

RELIGION AND VIOLENCE
RELIGION 217-I
SPRING 2011
MW, 1:00-2:15 PM, MARTING HALL ROOM 114

Instructor: Ellen Posman

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Office Hours: Mondays and Tuesdays 4:30-6:30 or by appt.

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Course Description:

Do all religions condemn violence? Do some religions promote violence? When, according to different religions, is force or violence justified? How can we better understand some of the major conflicts that are occurring today by deepening our understanding of religion? What can religions do to stop the violence in today's world? We will answer these and other questions by examining the history, scriptures, and interpretations from different religions with regard to violence and non-violence. We will theorize about the aspects of religion that can exacerbate or mitigate violent acts. In terms of contemporary events, we will look at global conflicts that divide people along religious lines, and we will analyze their causes in terms of religion, ethnicity, nationality, and history. Finally, we will examine the ways in which religious peacemakers work to rid the world of violence and consider the ways in which we can develop a more peaceful community, nation, and world.

Course Goals and Objectives:

As a core course in the humanities that counts for international credit, this course supports the mission of Baldwin-Wallace College as well as the overall goals of the college core. Baldwin-Wallace College is committed to a "rigorous academic program that is characterized by excellence in teaching and learning within a challenging, supportive environment that enhances students' intellectual and spiritual growth." To this end, this course has the following objectives:

- 1) Increase the breadth of student knowledge by providing basic familiarity with the major religions of the world and a basic understanding of current global conflicts.
- 2) Encourage students toward personal, intellectual, and spiritual growth by considering positions about violence and non-violence in relation to their own views.
- 3) Challenge students to read theoretical material and think critically about the relationship between religion and violence.
- 4) Engage students in the practice and understanding of textual interpretation.
- 5) Develop oral presentation skills, research skills, teamwork skills, and critical thinking skills by presenting on violence and peacemaking efforts within one religious tradition.
- 6) Establish critical thinking and writing skills by composing essays that analyze case studies that involve religion and violence.

Baldwin-Wallace College also "assists students in their preparation to become contributing, compassionate members of an increasingly global society." To that end, the course has the following objectives:

- 1) Learn to appreciate the international aspects of cultural diversity.
- 2) Consider deeply some of the global conflicts that exist today.
- 3) Utilize knowledge about the factors leading to violence and peacemaking to deepen one's commitment to and skills for creating a better society.

How You Can Help Achieve These Goals:

- 1) Come to class
- 2) Come to class prepared (do **all** the reading!)
- 3) Come to class ready to participate, preferably with questions
- 4) Participate thoughtfully
- 5) Come to office hours
- 6) Write rough drafts
- 7) Ask questions (about the material, about the assignments, about anything!)
- 8) Turn in assignments on time
- 9) Read the newspaper

How I Will Help You Achieve These Goals:

- 1) I will come to class prepared.
- 2) I will assign manageable but challenging readings.
- 3) I will explain the material using diverse methods.
- 4) I will be available to answer questions or help you find answers.
- 5) I will look over drafts.
- 6) I will return graded assignments promptly with thorough explanations of grades.
- 7) I will stimulate your curiosity by displaying my own passion for the material.
- 8) I will stay current on the issues by reading the newspaper.

Required Texts:

Juergensmeyer, Mark. *Terror in the Mind of God*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

Smith-Christopher, Daniel L. ed. *Subverting Hatred*. New York: Orbis Books, 1998.

Coward, Howard and Gordon S. Smith, eds. *Religion and Peacebuilding*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2004

Course Requirements:

30%: Two 4-6 Page Essays Based on Assigned Readings and Class Discussions due on **Friday, February 4th and Friday, March 25th**.

15%: Group Presentation: Each student will take part in a group presentation on violence and non-violence in a particular case or tradition and will produce an oral presentation about violence and non-violence within that case or tradition.

20% Final Exam: This will be an in-class exam on **Monday, May 2nd, 1:30-3:30 PM**

10% Keeping Current on Religion, Violence, and Peace in the Media: This will be a journal and analysis of news articles related to religion and violence due on **Friday, April 29th**.

