

## **RELS 450 Senior Seminar on Religion, Conflict & Violence (MW 4-5:15 MYBK 119)**

Dr. Zeff Bjerken  
Dept. of Religious Studies  
College of Charleston

Office: RELS Building, 4A Glebe Street, room 101  
Office hours: Mon. 9:30-11:30; Tue. 11-12; Wed. 1-2 pm  
Office phone: 843-953-7156 e-mail: bjerken@cofc.edu

### **Course Description**

Religious violence is a slippery topic, one that is sensitive, complex, potentially offensive, but of major importance. Defining “religion” is notoriously difficult. Defining “violence” turns out to be just as tricky. Due to the nature of the topic, then, this seminar will be exploratory in nature. This course will provide students with critical tools from a variety of disciplines within the field of Religious Studies to make sense of recent events in our world when religion became intertwined with racism, nationalism, and the preservation of ethnic identities, for these toxic combinations can result in tragic violence. We will rely on a variety of methods to examine instances of violence and reconciliation, including ethnography, social psychology, rhetorical analysis of religious speech, gender and ritual studies, and the history of religions.

As case studies, we will examine Hindu-Muslim conflicts in modern India, conflicts between Christian evangelicals and African animists, terrorism and the “war on terror” after 9/11, and the escalating role of religious rhetoric in American politics today. As we inquire into the history, causes, and characteristics of religious violence, none of us should expect to leave the class with a definitive explanation or solution for it. There are no clear “right answers” that cannot be questioned. What we can do, however, is place acts of religious violence in their proper context, and learn to ask questions and explore different means to answer those questions. What might some of those questions be?

There are many possible starting points and you will undoubtedly bring your own questions and ideas with you. We will initially organize our inquiry around the following: *Why do individuals involved in terrorism rely so heavily on religious texts and traditions to justify vengeful ideologies? Does violence represent an aberration born of human weakness or is it the inevitable result of religion? What is the logic that provides moral justifications for violence? What does it mean to “understand” something that we find morally reprehensible or simply bizarre? What is the proper balance between empathy and critical judgment for the scholar of religion? Should scholars of religion be neutral detached observers or serve as cultural critics in the public arena?*

### **Seminar Goals and Student Learning Outcomes**

- To re-examine “religion” as a modern constructed category and interrogate its intersection with power, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class (“intersectionality”)
- To apply a variety of critical theories to different religious contexts in order to better understand the violence in our world (this should make you a much more informed consumer of the news media)
- To foster a reflexive awareness of how scholars’ methods and theoretical presuppositions (including your own) have informed the way in which religion is understood
- To hone your critical reading, thinking, and writing skills through disciplined engagement with texts, short essay assignments, and a research writing project
- To improve how you speak with clarity, precision, and depth about complex and controversial topics

There are **Four Required Texts** available at the CofC Barnes & Noble Bookstore:

- Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God* (4th edition 2017) \$29.95
- Barbara Kingsolver, *The Poisonwood Bible: A Novel P.S.* (Harper edition) \$19
- Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2006) \$20
- Shashi Tharoor, *Riot: A Love Story* (Norton edition, 2011) \$14.95
- There are also **required Electronic Readings (ER#1-22)**, pdf of articles by scholars and former students available on **OAKS**, which registered students can access and download after they login to **MyCharleston** (<http://my.cofc.edu>) under **RELS 450**. Please **print out each article** and bring it to class on the day that it will be discussed.

### **Course Requirements**

This is a seminar, not a lecture course, and participants are expected to do **all** the required readings for **each class**. Seminar participation is crucial for success in the class, and the discussion board assignment is designed to encourage completion of the assigned reading before we meet.

