

Rel 302: Religion and Cultural Conflict (Fall 2016)

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Office Hours Wed. 1-4 and by appointment.



(image by Brian Stauffer)

Description

The power of religion to encourage violence and create conflict is well-known. The power of religion to create peace and harmony is also well-known. Each of these statements represents how much of the world views "religion." In this course we will explore some of the specific reasons that religions have the ability to both encourage violence and create peace.

The study of religion and cultural conflict, because it crosses numerous disciplinary boundaries, will train you do the following:

- Read carefully, speak clearly, think critically, or write persuasively about cultures and cultural works/artifacts
- Identify and analyze how beliefs, values, languages, theories, or laws shape cultures and cultural works and artifacts.
- Engage a variety of ideas and worldviews critically by formulating reflective and informed moral, ethical, or aesthetic evaluations of cultures and cultural works/artifacts
- Identify and explain various components of a culture that is distinct from those found within the United States.
- Analyze how cultural similarities and differences are negotiated in ways that help shape the modern world.

Requirements and Assessments

This course places an emphasis on developing your competence in written and oral communication in ways that are distinctive to Religious Studies and, by extension, ways that will be professionally useful to you in the longer term. Additionally, over the course of the semester we will strengthen your ability to develop and apply a theoretically-based hypothesis and on your ability carry out the kinds of research appropriate for your specific project.

Short Essay 1: 10%

Explain Appleby's theory of religious violence with reference to one example from the "Cultures of Violence" section of Mark Jurgensmeyer's book *Terror in the Mind of God* (PDF on D2L). 750 words + a copy of the notes used to prepare the essay. Guidelines will be given in advance.

Short Essay 2: 20%

Explain Chidester's theoretical approach to Jonestown and apply it to a different example (TBD). 1000 words + a copy of the notes used to prepare the essay. Guidelines will be given in advance.

Pop-Quizzes: 15%

We will begin most classes with approximately 10 minutes of time for you to write down your answers to the study questions. The answers must be written in-class and not before class. Occasionally I will collect the answers and grade them as a pop quiz. You may use notes for the quizzes but not the book. Quizzes cannot be made up but the lowest grade will be dropped.

Rewrites

You may rewrite any or all of the written assignments for this class within two weeks of when the essay is returned. The final grade for the assignment will be the average of the two.

Final Essay: 20%

Using the theoretical tools developed over the course of the semester, consider a specific example of conflict. Examine the conflict in a way that attends to the possibilities of both further conflict and peace that in some way or other involve “religion.” Make a set of recommendations for useful ways forward or explain why there are not any useful ways forward. 1500 words + abstract and end-of-semester oral presentation.

Research Notebook (20%)

Details will be provided.

Participation and Preparedness (15%)

Includes general class participation and preparedness as well as the following:

- 1-2x Conversation coordinator
- Oral Presentation and Feedback 1 (Partner)
- Oral Presentation and Feedback 2 (Small Group)
- Oral Presentation and Feedback 3 (Class)

I will provide a mid-term participation and preparedness grade.

Texts for Purchase

The Ambivalence of the Sacred by R. Scott Appleby (Rowman and Littlefield 1999). ISBN-13: 978-0847685554. ISBN-10: 0847685551

Salvation and Suicide: An Interpretation of Jim Jones, The Peoples Temple, and Jonestown by David Chidester (Indiana University Press, revised edition, 2003) ISBN-13: 978-0253216328
ISBN-10: 025321632X

Policies

Written Assignments

If you are not able to turn in on time due to particularly extenuating circumstances, some flexibility may be possible. If this is the case, you must have asked and received permission from me no later than the day before the assignment is due. Without permission, a grade penalty will be assigned at my discretion or I may not allow you to submit.

Required Articles

If I do not provide photocopies of an assigned reading not in one of our books, you must print out the reading (you will find PDF versions on our D2L site) and bring to class at a magnification you can actually read. You may NOT view the readings on a smart phone in class.

Smart Phones

Please do not use a smart phone in class without permission. Tablets or laptops for the purposes of note-taking are fine, with permission.

Assignments

Assignments will change. Be sure to check D2L before each assignment.

Absences

Everyone is automatically entitled to two unexcused absences. Anything beyond this should be discussed with me and will impact your final grade. Your presence and participation matter.

Learning Accommodations

<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/ADA/rightsADAPolicyinfo.pdf>

<http://www4.uwsp.edu/special/disability/>

Mutual Respect

<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/rightsCommBillRights.pdf>

Academic Misconduct

<http://library.uwsp.edu/guides/vrd/plagiarism.htm>

<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/SRR-2010/rightsChap14.pdf>

Percentage to Letter Grade Conversion:

A: 94-100, A-: 90-93, B+: 87-89, B: 83-86, B-: 80-82, C+: 77-79, C: 73-76. C-: 70-72, D+: 67-69, D: 65-66, F: 64 or lower

Schedule of Assignments

Beginning

Week 1

- Tuesday, Sept. 6: Beginning
- Thursday, Sept. 8: Read: *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (henceforth Appleby): 1-21
 - Study Questions: What is Appleby's main argument? What are the important terms that he makes sure to define as part of his argument?
 - Upload *About Me* document to *About Me* D2L dropbox.

