

HONR 3000
Sacred and Violent
Spring 2018

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University of Nebraska- Omaha

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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course investigates the complex relationship between religion, violence, and peace. This interdisciplinary course examines historical, political, economic, sociological, anthropological and psychological reasons behind religion-related violence in a comparative perspective. The course will also identify the conditions for co-existence and religious pluralism. To analyze the individual stories of religious co-existence, the students are expected to conduct fieldwork and interviews with the members of the Tri-Faith Initiative of Omaha. In doing so, the students will connect the theoretical knowledge on religion, violence and peace with practical experiences of real people from the community. This service learning project will produce an informal history of the emergence of Tri-Faith Initiative and teach the students the challenges and opportunities of religious pluralism in an era of increasing global polarization.

This course has the following three objectives:

- First, the course aims to familiarize the students with the sources of violence and peace in religious traditions.
- Second, it aims to give students a more nuanced and complete understanding of the religion, politics, and violence in a comparative perspective.
- Third, it seeks to supply students with the theoretical and empirical evidence necessary to evaluate and make critical, analytical arguments about religion and violence in comparative perspective.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Required Readings:

- Mark Juergensmeyer, Margo Kitts, and Michael Jerryson, *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2013)
- Robert Pape and James Feldman, *Cutting the Fuse: The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism and How to Stop It* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010)
- William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2009)

Make-Up Exams and Incompletes

I will not allow make-ups without an ***official documented excuse*** regarding medical or family emergencies. Any late assignments should be turned into me by person or via email. Please keep in mind that late assignments will be downgraded. An incomplete will only be given in exceptional circumstances (a documented circumstance beyond the student's control). Students will only be given an incomplete if they have been doing passing work during the semester.

Code of Conduct

All students need to acquaint themselves with what constitutes academic dishonesty and the consequences thereof. See the general university policies for further information: <http://www.unomaha.edu/aandsaffairs/leftcolumn/inside/students/policiesandprocedures/aiundeegrad.php>. ***Laptops and other devices with internet connections are not allowed during the classes.*** Although I acknowledge that laptops provide several benefits for learning, I am convinced, based on my experience, that they distract students from the lecture and discussions.

Fairness and Disability Statement

The instructor of this course is committed to support the learning of all students, irrespective of gender, race, age, religion, handicapping condition, or sexual preference. Students should be able to expect that their learning environments are free from any form of prejudice. Disparaging comments aimed stereotypically at any group and any questioning of the seriousness of purpose or academic commitment of students based upon group characteristics may undermine our educational mission. If such behavior occurs in class, students should first talk with the instructor. Identify specific examples of behavior by the instructor or by other students that the student finds offensive or disparaging. If the student is not satisfied with the resolution of the complaint, the student is encouraged to consult with the Department Chair and to seek the Chair's assistance in improving the classroom environment.

Students requiring special consideration must contact and work through the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities in EAB 117 (554-2872). This office then notifies the instructor in writing of the accommodations the student needs in compliance with 504/ADA.

Course Website

I will make use of the features of the Canvas system, which you can access through UNO webpage. The course syllabus, some of the course readings, lecture notes, and assignments will be available on this website. I may intermittently send course-related e-mails to you via this site. Therefore, you need to make sure that your university email is up and running and that you understand how to use your Canvas account.

Grading

Your final grade will be based on the following criteria. The students need to get at least “B” to get honors credit from this course.

1. Attendance (5 %) and Participation (5 %)

You are expected to attend all the course sessions. More than two unexcused absences will negatively influence your grade. After two absences, each absence will decrease your attendance grade by 0.5 %. You are also expected to productively contribute to classroom discussions. This contribution can be in the form of participating informal and formal debates, posing and responding questions, sharing other resources that can facilitate classroom learning. To facilitate your class participation, I encourage you to think critically, and as part of that, to think the positive aspects of the lectures and readings, and to develop your own analysis of the subject. Class attendance and participation will worth 10 percent of your final grade.

2. Exams (15 % each, 30 % total)

There will be a midterm and a final exam based on the assigned readings and material covered in class. The exam dates are **March 1**, and **May 3**. Each exam is worth 15 percent of your final grade.

3. Reading Reflections (5 % each, 15 % total)

The students are expected to write three reading reflections and discuss them in class throughout the semester. For each assignment, the students will be assigned to read a chapter in the assigned readings and prepare a 2-page (double-spaced) reading report on that chapter. Students then will briefly present their analysis in class and contribute to class discussions on the reading. Further instructions on this assignment will be provided on Canvas. The reading reflections are due on **January 23, February 27** and **March 15**. Each reflection paper weighs 5 % of your final grade.

