

Initial and Signature Page

Initials: Division Chair _____ Registrar _____ Teacher Education Chair _____

Division:

Record of vote: _____ Approve _____ Disapprove _____ Abstain _____

Division Chair

Date

Reason(s) for disapproval: _____

Teacher Education Committee:

Record of vote: _____ Approve _____ Disapprove _____ Abstain _____

_____ TE vote not required

Teacher Education Chair

Date

Reason(s) for disapproval: _____

Curriculum Committee:

Record of vote: _____ Approve _____ Disapprove _____ Abstain _____

Curriculum Committee Chair

Date

Reason(s) for disapproval: _____

Faculty Association:

Record of vote: _____ Approve _____ Disapprove _____ Abstain _____

Faculty Association President

Date

Reason(s) for disapproval: _____

VPAA:

_____ Approve _____ Disapprove _____

VPAA

Date

Reason(s) for disapproval: _____

University President:

_____ Approve _____ Disapprove _____

University President

Date

Reason(s) for disapproval: _____

USAO Board of Regents:

_____ Approve _____ Disapprove _____

Chair, USAO Board of Regents

Date

Reason(s) for disapproval: _____

Procedure

1. The originating faculty member (OFM) works with department faculty and division chair to develop curriculum change (CC).¹
2. OFM sends CC to division chair, *then* to registrar, and *then* to chair of teacher education. Each person electronically initials and returns CC to OFM. This step is only to communicate that a change is being proposed.
3. OFM forwards CC to curriculum committee chair and to faculty association president.
4. Curriculum committee holds digital forum for faculty and staff for questions and discussion of CC. Faculty/staff are notified by e-mail about the forum. The forum lasts five business days.²
5. Division faculty vote on CC. Division chair records result of the vote, electronically signs CC, and forwards to chair of teacher education.
6. Chair of teacher education determines if vote by teacher education committee is required. If so, teacher education committee votes on CC. Chair of teacher education records result of vote or indicates that vote was not required, electronically signs CC, and forwards to chair of the curriculum committee.
7. Curriculum committee votes on CC. President of curriculum committee records result of vote and electronically signs CC.
8. Chair of curriculum committee presents CC to faculty association. Faculty association votes on CC. Faculty association president records result of vote, electronically signs CC, and forwards to vice president of academic affairs (VPAA).
9. VPAA determines approval of CC, electronically signs it, and forwards to university president.
10. The university president determines approval of CC, electronically signs it, and forwards to USAO board of regents. University president sends letter of intent (LOI) to chancellor of the state regents.
11. USAO board of regents votes on CC. Chair of the board of regents signs CC and returns to university president. University president forwards CC to state regents no earlier than one month after the LOI was submitted. If the change is substantive a vote is required by the state regents. If it is non-substantive, only notification to the state regents is necessary.³
12. Once approved by state regents, the University president contacts Academic Affairs. Academic Affairs contacts OFM, registrar, and division chair about approval.
13. Registrar updates changes in Jenzabar and verifies updated checksheet. Registrar forwards verified checksheet to C&M who updates the checksheet on the website.
14. OFM works with administrative assistant to VPAA to update course catalog. CC record is held in the office of VPAA for 5 years. After 5 years it is relocated to university archives in Nash library.

¹ A curriculum change will take approximately two months to complete the cycle of approvals within the university and another 6 months to be approved by the state regents. However, that time may be longer based on the date when the proposal is initially submitted, the timing of regents' meetings, and the level of completeness of the proposal.

² It is the responsibility of the OFM to incorporate text of any agreed upon changes to the original proposal, as they see fit, based on comments from the faculty forum period in step 4. The division chair will review the revised proposal to verify that the text was altered accurately.

³ A substantive change is a change in what students must complete to graduate (# of hours, deleting/adding a required course, changing admission requirements). A non-substantive change does not change what students must complete to graduate (adding/removing an elective, changing a course prefix or title, changing a course #)

Originating Faculty Member _____

Date _____

Department: _____

Division: _____

Proposed Course #: _____

Proposed Course Title: _____

Has your program undergone a program review within the last 5 years? yes no

Append the following:

- A. Course description.
- B. Justification for the new course.
- C. Sample course syllabus.
- D. If this is a resubmission of a previous curriculum change, include a description of the changes that have been made to the proposal.

