

## **IR313 – RELIGION AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE**

An introduction to debates about the intersection of religion and violence in politics and international affairs

**Department of International Relations  
University of Southern California  
Spring 2014**

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### **I. Course Description**

This course provides an introduction to complex and unresolved questions about the intersection of religion and violent conflicts. Does “religion” tend to promote or intensify conflicts? Are religious differences more likely than others to lead to violence? Are some religious traditions more prone to conflicts than others? Is it ever possible to separate religious variables in armed struggles from purely material or “secular” ones, such as economic grievances and sheer power objectives? And what are some of the social and political uses of discourse *about* “sacred” versus “secular” violence”? Each week we will explore the nexus of religion and conflict from different analytical as well as normative perspectives. We will: 1) consider different accounts of the sources and properties of religious conflicts; 2) wrestle with debates about religiously motivated terrorism and the rise of fundamentalisms around the world (both highly contested terms); 3) discuss some of the challenges of religion for global governance and civil society; 4) critically examine the social construction of religion as a source of dangerous/dissident identity uniquely prone to violence; and 5) consider the potential positive role of religions as a force for conflict resolution, tolerance, human rights, and peacemaking.

### **II. Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this course you will have gained a deeper understanding of the contours of important debates about the role of religion in international affairs and political life. You will have acquired critical tools for evaluating rival theories, rhetoric, and evidence about religious conflicts. You will also have developed skills in listening, reflection, writing, and dialogue that will help you as you engage with other fields of study, as well as with practical problems confronting persons of all beliefs or none in a world of all too frequent violence toward the Other.

### **III. Required Texts**

This is a reading intensive course. I have compiled and posted on Blackboard chapters and articles in PDF format from a variety of disciplines, including political science, international relations theory, anthropology, and the sociology of religion. It is your

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responsibility to print these readings out and bring them with you to class for discussion. In addition, we will read the following book (which you are responsible to purchase):

Cavanaugh, William, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Note: it is vitally important that you come to class each week prepared to engage in thoughtful discussion about the assigned readings. This includes supporting your ideas and arguments with evidence and illustrations from the assigned texts. I am therefore requiring that you either bring: 1) printed versions of all readings with you to class, preferably copiously marked; or 2) typed or written notes based on your reading. You might be asked to produce one of these at any time as part of your participation grade.

### IV. Grading Scale and Distribution

The grading scale for this course is as follows: A (90-100); B (80-89); C (70-79); D (60-69); F (< 60). You will be assessed based on the following distribution of points:

- 10%      Class Attendance (6%) and Participation (4%): You are expected to attend all classes and to actively contribute to discussions through thoughtful dialogue and respectful debate with others based upon your careful reading of all assigned texts. Attendance will be taken at the start of each class. It is your responsibility to make sure you have signed the sign-in sheet once it has been announced that it is being circulated. *Note: There are no excused absences. Any missed sign-in will result in an automatic one percent reduction from your A&P grade.*
- 10%      Quizzes: There will be periodic quizzes based upon the assigned readings. They should not be difficult *if you have done the reading.*
- 20%      Midterm Examination: There will be a midterm exam (March 26) that will be comprehensive of the ideas, key terms, and literature covered up to that point in the course. I will say more about what you can expect on the midterm later in the semester.
- 20%      Final Examination: There will be a final exam (May 7) that will be comprehensive of the ideas, key terms, and literature covered in this course. I will say more about what you can expect on the final exam later in the semester.
- 40%      Research Paper: You will submit a 10-page research paper addressing one of the major questions or themes of this course. The paper is due date on the last day of the class before final exams (April 30). There will be a letter grade reduction for each day a paper is late. I will give you more details about the paper later in the semester.

## V. USC Statement on Disabilities

Students requesting academic accommodations based on disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early as possible. DSP is in STU 301. The DSP phone number is 213-740-0776.

