

RELS 106-1: Religion and Violence

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Office Hours: By appointment

Fall 2023
Online Synchronous
MWF 2:00 PM – 2:50 PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course provides an historical and comparative introduction to the academic study of religion by engaging in a multivalent approach to religion and violence. Through engagement with the course material, students will understand how cultural, historical, and political contexts influence how these terms are defined and understood. Students will acquire critical tools from a variety of disciplines within the field of religious studies to make sense of recent events in our world when religion has become intertwined with various iterations of violence at the individual, communal, global, and structural levels. These critical tools will be applied to a selection of case studies taken from different cultures, religious traditions, and social and political contexts in different time periods, with some tilt towards the contemporary.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God* (4th Edition 2017)
- Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11th* (2nd Edition, 2006)
- These texts will be supplemented by PDFs and Videos to be found on our course page.

GENERAL EDUCATION LEARNING OUTCOMES:

This course satisfies the General Education requirements for a course in the Humanities, which address these two additional Student Learning Outcomes: 1) Students analyze how ideas are represented, interpreted or valued in various expressions of human culture; 2) Students examine relevant primary source materials as understood by the discipline and interpret the material in weekly writing assignments and in a final paper.

COURSE QUESTIONS:

- How do we define religion and what is religious?
- How do we define violence?
- In what ways do social, cultural, historical, and political contexts impact how religion and violence are defined?

COURSE MAP:

Our course will be organized into modules within OAKS that will encapsulate the assigned readings and supplementary content. Each module will see us visiting many case studies and examples throughout the week, with our lectures focusing on particular incidents and movements appropriate to the traditions we cover in a given module. In **Module 1**, we will be introduced to different paradigms within the religious studies of defining religion and how this pertains to violent acts and cultural movements. We will make our way through the text *Holy Terrors* by

scholar Bruce Lincoln and compare rhetoric pertaining to the Global War on Terror provided by the United States and Al-Qaeda. In **Module 2**, we will begin our analysis of violence and the rhetoric surrounding the justification of violence within world religions, beginning with Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In **Module 3**, we will analyze movements and incidents within the Dharmic traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sikhism in addition to the Japanese religion of Shinto. We will cover a range of recent and current events and movements ranging from the Nationalist Hindu BJP party, Incidents of Buddhist violence in south and east Asia, the movements surrounding the desired formation of a Sikh state in the Punjab, and the writings of a Japanese nationalist to name a few. In **Module 4**, we will turn our attention to new religious movements and state powers as perpetrators of violent acts and overview the theoretical themes we have gone over throughout the course.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS:

Weekly Discussion Posts and Responses (300 pts.): You will be expected to submit brief 200-300-word posts on a weekly basis. These posts are to be on something you found interesting in either the readings or supplemental content for a given week. You will also be expected to make a response to one of your classmates' posts. These assignments will serve to supplement the ongoing discussions that we will have in this course. **Your initial posts will be due on Fridays by 11:59 PM and your responses will be due Sundays by 11:59 PM.**

Research Prezi (100 pts.): You are to select a topic of your choosing with which to produce a research paper. Before the paper, however, you will record a prezi discussing said topic to submit to OAKS. In order for you to have adequate time to dedicate to the prezi and your accompanying paper, please email me your topic of choice **no later than Thursday November 3rd**. Your prezi is to be uploaded to OAKS by **Friday November 17th, 11:59 PM.**

Research Paper (100 pts.): This will be the research paper related to your prezi topic. The paper should be 6-7 pages double spaced (1500-1750 words). I will expect you to provide in-text citations of your sources using MLA, a guide to which may be found [here](#). **You should aim to have 5 Academic Sources for this, I will provide a short video describing what these are towards the beginning of our course.** This paper is to be submitted to OAKS no later than **Friday December 8th, 11:59 PM.**

A note on deadlines: Barring extenuating circumstances, I adopt a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to late submissions. If you feel you cannot submit an assignment in time, please email me at least three days in advance of the due date and we can discuss.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Module 1: Religion and Violence

Week 1: Introduction

8/23 Introduction to the course, syllabus overview

8/25 Lincoln 1-18, Jurgensmeyer 1-16
Signed syllabus contract due by **11:59 PM**
Post 1 due by **11:59 PM**