Course Description and Justification

PRLG 3XX3: Religion and Violence

Course Description

A seminar designed to acquaint students with issues raised by the conjunction of religion and violence in multiple religious traditions, and through a variety of approaches, including anthropology, psychology, history, and ritual theory. Students will become acquainted with sacred texts related to violence and peace, theoretical perspectives on religious violence, in depth studies of religious violence, and the religious resources for peace-building.

Justification

This course has been offered on two previous occasions. This course change is to reflect the fact that Religion and Violence will be a consistent element within the Philosophy and Religious Studies curricular rotation. The course should also be seen as supplement to the Ableson Chair in Religious Reconciliation.

PRLG 4883: Religion and Violence
Zach Simpson, Professor
University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma, Fall 2016

Office: Davis 204c

E-mail: zsimpson@usao.edu

Phone: 574-1381

Office Hours: MWF: 8:30-10 am; TTh: 9-11 am and 3-4 pm (Other times can be arranged by appointment)

Turnitin.com Course ID: 13180844 **Turnitin.com password:** sacrifice

Course Description

This course is an upper-level seminar designed to acquaint students with issues raised by the dual themes of religion and violence. Throughout the course, students will become acquainted with theories related to violence in general, positive and negative approaches to the conjunction of religion and violence, and constructive approaches to peace-building. Because the course is a seminar, students will also conduct independent research to further expand resources in religion and violence, and will write a paper which responds to issues of their own choosing. The course will be centered around primary texts, discussion, and synthetic writing projects, helping to cultivate a critical understanding of religion and violence both as a field of student interest and as a historic phenomenon.

Overview

Though two separate phenomena, “religion and violence” have come to be conjoined in our collective consciousness in the past twenty years. With suicide terrorism, the “Arab spring” and its attendant disruption of the Middle East, the Yugoslavian conflict, Rwanda, Israel-Palestine, and sundry other examples fresh on our minds, it is hard to avoid thinking that religion and violence are synonymous with another, or that conflict is almost always religious in nature. Was it always this way? What textual resources do individuals and groups rely upon when they act out violently and identify religious motivations? What is the motivation for violence? How is violence understood religious and politically? Is there anything religions can do to ameliorate their seemingly created violence? Or is this all a screen for other motivations and ideologies? This course seeks to pose – and hopefully interrogate – these critical questions and the fields of thought which have attempted to study them.

During the first part of the course, we will analyze the notion of violence from two different perspectives. First, using Christopher Hedges’ book, *War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning*, we will look into the positive and negative reasons for why we go to war. Does war give us meaning? What meaning can possibly found in violence? What are some traditional theories which have sought to explain the emergence of violence in our species? These considerations are critical: violence may be something necessary to being human and to live in a society, as Hedges suggests.

After Hedges, the course moves to a discussion of the various ways in which world religious traditions have understood their own violence towards others. During this part of the course, we will look at textualized violence in texts from Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. We will also examine contemporary incarnations of religious violence, as seen in phenomena such as suicide terrorism and the Israel-Palestine conflict (in Scott Atran’s amazing book, *Talking to the Enemy*). These treatments will be further explored through an examination of ritualized violence and its contemporary manifestation as media-tized violence. Each of these different perspectives on what is apparently religious violence will allow us to see the various ways in which religion

legitimizes, heroizes, and sacralizes particular forms of conflict. It will also allow us to question whether or not such instances of violence are aberrant or wholly in keeping with the spirit of individual religious traditions.

The next part of the course will more deeply examine a seemingly paradigmatic example of religious violence: the mass sacrifice of humans by the Aztecs during the pre-Columbian period. In looking at the elaborate (and often eerily beautiful) forms of human sacrifice practiced by the Aztecs, we will see the multiple dimensions of religious violence: its ritualization, the death of the Other, the need to satisfy gods, its political dimensions, and its entwinement with culture. Instead of simplifying our view of religious violence, it will get more complicated.