4. Analysis of the Tri-Faith Initiative Project (45 %)

In this project, the students will analyze the religious motivations and social context of collaboration between Jews, Christians, Muslims, and other community supporters of the Tri-Faith project in Omaha. Through the project, the students will implement the multi-disciplinary perspectives that they learn about the relationship between, religion, violence and accommodation. For this project, we will host the Tri-Faith leaders in class for 4 sessions throughout the semester (see the schedule below for more details). In addition to these sessions, the students will complete 4 other components of the project.

- a. Interview Transcript and Reflection Paper (10 %):** In the beginning of the semester, we will divide the class into three groups and students in each group will focus on a faith group's involvement in the Tri-Faith Initiative. Each student will need to conduct an interview with a participant in their chosen faith group about the interviewee's motives for being involved in the Tri-Faith Initiative. Students will post both the transcript and their analysis of the interview on Canvas. The interview transcript and analysis paper is due on **March 29** and it is worth of 10 % of the final grade.
- b. Group Report (10 %):** After the interviews are conducted, each group will write an analysis paper on their own religious community based on the interviews and in-class presentations from the Tri-Faith representatives. In this report, the group members will identify the religious, social and political motives for interfaith collaboration in each religious tradition. The group report is due on **April 5** and it is worth of 10 % of the final grade.
- c. Class Report and Presentation (20 %):** In the end of the semester, the students in class will produce a combined paper in which they will explain the convergences and divergences in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim motivations toward inter-faith collaboration. They will identify recurring themes in each tradition as well as differences in their motivations for and involvement in inter-faith collaboration. The students will also analyze the impact of community leaders, religious capital, and social context in Omaha that made the Tri-Faith Initiative possible. The students will present their findings to the wider community on April 24. The first draft of the class report is due on **April 17** and it is worth 2.5 % of the final grade. The final draft is due on **May 3** and will weigh of 15 % of the final grade. The presentation will weigh 2.5 % of the final grade.
- d. Group and Class Discussions (5 %):** Although the students will need to work in groups outside the classroom for their group and class projects, we will have group and class discussions in class time on **March 29** and **April 10**. The students are required to attend those sessions to better coordinate the work for their group assignments. Participation in these two sessions weighs 5 % of the final grade.

A Summary of Grading Requirements

<u>Course Requirement</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
Attendance	5 %	
Participation	5 %	
Reading Reflection 1	5 %	January 23
Reading Reflection 2	5 %	February 27
Midterm Exam	15 %	March 1
Reading Reflection 3	5 %	March 15
Interview Transcript and Reflection	10 %	March 29
Group Discussion	2.5 %	March 29
Group Report	10 %	April 5
Class Discussion	2.5 %	April 10
Class Report First Draft	2.5 %	April 17
Class Presentation	2.5 %	April 24
Class Report Final Draft	15 %	May 3
Final Exam	15 %	May 3
TOTAL	100 %	

The entire course is worth 100 points:

A	94-100 points	C	72-76 points
A-	90-93 points	C-	69-71 points
B+	87-89 points	D+	66-68 points
B	83-86 points	D	63-65 points
B-	80-82 points	D-	60-62 points
C+	77-79 points	F	0-59 points

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING

<i>Date</i>	<i>Readings and Lectures Schedule</i>	<i>Tri-Faith Initiative Analysis Project Schedule</i>
	INTRODUCTION	
<i>January 9</i>	<i>Overview of the Course</i> No Reading	
<i>January 11</i>	<i>Perspectives on Religion and Violence: Political Science</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Juergensmeyer, Kitts, and Jerryson, Chapter 22: Monica Duffy Toft, “Religion and Political Violence.” Juergensmeyer, Kitts, and Jerryson, Chapter 28: Daniel Philpott, “Religion and Violence from a Political Science Perspective.” 	
<i>January 16</i>	<i>Perspectives on Religion and Violence: Sociology</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Juergensmeyer, Kitts, and Jerryson, Chapter 25: John Hall, “Religion and Violence from a Sociological Perspective.” 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Juergensmeyer, Kitts, and Jerryson, Chapter 37: Hector Avalos, “Religion and Scarcity: A New Theory for the Role of Religion in Violence.” 	
January 18	<i>Perspectives on Religion and Violence: Theology</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Juergensmeyer, Kitts, and Jerryson, Chapter 29: Margo Kitts, “Religion and Violence from Literary Perspectives.” Juergensmeyer, Kitts, and Jerryson, Chapter 30: Charles Kimball, “Religion and Violence from Christian Theological Perspectives.” 	
January 23	<i>Student Reflection Papers and Class Discussion on</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Juergensmeyer, Kitts, and Jerryson, Chapters 26, 27, 31, 36, 38, 39 Reading Reflection 1 due	
January 25		<i>Introduction and Methodological Considerations</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Juergensmeyer, Kitts, and Jerryson, Chapter 40: Mark Juergensmeyer and Mona Kanwal Sheikh, “A Sociotheological Approach to Understanding Religious Violence.”
January 30		<i>Tri-Faith Initiative: Background</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation by and Discussion with the Tri-Faith Initiative Leaders
	JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM	
February 1	<i>Judaism</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Juergensmeyer, Kitts, and Jerryson, Chapter 4: Ron Hassner and Gideon Aran, “Religion and Violence in the Jewish Traditions.” Juergensmeyer, Kitts, and Jerryson, Chapter 15: Reza Aslan, “Cosmic War in Religious Traditions.” 	
February 6	<i>Christianity</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Juergensmeyer, Kitts, and Jerryson, Chapter 5: Lloyd Steffen, “Religion and Violence in Christian Traditions.” Juergensmeyer, Kitts, and Jerryson, Chapter 19: John Kelsay, “Just War and Legal Restraints.” Juergensmeyer, Kitts, and Jerryson, Chapter 20: Julie Ingersoll, “Religiously-Motivated Violence in the Abortion Debate.” 	

