enough? <i>Reading:</i> Schwartz, ix-38 Additional Grad Reading: RVMP (Oldenhage, Keshgegian) Assessment: Exam #1 due by 11:59pm 10/1 Revised Paper Proposals (if required) due by 11:59 pm on 10/2
Week 7	10/4 10/6	Biblical Identity and Violence II <i>Problem:</i> What's Wrong with Being Nationalistic? <i>Reading:</i> Schwartz, 39-119 Additional Grad Reading: RVMP (Foard; Longman & Rutagengwa)
Week 8	10/13	No class on 10/11 due to Sukkot Biblical Identity and Violence III <i>Problem:</i> In what ways are Schwartz's theories relevant today? <i>Reading:</i> Schwartz, 120-176 Additional Grad Reading: RVMP (Herrero Brasas)

WEEK	DATES	TOPICS & REQUIREMENTS
Week 9	10/20	No class on 10/18 due to Simchat Torah Terror and God <i>Problem:</i> How Do We Study Religious Terrorism? <i>Reading:</i> Juergensmeyer, xi-15; Rapoport TBA Additional Grad Reading: RVMP (Jacobs) Assessment: Exam #2 due by 11:59pm 10/22
Week 10	10/25 10/27	Cultures of Religious Violence <i>Problem:</i> Can We Ever Justify Violence? <i>Reading:</i> Juergensmeyer, 19-146 Additional Grad Reading: RVMP (Chidester and Rey)
Week 11	11/1 11/3	The Logic of Religious Violence <i>Problem:</i> Terrorists or Militants? <i>Reading:</i> Juergensmeyer, 149-301 Additional Grad Reading: RVMP (Young and Linenthal)
Week 12	11/8 11/10	The Mind of God <i>Problem:</i> Does God Desire Violence?
Week 13	11/15 11/17	The IS Case <i>Problem:</i> Is IS at Odds with Modernity? <i>Reading:</i> McCants Grad Discussion on IS and McCants; research check-in
Week 14	11/22	No class on 11/24 due to Thanksgiving The IS Case (continued) <i>Problem:</i> TBA (student-defined) <i>Reading:</i> IS articles TBA (selected by students) Grad hour: preparing for research presentations
Week 15	11/29 12/1	IS Presentations/Discussions; Course Conclusions <i>Reading:</i> IS articles TBA (selected by students) Grad Research Presentations on 12/1 (extended class meeting) IS Research Brief due by 11:59 pm, 12/3
Week 16 Finals Week	12/6 or 12/8: (Class meets if needed)	FINAL PAPERS due by 11:59 pm, WEDS., 12/7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no final examination in this course, but class presentations may be held during our scheduled final exam time slot, if necessary.

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