This more complicated view of religious violence is furthered through our engagement with the work of William Cavanaugh, whose *The Myth of Religious Violence* questions the conjunction of religion and violence on multiple fronts. First, as Cavanaugh will argue, “religion” is an academic construct that fails to see the ways in which politics, economics, group-think, and other areas of our lives are inseparable from one another. Thus, there is no “religion” in “religious violence.” Violence is violence. Secondly, and of equal importance, most conflicts employ religion as a justification for political, ethnic, or social motivations. Is this violence then religious? Or something else? Cavanaugh will help us problematize these assumptions, though we will have to see if Cavanaugh lets religion off the hook here, too.

The course ends on a hopeful note by examining the spiritual lives of peacemakers and the ways in which they embed themselves in their own parent traditions. In examining the lives of peacemakers in conflict zones and those whose cultures clash with other religions, we can begin to see the ways in which religion can be used not just for legitimation or violence, but also transformation and healing. These readings, along with the reports of current events throughout the class (see assignments below) will help to round out our understanding of religion, violence, and the prospects for peace.

Ultimately, the course may do no more than pose a series of questions and complicate an already confusing set of ideas. In exploring the various dimensions of religion, violence, and religion/violence, however, we can begin to not only explore “religion and violence,” but the notions which undergird such a phrase and the political, spiritual, and moral dimensions of why we see, or wish to see, violence given a sacred character. And, even though many of us believe religious violence to be anachronistic and left to other parts of the world, we may see that we, too, are the subject of the course.

Learning Objectives

1. In this course, students will understand a diversity of historical struggles which have been inflected with religious violence. Students will also examine the possibilities for peace-building. This more basic understanding will primarily be demonstrated through class discussion.
2. Students will gain empathy for practices and cultures not their own by internalizing the perspective of others, even if they are horrific, violent, or foreign. This is a precondition of #1 above and should also be demonstrated through class discussion and basic analysis in papers.
3. Students will critically analyze forms of religious violence, their definitions, the ways in which such violence is practiced, and the intersection of religious violence with political, cultural, ethnic, and historic aspirations. This more complex form of thinking should be demonstrated in critical writing projects.
4. Students will creatively assimilate class material and material from outside the course to cultivate an original thesis on religious violence or peace-building.

Honor Code

This course requires original work from each student. No work is to be plagiarized or copied in any way, and potential violations will be referred to the academic integrity committee. Students found guilty of academic misconduct will automatically fail the course.

In order to eliminate any possibility of plagiarism, please do not use the internet for research unless you are accessing peer-reviewed journals. Do not cut-and-paste, use Wikipedia or blogs, or cite from anything other than journals for your papers. The only internet site which is permissible as a source is the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. All other sites, unless accessed through our library, are unacceptable. As always, we are here to help if you have any questions.

Class Sessions

The class will meet each Tuesday and Thursday from 1:30 to 2:55 pm. The class will be conducted as a seminar where discussion is paramount and encouraged. The professor will occasionally lecture, but the professor's primary job is to facilitate discussion and guide students through the material. *Students are expected to come to class prepared and ready to discuss the assigned readings.* These will be the focus of our class sessions together.

This means that students will be in command of their education: the class is as good – or bad – as you make it. Given the nature of some the material in this course, it is inevitable that the professor will have to lecture on topics that bear on the class material. What is paramount, though, is the fact that class sessions are opportunities for you to explore the readings in ways you see fit.

In order to maintain a healthy discussion environment, please refrain from using a cell-phone (in any form) or a laptop in class.

Grading and Course Requirements

20% -- Class participation and attendance. Because the course is modeled as a seminar, your participation is both expected and necessary. At minimum, you are expected to have read the assigned readings for each class at least once and prepared questions of both general and specific interest. Do not be concerned with the *amount* of times you talk: a single incisive comment can often be of greater value for the class than many comments taken together.

15% -- One three page paper due at the beginning of the fourth week of class. Students will write a short paper focusing on an understanding of violence as found in Christopher Hedges and/or religious sources which sacralize violence.