Week 2: 9/11 and the Global War on Terror

8/28 Lincoln 19-32

8/30 Lincoln 33-50

9/1 Lincoln 51-61
Post 2 due by **11:59 PM**

Module 2: Abrahamic Traditions

Week 3: Judaism

9/4 Jurgensmeyer 48-55, Jerryson 463-471

9/6 Jurgensmeyer 56-67, Jerryson 523-545

9/8 Jurgensmeyer 230-265
Post 3 due by **11:59 PM**, response due **9/10** by **11:59 PM**

Week 4: Christianity

9/11 Jurgensmeyer 19-32, Jerryson 176-192

9/13 Jurgensmeyer 182-203, Jerryson 193-205, 233-239

9/15 Jurgensmeyer 33-47, *Northern Ireland's Invisible Border Part 1*
Post 4 due by **11:59 PM**, response due by **9/17 11:59 PM**

Week 5: Islam Pt. 1

9/18 Lincoln 77-92, Jurgensmeyer 149-181

9/20 Jurgensmeyer 68-75, Jerryson 307-332

9/22 Jurgensmeyer 76-102

Post 5 due by **11:59 PM**, response due 9/24 by **11:59 PM**

Week 6: Islam Pt. 2

9/25 Jerryson 335-355

9/27 Jerryson 356-374, 376-384

9/29 Jurgensmeyer 204-229

Post 6 due by **11:59 PM**, response due 10/1 by **11:59 PM**

Module 3: Dharmic Traditions and Shinto

Week 7: Hinduism

10/2 Lincoln 62-76, Jerryson 240-259, 262-264

10/4 Jurgensmeyer 103-108, Jerryson 273-290

10/6 Jerryson 291-306

Post 7 due by **11:59 PM**, response due 10/8 by **11:59 PM**

Week 8: Sikhism

10/9 Jurgensmeyer 109-127

10/11 Jerryson 633-649, 661-665

10/13 Jerryson 666-693

Post 8 due by **11:59 PM**, response due 10/15 by **11:59 PM**

Week 9: South Asian Buddhism

10/16 Fall Break

10/18 Jerryson 694-704

10/20 Jurgensmeyer 128-132, Jerryson 58-75

Post 9 due by **11:59 PM**, response due 10/22 by **11:59 PM**

Week 10: Japanese Buddhism and Shinto

10/23 Jerryson 76-84, 100-113

10/25 *When Shinto Became a Religion*

10/27 Yukio Mishima – *Philosophy of Sun and Steel*

Post 10 due by **11:59 PM**, response due 10/29 by **11:59 PM**

Module 4: New Religious Movements

Week 11: What are New Religious Movements?

10/30 Lewis 60-71, Tumminia 346-357

11/1 Chryssides 25-35, Prophet 36-49

11/3 Mayer 401-414, Frisk et al. 469-481

Deadline to email/meet with me about your Prezi

Post 11 due by **11:59 PM**, response due 11/5 by **11:59 PM**

Week 12: Heaven's Gate

11/6 Ostling 417-430, Zeller 17-42

11/8 Zeller 64-89

11/10 Zeller 171-217

Post 12 due by **11:59 PM**, response due 11/12 by **11:59 PM**

Week 13: Satanism

11/13 Petersen 441-454, Shupe 117-142

11/15 Shah et al. 1-17, Ross and Donahue 1-15

11/17 Moynihan and Soderlind 33-44, 81-108

Prezi and Post 13 due by **11:59 PM**, response due 11/19 by **11:59 PM**

Week 14: Neopagan Movements

11/20 Davy 1-30

Holiday Break

Week 15: Neopaganism: Asatru and Heathenry

11/27 Rood 81-95

11/29 Snook 140-171

12/1 Strmiska 5-44

Post 14 due by **11:59 PM**, response due by **12/3 11:59 PM**

Week 16: Conclusions

12/4 Jurgensmeyer 266-301

12/8 Post 15 and Final Paper due by **11:59 PM**

ADDITIONAL COURSE NOTES & COLLEGE POLICIES

Writing Lab: I encourage you to take advantage of the Writing Lab in the Center for Student Learning (Addlestone Library, first floor). Trained writing consultants can help with writing for all courses; they offer one-to-one consultations that address everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. For more information, please call 843.953.5635 or visit <http://csl.cofc.edu/labs/writing-lab/>.

