

REL 3148: RELIGION AND VIOLENCE
Summer B 2016

Room: Anderson 101

Schedule: MTWRF period 5 (2:00-3:15)

Instructor: Anna Peterson

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DESCRIPTION

The relations between religion and violence has long posed a challenging problem both for contemporary politics and for the academic study of religion. Religions sometimes contribute to violence or justify it, but they can also help achieve peaceful solutions to violent conflicts. Religious rituals themselves can be extremely violent, and some scholars argue that violence lies at the heart of religion itself. This class explores violence within religion, religiously motivated violence, religious justifications of political violence, and religious rejections and resolutions of violence. Throughout the course, readings will address a variety of religious traditions in different regions and historical periods. We will also explore a variety of approaches to religious studies and to comparative ethics, including both descriptive and normative studies.

This summer course is fast-paced and intense. We will move through the readings quickly. Please read the syllabus carefully, plan ahead, and make sure you keep up with both readings and assignments. Class participation will be vital to your understanding of the material and to your success in the course. Please let me know if you will be absent at any time or if there is any other issue related to your ability to keep up with the class.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To become familiar with diverse approaches to the comparative study of religion;
2. To learn about and discuss the problem of violence in relation to the broader disciplines of comparative religious studies and comparative ethics;
3. To improve students' ability to discuss and analyze theoretical claims and supporting arguments; and
4. To improve students' ability to express, in writing and orally, their own analytical arguments.

REQUIRED BOOKS

The following required books are available at area bookstores and on reserve at Library West.

John Renard, ed., *Fighting Words: Religion, Violence, and the Interpretation of Sacred Texts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012)

Davíd Carrasco, *City of Sacrifice: The Aztec Empire and the Role of Violence in Civilization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999)

Hans G. Kippenberg, *Violence as Worship: Religious Wars in the Age of Globalization* (Stanford University Press, 2011)

Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God* (California, 2003)

Lisa S. Cahill, *Love Your Enemies: Discipleship, Pacifism, and Just War Theory* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994)

Additional reading (on Canvas)

John Kelsay, *Arguing the Just War in Islam*, Ch. 1: Sources

POLICIES, RULES, AND RESOURCES

1. *Handing in Assignments:* Place all papers in my mailbox in the Religion Department, 107 Anderson Hall. DO NOT slip them under the door or leave them on the door of my office, the main department office, or the teaching assistant's office. Please also keep a dated electronic copy of all your papers.
2. *Late or Make-Up Assignments:* You may take an exam early or receive an extension on an exam or essay assignment *only* in extraordinary circumstances *and* with prior approval from the instructor. If an extension is not granted, the assignment will be marked down ½ grade (e.g., from B+ to B) for each day late.
3. *Completion of All Assignments:* You must complete all written and oral assignments and fulfill the requirement for class participation in order to pass the course. I will not average a grade that is missing any assignment or requirement.
4. *Attendance and Participation:* Class attendance is required. Do not register for this class if you cannot arrive on time. Students should arrive on time and prepared to discuss the day's readings. Tardiness harms your understanding of the material and disrupts the class. After the first late arrival, the instructor reserves the right to mark you absent. The instructor will *not* provide notes or discuss material that has already been covered for students who arrive late, barring extraordinary circumstances (which do not include failing to find a parking place or sleeping in).
5. *Common Courtesy:* Cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off during class. Students who receive or make calls during class will be asked to leave. You may take notes on a laptop computer, although the instructor reserves the right to ask you to turn off the computer if circumstances warrant. The instructor also reserves the right to ask any student engaging in disruptive behavior (e.g., whispering, reading a newspaper) to leave the class. If that occurs, the student will be marked absent for the day.

6. *Honor Code*: On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The university specifically prohibits cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation, bribery, conspiracy, and fabrication. For more information about the definition of these terms and other aspects of the Honesty Guidelines, see <http://www.chem.ufl.edu/~itl/honor.html>. Any student(s) demonstrated to have cheated, plagiarized, or otherwise violated the Honor Code in *any assignment* for this course will fail the course. In addition, violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines shall result in judicial action and the sanctions listed in paragraph XI of the Student Conduct Code.

7. *Accommodation for Disabilities*: Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

8. *Counseling Resources*: Resources available on-campus for students include the following:

- University Counseling Center, 301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575, personal and career counseling;
- Student Mental Health, Student Health Care Center, 392-1171, personal counseling;
- Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, 392-1161, sexual counseling;
- Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601, career development assistance and counseling.

