

**University of Florida
Department of Religion**

REL 3148/POS 4931/RLG 5937: Religion and Violence

Fall 2023

Sections:

REP1
REP2
REP3
2354
1641
9238
9327

Instructor:

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Locality/Periods:

Tuesday, period 5-6 (11:45-1:40): LAR 0310 (all sections)
Friday, period 3 (9:35-10:25): AND 0134 (section REP1, 1641)
Friday, period 5 (11:45-12:35): MAT 0114 (section REP2, 9238, 2354)
Friday, period 6 (12:50-1:40): TUR 2328 (sections REP3, 9327)

Course Description

The relations between religion and violence have 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.
- Reflection notes (40%)
- Paper 1 (25%)
- Paper 2 (25%)

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.

Reflection Notes: Each student will write a reflection note on selected readings each week during the course (200 words for each). You will find info on which reading you are supposed to reflect on through Canvas. This should not be a summary of the reading, but your reflections and reactions to ideas, concepts or topics introduced in each chapter/article. It can also include questions.

Papers: Each student will write two papers (minimum 1,500 words each). These papers should relate the materials you read, and the topics discussed to own daily life. What this means is to use a news story, a conversation you have had, a book, a film, a video, a picture, a social media posting, or anything that caught your attention in your daily life – and reflect on this in relation to the course (readings, topics, etc.). Your papers should include:

1. A description of what you “encountered” – a personal experience, a song, film, tweet, video game, book, conversation with a parent, friend, etc.
2. A discussion of how this relates to readings/topics from the course, how this sheds light on what you experienced, how it can interpret, better understand it. Make sure to present the main points from the reading, demonstrating that you understand it.

The reflection notes and the papers 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.

General Education Description and Student Learning Outcomes

HUMANITIES DESCRIPTION: Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and to analyze the key elements, biases and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives.

HUMANITIES SLOs:

- Identify, describe, and explain the history, underlying theory and methodologies used in the course (Content).
- Identify and analyze key elements, biases and influences that shape thought within the subject area. Approach issues and problems within the discipline from multiple perspectives (Critical Thinking).
- Communicate knowledge, thoughts and reasoning clearly and effectively (Communication).

INTERNATIONAL DESCRIPTION: International courses promote the development of students’ global and intercultural awareness. Students examine the cultural, economic, geographic, historical, political, and/or social experiences and processes that characterize the contemporary world, and thereby comprehend the trends, challenges, and opportunities that affect communities around the world. Students analyze and reflect on the ways in which cultural, economic, political, and/or social systems and beliefs mediate their own and other people’s understanding of an increasingly connected world.

INTERNATIONAL SLOs

- Identify, describe, and explain the historical, cultural, economic, political, and/or social experiences and processes that characterize the contemporary world (Content).
- Analyze and reflect on the ways in which cultural, economic, political, and/or social systems and beliefs mediate understandings the students’ and others’ realities in an increasingly contemporary world (Critical Thinking).

Reflecting these Gen Ed designations, after taking religion and violence students will be able to:

1. Identify, describe, and explain how the resources available in the humanities (and social sciences) can help in understanding the notion of religion and violence (**Content SLOs for Gen Ed Humanities**).
2. Identify and analyze the relations among different theoretical frameworks in humanistic traditions of thought relevant for understanding religion and violence as a concept and phenomenon (**Critical Thinking SLOs for Gen Ed Humanities**)
3. Identify and analyze divergent instances of religion and violence in different parts of the world (**Content and Critical Thinking SLOs Gen Ed Humanities and International**)
4. Apply relevant theoretical perspectives and analyze how they can be applied with regard to current representations of religion and violence in different parts of the world (**Critical Thinking SLO for Gen Ed Humanities and International**)
5. Critically analyze different aspects of religion and violence in relation to nationalism, race, gender, etc. as these appear in different contexts of the world (**Critical Thinking SLO Gen Ed Humanities and International**)

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.
- Using and copying verbatim a sentence or paragraph of text from Chatgpt or any other AI software for any kind of course assignments.
- 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.