Grading Scale: A: 93-100; A-: 90-92; B+: 87-89; B: 83-86; B-: 80-82; C+: 77-79; C: 73-76; C-: 70-72; D+: 67-69; D: 63-66; D-: 61-62 F: 60 or below.

Late Policy: As this is an accelerated course with a strict time table, **late assignments will not be accepted.**

SNAP: If you have a disability that qualifies you for academic accommodation, please present a letter from the Center for Disability Services at the beginning of the semester. For more information regarding accommodation and the SNAP program, see: <http://www.cofc.edu/~cgs/index.htm>.

Academic Integrity Statement: Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when suspected, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved.

Incidents where the instructor determines the student's actions are related more to misunderstanding and confusion will be handled by the instructor. The instructor designs an intervention or assigns a grade reduction to help prevent the student from repeating the error. The response is recorded on a form and signed both by the instructor and the student. It is forwarded to the Office of the Dean of Students and placed in the student's file.

Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly by the instructor and/or others having knowledge of the incident to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the

Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XXF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This status indicator will appear on the student's transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the XX to be expunged. The F is permanent.

Students can find the complete Honor Code and all related processes in the Student Handbook at: <http://deanofstudents.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/>."

OAKS: OAKS, including Gradebook, will be used for this course throughout the semester to provide the syllabus and class materials and grades for each assignment, which will be regularly posted.

MENTAL AND PHYSICAL WELLBEING: At the college, we take every students' mental and physical wellbeing seriously. If you find yourself experiencing physical illnesses, please reach out to student health services (843.953.5520). And if you find yourself experiencing any mental health challenges (for example, anxiety, depression, stressful life events, sleep deprivation, and/or loneliness/homesickness) please consider contacting either the Counseling Center (professional counselors at <http://counseling.cofc.edu> or 843.953.5640 3rd Robert Scott Small Building) or the Students 4 Support (certified volunteers through texting "4support" to 839863, visit <http://counseling.cofc.edu/cct/index.php>, or meet with them in person 3rd Floor Stern Center). These services are there for you to help you cope with difficulties you may be experiencing and to maintain optimal physical and mental health.

FOOD AND HOUSING RESOURCES:

Many CofC students report experiencing food and housing insecurity. If you are facing challenges in securing food (such as not being able to afford groceries or get sufficient food to eat every day) and housing (such as lacking a safe and stable place to live), please contact the Dean of Students for support (<http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/about/salt.php>). Also, you can go to <http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/student-food-housing-insecurity/index.php> to learn about food and housing assistance that is available to you. In addition, there are several resources on and off campus to help. You can visit the Cougar Pantry in the Stern Center (2nd floor), a student-run food pantry that provides dry-goods and hygiene products at no charge to any student in need. Please consider reaching out if you need more assistance.

Syllabus Contract and Expectations:

While I expect certain things of you in the course, participation, attendance, timeliness, and good engagement, you also should and could expect certain things of me. Think of the syllabus as a **tool** and also a **contract**. First, the syllabus is a tool. It can offer answers and solutions to problems. The syllabus can help you piece together the course to create an entire picture of what the final product will look like. Look to the syllabus first. Second, the syllabus is a contract. The syllabus says, to you, “This is what Professor Fitzgerald expects of you.” There’s nothing sneaky, tricky, or underhanded about it. But, the syllabus also holds me accountable to you. You know what to expect of me with regard to office hours, email response time, assignment expectations, and grade performance. Your first assignment will be to return this page to me, uploaded as an assignment (Syllabus Contract), and signed (typed name is fine).

I can expect you:

- To show up to class on time and ready to participate/listen.
- To be attentive and engaged for lectures and discussions
- To spend an appropriate amount of time on our readings, podcasts, videos, assignments, etc. each week.
- To turn in your assignments on time
- To engage with all parts of the material even if you may disagree
- To **ASK FOR HELP**.

You can expect me:

- To start and end class on time
- To answer emails within 24-48 hours during weekdays, and within 72 hours of weekends
- To assign readings, videos, movies, or podcasts that cover the material, are the appropriate reading level, and that are informative and engaging
- To give assignments that are fruitful, reflective of the material, and helpful to your overall construction of the course.
- Be available during the week to offer help

Signed (by professor): Padraic M. Fitzgerald (he/him)

Signed (by student):