- **Active participation in seminar, including a class presentation (20%)**  
Asking questions, raising concerns, and offering your own ideas during seminar discussions is a crucial part of this course. You are expected to be an active participant in class discussions. Grades for class participation will be assigned on the basis of the quality and consistency of your involvement in class discussions, including those provoked by other students' comments. Each student will be required to do **a class presentation (5%)** on their research project towards the end of the semester.
- **Discussion Board (20%)** Discussion posts on OAKS should re-articulate the reading's most important point in our own words and also pose a question raised by the reading for class discussion. The controversial subject matter of this course can provoke anger, shock, and disagreement in you, all of which you can note in your posts, but I'm also looking for new insights, new ways to contextualize and critique what you've read. Preparing in this manner will enable us to move our discussions along in a lively and interesting way. You will post on our discussion board by **11:59 am** prior to each class.
- **Two 4-page essays due 9/25 and 10/16 (15%)** There will be two critical essays that apply some of theories we have studied to the two novels that we will read, namely *Riot* and *Poisonwood Bible*. Grades will be based on accuracy, analytic insight, and clarity of organization and expression.
- **Term Research Paper of 12-15 pages (45%):** For this research paper you will be required to apply one theoretical perspective and a method learned from those studied in seminar to some current controversy that features religion, politics, identity and violence. A one-page description with research questions is due **October 23 (5%)**; an **annotated bibliography** is due **October 30 (5%)**; a complete draft of the paper is due on **November 13 (15%)**; the final revised draft is due **December 7 (20%)**.

|                      |                |                |                |
|----------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Grading Scale</b> | A 100-93 (4.0) | B- 82-80 (2.7) | D+ 69-67 (1.3) |
|                      | A- 92-90 (3.7) | C+ 79-77 (2.3) | D 66-63 (1.0)  |
|                      | B+ 89-87 (3.3) | C 76-73 (2.0)  | D- 62-60 (.70) |
|                      | B 86-83 (3.0)  | C- 72-70 (1.7) | F 59-lower (0) |

### **Technology**

Use of cell phones in class is strictly prohibited; please turn off your cell phone when you enter class. Students are expected to have a CofC email address linked to OAKS that they check regularly. Email is my most frequent and effective means of communication. Since technology can fail, technical difficulties are not acceptable excuses for late assignments or missed class. I expect you to complete assignments well enough in advance to factor in these variables and remember, so always back up your documents.

### **Academic Integrity and Learning Resources**

There is a zero-tolerance policy toward plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty in this course. This means that anyone caught taking credit for work that is not his or her own will receive a failing grade for the course. A student found responsible for academic dishonesty will receive a **XXF grade**, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty.

Students may utilize the **Center for Student Learning's** (CSL) academic support services for assistance in study strategies and course content. They offer tutoring, supplemental instruction, and study skills workshops. 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 students develop their writing skills; they offer one-to-one consultations that address everything from brainstorming to identifying and defending a thesis statement. For more, visit <http://csl.cofc.edu/labs/writing-lab>

**I. Studying Religion & Violence: Introduction to the major themes and debates**

8/21 Introduction to Course Requirements and Themes  
(Discuss Syllabus and clips from “7 Days in September” documentary film)

8/26 How and why do we associate “religion” with “violence?”  
(ER#1-2: “Is Religion the Problem?” and “The Violence of Illusion”)

**Seminar topics:** What important insights do Juergensmeyer & Sen offer us about religion, identity, and violence? If religion has been linked to violence, then why is Juergensmeyer reluctant to conclude that religion is the source of violence? Sen writes about the “freedom to determine our loyalties and priorities.” Would religious folks like Hindus and Muslims feel free to choose their identity? Why or why not?

8/28 Is the claim that religions are “violent” a “myth?”  
(ER#3-4: “Does Religion Cause Violence?” and “Religions are Intrinsically Violent”)  
Clips from PBS Frontline documentary, “Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero”

**Seminar topics:** How does the distinction drawn between the “religious” vs. the “secular” causes of violence tell us about the boundaries of “religion”? When you consider why “religion” is connected with violence, can you identify any reasons beyond the three that Cavanaugh identifies, namely that “religion is absolutist, religions is divisive, and religion is irrational”? According to Sheedy, what assumptions about “religion” are made by those who are committed to “secular rationalism”?