15% Weekly Guided Reflections as preparation for class.

10% Class Participation: Students are expected to complete the readings as assigned, contribute meaningfully to classroom discussions, participate eagerly in review sessions, and attend one teacher-student individual conference.

Course Policies:

Late Policy: Papers go down one-third of a grade (e.g. B to B-) per day late.

Paper Grading Policy: A is Excellent; B is Good; C is Fair; D is barely satisfactory; F is unsatisfactory. Further guidelines will be handed out at a later date.

Disabled Student Policy: Any student with a documented disability (e.g. physical, learning, psychological, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange accommodations must contact both the instructor and Disability Services **at the beginning** of the term.

Plagiarism Policy: A Plagiarized paper will receive an automatic zero, and if the plagiarism is flagrant, it will be reported to student affairs, which may result in automatically failing the class. See the BW academic honesty policy at

<http://www.bw.edu/stulife/judicial/policies/index.html>

WEEK ONE: INTRODUCTION

Mon. Jan. 10: Introduction to course, materials, syllabus, themes of the course

Wed. Jan. 12: Religion and Violence in General

Juergensmeyer, Preface and Chapter 1

WEEKLY REFLECTION #1 DUE IN CLASS!

WEEK TWO: VIOLENCE IN CHRISTIANITY

Mon. Jan. 17: **MLK DAY!!!!!! NO CLASS TODAY!!!!!!**

Wed. Jan. 19: Violence in the name of Christianity

Juergensmeyer, Chapter 2

Handout on Just War Theory

Handout on Liberation Theology

Bartoli in Coward and Smith, 147-153 (Optional)

WEEKLY REFLECTION #2 DUE IN CLASS!

WEEK THREE: VIOLENCE IN CHRISTIANITY: CASES

Mon. Jan. 24: Historic and Current Cases of Christian Violence

Packet of Handouts/Websites (TBA)

WEEKLY REFLECTION #3 DUE IN CLASS!

Wed. Jan. 26: Discussion of Christian Cases

WEEK FOUR: VIOLENCE IN ISLAM

Mon. January 31: Basics of Islam

Wed. Feb. 2: Violence in the Name of Islam

Denny in Coward and Smith, 129-137

Juergensmeyer, Chapter 4

WEEKLY REFLECTION #4 DUE IN CLASS!

*****ESSAY #1 DUE BY 5:00 PM ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 4TH*****

WEEK FIVE: VIOLENCE IN ISLAM: CASES

Mon. Feb. 7: Case Studies on Islam and Violence

Handout on 9/11 (Lincoln)

Packet of Other Handouts/Websites (TBA)

WEEKLY REFLECTION #5 DUE IN CLASS!

Wed. Feb. 9: Discussion of Cases

WEEK SIX: VIOLENCE IN JUDAISM

Mon. Feb. 14: Violence in the name of Judaism

Juergensmeyer, Chapter 3

Genesis 21 (Handout)

WEEKLY REFLECTION #6 DUE IN CLASS!

Wed. Feb. 16: Discussion of Cases

WEEK SEVEN: VIOLENCE IN HINDUISM

- Mon. Feb. 21: Violence in the name of Hinduism
 Gandhi in Coward and Smith, 45-55
 Handout (Kakar)
 Packet of other Handouts/Websites (TBA)
WEEKLY REFLECTION #7 DUE IN CLASS!
- Wed. Feb. 23: Discussion of Cases

WEEK EIGHT: VIOLENCE IN BUDDHISM

- Mon. Feb. 28: Justifications for Violence in Buddhism
 Neumaier in Coward and Smith, 69-86
 Handouts/Websites (TBA)
WEEKLY REFLECTION #8 DUE IN CLASS!
- Wed. March 2: Discussion of Cases

WEEK NINE: SPRING BREAK! NO CLASSES!**WEEK TEN: THEORIES OF RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE**

- Mon. March 14: Patterns of Religious Violence
 Book Review Handouts/Websites
- Wed. March 16: Juergensmeyer's Theories
 Assigned Chapter in Juergensmeyer (7 or 8 or 9 or 10)
WEEKLY REFLECTION #9 DUE IN CLASS!