25% -- One 5+-page paper due during the tenth week of class, and focusing primarily on suicide terrorism and sacrifice. The paper does not require outside research, but should take a critical and analytical approach with respect to the course's readings. A paper of this length should be argumentative (i.e., it needs a thesis!).

15% -- A "religious violence hotspot" presentation that should take 20-30 minutes at the beginning of a class session. Students should choose a place where religious violence is currently occurring and present, to the class, the nature of religious violence, its history, and its current effects. The presentation should include visual media, including, but not limited to, a Powerpoint Presentation, videos, newspaper clippings, etc. The purpose of such presentations is to acquaint the class with events currently shaping our world. Contemporary geographical hotspots may include:

- Syria
- Iraq
- Yemen
- Bangladesh
- India
- Central African Republic

- Boko Haram
- ISIS
- Egypt
- Russia

25% -- A final paper which should take on a creative thesis vis-à-vis the topics addressed in the course. The paper should maintain high standards for scholarship and analysis, but should also mount a constructive thesis regarding some aspect of the course. The paper is due during Finals Week.

Students will be graded based on their understanding of the material, their critical engagement with it, and the clarity and coherence of their paper, as well as improvement relative to previous papers. Students are encouraged to use secondary sources (**not** from the internet!) to facilitate their understanding of the texts. What is of primary interest is your use of the text, understanding of its key concepts and ideas, and critical analysis of those concepts and ideas. We will discuss these criteria as the class progresses.

Books for Purchase

City of Sacrifice: The Aztec Empire and the Role of Violence in Civilization, David Carrasco (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999). ISBN: 978-0807046432.

War is a Force that Gives us Meaning, Christopher Hedges (New York: Anchor Books, 2003). ISBN: 1-4000-3463-9

Princeton Readings in Religion and Violence, eds., Mark Juergensmeyer and Margo Kitts (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011). ISBN: 978-0691129136.

Talking to the Enemy: Religion, Brotherhood, and the (Un)Making of Terrorists, Scotta Atran (New York: Harper Collins, 2010). ISBN: 978-0061344909

The Myth of Religious Violence, William T. Cavanaugh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). ISBN: 978-0195385045

****There is also a required coursepack for purchase at the bookstore****

Miscellany

- 1) This may sound rotten, but Dr. Simpson does not befriend students on Facebook while they are still students. This allows a measure of privacy for us both.
- 2) I am always happy to help you with your writing or ability to understand an assignment. Please come see me at our office hours or arrange a way to meet up if you are having any trouble. Copies of essay assignments will also be submitted to the USAO Writing Center in Nash Library, so please use that resource as well.
- 3) Though the course schedule does not show it, I am always willing to work at your pace if you are significantly engaged with material. The syllabus can always be changed to meet your goals.

Course Schedule

Week 1 – Introductions and the Role of Violence

Tuesday, August 23: Introductions to the class and one another

Thursday, August 25: Wars and Nations

Reading: Christopher Hedges, *War is a Force that Gives us Meaning*, pgs. 1-61

Week 2 – Why War?

Tuesday, August 30: Justifications of War

Reading: Christopher Hedges, *War is a Force that Gives us Meaning*, pgs. 62-121

Thursday, September 1: Some Explanations...

Reading: Christopher Hedges, *War is a Force that Gives us Meaning*, pgs. 122-185

Recommended Viewing: Akira Kurosawa, *Rashomon* (I will have it available for checkout)

Week 3 – Ancient Violence: Critical Texts

Tuesday, September 6: Violence in the West

Reading: *Princeton Readings in Religion and Violence*, Chs. 5, 6, and 7

Recommended Reading: *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence*, Chs. 14 and 15
(coursepack)

Thursday, September 8: Violence in the East

Reading: *Princeton Readings in Religion and Violence*, Chs. 1-4

Week 4 – Contemporary Violence: Terrorism

Tuesday, September 13: Case Studies

Reading: Chs. 3, 8, 9, and 10 of *Talking to the Enemy*, Scott Atran

****First Paper Due****

Thursday, September 15: Al-Qaeda and Madrid

Reading: Chs. 7 and 11-13 of *Talking to the Enemy*

Week 5 – Terrorism, Continued

Tuesday, September 20: A Framework of Analysis

Reading: Chs. 17 and 18 of *Talking to the Enemy* and listen to a podcast of Scott Atran at:
<http://www.onbeing.org/program/demonstrations-hopes-and-dreams/84>

Thursday, September 22: Any Way Out?