## VI. Academic Integrity

Your work on all written assignments, both exams and papers, should be your own and original for this course. You should not use the words or ideas of others without giving full credit to them using proper citation methods, and you should not self-plagiarize, i.e., re-cycle your own work in whole or in part from another class. If you have any questions about how and when to cite other peoples' work you should come and speak with me after reviewing the USC student handbook (on the web at: <http://dornsife.usc.edu/usc-policies/#plagiarism>). Students found to be copying or plagiarizing the work of others on any assignment, or turning in papers or parts of papers they have submitted elsewhere, will receive an automatic failing grade. **You will submit your final paper to Turnitin on Blackboard.**

Academic integrity means more, however, than simply not cheating or plagiarizing. It also means fulfilling assignments with the care and rigor of a serious scholar, showing basic respect and courtesy to others both in and out of the classroom (including being in class on time), and being honest and forthright in dialogue. While not all of these virtues are directly subject to grading, they will serve you well in this class and in your academic and professional lives in general.

## VII. No Electronic Devices Policy

This course depends upon your active participation as an attentive listener and generous conversation partner with others. Texting devices, internet, and social media do violence to serious academic conversations. They are not permitted in class at any time. Students observed using phones or texting devices during class will be marked absent. Computers should be used as reading devices for assigned readings and for note-taking during designated lecture times only. *They should be kept closed at all other times.*

## VIII. Course Outline and Weekly Reading Assignments

*Note: This reading list is subject to change as the course progresses.* I will let you know in class and/or by email if any readings are dropped or added. Texts marked with stars (\*) are required and should be read carefully in advance of the class period for which they are assigned. I have listed a few other works you may find helpful and that I might discuss in lectures. Superscript numerals indicate the course days (first or second) of each week on which we will discuss the required texts. Normally but not always you will have a heavier reading load on the first class day of the week. The average reading load

per week this semester is 88 pages (although the number of *words* per page will obviously vary depending on the size of the book, and some very short but demanding texts will require more of your time than others).

**Wk. 1 (January 13 and 15): Does Religion Necessarily Lead to Violence?: The Charges of the New Atheists (100 pages)**

<sup>1</sup>\*Hitchens, Christopher, “Ch.1: Putting it Mildly,” and “Ch.2: Religion Kills” in *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (Australia: Allen & Unwin, 2007), pp.1-36.

<sup>2</sup>\*Hitchens, Peter, “Introduction,” “Ch.1: The Generation Who Were Too Clever to Believe,” “Ch.3: The Seeds of Atheism,” “Ch.7: Rediscovering Faith” in *The Rage Against God: How Atheism Led Me to Faith* (New York: Zondervan, 2010), pp.9-31, 41-53, 99-115, 127-141.

Video: “Christopher Hitchens and Peter Hitchens: Brothers Debate God and War,” on the web at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1XHv7IQCg-w>

Video: “Christopher Hitchens vs. Tony Blair: Is Religion a Force for Good?,” on the web at: <http://vimeo.com/28847925>

**Wk. 2 (January 22): The Sources of Religious Conflict: Endogenous Stories, Part I: Exclusive Monotheism and Intolerance Toward the Other (108 pages)**

<sup>1</sup>\*The Book of Exodus (NJPS) pp.85-151.

<sup>1</sup>\*The Book of Joshua, Chapters 1-12 (NJPS) pp.337-356.

<sup>1</sup>\*Jenkins, Philip, *Laying Down the Sword: Why We Can't Ignore the Bible's Violent Verses* (New York: HarperOne, 2011), pp.167-252.

Schwartz, Regina, “Ch.1: Inventing Identity,” in *The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997), pp.15-38.

Assman, Jan, “Ch.6: No God but God: Exclusive Monotheism and the Language of Violence,” in *Of God and Gods: Egypt, Israel, and the Rise of Monotheism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008).

**Wk. 3 (January 27 and 29): The Sources of Religious Conflict: Endogenous Stories, Part II: Moral Dualism and Apocalypticism (79 pages)**

<sup>1</sup>\*Bromley, David, “Ch.1: Constructing Apocalypticism: Social and Cultural Elements of Radical Organization,” in *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements*, eds. Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (London: Routledge, 1997), pp.31-47.

<sup>1</sup>\*Juergensmeyer, Mark, “Ch.1: Terror and God,” “Ch.7: Theater of Terror,” and Ch.8: Cosmic War,” in *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), pp.3-19, 121-167.

