

**University of Florida
Department of Religion**

REL 3148: Religion and Violence

Fall 2021

Section:
1641

Instructor: Dr. Terje Ostebo
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Office Hours: Wednesday 8:30-10:30; F2F or online
(students have the possibility to meet F2F or online for office hours. Note that masks are required for meeting F2F. Students unwilling to comply with this will have to meet online.)

TA: Yuan Zhang
Office: 009 Anderson Hall
Phone: (352) 273-2943
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Office Hours: Friday: 10:30 am – 12:30 pm; F2F or online
(Students have the possibility to meet F2F or online for office hours. Note that masks are required for meeting F2F. Students unwilling to comply with this will have to meet online.)

Locality/Periods:

L011 Turlington Hall Monday-Wednesday-Friday period 7 (1:55-2:45)
This course will be 100 percent F2F.

Course Description

The relations between religion and violence has long posed challenges both for ordinary life 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.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course you should:

- Be familiar with diverse approaches to the comparative study of religion;

- Have learned about and discussed the problem of violence in relation to the broader disciplines of comparative religious studies and comparative ethics;
- Improved your ability to discuss and analyze theoretical claims and supporting arguments; and
- Improved your ability to express, in writing and orally, their own analytical arguments.

Course Requirements and Grading Criteria

The final grade will be determined by the total scored for:

- Attendance and participation in classroom discussions (10%). We will circulate an attendance sheet, which you should sign. Signing for others is considered Academic dishonesty.
- 3 short reflection paper (15% x 3 = 45)
- 1 research papers (45%)

Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
Tot %	94-100	88-93	82-87	76-81	71-75	66-70	61-65	56-60	51-55	46-50	40-45	<40

Additional information about UF's grading policy can be found here:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Attendance and Classroom Participation: Students are expected to attend **ALL** classes and participate actively in class discussions. Active and informed participation demands that students **read the material carefully before coming to class**. The instructor will seek to engage all students in discussions by asking direct questions to the students, and by for comments to the readings. The instructor will keep a log for each week, noting the degree of engagement and level of insights demonstrated.

3 Reflection Notes: Each student will write three reflection papers (300 words), where you will be asked to critically reflect over the topics covered over the last week(s). You will choose one of the readings covered in the weeks before the due date of the reflection note (or the weeks in-between 2nd and 3rd note). This should not be a summary, but your reflections and reactions to ideas, concepts or topics introduced in the chapter/article. It can also include questions.

1 Research Paper: Each student will write a final research paper (minimum 1,500 words) on a topic related to the course's topics, readings, and discussions. The students will choose the topic for the paper in consultation with the instructor, and there will be stated and fixed deadlines for submitting topic, outline, and final version of the paper (see class calendar for dates). The research paper will be evaluated based on the student's comprehension of the material, degree of independent and critical thinking, and ability to communicate the material clearly.

The reflection notes and the research paper must be typed, double-spaced with one-inch margins, 12 pt Times New Roman. Please also include your name and the date you hand in the assignment. Each note is to be uploaded onto the course's e-learning site in Canvas. You can log in and find the course web page here: elearning.ufl.edu. The notes will be graded electronically, and returned to you electronically.

Writing Requirement:

The University Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. This course carries 2000 words that count towards the University Writing Requirement. You must turn in all written work counting towards the 2000 words in order to receive credit for those words. The writing course grade assigned by the instructor has two components: the writing component and a course grade. **To receive writing credit a student must satisfactorily complete all the assigned written work and receive a minimum grade of C (2.0) for the course.** It is possible to fail to meet the writing requirement and still earn a minimum grade of C in a class, so students should review their degree audit after receiving their grade to verify receipt of credit for the writing component.

I encourage you to seek help from the university's Writing Studio (www.writing.ufl.edu), which offers support for writing in all fields and can be very helpful both in developing your first drafts and in polishing those drafts. I recommend the Chicago manual of style (<https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>) as a guide for writing format and style. However, if you are used to following a different style guide, that is acceptable, as long as you check with me first and make sure to use the same format consistently throughout your paper.

Make-ups and Attendance:

Make-up exams and tests will only be allowed in unavoidable circumstances or for compelling reasons that can be convincingly documented. Similarly, absence(s) will detract points except unavoidable ones proven with satisfactory explanation/documentation.

Student Honor Code:

As a UF student, you have agreed to follow the university's Honor Code, meaning you will not give or receive unauthorized assistance in completing assignments. Violations can result in failing an exam, paper or the course. For more information, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/studentguide/studentrights.php>. On all work submitted for credit by University of Florida students, the following pledge is implied, "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." Please note that acts of plagiarism include:

- Turning in a paper or assignment that was written by someone else.
- Copying verbatim a sentence or paragraph of text from the work of another author without proper citation and quotation marks.
- Paraphrasing or restating in your own words, text or ideas written by someone else without proper citation.

For more info, see <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/students.html>

Disabilities:

"If you are a student with a disability and would like to request disability-related accommodations, you are encouraged to contact me and the Disability Resource Center as early in the semester as possible. The Disability Resource Center is located in 001 Building 0020 (Reid Hall). Their phone number is 392-8565."

Course Evaluations:

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals/Default.aspx>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these evaluations are available at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>

Recording of Class Sessions:

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

Required Reading:

See Class Calendar for details about required and supplementary readings.

Most of the readings will be available as pdf-files on Canvas, while required readings marked with an “*” should be purchased.

Class Calendar and Reading Schedule:

Note: This document is subject to change, students are responsible for all changes announced in class.