Critical Thinking

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 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 29): Introduction and Course Preview

Part I: Understanding Religion and Violence

Week 2 (September 5-8): 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.

Reflection Note 1 due – September 4

Week 3 (September 11-15): Religion and Violence

Readings:

- *Juergensmeyer, M. *Terror in the mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000: 1-15.
- Lincoln, B. *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 1-18.

Reflection Note 2 due – September 11

Week 4 (September 18-22): Religious Violence?

Readings:

- Armstrong, K. “The Myth of Religious Violence” *The Guardian*, September 25, 2014.

- King, R. “The Association of ‘Religion’ with Violence: Reflections on a Modern Trope.” *Religion and Violence in South Asia: Theory and Practice* (eds. Hinnells, J & King, R.), London: Routledge: 226-257.
- Cavanaugh W. “The Myth of Religious Violence,” *The Blackwell Companion to Religion and Violence* (ed. Murphy, A.), London: Blackwell Publishing, 2011: 3-14.

Reflection Note 3 due – September 18

Part II: War and Terror

Week 5 (September 24-29): Just War

Readings:

- Reichberg, G., Turner, N. and Popovski, V. “Norms of war in cross-religious perspective,” *World Religions and Norms of War* (eds. Popovski, V., Reichberg, G. and Turner N. New York: United Nation University Press, 2009.
- Johnson. J. *Can Modern War be Just?* Yale: Yale University Press, 1984: 11-29.

Reflection Note 4 due – September 25

Week 6 (October 2-6): Terrorism

Readings:

- *Juergensmeyer, M. *Terror in the mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000: Chapter 7
- *Juergensmeyer, M. *Terror in the mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000: Chapter 8.

Reflection Note 5 due – October 2

Week 7 (October 9-13): 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.
- Francis, M. “Why the ‘Sacred’ Is a Better Resource Than ‘Religion’ for Understanding Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 28,5, 2016: 912-927.

Reflection Note 6 due – October 9

Midterm Paper due – October 13

Part III: Religion and Violence – Broader Perspectives

Week 8 (October 16-20): 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.

Reflection Note 7 due – October 16

Week 9 (October 23-27): Violence and Race

Readings:

- Loubster, J.L. “Apartheid Theology: A ‘Contextual’ Theology Gone Wrong,” in *Journal of Church and State* 38,2, 1996: 321-337.
- Gardell, M. “Crusader Dreams: Oslo 22/7, Islamophobia, and the Quest for a Monocultural Europe.” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26,1, 2014, p. 129-155.

Reflection Note 8 due – October 23

Week 10 (October 30 – November 3): 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>

Reflection Note 9 due – October 30

Week 11 (November 6-10): Gender, Sexuality, and Violence

Readings:

- Orsi, Robert: *History and Presence*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016: chapter 7.
- Film: The priest's confession: What the Catholic bishops knew.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IX-rDwCsUCU&t=69s> ???

Reflection Note 10 due – November 6

Week 12 (November 13-17): Gender, Sexuality, and Violence (cont.)

Readings:

- Loken, M. & Zelenz, A. “Explaining Extremism: Western Women in Daesh.” *European Journal of International Security*, 3,1, 2017, p. 45-68.

Reflection Note 11 due – November 13

Week 13 (November 21, 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
- “[The Lottery](#),” *The New Yorker*, June 18, 1948.

Reflection Note 12 due – November 20

Week 14 (November 27 – December 1): The Question of Sacrifice (cont.)

- Guest lecture by Gabriel Prieto (Dept. of Anthropology)

Readings:

- Benson, E. “Why Sacrifice?” in *Ritual Sacrifice in Ancient Peru* (eds. Benson, E. and Cook, A.), Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001.
- Verano, J. and Prieto, G. “Ritual violence in the ancient Andes: archaeological evidence from northern coastal Peru” in *Ritual Violence – Rituals of Violence*, Halle 2019.

Week 16 (December 5): Conclusions

Final Paper due – December 8