<sup>2</sup>\*Jones, James, “Ch.3: Aum Shinrikyo: Violence and Terrorism in Japanese Buddhism,” in *Blood That Cries Out From the Ground: The Psychology of Religious Terrorism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.71-88.

<sup>2</sup>\*Film: “Jonestone: The Life and Death of Peoples Temple” (2006) directed by Stanley Nelson (86 minutes).

**Wk. 4 (February 3 and 5): The Sources of Religious Conflict: Endogenous Stories, Part III: Fundamentalism in Conflict With Modernity (90 pages)**

<sup>1-2</sup>\*Almond, Gabriel, R. Scott Appleby, and Emmanuel Sivan, “Introduction” and “Ch.1: The Enclave Culture” in *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalisms Around the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp.1-46, 46-90.

Armstrong, Karen, “Ch.6: Fundamentals (1900-1925),” in *The Battle for God* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), pp.167-199.

Farley, Edward, “Fundamentalism,” in *Cross Currents*, Vol.55, No.3 (Fall 2005).

Martin, Marty and R. Scott Appleby, “Ch.15: Conclusion: An Interim Report on a Hypothetical Family,” in *Fundamentalisms Observed: The Fundamentalism Project, Vol.1*, eds. Martin Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

**Wk. 5 (February 10 and 12): Or is Religion a Mask for Something Else?: Exogenous/Reductive Stories: Evolutionary, Psychological, and Economic Theories (68 pages)**

<sup>1</sup>\*Darwin, Charles, “Ch.2: Mental Powers,” in *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex, Volume 1* (London: John Murray, 1871), pp.34-69.

<sup>1</sup>\*Nietzsche, Friedrich, excerpts from *Beyond Good and Evil* in *On the Genealogy of Morals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp.145-157.

<sup>2</sup>\*Marx, Karl, “Part IV: Criticism of Religion” in *Marx on Religion*, ed. John Raines (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), pp.167-187.

Boyer, Pascal, “Ch.8: Why Doctrines, Exclusion and Violence?” in *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought* (New York: Basic Books: 2001), pp.265-297.

Berman, Eli, *Radical, Religious, and Violent: The New Economics of Terrorism* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009).

**Wk. 6 (February 19): Does Religion Create Violence or Does Violence Create Religion? Reversing the Question: Scapegoats, Totems, and Forging Group Identities (66 pages)**

<sup>1</sup>\*Girard, René, “Ch. 1: Mimesis and Violence,” “Ch. 2: The Surrogate Victim,” and “Ch.6: Sacrifice as Sacral Violence and Substitution,” in *The Girard Reader* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2002), pp.9-29, 69-93.

Taylor, Charles, “Notes on the Sources of Violence: Perennial and Modern,” in *Beyond Violence*, ed. James Heft, *Beyond Violence: Religious Sources of Social Transformation in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004).

Davis, Natalie Zeemon, “The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth-Century France,” *Past and Present*, Vol.59, No.1 (1973).

**Wk. 7 (February 24 and 26): Are there “Secular” Religions?: Flag Religion (92 pages)**

<sup>1</sup>\*Bellah, Robert, “Civil Religion in America,” *Daedalus*, Vol.134, No.4 (Fall 2005, reprinted from 1967), pp.40-55.

<sup>2</sup>\*Marvin, Carolyn and David Ingle, “Ch.1: Introduction,” “Ch.2: That Old Flag Magic,” “Ch.4: The Totem Myth,” and “Ch.11: Epilogue,” in *Blood Sacrifice and the Nation: Totem Rituals and the American Flag* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp.1-40, 63-97, 312-315.

<sup>2</sup>\*Video: “Beyonce: ‘God Bless The USA’: Macys 4th of July 2011” (2:48 minutes) on the web at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XnCNHFg9y1Q>

Gray, John, “Ch.1: The Death of Utopia,” in *Black Mass: Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007).

Lincoln, Bruce, “Postscript: On Abu Ghraib and Some Related Matters,” in *Religion, Empire and Torture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

**Wk. 8 (March 3 and 5): Does “Religion” Exist?: Critical Perspectives on the Social Construction of “Religious Violence” (120 pages)**

<sup>1-2</sup>\*Cavanaugh, William, “Introduction,” “Ch.1: The Anatomy of the Myth,” and “Ch.2: The Invention of Religion,” in *The Myth of Religious Violence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp.3-123.