9. *Software Use*: All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

REQUIREMENTS AND WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

This class fulfills the **Gordon Rule** writing requirement (GR2) for undergraduates. You must complete at least 2000 words of writing during the semester. Please ensure that each written assignment fulfills the minimum word requirement.

Important: All written assignments should be handed in during class or left in my mailbox in 107 Anderson Hall. Under *no* circumstances should papers be left in my office (taped to the door, slid under the door, etc.).

- Active participation in class discussions, based on timely and close reading of all assigned texts (10% of final grade). This grade may include quizzes and other unannounced in-class assignments.
- Questions for class: Ask at least one good question about the reading to each class. The questions can request clarification (e.g., “What does Renard mean by allegorical interpretation”), investigate a particular point in the reading (e.g., “Why does Juergensmeyer choose to start his

book with an example in the US?”), or raise broader issues (e.g., “Why is ritual so much more important for Aztecs than Protestants?”). You should not ask questions that you can easily answer yourself (e.g., “What does ‘henotheism’ mean?”). We will go through the questions at the start of class each day. (15% of final grade).

3. First short essay, due Tuesday, July 11 by midnight via email; submit print copy in class on Wednesday 7/12. Minimum 1000 words. Topic: Violence in comparative religious perspective. Detailed instructions will be provided during the first week of class (25% of final grade).

4. Second short essay, due Sunday, July 24 by 9:00 pm via email; submit print copy in class on Monday 7/25. Minimum 1000 words. Topic: Religious war and terrorism. Detailed assignment instructions will be provided during the week of July 11 (25% of final grade).

5. Debate on the ethics of war and peace: Students will be divided into groups to prepare for a debate about just war theory and pacifism. The debate will be held the last day of class (Friday, August 4). Every individual student will be responsible for part of the group’s argument and will prepare a short position paper (about 500 words), due by midnight on Thursday, August 3. You will have Thursday class time to prepare for the debate. Debate participation: 10% of final grade. Position paper: 15% of final grade.

SCHEDULE

Week 1

M 6/26 Introduction to the Class

T 6/27 Renard, *Fighting Words*, Ch. 1 (Introduction)

W 6/28 Renard, *Fighting Words*, Ch. 2 (History of War in the Hebrew Bible and Jewish Tradition)

Th 6/29 Renard, *Fighting Words*, Ch. 4 (Violence in the New Testament)

F 6/30 Renard, *Fighting Words*, Ch. 8 (The Bhagavad Gita)

Week 2

M 7/3 John Kelsay, *Arguing the Just War in Islam*, Ch. 1: Sources (on Canvas)

T 7/4 July 4 holiday - no class

W 7/5 Carrasco, *City of Sacrifice*, Ch. 1-2

Th 6/30 Carrasco, *City of Sacrifice*, Ch. 3-4

F 7/1 Carrasco, *City of Sacrifice*, Ch. 5-6

Week 3

M 7/10 Carrasco, *City of Sacrifice*, Ch. 7-8

T 7/11 * First essay due by email before midnight today. Bring print copy to class Wednesday

W 7/12 Kippenberg, *Violence as Worship*, Ch. 1-2

Th 7/13 Kippenberg, *Violence as Worship*, Ch. 3-4

F 7/14 Kippenberg, *Violence as Worship*, Ch. 6-7

Week 4

M 7/17 Kippenberg, *Violence as Worship*, Ch. 8
T 7/18 Kippenberg, *Violence as Worship*, Ch. 9-11
W 7/19 Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, Ch. 1
Th 7/20 Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 2-6
F 7/21 Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, Ch. 7-8

Week 5

M 7/24 Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, Ch. 9-10
T 7/25 Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, Ch. 11
W 7/26 Second essay due by midnight via email; submit print copy in class on Thursday
Th. 7/27 Cahill, Ch. 1-2: Overview of Christian thinking about war and peace
F 7/28 Cahill, Ch. 4-5: Development of the just war tradition

Week 6

M 7/31 Cahill, Ch. 6-7: Modern just war theory
T 8/1 Cahill, Ch. 3: Pacifism in the Early Church
W 8/2 Cahill, Ch. 8: Anabaptist and Quaker pacifism
Th 8/3 Group work to prepare for debate
* Individual position papers (500 words) due by midnight on Thurs. 8/3 *
F 8/4 In-class debate