

UNDERGRADUATE COURSE
SPRING 2011

PEACE AND VIOLENCE IN THE QUR'AN
(REL 255)

CLASSROOM: DEMAREST 117A
TIME: MONDAY, WEDNESDAY, AND FRIDAY AT 10:10-11:05AM

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 12:00-2:00 PM; or by appointment

CONTENTS

This course explores Qur'anic view on peace and violence. It discusses Qur'anic views regarding the meaning of Islam and Qur'anic treatment of various forms of peace including liberation, justice, equality, submission, freedom, and tolerance, as well as those of violence including war, self-defense, killing, suicide, sacrifice, and punishment. To appreciate the meaning of Qur'anic verses on these issues, the course pays attention to the horizon of the questions focusing on their specific circumstances. Throughout the semester, the class discusses questions on Qur'anic support for peace and violence: Does the Qur'an support peace or violence? How is peace to be achieved in a Qur'anic worldview? What kinds of violence does the Qur'an allow or disallow to take place? Since Qur'anic verses seem to suggest both peace and violence, to what extent does the Qur'an promote peace and to what extent does it allow violence? Does the Qur'an promote peace/violence as an end or as a means? What are the historical circumstances that students of the Qur'an should know in order to better understand the meaning of Qur'anic verses regarding peace and violence?

COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the end of the semester, students are expected to be able to:

- ✓ understand the historical circumstances of Qur'anic teachings about peace and violence;
- ✓ identify Qur'anic verses that promote peace and those that encourage violence;
- ✓ have a comparative glance at peace and violence in the Qur'an with those in other scriptures;
- ✓ express agreement or disagreement in on the interpretations regarding Qur'anic stance on peace and violence with solid arguments from Qur'anic verses and their historical contexts.

CURRICULAR GOALS

This course addresses the following curricular goals:

- ✓ Goal 1: effective communication skills. This course cultivates “the ability to read and listen critically and the ability to speak and write effectively.”
- ✓ Goal 2: critical thinking and argumentation. This course aims at “the ability to articulate a question, to identify and gain access to appropriate information, to organize evidence, and to construct a complex written argument.”

- ✓ Goal 7: knowledge of the multiplicity of world cultures. This goal is achieved through understanding Qur’anic perspectives on peace and violence.
- ✓ Goal 8: ethical judgment and action. This course provides “grounded foundation for ethical judgment and action [that] derives from a deep, historically informed examination of the beliefs and values deeply embedded in our views and experience.” The class addresses this goal by examining Muslims’ ethical consideration in their treatment of peace and violence.

STRATEGIES

In order to achieve the course objectives and curricular goals, students will:

- ✓ read the entire Qur’an. They will pay special attention to verses regarding peace and violence. Based on their reading, students will prepare notes or Power-Point presentation to discuss their finding in group discussion and presentation.
- ✓ compare and contrast their readings of the Qur’an with scholarly works on peace and violence as well as public discourse on these issues. In line with this, the instructor will distribute contemporary news so that students bring scholarly argumentation into public discourse and vice versa. The instructor will examine Qur’anic stance on peace and violence in lectures and discussions. Whenever applicable, the course will also incorporate other on-campus activities such as lectures and presentations on topics related to the course materials into class activities.
- ✓ think and communicate effectively by reading the assigned texts, critiquing them, talking about them in class discussion, preparing notes or media for class presentation and group discussions, and responding to the instructor’s questions in quizzes, mid-term, and final exams.
- ✓ write a research proposal that at least contains a main question, a thesis statement, a list of arguments and counter-arguments with their response. In order to do this, students will work in group discussion to explore and brainstorm some ideas on possible topics and arguments. The students will also get some help from reference librarian to facilitate the exploration. Before final submission, students will submit a draft of the research paper and read each other’s draft. The students and the instructor will talk about their proposal and research paper in their structured meetings at the office. When applicable they will brainstorm a new set of arguments and counter-arguments on the proposed topic.

TEXTS

Abou El Fadl, Khaled. *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists*. New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2007.

Abu-Nimer, Mohammed. *Nonviolence and Peace Building in Islam: Theory and Practice*. Florida: University Press of Florida, 2003.

Bakhtiar, Laleh, trans. *The Sublime Quran: Based on the Hanafi, Maliki and Shafii Schools of Law*. Chicago: Islamicworld.com; distributed by Kazi Publications, 2007. **)

Eller, Jack David. *Cruel Creeds, Virtuous Violence: Religious Violence across Culture and History*. New York: Prometheus, 2010.