**II. Hindu and Muslim Conflicts in India**

9/2 The Indian Religious Context: Competing Hindu Memories of the Past  
(ER#5: “Introduction” and “Religious and Spiritual Life;” and ER#6: “The Setting”)

**Seminar topics:** What values do the Hindu nationalist and flexible Hindu share (according to ER#5), and how do they differ? “The Setting” begins with a very disturbing image of a young girl that haunts Kakar’s imagination; what does this image tell us about the limits of empathy and his role as a psychoanalyst? Kakar then distinguishes between the Indian secularist and Hindu nationalist representations of the history of Hindu-Muslim relations. What are the key ideological points found in each form of historiography? What is problematic about each viewpoint? Which historical perspective comes closer to the truth in your estimation?

9/4 The Rhetorical Magic of Demagogues: Hindu and Muslim Stereotypes of the “Other”  
(ER#7-8: “Conflict: Hindus and Muslims” and “Search for Hindu-ness”)

**Seminar topics:** How is an enduring Hindu identity identified? Is it new or old, both or neither? Is it a manifestation of group narcissism? Why do Hindus need Muslims for their nationalist agenda, while Muslims do not need Hindus for theirs, according to Kakar? How does the powerful rhetoric and political “magic” of the Hindu demagogue, Rithambara (ER#8), tap into the subconscious fears and wishes of her audience? How does her celebration of Hindu “tolerance” turn Muslims into scapegoats?

9/9 Why Guys Throw Bomb: Empowering Marginal Men with Warrior Power  
(*Terror in the Mind of God*, chapter 5: “Warriors’ Power” and ER#9: “The Warriors”)

**Seminar topics:** Juergensmeyer writes the following about men who engage in religious violence: “What they have in common, these movements of cowboy monks, is that they consist of anti-institutional, religio-nationalist, racist, sexist, male-bonding, bomb-throwing young guys. Their marginality in the modern world is experienced as a kind of sexual despair that leads to violent acts of symbolic empowerment. It could almost be seen as poignant, if it were not so terribly dangerous.” (255) Do these insights into the causes of religious violence apply to Kakar’s description and analysis of Indian wrestlers (*pelhwan*) in ER#9? How does the assertion of macho masculinity and the recovery of public virility relate to the ideology of Hindu nationalism?

9/11 Machismo and Mobs: Collective Effervescence or Toxic Masculinity?  
(ER#10: “The Riot”)

**Seminar topics:** What stands out to you about Kakar’s childhood memories of the religious violence that resulted from the Partition of Pakistan and India? When religious processions turn violent, does the mobs’ ecstatic experience qualify as a “religious” moment of self-transcendence and collective effervescence? How is violence between Muslims and Hindus explained in the film *Father, Son, and Holy War*?

## RELS 450 Senior Seminar on Religion, Conflict & Violence (MW 4-5:15 MYBK 119)

9/16 Introducing Riot: Coca-Colonialism, Love & the Death of an American Woman (Riot: 1-63)

**Seminar topics:** “We have given passports to a dream, a dream of an extraordinary, polyglot, polychrome, polyconfessional society.... But who allowed for militant Hinduism to arise, challenging the very basis of the Indianness I’ve just described to you?” asks Laxman. How does the Hindu militant Ram Charan Gupta challenge Laxman’s secular and pluralistic ideals of Indian democracy? When Gupta voices his own perspective, what echoes do you hear of Kakar’s Hindu subjects?

9/18 Reading *Riot*: Intertwining Love and Lust, Hate and History

(ER#11: “Contemporary Sexuality;” continue reading *Riot*, in whatever order of events you wish)

**Seminar topics:** *Riot* presents a sharp contrast between the two lovers Priscilla and Laxman, and their attitudes towards sexuality and public displays of affection. How does each reflect distinct cultural norms about sexuality, gender, selfhood, and power? Why does control of the body and sexuality generate such strong moral and religious feelings that are then expressed in a language of virtue and vice, sin and redemption? What collisions of cultures, religions, race and class occur in this novel?