WEEK ELEVEN: FROM VIOLENCE TO NON-VIOLENCE

- Mon. March 21: Religious Non-Violence and the Case of Jainism
Subverting Hatred, Forward, Introduction, and Chapter 1
WEEKLY REFLECTION #10 DUE IN CLASS!
- Wed. March 23: Discussion of Non-Violence and Peacebuilding: Preparing for Presentations
 Read for your own Presentation

*****ESSAY #2 DUE BY 5:00 PM ON FRIDAY, MARCH 25TH!!!****WEEK TWELVE: NON-VIOLENCE AND PEACEBUILDING IN BUDDHISM AND HINDUISM**

- Mon. March 28: Looking at Buddhist Non-Violence
Subverting Hatred, Chapter 2
 D'Souza in Coward and Smith, 178-185
Subverting Hatred, Chapter 4
 Gandhi in Coward and Smith, 55-65
 Religion and Peacebuilding, Chapter 10 (Optional)
WEEKLY REFLECTION #11 DUE IN CLASS!
ORAL PRESENTATIONS: BUDDHIST CASES
- Wed. March 30: Looking at Hindu Non-Violence
ORAL PRESENTATIONS: HINDU CASES

WEEK THIRTEEN: NON-VIOLENCE AND PEACEBUILDING IN JUDAISM

- Mon. April 4: Looking at Jewish Non-Violence
Subverting Hatred, Chapter 9
 Gopin in Coward and Smith, 111-124
 D'Souza in Coward and Smith, 169-178
WEEKLY REFLECTION #12 DUE IN CLASS!
- Wed. April 6: **ORAL PRESENTATIONS: JEWISH CASES**

WEEK FOURTEEN: NON-VIOLENCE AND PEACEBUILDING IN CHRISTIANITY

- Mon. April 11: Looking at Christian Non-Violence

Subverting Hatred, Chapter 10
 Bartoli in Coward and Smith, 147-162
 Religion and Peacebuilding, Chapters 12 and/or 13 (Optional)
WEEKLY REFLECTION #13 DUE IN CLASS!

Wed. April 13: **ORAL PRESENTATIONS: CHRISTIAN CASES**

WEEK FIFTEEN: NON-VIOLENCE AND PEACEBUILDING IN ISLAM

Mon. April 18: Non-Violence in Islam
 Subverting Hatred, Chapters 7 & 8;
 Denny in Coward and Smith, 137-144

WEEKLY REFLECTION #14 DUE IN CLASS!

Wed. April 20: **ORAL PRESENTATIONS: ISLAMIC CASES**

WEEK SIXTEEN: PRESENTATIONS AND CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Mon. April 25: **EASTER MONDAY! NO CLASS!**

Wed. April 27: Hope for the Future: Final Discussion
 Juergensmeyer, Chapter 11;
Subverting Hatred, Epilogue;
Religion and Peacebuilding, Chapter 14
WEEKLY REFLECTION #15 DUE IN CLASS!

*****MEDIA ESSAY DUE BY 5:00 ON FRIDAY, APRIL 29TH!!!*****

FINAL EXAM: MONDAY, MAY 2ND, 1:30-3:30 PM

Keeping Current On Religion and Violence Project

Each student is required to keep a journal of articles from the *New York Times*, the USA Today, or other news sources dealing with religion and violence. The student should read each article and then enter it into the journal. At the end of the semester, the student will submit the journal along with a 3-6 page essay about current issues involving religion, violence, and peacebuilding. The statement should summarize and synthesize the articles in the journal. It may do so by religion or by geographic location or by some other theme, and will be judged according to the amount of information as well as how thoughtful the synthesis of issues is. Paper articles are preferred (available in the student union and some dorms), but articles from the *New York Times* website are also acceptable. Articles from LexisNexis will not be accepted.