Week 1 (August 23-27): Introduction and Course Preview

Part I: Understanding Religion and Violence

Week 2 (August 30 – September 3): What is Religion?

Readings:

- Asad, T. *Genealogies of Religion*, New York: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993: 27-54.

Week 3 (September 8-10, Monday holiday): What is Violence?

Readings:

- Govier, T. "Violence, Nonviolence, and Definitions: A Dilemma for Peace Studies," *Peace Research*, 40,2, 2008: 61-83.
- de Haan, W. "Violence as an Essentially Contested Concept," *Violence in Europe: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (eds. Body-Gendrot, S. and Spierenburg, P.), New York: Springer, 2009: 27-40.

Week 4 (September 13-17): Is Religion Violent?

Readings:

- Armstrong, K. "The Myth of Religious Violence" *The Guardian*, September 25, 2014.
- *Juergensmeyer, M. *Terror in the mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000: (1-15).
- Cavanaugh W. "The Myth of Religious Violence," *The Blackwell Companion to Religion and Violence* (ed. Murphy, A.), London: Blackwell Publishing, 2011: 3-14.

1st Reflection Note due – Friday September 17

Part II: War and Terror

Week 5 (September 20-24): Just War

Readings:

- Reichberg, G., Turner, N. and Popovski, V. "Norms of war in cross-religious perspective," *World Religions and Norms of War* (eds. Popovsk, V., Reichberg, G. and Turner N. New York: United Nation University Press, 2009.
- Popovski, V. and Turner, N. *Religious Perspectives on the use of Force*. Research Brief 1: United Nation University, 2007.
- *Kelsay, J. *Arguing Just War in Islam*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press: chapter 3-4. (for those unfamiliar with Islam, chapters 1-2 are recommended reading)

Topic for Research Paper due – Friday September 24

Week 6 (September 27 – October 1): Just War (cont.)

Readings:

- *Kelsay, J. *Arguing Just War in Islam*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press: chapter 5-6.
- Johnson. J. *Can Modern War be Just?* Yale: Yale University Press, 1984: 11-29.

Week 7 (October 4-7, Friday holiday): Terrorism

Readings:

- Francis, M. “Why the ‘Sacred’ Is a Better Resource Than ‘Religion’ for Understanding Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 28,5, 2016: 912-927.
- *Juergensmeyer, M. *Terror in the mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000: (147-181).

Week 8 (October 11-15): Terrorism (cont.)

Readings:

- *Juergensmeyer, M. *Terror in the mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000: chapter 11.
- Film: Jihad by Deeyah Khan: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= usgevtEppg>

2nd Reflection Note due – Friday October 15

Part III: Religion and Violence – Broader Perspectives

Week 9 (October 18-22): Violence, Media, and Popular Culture

Readings:

- Bain-Selbo, E. “On the Sacred Power of Violence in Popular Culture,” in *Understanding Religion and Popular Culture* (eds. Clark, T. and Clanton, D.), London: Routledge, 2012: 72-88
- Video: Quentin Tarantino interview about violence: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V5luBQ3pCXU>
- Kimberly, K. “Framing Islam: An Analysis of U.S. Media Coverage of Terrorism since 9/11,” *Communication Studies*, 62,1, 2011: 90-112.

Outline for Research Paper due – Friday October 22

Week 10 (October 25-29): Violence and Race

Readings:

- Holy Hate: The Far Right’s Radicalization of Religion: <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2018/holy-hate-far-right’s-radicalization-religion>
- Spangenberg, I. “The Religious Roots of Racism in the Western World,” *HTS Theological Studies*: 1-8
- Vorster, N. “Christian Theology and Racist Ideology: A Case Study of Nazi Ideology and Apartheid Theology,” *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, 7,19:144-161

Week 11 (November 1-5): Violence and Race (cont.)

Readings:

- Gardell, M. “White Racist Religions in the United States: From Christian Identity to Wolf Age Pagans,” in *Controversial New Religions*, ed. Lewis, J and Aasgard Petersen, J. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p 387-458.

- Film: White Right: Meeting the Enemy by Deeyah Khan:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxP4B374Os8>

Week 12 (November 8-12): Gender, Sexuality, and Violence

Readings:

- Orsi, Robert: *History and Presence*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016: chapter 7.
- Film: Hand of God: <https://www.pbs.org/video/frontline-hand-god/> (Resources for the film: <http://www.bishop-accountability.org/Birmingham/>)

3rd Reflection Note due – Friday November 12

Week 13 (November 15-19): Gender, Sexuality, and Violence (cont.)

Readings:

- Uma Narayan: "Cross-Cultural Connections, Border-Crossings, and "Death by Culture": Thinking About Dowry-Murders in India and Domestic-Violence Murders in the United States," in *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third World Feminism*, 1997: 82-117.

Draft of Research Paper due – Tuesday November 19

Week 14 (November 22, Thanksgiving): The Question of Sacrifice

Readings:

- McClymond, K. "Sacrifice and Violence," *The Blackwell Companion to Religion and Violence* (ed. Murphy, A.), London: Blackwell Publishing: 320-330

Week 15 (November – December 3): The Question of Sacrifice (cont.)

- Shirley Jackson, "The Lottery" <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1948/06/26/the-lottery>
- Matthews, D. "Lynching is Part of the Religion of our People: Faith in the Christian South," *Religion in the American South* (eds. Barton Schweiger, B. and Matthews, D), Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004: 153-194.

Week 16 (December 6-8): Conclusions

Final Research Paper due – Monday December 13