Esack, Farid. *The Qur’an: A User’s Guide*. Oxford: Oneworld, 2005.**)

Esposito, John L. *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Movie: *Fitna*. (Available on the internet at <http://liveleak.com>; <http://www.clipser.com>; or <http://www.youtube.com>).*)

Movie: *Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land*. (Available on the internet at <http://www.youtube.com>).*)

Nelson-Pallmeyer, Jack. *Is Religion Killing Us? Violence in the Bible and the Qur'an*. London: Continuum, 2005.

Schwartz-Barcott, T. P. *War, Terror and Peace in the Qur'an and in Islam: Insights for Military and Government Leaders*. Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Army War College Foundation Press, 2004.

*) With the exception of those with an asterisk, all texts are available at HWS College Store. Those with an asterisk are available on the internet at the indicated addresses.

***) Available at library reserves.

GRADING FORMAT

1. Quizzes: 10 points. The quizzes will be occasionally given to familiarize students with mid-term and final-exam questions. They will include both basic facts (such as names and terms) and summary of arguments.
2. Group presentation: 10 points; Students will get involved in a collaborative work by distributing responsibilities in group discussion and preparing a coherent materials for class presentations. There are two assignments for this task: (1) presenting their finding of Qur'anic verses that may be seen as supporting peace and violence, and (2) presenting their understanding of the assigned readings from Abu Nimer's *Nonviolence and Peacebuilding in Islam*. The groups should electronically submit their presentation materials in Power Point at least two days before the presentation.
3. Mid-term exam: 10 points. The mid-term questions will be in three formats:
 - ✓ Names, simple terms, and concepts
 - ✓ Short answers
 - ✓ Essay outlines
4. Research paper of 8-10 pages long: 30 points. This assignment is divided into three parts as described below.
 - a. Proposal (5 points). The full 5 points will be automatically given to proposals (no more than two pages) that have the following elements: (1) a title, (2) a guiding question, (3) a thesis statement, (4) a list of arguments, (5) a list of counter-arguments and the response to each counter-argument, (6) a list of bibliography containing of at least five books and five articles from refereed journals (the list should be written in *Chicago Manual of Style* format);
 - b. Draft (5 points). The full 5 points will be automatically given to drafts elaborated based on the proposal and have the following elements: (1) a minimum page requirement of 8 pages, (2) a minimum number of references of five books and five articles cited in the paper, (3) a proper use of references written in *Chicago Manual of Style* format;
 - c. Final research paper (20 points). The 20 points will be given to papers that satisfy the following requirements: (1) minimum requirements for the draft as indicated above, and (2) objective, logical, and cohesive arguments.
5. Final exam: 20 points. The exam questions will be in three formats:
 - ✓ Names, simple terms, and concepts
 - ✓ Outline for argumentative essays

- ✓ Essay of about 500 words.
6. Participation: 20 points;
- ✓ 16-20 points: those who read materials and demonstrate their readings in their questions, answers, comments, in-class writing and class discussions in every class. In addition to understanding the author's thesis and arguments, students also understand the author's assumptions under which the arguments are made. Such students challenge the author's view on the subject matter.
 - ✓ 10-15 points: those who read materials and sometimes demonstrate their readings in their questions, answers, comments, in-class writing and class discussions.
 - ✓ 5-9 points: those whose questions, answers, comments, in-class writing and class participation do not reflect that they read the materials.
 - ✓ 0-4 points: those who disrupt class activities or those who never or sometimes participate but their participations do not reflect that they read the materials.

FINAL GRADE

Students will accumulate the points—there will be no conversion of points into grades—until the end of the semester. Below is the table of point conversion for the final grade:

Points	Final Grade
94-up	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
74-76	C
70-73	C-
67-69	D+
64-66	D
60-63	D-
0-59	F

PAPER SUBMISSION PROCESS

Some assignments will be posted on Blackboard. For the research paper, students are encouraged to work collaboratively with resources available, read each other's draft, and consult Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). If there is any concern on writing the proposal and research paper, students should contact the instructor. Unless otherwise indicated, all papers—including research proposal, draft, final research paper, Power Point presentation and other assignments where applicable—should be electronically submitted through Blackboard's assignment page by the indicated dates. If for some reason there is a problem with electronic submission on Blackboard, the assignment should be sent via e-mail attachment or a printed copy of the paper should be submitted to the instructor's office on the same day. Late submissions will be downgraded for that specific assignment up to one point per day.

When applicable, students are encouraged to rewrite the proposal and draft. The rewritten papers are due within a week after the papers are electronically posted. Since the grades of the rewritten papers can be better or worse than those of the originally submitted papers, the best grades will be counted toward the final.

CLASS POLICIES

Academic Honesty

Students are required to honor academic integrity. A violation of academic integrity, such as cheating in quizzes or exams and plagiarism, could result in failure in the course and could be reported to the Dean's office and the Committee on Standard for further actions. For more information on academic integrity, consult *HWS' Handbook of Community Standards* (2010-2011), 24-27.

