

# Religion, Violence, and Peace: Patterns across Time and Tradition

[Students](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Syllabus](#)

[Home](#)

## RELIG/NEAR E/HUM 205

### Syllabus

Winter Quarter

T/TH 1:30-3:20 ◆ MGH 389

#### Course Description

The complex relationship between religion, violence, and peace is a central problem that bridges the boundaries of academic disciplines, historical periods, and global cultures. In recent years it has taken center stage in a number of academic disciplines including history, anthropology, political science, and of course, religious studies. While some scholars have argued that religion has been ◆hijacked◆ by violence, others have asserted that religion is inherently violent. Still others have moved for a more nuanced argument by positing that religion, conflict, and violence are interwoven across history and cultures. They have stressed that religions sometimes nurture their identities by being in conflict with dominant cultures, and that this conflict is not necessarily always violent, but can produce enormous benefits. But are conflict and violence necessary components of religion? Can religion be a resource for peace? We shall explore this question and the viewpoints and arguments that inform it.

#### Instructors

Scott Noegel

Office: Denny M-19

Office hours: T 8:00-9:30

James Wellman

Office: Thomson 420

Office hours: T/Th 10:30-11:00

#### Teaching Assistants

Sean Casella

Office: Denny 123

Office Hours: T/TH 8:30-9:30AM and by appt.

Jay Laughlin

Office: Denny 123

Office Hours:

Deborah Rohan

Office: Denny 123

Office Hours: T/TH 12:30-1:30 and by appt.

#### Required Text

1. Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 2000).
2. Scott R. Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Lanham, MD : Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000).
3. James Wellman and Kyoko Tokuno, eds., *Religion, Conflict and Violence: Exploring Patterns Past and Present, East and West* (Seattle, WA.: University of Washington Press, forthcoming).
4. Additional readings, charts, and maps available online.

#### Course Format

Each week the professors for the course shall focus on particular case studies that underscore an important aspect of the study of religion, violence, and peace.. Each week is organized around a central theme that aims to contextualize the case studies. These case studies provide models and ideas for the required term papers (see below). Typically, we shall devote each1 class to an equal proportion of in-class lecture and discussion. Discussions shall focus on a number of questions provided by the professors following the lectures.

#### Expectations and Online Component

In general you will be expected to attend lectures, do the assigned readings, and use the online resources available from the course web site. The latter includes participation in an online discussion list. Writing also plays an important role in the class. There will be eight weekly essays assigned that seek to engage you in the assigned readings. These assignments are in addition to, and separate from, the research paper portfolio. In addition, we will expect you to undertake research on a specific case study of individual interest, one not covered in the class, but one that addresses the themes of the course. This research project will result in a term paper of 12-15 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font, not including endnotes and bibliography. This paper will be turned in on the final day of class.

#### Sequence and Research Paper Portfolio

In this class you will build a portfolio for the research paper that includes a series of seven steps. These steps are intended to help you remain organized and on track in the course of your research.

1. Write a short essay on your assumptions about the relation of religion, conflict and peace (Two pages, 10 points; due 1/12).
2. Choose a case-study about religion, violence, and peace not covered in the course; write a short reflection on three things you know; three you do not know; three you want to know (Two pages, 10 points; due 1/19).
3. Research a solid secondary source about the event; create a short description of the event; your initial assessment of the factors/agents/variables in the relation of religion, conflict and peace (Two pages, 10 points; due 1/26).
4. Investigate a primary source on the subject; primary data about the incident; make your initial interpretation. (Two pages, 10 points; due 2/2).
5. Research a second reliable secondary source on the incident; compare and contrast the secondary source interpretations. (Two pages, 10 points; due 2/9).
6. Based on your study of the primary document, create your own hypothesis concerning the incident; adjudicate and make your own judgments in the light of the secondary interpretations. This is your 12-15 page research paper, which is due 3/9, last day of class (60 points).
7. Based on your initial understanding of the relation of religion, conflict and peace how has your mind changed based on your original research? (One to two page paper, attached to the end of the 12-15 page research paper, due on 3/9 (10 points).

Writing Tips (download [pdf](#))

## Grading

Engaged participation in class discussions is strongly encouraged. You also will be graded on the basis of the eight required two-page weekly reflection essays mentioned above. These essays will address an assigned question from the required readings (worth 10 points each, totaling 80 points). Also required will be the final research paper mentioned above which focuses on the case study of your choice. The weekly papers and final research paper total 200 points. The final paper is worth 120 points. The numerical grading guide that corresponds to the 200 total possible points can be found on the class website.

[Grading Table](#)

## Optional Linked Sections

### Writing link:

Writing is already a key component of the course. Additional assignments shall seek to improve your writing skills to enhance your work on the required research paper.

### Speech link:

This link will investigate important speeches of religious figures that have led to violence or to peace, or both; it will engage you in the debates around the central themes of the course.

## Overall Learning Themes

Though we provide specific learning goals for each week of the course below, in general students will:

- Think critically and comparatively about and between each of the traditions.
- Critical thinking defined: To imagine what you cannot imagine.
- Appreciate the complexities surrounding the subject of violence and religion.
- Reflect and articulate a critical voice on the religious events and figures of ancient and contemporary religious cultures.
- Acquire a general understanding of the theoretical issues that confront the subject of violence and religion.

## Overall Teaching Goals

- To create a stimulating environment for learning; to provoke your imagination and transport you, on occasion, into another world.
- To unfold the material logically so that students gain a clearer understanding of the religious traditions covered.
- To serve as a resource and model for understanding, critical thinking, and appreciating the religious traditions discussed.
- To underscore for students the intricacies of religions across time and cultures.
- To provide students with a deeper sense of a religion's ability to shape and create culture, and even peace.
- Finally, to show that original contributions, in whatever field, depend upon new questions and new questions depend upon your ability to play.