9/23 Cross-Cultural Clashes and Political Polemics in *Riot*

(ER#12: “Clash of Civilizations?” and continue reading *Riot*)

**Seminar topic:** Why might Huntington’s “clash of civilization” theory (ER#12) be so appealing? Is there a singular “Hindu civilization” distinct from an essential “Muslim civilization?” Does this theory reinforce the ideological interests of religious nationalists? Does it help to clarify the conflict between Hindus and Muslims that we’ve read about in *Riot* or in earlier readings?

9/25 Post-modern Plots: Is the riot and the murder unknowable? (Wrap up *Riot*)

**Essay #1 on Riot due:** On pp. 136-7 Laxman describes to Priscilla his dream of writing a book about religion without an omniscient narrator, a book of interconnected events that can be read in whatever order the reader wishes to reveal that Truth is “elusive, subtle and many-sided.” *How successful is Tharoor in writing a mystery with a plot that cannot be completely unraveled about a murder and a riot that can never be completely known? Is truth really unknowable and subjective in this novel, or can we explain some of the causes for the riot by drawing upon RELS theories? Do all of the antagonists believe themselves to be in sole possession of “the truth,” including Laxman?*

### III. Missionaries Encounter the “Other” in Africa: Words about the Word

9/30 Missionaries, Colonialism, and the Study of Religion in Africa

(ER#13: “Frontiers of Comparison” and *Poisonwood Bible: Genesis*)

**Seminar topics:** According to ER#13 there are three phases in the history of the study of African culture/religions; how does each phase manifest colonial interests and the desire for control of African subjects? How is the foreign in Africa made more familiar to the western colonizer? In *Poisonwood Bible* what themes from the Old Testament are used in telling the family’s story? What are the implications of the “poisonwood bible” in the title?

10/2 *The Poisonwood Bible*: Revelations about Race in Africa

(ER#14: “Race and Religion;” *Poisonwood Bible: The Revelation*)

**Seminar topics:** How does ER#14 shed light on the racist baggage brought from Georgia to Africa, e.g. when Ruth May says “God says the Africans are the Tribes of Ham?” How does Kingsolver differentiate among the Price sisters in terms of their voices and attitudes towards their religious mission in Africa? What differences and similarities are there among Nathan Price’s relationship with his family, Chief Tata Ndu’s relationship with his people, and the relationship of the Belgian and American authorities with the Congo?

10/7 The Rhetoric of Fundamentalist Preachers & the Magical Power of Naming in an Animist Culture

(ER#15: “Speaking is Believing;” *Poisonwood Bible: The Judges*)

**Seminar topics:** According to ER#15, what are the rhetorical strategies used by Baptist ministers to foster conversion to the Word? Language is vitally important in Kingsolver’s novel: misused words fill the interior monologues of both Rachel and her little sister Ruth Ann, and the central metaphor of the novel features Reverend Price’s attempt to disseminate the Word in the language of Kikongo: “Tata Jesus is *Bängala*.”

What is the significance of the Kikongo word *nommo* and its attendant concepts of being and naming? Are there Christian parallels to the constellation of meanings and beliefs attached to *nommo*?

## **RELS 450 Senior Seminar on Religion, Conflict & Violence (MW 4-5:15 MYBK 119)**

10/9 *Poisonwood Bible* and Mimetic Violence

(ER#16: Violence & Religion: Cause or Effect?" *Poisonwood Bible: Bel and the Serpents*)

**Seminar topics:** Do you find Girard's theory about mimetic desire and mimetic rivalries a convincing way to explain religious violence? Does scapegoating a victim for ritual sacrifice help us to understand events in the *Poisonwood Bible*?