Attendance and Extra Credits

Students are encouraged to attend all scheduled meetings for this course. An extra credit of 5 points will be awarded to those who have complete attendance. Students have the liberty to miss two classes without penalty. They may opt to miss more than two classes with the consequence of losing 2 points of the total grade for each missed meeting after the two absences, unless they provide the instructor with a justified reason(s) in writing and verification from the Dean's office, the Counseling Center and/or other related office(s).

Up to a 2-point credit will be given to those who fulfill one of these: (1) attend and ask questions in an on-campus lecture or other activities related to religion and peace/violence, and write a two-page response paper on the subject discussed, (2) participate in the Senior Symposium on April 15, 2011, or (3) publish an article on the Qur'an and peace/violence. Throughout the semester, students may accumulate extra credits of up to 5 points.

Laptop Computers and Cell Phones

Students are expected to fully engage in class activities. The use of laptops for non-teaching related activities is strictly prohibited. To get full participation of the class, students have to close their laptops during discussion. Students with laptops should sit in front rows. Since the use of cell phones often causes class disruption, cell phones have to be turned off during class time.

Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL):

At Hobart and William Smith Colleges, we encourage students to seek the academic collaboration and resources that will enable them to do their best work. The CTL offers a variety of resources that can help students achieve academic success, including Teaching Fellows (for course content help in the departments of Anthropology/Sociology, Biology, Chemistry, Economics, Geoscience, Philosophy, Physics, Psychology, Spanish & Hispanic Studies), Writing Colleagues (for help on papers), Study Mentors (for help with study skills and time management), Group Study Tables (for content help in specific courses), and more.

The CTL resources most useful for this class include making preparation for effective presentations and guiding students to write research papers. For more information on these resources, visit the CTL webpage at <http://www.hws.edu/academics/ctl/index.aspx>, or visit the CTL Blackboard site.

Disability Accommodations

If you are a student with a disability for which you may need accommodations, you should self-identify and register for services with the Coordinator of Disability Services at the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), and provide documentation of your disability. Disability related accommodations and services generally will not be provided until the registration and documentation process is complete. The guidelines for documenting disabilities can be found at the following website: <http://www.hws.edu/disabilities>

Please direct questions about this process or Disability Services at HWS to David Silver, Coordinator of Disability Services, at silver@hws.edu or x3351.

SCHEDULE

No.	Date	Teaching Materials	Due Dates
1	1/19 (W)	Introduction [Reading: Syllabus]	
2	1/21 (F)	Overview on Religion and Violence 1 [Reading: Eller, <i>Cruel Creeds, Virtuous Violence</i> , 7-44]	
3	1/24 (M)	Overview on Religion and Violence 2 [Reading: Eller, <i>Cruel Creeds, Virtuous Violence</i> , 45-79]	
4	1/26 (W)	Forms of Religious Violence 1: Sacrifice [Reading: Eller, <i>Cruel Creeds, Virtuous Violence</i> , 81-116]	
5	1/28 (F)	Forms of Religious Violence 2: Self-Injury [Reading: Eller, <i>Cruel Creeds, Virtuous Violence</i> , 117-59]	
6	1/31 (M)	Forms of Religious Violence 3: Persecution [Reading: Eller, <i>Cruel Creeds, Virtuous Violence</i> , 161-205]	
7	2/2 (W)	Forms of Religious Violence 4: Ethnoreligious Conflict [Reading: Eller, <i>Cruel Creeds, Virtuous Violence</i> , 207-40]	
8	2/4 (F)	Forms of Religious Violence 5: War [Reading: Eller, <i>Cruel Creeds, Virtuous Violence</i> , 241-89]	
9	2/7 (M)	Forms of Religious Violence 6: Homicide and Abuse [Reading: Eller, <i>Cruel Creeds, Virtuous Violence</i> , 291-330]	
10	2/9 (W)	Religion and Non-Violence [Reading: Eller, <i>Cruel Creeds, Virtuous Violence</i> , 331-72]	
11	2/11 (F)	Qur'an: An Overview 1 [Reading: Esack, <i>The Qur'an: A User's Guide</i> , 13-29]	
12	2/14 (M)	Qur'an: An Overview 2 [Reading: Esack, <i>The Qur'an: A User's Guide</i> , 30-55]	Power Point Presentation
13	2/16 (W)	Qur'an: An Overview 3 [Reading: Esack, <i>The Qur'an: A User's Guide</i> , 121-145]	
14	2/18 (F)	Group Presentation on the Qur'an. The class will be divided into three groups on the following chapters: A (1-9); B (10-28); C (29-114).	
15	2/21 (M)	Research Literacy [Bring a draft of your research proposal to the class]	
16	2/23 (W)	Violence-of-God Traditions: 1 [Pallmeyer, <i>Is Religion Killing Us?</i> , 1-40]	Proposal

