

Soc 393 Religion and Violence in a Global Age

Fall 2006 (fulfills U2 requirement)

Fridays 10:20 – 12:20; PPHAC 116

Professor Daniel Jasper

PPHAC 316

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00 – 4:00, Fridays 9:30 – 10:15, or by appointment

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Course Overview: Sociologists and other scholars of modernity predicted that the importance and influence of religion would diminish to be replaced by a brave new secular world. These predictions have been proven incorrect as religion remains a prominent determinant of social identity and political organization in the modern world. Under contemporary processes of globalization, the interactions between different religions have only increased leading to an increasing number of conflicts between different religious communities.

This course will take this development as a point of departure to analyze the ways in which religious conflicts emerge, develop, and play themselves out in the modern globalized world. We will look at religious conflicts that occur within and between societies. Towards this end, a series of related questions will guide our inquiry:

-What constitutes religious violence?

-How does religious violence relate to other forms of collective violence?

-Why has religious conflict become so prominent in our world today? We will, thus, explore the different theoretical models explaining religious conflict. Topics will include the 'Clash of Civilizations', Economic Competition, civic ties, and political processes.

-How do religions justify the turn to violence? Here we will look at the ways in which different religious traditions find theological justifications for violent confrontations. How do social circumstances impact these theological interpretations?

-What are the lasting effects of religious conflict? We will look at the lasting social, psychological, and cultural tolls brought about as the result of violence.

A Note on Course Content: This course investigates violence. Therefore, course readings, presentations, and discussions will often be graphic, potentially disturbing and unsettling. In order to analyze any social phenomena, it is first necessary to understand the phenomena. Since the first step towards understanding is description, it is necessary for the material in this course to be graphic. If you are uncomfortable with graphic descriptions and images of violence, you may want to consider an alternate course.

Course Requirements and Expectations: Students are expected to complete all assigned readings before the due date. The majority of our in class time will be spent in a collective exploration of the texts and the ideas presented in them. It is therefore expected that all students will come to class prepared to discuss the material. For each week, students will prepare a weekly reading note that will assist them in formulating

reactions to, and raising questions about, the assigned texts. Reading notes will be due on Tuesday evenings (before 10:00 pm), to be submitted electronically as a MS Word file.

Each student will be a member of a study group that will develop an expertise on one inter-religious group conflict. Much of the written work for this course will be the product of this group endeavor.

Assignment guidelines will be posted on the course blackboard site. Students should check the site regularly for announcements.

Grading: Grades for this course will be based upon a combination of individual and group work.

Individual Work:

Reading Notes:	20%
Class Participation	10%
Annotated Bibliography	10%
Final Take Home Essay Exam	20%

Group Work:

Identifying Conflict Assignment	5%
Theologies of Peace and Conflict Assignment	5%
Explaining Conflicts Assignment	5%
Group Presentation	20%
Group Participation	5%

Repressive Policies and other mechanisms of social control: We all share the responsibility for the success of this course. Therefore, we should plan on attending all class sessions. We shall arrive on time, having completed the shared readings and assignments, and be prepared to collectively explicate, interrogate, and expand the arguments. We should arrive with the texts, our notes on the texts, and the necessary tools of scholarship. We should leave unnecessary distractions, such as cell phones, in our private ‘backstage’ regions.

The most important part of conducting oneself as a professional scholar involves following the conventions of scholarly citation. All members of this course should read, re-read, and familiarize themselves with the college policy on Academic Honesty included in the student handbook. All written work must include full and proper citations. There are no exceptions, including ignorance. Cheating and plagiarism will result in failing this course.

Written work is due on the date specified. Late reading notes will not be accepted, other late assignments will be penalized 10 % per day.

Required Texts:

Since our course readings will come from academic journals, e-books, news sources, and periodic sources, it is not required that you purchase any books for this course. You are welcome, however, to purchase any of the books that we will be reading from.

Texts marked with an asterisk (*) are available through one of the online databases accessible through the library. Texts marked with an 'e' are available as ebooks from ebrary, available through Reeves Library. Please bring a copy of all texts with you to class.

Course Outline

Please note, the outline below is merely a guide. Changes are possible as the semester progresses. This is particularly the case as we will incorporate contemporary outbreaks of religious violence into the course content. Again, check the blackboard site regularly for updates.

Week 1 September 1 Introduction

Week 2 September 8: Religion and Violence: What is it?

* Wellman, James K., Jr. and Kyoko Tokuno "Is Religious Violence Inevitable?" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion (JSSR)* 43:3

* Nepstad, Sharon Erickson. "Religion, Violence, and Peacemaking" *JSSR* 43:3

Week 3 September 15: Religion, Violence, and the Global

Appadurai, Arjun. *Fear of Small Numbers* chs. 3 & 4

Wink, Walter. *Engaging the Powers*. pp. 13-25

Week 4 September 22: Understanding the Religious and the Political

e Asad, Talal. *Formations of the Secular*. ch. 6

* Barnes, L. Philip. "Was the Northern Ireland Conflict Religious?" *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 20:1.

Week 5 September 29: Religious Violence and Global Structures

* Huntington, Samuel. "The Clash of Civilizations" *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1993)

e Chua, Amy. *World on Fire*. Introduction; ch. 12 (highly recommended); other chapters (Recommended).

Week 6 October 6: Competing Explanations - A case study

Brass, Paul. *Theft of an Idol*, ch. 8; (ch. 1 recommended).

Varshney, Ashutosh. *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life*, chs. 1-2.

Wilkinson, Steven. *Votes and Violence*. ch. 1

Week 7 Friday October 13: The extent of religious violence
The Hedgehog Review, Special Issue on Religion and Violence. Spring 2004.
Volume 6, Number 1.

Moore, R.I. *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*. Blackwell, 1987.

Week 8 Friday October 20: Strategies of Religious Violence

e Juergensmeyer, Mark. *Terror in the Mind of God*. U. of California, 2000.

Reuter, Christoph. *My Life is a Weapon*. Princeton, 2002.

Week 9 Friday October 27 Marked bodies and Scarred Memories: the effects of religious violence

Das, Veena. “Communities, Riots, Survivors” and “Our Work to Cry: Your work to Listen” from *Mirrors of Violence*.

Kakar, Sudhir. “Victims and Others”, chs. 4-5 from *The Colors of Violence*.

Week 10 Friday November 3 Student Presentations

Week 11 Friday November 10 Student Presentations

Week 12 Friday November 17 Student Presentations

Week 13 Friday November 24 (No Class – Thanksgiving Break)

Week 14 Friday December 1 Can Pluralism Work?

Marty, Martin. *When Faiths Collide*. Blackwell, 2005.

Week 15 Friday December 8 Putting it all together

Take Home Final Exam Essay due during scheduled Exam Hour