King, Richard, “Ch.11: The Association of ‘Religion’ with Violence: Reflections on a Modern Trope,” in *Religion and Violence in South Asia: Theory and Practice*, eds. John Hinnells and Richard King (London: Routledge, 2006).

Gottschalk, Peter, “Ch.9: A Categorical Difference: Communal Identity in British Epistemologies,” in *Religion and Violence in South Asia*.

**Wk. 9 (March 10 and 12): Post-Secular Views of State-Making (108 pages)**

<sup>1-2</sup>\*Cavanaugh, William, “Ch.3: The Creation Myth of the Wars of Religion,” and “Ch.4: The Uses of the Myth,” in *The Myth of Religious Violence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp.123-231.

Philpott, Daniel, “The Religious Roots of Modern International Relations,” in *World Politics*, Vol.52 (2000).

Smith, Anthony, “The Sacred Dimension of Nationalism,” in *Millennium*, Vol.29, No.3 (2000).

**MARCH 17-22: SPRING RECESS: NO CLASSES**

**Wk. 10 (March 24 and 26): Review and Midterm**

**Wk. 11 (March 31 and April 2): Religion and the Rwandan Genocide: A Case Study (98 pages)**

<sup>1</sup>\*Longman, Timothy, “Ch.1: Introduction” in *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp.3-33.

<sup>1</sup>\*Gourevitch, Philip, *We Wish To Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998), pp.25-43.

<sup>2</sup>\*Lacey, Marc, “Since '94 Horror, Rwandans Turn Toward Islam,” *New York Times*, April 7, 2004, online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/04/07/world/since-94-horror-rwandans-turn-toward-islam.html>

<sup>2</sup>\*Radner, Ephraim, “Ch.1: Religious Violence and Christian Blasphemy” in *A Brutal Unity: The Spiritual Politics of the Christian Church* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2012), pp.19-69.

**Wk. 12 (April 7 and 9): Finding Moral Resources Within the Traditions, Part I: Human Rights and the Violence of the Nation-State (100 pages)**

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<sup>1</sup>\*Eagleton, Terry, *Reason, Faith, and Revolution: Reflections on the God Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), pp.1-47.

<sup>2</sup>\*Cavanaugh, William, “Introduction” and “Ch.1: The Myth of the State as Savior,” in *Theopolitical Imagination* (London: T&T Clark, 2002), pp.1-53.

Appleby, R. Scott, “Ch.8: Ambivalence as Opportunity,” in *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), pp.281-309.

### **Wk. 13 (April 14 and 16): Finding Moral Resources Within the Traditions, Part II: Gender, Religion, and Violence (113 pages)**

<sup>1</sup>\*Ahmed, Leila, “Women and the Rise of Islam,” in *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), pp.177-198.

<sup>1</sup>\*Stark, Rodney, “Reconstructing the Rise of Christianity: The Role of Women,” *Sociology of Religion*, Vol.56, No.56 (Autumn 1995), pp.229-244.

<sup>2</sup>\* \_\_\_\_\_, “Ch.3: God’s Enemies: Explaining the European Witch Hunts,” in *For the Glory of God: How Monotheism Led to Reformations, Science, Witch-Hunts, and the End of Slavery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), pp.201-266, 276-288.

### **Wk. 14 (April 21 and 23): What Next?: Postmodern Theology in a “Secular” Age (30 pages)**

<sup>1</sup>\*Taylor, Charles, “Ch.14: Religion Today,” in *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp.505-535.

<sup>2</sup>\*Audio: “On Being with Krista Tippett: Alain de Botton: A School of Life for Atheists,” (51 minutes) National Public Radio, October 10, 2013, on the web at: <http://www.onbeing.org/program/alain-de-botton-school-life-atheists/4821>

<sup>2</sup>\*Video: “Peter Rollins Lecture at Fuller Seminary and the Brehm Center, October 21, 2011,” (1 hour 40 minutes) on the web at: <http://vimeo.com/34676925>

### **Wk. 15 (April 28 and 30): TBA**

**FINAL EXAM: WEDNESDAY, MAY 7, 4:30-6:30 PM**