February 8	NO CLASS	
February 13		<i>Jewish Community and the Tri-Faith Initiative</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest Speaker: Rabbi Brian Stoller, Senior Rabbi at Temple Israel
February 15	<i>Islam</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juergensmeyer, Kitts, and Jerryson, Chapter 6: Bruce Lawrence, “Muslim Engagement with Injustice and Violence.” • Juergensmeyer, Kitts, and Jerryson, Chapter 12: David Cook, “Martyrdom in Islam.” 	
February 20	<i>Apocalypse and Violence</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juergensmeyer, Kitts, and Jerryson, Chapter 14: Jamel Velji, “Apocalyptic Religion and Violence.” • Juergensmeyer, Kitts, and Jerryson, Chapter 33: Michael Sells, “Armageddon in Christian, Sunni and Shia Traditions.” 	
February 22	<i>Evil and Violence</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juergensmeyer, Kitts, and Jerryson, Chapter 10: James Aho, “The Religious Problem of Evil.” • Juergensmeyer, Kitts, and Jerryson, Chapter 35: David Frankfurter, “The Construction of Evil and the Violence of Purification.” 	
February 27	<i>Student Reflection Papers and Class Discussion on</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juergensmeyer, Kitts, and Jerryson, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 11, 16, 21 Reading Reflection 2 due	
March 1	Midterm Exam	
March 6		<i>Christian Community and the Tri-Faith Initiative</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest Speaker: Dr. Eric Elnes, Senior Minister at Countryside Community Church
	RELIGION AND SUICIDE TERRORISM	
March 8	<i>Why Suicide Terrorism?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pape and Feldman, Chapter 1: “Why Occupation Ignites Suicide Terrorism.” • Pape and Feldman, Chapter 2: “What Really Motivates Transnational Suicide Terrorists.” 	
March 13	<i>Cases of Suicide Terrorism</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pape and Feldman, Chapter 3: “Iraq.” 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pape and Feldman, Chapter 8: "Israel and Palestine." 	
March 15	<i>Student Reflection Papers and Class Discussion on</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pape and Feldman Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 Reading Reflection 3 due	
March 20	SPRING BREAK	
March 22		
March 27		<i>Muslim Community and the Tri-Faith Initiative</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guest Speaker: Imam Jamal Daoudi, Imam at American Muslim Institute
March 29		<i>Group Discussion on Motives of Interfaith Collaboration</i> Interview Transcript and Reflection due
	CRITICAL APPROACHES TO RELIGION AND VIOLENCE	
April 3	<i>Is Religious Violence a Myth?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cavanaugh, Chapter 1: "The Anatomy of the Myth." 	
April 5	<i>The Origins of the Concept of "Religion"</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cavanaugh, Chapter 2: "The Invention of Religion." 	Group Analysis report due
April 10		<i>Class Discussion on Motives of Interfaith Collaboration</i>
April 12	<i>Historical Background</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cavanaugh, Chapter 3: "The Creation Myth of the Wars of Religion." 	
April 17	<i>Politics of "Religious Violence"</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cavanaugh, Chapter 4: "The Uses of the Myth." 	Class Report First Draft due
April 19		<i>Preparation for the Class Presentation</i>
April 24		<i>Class Presentation on Tri-Faith Initiative Analysis Project</i>
	CONCLUSION	
April 26	<i>Conclusions</i>	
May 3	Final Exam	Class Report Final Draft due