Unit 1: "Coming to Terms with Religion"

Week 2

- Tuesday, Sept. 13: Read: "The Growing End of An Argument" (Appleby 25-56)
 - Study Questions: What does Appleby say about ambivalence and argument as they relate to religion? What do you think he means by saying on p. 56 that "...there is no 'Islam,' no 'Christianity,' no 'Buddhism' – only Muslims, Christians, and Buddhists..."?
- Thursday, Sept. 15: Read: "Religion's Violent Accomplices" (Appleby 57-80)
 - Study Questions: What does Appleby say about the relationship of ethnic identity and religion and how does what he argues about this connect to his broader argument in the book?

Week 3

- Tuesday, Sept. 20: Read: "Violence as a Sacred Duty: Patterns of Religious Extremism" (Appleby 81-104)
 - Study Questions: How does Appleby define fundamentalism? Also, come to class ready to share your reactions to the examples used.
- Thursday, Sept. 22: Read: "Violence as a Sacred Duty: Patterns of Religious Extremism" (Appleby 104-120)
 - Study Questions: On p. 104 Appleby says that "By any reckoning, Islam produces more contemporary fundamentalist movements than any other great religious tradition." On the same page, he says "Irresponsible, of course, are construals of Islamic fundamentalism that suggest that Islam is inherently intolerant and that religious extremism represents its true face." How do you understand the relationship between these two sentences? How is "religious nationalism" different than "extremist fundamentalism"?
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Week 4

- Tuesday, Sept. 27: Arguments and Claims
 - Assignment TBD
- Thursday, Sept. 29
 - **Short Essay 1 due.** In-class partner exercise. Bring print-out of essay to class along with digital or printed copy of notes and other materials used to write essay. Peer conferences and individual check-ins.

Week 5

- Tuesday, Oct. 4: Read: *Salvation and Suicide: An Interpretation of Jim Jones, the Peoples Temple, and Jonestown* by David Chidester (henceforth Chidester): i-xvii, 1-12
 - Study questions: What is Chidester's overall argument? What place do "symbols" have in his argument?
- Thursday, Oct. 6: Read: Chidester: 13-51

Week 6*

- Tuesday, Oct. 11: Read: Chidester: 51-79
- Thursday, Oct. 13: Read: Chidester: 79-129

Week 7*

- Tuesday, Oct. 18: Read: Chidester: 129-160
- **Thursday, Oct. 20*: TBD**

Week 8

- Tuesday, Oct. 25: Read: Chidester: 160-169.
- Thursday, Oct. 27
 - **Short Essay 2 due.** Bring printed-out copy of essay to class along with digital or printed copy of notes and other materials used to write essay. Peer conferences and individual check-ins.

Unit 2: Coming to Terms with Religion > The Logic of Religious Peacebuilding**Week 9**

- Tuesday, Nov. 1: Read: Read: "Militants for Peace" (Appleby 121-143)
- Thursday, Nov. 3: "Militants for Peace" (Appleby 143-165), begin "Reconciliation and the Politics of Forgiveness"

Week 10

- Tuesday, Nov. 8: Read: "Reconciliation and the Politics of Forgiveness" (Appleby 167-206)
- Thursday, Nov. 10: Read: "Religion and Conflict Transformation" (Appleby 207-244)

Week 11:

- Tuesday, Nov. 15: Read: "The Promise of Internal Pluralism: Human Rights and Religious Mission" (Appleby 245-280)
- Thursday, Nov. 17: Documentary film about religious peace-building. Discussion of topic choices.

Unit 3: Application and Research Methods**Week 12**

- Tuesday, Nov. 22: Focus on Scholarly Sources: the encyclopedia article. Discussion of topic choices. Workshop on professional development.
- Thursday, Nov. 24: THANKSGIVING

Week 13

- Tuesday, Nov. 29
 - Assignment: Come to class with the following:
 - A finalized general topic (a specific conflict)
 - one scholarly encyclopedia article in printed out or digital form
 - notes on the article.
- Thursday, Dec. 1: Primary and Secondary, Scholarly and Non-Scholarly
 - Assignment: TBD.

Week 14

- Tuesday, Dec. 6:
 - Assignment: Bring your in-progress digital or print copy of Research Notebook to class. Details for what needs to be in the notebook will be provided in advance. Preliminary grade given for Research Notebook at this time.
- Thursday, Dec. 8: Read: "Ambivalence as Opportunity: Strategies for Promoting Religious Peacebuilding" (Appleby 281-308)
 - Class Focus TBD.

Week 15

- Tuesday, Dec. 13
 - Student Presentations and Small Writing Groups
- Thursday, Dec. 15
 - Student Presentations and Small Writing Groups
 - Closing Remarks
 - **Research Notebook due.**

Final Essay due during Finals Period.