10/16 Revelations from *The Poisonwood Bible*: Understanding the “Word” and World in Africa

**Essay #2 due:** *What do you consider the most important lessons learned by Orleanna and the Price girls about the language and religion of the Congo? What “revelations” do they learn about themselves, their earlier assumptions about Africa, and their religious mission there once they begin to listen to the voices and learn the language of the Congolese? Finally, what lessons can we learn from the novel about the study of other religions?*

### **IV. Rethinking Terror, Violence and the “Culture Wars” in America After 9/11**

10/21 “In God We Trust”: Civil Religion and America’s Mission in the World

(ER #17-18: “Civil Religion in America” and “To Blood Sacrifice and the Nation”)

**Seminar topics:** Is the analysis of American “civil religion” (in ER#17) a neutral description or an endorsement? Does civil religion provide the State with religious legitimization for war? Does America have a special historic mission to liberate the whole of humanity from bondage? Is the argument made in ER#18, in support of the claim that “nationalism is the most powerful religion in the United States,” but that “citizens of nation-states have religious reasons for denying it,” appear convincing to you? Would Cavanaugh (in ER#3) agree with their point?

10/23 Theorizing Violence and Terror

(*Terror in the Mind of God*, xiii-xvii, 1-15, 29-39; ER#19: Michael Bray) **Term paper topic due**

**Seminar topics:** How is Juergensmeyer’s cultural approach to the study of religious terrorism different from Huntington’s clashing civilizations model? Does a “war on terrorism” create more religions of rebellion? Are the Christians who justify their acts of violence acting in defense of the American status quo or in revolution against it? Bray appeals to a divine mandate for righteous violence (with God as wrathful warrior) to justify the acts of Christian “soldiers” who attack abortion clinics. What do we make of his use of the American revolution and to the anti-slavery abolitionists during the Civil War to justify his position?

10/28 Onward Christian Soldiers: Images of Terror at Abu Ghraib

(*Terror in the Mind of God*, pp. 19-29; ER#20: “Torture at Abu Ghraib”)

**Seminar topics:** Why do the images of Abu Ghraib require context to understand what their “meaning” is? Are there contexts that seem absent in the analysis of these images? After viewing the images and reading ER#20, does this instance of our government’s “war on terror” seem “secular” or “religious?” Why is this distinction so problematic? How do scholars like Kakar, Cavanaugh, and Juergensmeyer help clarify what is at stake at Abu Ghraib? (**Note:** ER#20 as written by a former student in RELS 450 and it serves as a **model term paper!**)

10/30 Redefining Religion and Understanding the *Spiritual Manual* of the Suicide Bombers

(*Holy Terrors*: 1-18; 93-98; ER#21: “Defining the Present Situation of Muslims”)

#### **Annotated bibliography due**

**Seminar topics:** According to Lincoln, what is wrong with labeling the hijackers as “evil-doers?” Should we abandon the “F” word (“Fundamentalism) in favor of “religious maximalism?” Is religion most vital when it is in conflict with mainstream or surrounding cultures? What would motivate the American mainstream media and the 9/11 Commission to disregard the *Spiritual Manual*, a manual that prescribed how the hijackers ought to perform rituals of purification and recite prayers? How does the *Manual* allow us to understand the motivation of the hijackers in their quest for martyrdom?

11/4 Cosmic Wars: When Symbols Become Deadly

(*Terror in Mind of God* chapters 7-8: “Theater of Terror” and “Cosmic War”)

**Seminar topic:** Do the events of 9/11 support Juergensmeyer’s generalizations about ritualized violence performed in a “theater of terror?” Are the acts of terror by the hijackers more important for their symbolic value than for achieving any strategic goal? Does an appeal to the “symbolism” of cosmic warfare, which need not result in acts of violence, require that we make distinctions between “actual” vs. “potential” violence, or private “inner” vs. public “outer” religiosity?

## **RELS 450 Senior Seminar on Religion, Conflict & Violence (MW 4-5:15 MYBK 119)**

11/6 Symmetric Dualisms: Analyzing the Rhetoric of Bush and Bin Laden

(*Holy Terrors*: 19-32, 99-103). **Thesis Statement and first paragraph due**

**Seminar topics:** What are some of the dualisms shared by Bush and Bin Laden? How does the basis for their authority (whether religious or secular) produce different rhetorical styles in their public speeches? Can we clearly distinguish between “religious” vs. “political” motivations when we examine President Bush’s policies?