Reading: Chs. 19, 21, and 23 of *Talking to the Enemy*

Week 6 – Classic Forms of Religious Violence: Terrorism and Sacrifice

Tuesday, September 27: Apocalyptic Violence: In class we will watch and discuss *Time of Favor* and *Paradise Now* (propaganda films on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict)

Recommended Reading: *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence*, Ch. 33

Thursday, September 29: Ritual Sacrifice

Reading: *Princeton Readings in Religion and Violence*, Chs. 19 and 22; *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence*, Ch. 13 (coursepack)

Week 7 – Interpretive Methods: Sacrifice, Theoretical and Human

Tuesday, October 4: Sacrifice: Classical Perspectives

Reading: *Princeton Readings in Religion and Violence*, Ch. 15; Selections from *The Girard Reader* (coursepack); *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence*, Ch. 11 (coursepack)

Thursday, October 6: The Geography of Sacrifice: The Aztec Conception of Place
Reading: *City of Sacrifice*, Ch. 2 (we will also refer to Ch. 1)

Week 8 – Sacrifice Further Explored: The Aztecs

Tuesday, October 11: The Nature of the Divine and Initiation to Human Sacrifice
Reading: *City of Sacrifice*, Ch. 4

Thursday, October 13: Sacrifice and Power (and the consumption of human flesh...)
Reading: *City of Sacrifice*, Ch. 5

Week 9 – The Gods must be Fed: The Aztecs, Continued

Tuesday, October 18: Had Enough Already? Self-Consumption and the Sacrifice of Women
Reading: *City of Sacrifice*, Chs. 6 and 7

Thursday, October 20: **No Class. Fall Break.**

Week 10 – The Invention of Religion and Religious Violence

Tuesday, October 25: The Myth (?) of Religious Violence
Reading: William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, Ch. 1

****Second Paper Due****

Thursday, October 27: The Myth (?) of Religion
Reading: William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, Ch. 2 (I will cut this down)

Week 11 – Problematizing Religious Violence

Tuesday, November 1: Wars of Religion
Reading: William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, Ch. 3 (I will cut this down)

Thursday, November 3: How a Myth Becomes Real
Reading: William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, Ch. 4

Week 12 – Women, Religion, and the Prospects for Peace

Tuesday, November 8: Feminist Peace-Building as a Collective Process
Reading: Chapters 3 and 6 from *Women, Religion, and Peacebuilding* (in coursepack); we will also refer to the introduction in our discussion

Thursday, November 10: The Particular Challenge of Peace in Islam
Reading: Chapters 3 and 6 from *Women, Religion, and Peacebuilding* (in coursepack)

Week 13 – Religion and Peace: The Lives of Peacemakers

Tuesday, November 15: Exploring the Spiritual Lives of those in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
Reading: Chapters 1 and 2 of *Bridges Across an Impossible Divide* (in coursepack)

Thursday, November 17: Crossing Boundaries, Both Political and Spiritual
Reading: Chapters 3 and 6 of *Bridges Across an Impossible Divide* (in coursepack)

Week 14 – A Bit of Rest

Tuesday, November 22: **Film and Discussion:** *The Kite Runner*

Thursday, November 24: **No class – Thanksgiving!**

Week 15 – Conclusions

Tuesday, November 29: Final Remarks

Thursday, December 1: **Final Paper Due at Noon** – Have a Wonderful Christmas!

Annotated Bibliography

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Eisen, Robert. *The Peace and Violence of Judaism: From the Bible to Modern Zionism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

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The Legitimization of Violence. Ed., David Apter. New York: New York University Press, 1997.

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