17	2/25 (F)	Violence-of-God Traditions: 2 [Pallmeyer, <i>Is Religion Killing Us?</i> , 41-94]	
18	2/28 (M)	Violence-of-God Traditions: 3 [Pallmeyer, <i>Is Religion Killing Us?</i> , 95-149]	
19	3/2 (W)	Terror in God's Name 1 [Reading: Esposito, <i>Unholy War</i> , 3-25]	
20	3/4 (F)	Terror in God's Name 2 [Reading: Esposito, <i>Unholy War</i> , 26-70]	
21	3/7 (M)	Causes of Terror 1 [Reading: Abu El Fadl, <i>Great Theft</i> , 1-44]	
22	3/9 (W)	Mid-term exam	
23	3/11 (F)	Causes of Terror 2 [Reading: Abu El Fadl, <i>Great Theft</i> , 45-94].	
	3/14 (M)	Spring Break (March 12-20)	
	3/16 (W)	Spring Break (March 12-20)	
	3/18 (F)	Spring Break (March 12-20)	
24	3/21 (M)	Causes of Terror 3 [Reading: Abu El Fadl, <i>Great Theft</i> , 95-141].	
25	3/23 (W)	Causes of Terror 4 [Reading: Abu El Fadl, <i>Great Theft</i> , 142-61].	
26	3/25 (F)	Causes of Terror 5 [Reading: Abu El Fadl, <i>Great Theft</i> , 162-79].	
27	3/28 (M)	Causes of Terror 6 [Reading: Abu El Fadl, <i>Great Theft</i> , 180-202].	
28	3/30 (W)	Causes of Terror 7 [Reading: Abu El Fadl, <i>Great Theft</i> , 220-290]	
29	4/1 (F)	War, Terror and Peace in the Qur'an 1 [Reading: Schwartz-Barcott, <i>War, Terror and Peace in the Qur'an and Islam</i> , 1-39]	
30	4/4 (M)	War, Terror and Peace in the Qur'an 2 [Reading: Schwartz-Barcott, <i>War, Terror and Peace in the Qur'an and Islam</i> , 41-94]	
31	4/6 (W)	War, Terror and Peace in the Qur'an 3 [Reading: Schwartz-Barcott, <i>War, Terror and Peace in the Qur'an and Islam</i> , 95-140]	Draft
32	4/8 (F)	War, Terror and Peace in the Qur'an 3 [Reading: Schwartz-Barcott, <i>War, Terror and Peace in the Qur'an and Islam</i> , 141-210]	
33	4/11 (M)	War, Terror and Peace in the Qur'an 3 [Reading: Schwartz-Barcott, <i>War, Terror and Peace in the Qur'an and Islam</i> , 211-64]	
34	4/13 (W)	War, Terror and Peace in the Qur'an 4 [Reading: Schwartz-Barcott, <i>War, Terror and Peace in the Qur'an and Islam</i> , 265-305]	
35	4/15 (F)	War, Terror and Peace in the Qur'an 5 [Reading: Schwartz-Barcott, <i>War, Terror and Peace in the Qur'an and Islam</i> , 306-355]	Peer review

		<i>Islam</i> , 307-63]	
36	4/18 (M)	Movies: <i>Fitna the Movie</i> and <i>Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land</i>	
37	4/20 (W)	Movies: <i>Fitna the Movie</i> and <i>Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land</i> . Discussion.	
38	4/22 (F)	Non-Violence and Peace Building 1 [Reading: Abu-Nimer, <i>Nonviolence and Peace Building in Islam</i> , 1-47]	Research paper
39	4/25 (M)	Non-Violence and Peace Building 2. Group Presentation on Abu-Nimer's <i>Nonviolence and Peace Building in Islam</i> . The class will be divided into four groups: A (Group A (pp. 11-47); B (pp. 48-84); C (pp. 85-127); D (128-86).	Power Point Presentation
40	4/27 (W)	Non-Violence and Peace Building 3. Group Presentation on Abu-Nimer's <i>Nonviolence and Peace Building in Islam</i> . The class will be divided into four groups: A (Group A (pp. 11-47); B (pp. 48-84); C (pp. 85-127); D (128-86).	Power Point Presentation
41	4/29 (F)	Debates on whether the Qur'an promotes violence. The class will be divided into two groups: one group elaborates on the arguments and the other on the counter-arguments	
42	5/2 (M)	Concluding Remarks	
	5/5-8	Final exam	