### **The Long Shadow of 9/11: Our “Culture Wars”**

11/11 The Jeremiads of Jerry & James (Falwell & Dobson)

(*Holy Terrors*: 33-61, 104-107; ER#22: “SpongeBob and the Emasculating Arm of Flesh”)

**ER#22** was written by a former RELS major in the Senior Seminar and it serves as a **model term paper!**

**Seminar topics:** When Jerry Falwell stated that liberal secularists in America (feminists, abortionists, gays and lesbians) made God mad, which resulted in the attacks of 9/11 on American soil, how does this mobilize an evangelical Christian revival? How does James Dobson’s campaign against SpongeBob as a “gay conspiracy” reflect his larger claim that evangelicals are “victimized” in our culture today? Are leaders like Falwell and Dobson, who protest against “deviant” sexuality and gender roles in today’s society, fomenting a patriarchal protest movement? How do scholars like Lincoln, Kakar and Juergensmeyer help clarify what is at stake in these “culture wars,” where the “warriors” make tactical moves in their “struggle” to reclaim God’s territory?

11/13 Student research presentations; **complete draft of research paper due**

11/18 Student research presentations

11/20 Student research presentations

11/25 Student research presentations

12/2 Healing Politics with Religion

(*Terror in the Mind of God* chapter 11: “The Mind of God”)

**Seminar topics:** What role might theology and ritual play in healing radical religious violence? Is ritualized violence (such as sacrifices or the Crucifixion) cathartic? Does RELS theory about violence and terror only deal with abstractions and arise from too much “distance” from the real lives of religious folks? How can we empathize with and understand the religious lives of others yet retain the capacity for moral judgment?

### **12/6 Final Draft of Term paper due by 7 pm**

#### **12/15 SECSR Undergraduate Essay deadline**

Students at institutions in the Southeast Region are invited to submit papers for the Undergraduate Sessions, sponsored by SECSR. Open to all topics, the sessions will be composed of the papers considered the best submissions by an interdisciplinary committee. Students should submit completed papers that reflect original student research of an appropriate length for presentation (approximately 12 double-spaced pages). No paper over 14 double-spaced pages, regular size font, will be considered; one submission per student. On a cover page, please include contact information for the student and for the faculty sponsor who has reviewed the submission. Papers in Word or PDF format are to be emailed to [secsr.undergraduate.section@gmail.com](mailto:secsr.undergraduate.section@gmail.com) no later than **December 15**. All undergraduate papers are automatically considered for the Undergraduate Paper Prize.

