

Soc 393 Religion and Violence in a Global Age
Spring 2008 (fulfills U2 requirement)
Fridays 10:20 – 12:20; PPHAC 116

Professor Daniel Jasper

PPHAC 316

Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 10:00-11:30; Fridays 8:30-9:30; 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.

By the end of the semester, students will:

- 1.) Be able to identify the multiple causes of religious conflict.
- 2.) Understand the different theoretic approaches to make sense of religious conflict.
- 3.) See that no particular religion or society is more (or less) prone to religious conflict than others.
- 4.) Develop their reading, writing, analytic and presentation skills.
- 5.) Develop their abilities to work in groups with colleagues.

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 steps towards understanding are documentation and 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 response questions to the readings. These will be due on Tuesday evenings (before 10:00 pm), to be submitted via email (djasper@moravian.edu) 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. Each group will prepare two essays and make a presentation to the class.

Individually, students will be responsible for completing an annotated bibliography, an assignment identifying conflict, a reflective essay and a Final Take-Home Essay Exam. For the points associated with each of the requirements, see grading sheet appended to this syllabus. Detailed instructions for each assignment will be provided during class time.

Students should plan on spending 8 – 10 hours per week on this course.

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:

*e*Juergensmeyer, Mark. 2003 [2000]. *Terror in the Mind of God*, 3E. University of California Press.

Other required readings will be available online, through Reeves Library, or distributed in class. 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

library, available through Reeves Library. Please print a copy of each of these texts and bring a copy 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.

Week 1 (January 18) Course Introduction

Juergensmeyer, Preface to RE, Preface

Week 2 (January 25) Religion and Violence: What is it?

Juergensmeyer, ch. 1

* 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 (February 1) Manifestations of Violence in Different Religions

Juergensmeyer, Cultures of Violence chs. 2-6

Week 4 (February 8) Why Religious Violence?

Juergensmeyer, The Logic of Religious Violence chs. 7-11

Week 5 (February 15) Religion, Violence, and the Global

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

* 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 (February 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 7 (February 29) Why People Kill

Khosrokhavar, Farhad. *Suicide Bombers*.

* Elliot, Andrea. "Where Boys Grow Up to Be Jihadis" *New York Times Magazine*. November 25, 2007.

March 3 – 7: Spring Break, No Classes

Week 8 (March 14) Competing Explanations - A case study

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

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

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

Week 9 (March 21) **No Class for Good Friday**

Week 10 (March 28) **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 11 (April 4) Student Presentations

Week 12 (April 11) Student Presentations

Week 13 (April 18) Student Presentations

Week 14 (April 25) **Course Conclusion: Can Pluralism Work?**

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

Take Home Final Exam Essay due at the beginning of the scheduled Exam Hour (April 28 – May 3)

Religion and Violence in a Global World

Soc 393, Spring 2008

Grading Sheet

Individual Work

Weekly Response Questions: $\frac{\quad}{1} \quad \frac{\quad}{1} \quad \frac{\quad}{1} \quad \frac{\quad}{1} \quad \frac{\quad}{1} \quad \frac{\quad}{1} \quad \frac{\quad}{1} \quad \frac{\quad}{1} \quad \frac{\quad}{1} \quad \frac{\quad}{1} = \frac{\quad}{10}$

Seminar Participation

Points at Midterm: $\frac{\quad}{5}$

Points at End-term: $\frac{\quad}{5}$

Annotated Bibliography: $\frac{\quad}{10}$

Identifying Conflict Assignment: $\frac{\quad}{10}$

Reflective Essay $\frac{\quad}{10}$

Final Exam $\frac{\quad}{20}$

Group Work:
Explaining Conflicts Assignment: $\frac{\quad}{8}$

Theologies of Conflict Assignment: $\frac{\quad}{8}$

Group Presentation: $\frac{\quad}{10}$

Group Participation: $\frac{\quad}{4}$

Total: **Possible points = 100**

Final Grades

	87.1-90 = B+	77.1-80 = C+	67.1-70 = D+
>94.1 = A	83.1-87 = B	73.1-77 = C	63.1-67 = D
90.1-94 = A-	80.1-83 = B-	70.1-73 = C-	60.1-63 = D-
60 points or below = F			