**2/28-3/1 SECSR Conference, Athens GA**

## **RELS 450 Senior Seminar on Religion, Conflict & Violence (MW 4-5:15 MYBK 119)**

### **RELS 450 Electronic Readings on OAKS**

1. Mark Juergensmeyer, "Is Religion the Problem?" *Hedgehog Review* 6.1 (2004), pp. 21-33.
2. Amartya Sen, "The Violence of Illusion" from *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (New York: Penguin, 2006), pp. 1-17
3. William Cavanaugh, "Does Religion Cause Violence?" in *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, vol 25 no. 2-3, (Spring/Summer 2007), 22-35.
4. Matt Sheedy, "Religions are Intrinsically Violent" from *Stereotyping Religion: Critiquing Clichés* ed. by Brad Stoddard and Craig Martin, New York: Bloomsbury, 2017, pp. 23-39.
5. Sudhir and Katharina Kakar, "Introduction" and "Religious and Spiritual Life" from *The Indians: Portrait of a People*. Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2009, pp. 1-6, 134-151.
6. Sudhir Kakar, *The Color of Violence: Cultural Identities, Religion, and Conflict*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, pp. pp. 1-4, 12-24.
7. Sudhir & Katharina Kakar, "Conflict: Hindus and Muslims" from *The Indians*, pp. 152-179.
8. Sudhir Kakar, "Search for Hindu-ness" from *The Color of Violence*, pp. 152-169.
9. Sudhir Kakar, "The Warriors" from *The Color of Violence*, pp. 52-59, 80-86.
10. Sudhir Kakar, "The Riot," from *The Color of Violence*, pp. 25-51.
11. Sudhir & Katharina Kakar, "Contemporary Sexuality" from *The Indians*, pp. 84-106.
12. Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1993), pp. 22-41.
13. David Chidester, "Frontiers of Comparison," from *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996, pp. 1-29.
14. Malory Nye, "Race and Religion: Postcolonial Formations of Power and Whiteness," in *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* (2018) pp. 1-28.
15. Susan Friend Harding, "Speaking is Believing" from *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics*. Princeton University Press, 2000, pp. ix-xii; 33-60.
16. Rene Girard, "Violence & Religion: Cause or Effect?" *Hedgehog Review* 6.1 (Spring 2004), pp. 8-20.
17. Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 96.1 (Winter 1967), pp. 1-21. Downloaded from: www.robertbellah.com/articles\_5.htm
18. Carolyn Marvin and David W. Ingle, "Blood Sacrifice and the Nation: Revisiting Civil Religion" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* Vol. 64. no. 4, (Winter 1996), pp. 767-780.
19. Michael Bray, "A Time for Revolution?" in *Princeton Readings in Religion and Violence*, ed. by Mark Juergensmeyer and Margo Kitts (Princeton University Press, 2011), pp. 55-61.
20. Katie Browne, "Torture at Abu Ghraib: The Terrorist Tactics of a Modern Democracy and the Oppression of the Muslim "Other," *Chrestomathy: Annual Review of Undergraduate Research at the College of Charleston* vol 7. (2008), pp. 22-35.
21. Hans G. Kippenberg, "Defining the Present Situation of Muslims and Re-Enacting the Prophet's *Ghazwas*" in *The 9/11 Handbook* ed. by Kippenberg and Tilman Seidensticker (London: Equinox, 2006), pp. 47-58.
22. Chelsea Diffendal, "SpongeBob SquarePants and the Emasculating Arm of Flesh," *Chrestomathy: Annual Review of Undergraduate Research at the College of Charleston* vol. 4 (2005), pp. 46-64.

### **Resources on Religion and Politics in Current Events**

1. *Religion News Service*: <https://religionnews.com>
2. *The Revealer*: [www.therevealer.org](http://www.therevealer.org)
3. *Religion Dispatches*: <https://rewire.news/religion-dispatches>
4. *Killing the Buddha*: <http://killingthebuddha.com/>
5. *Immanent Frame*: <https://tif.ssrc.org>
6. *Alt.Muslim: Interactive News for the Muslim Community*: [www.altmuslim.com](http://www.altmuslim.com)
7. *Christianity Today*: [www.christianitytoday.com](http://www.christianitytoday.com)
8. *Soujourners: Faith, Politics, Culture*: [www.sojourners.org/index.cfm?action=magazine.home](http://www.sojourners.org/index.cfm?action=magazine.home)

**RELS 450 Seminar on Religion, Conflict & Violence**  
**Fall 2019 on M/W 4:00-5:15 in MYBK 119**



The rise of Al Qaeda and ISIS, the bombing in the cities of Charleston & Christchurch, El Paso and London—recent years have seen an alarming global increase in religiously motivated violence, often inspired too by nationalism, colonialism, ethnic conflict, and fundamentalism.

**FUNDAMENTALISM**

*Secularism*

**PLURALISM**

**Nationalism**

*Jihad*

**War on Terror**

*Colonialism*

**ETHNIC CONFLICT**

There has perhaps never before been a time when the study of religion and violence has been so relevant to global society. RELS 450 will engage this timely and controversial topic by examining Hindu-Muslim conflicts in India, conflicts between Christian evangelicals and African animists, terrorism and the “war on terror” after 9/11, and the escalating role of religious rhetoric in American politics today.