

## CONF 722: RELIGION, CONFLICT, AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

FALL TERM 2010

INSTRUCTOR: RICHARD RUBENSTEIN

### SYLLABUS AND SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

#### General matters

This course is offered on Mondays at 4:30-7:10 in Room 333A of the Truland Building. The **instructor** can be reached via telephone at 703-993-1307 or 703-400-7674 (cell) or via email at [rrubens@gmue.edu](mailto:rrubens@gmue.edu). His office is Room 646 Truland, and office hours are by appointment. He is available to discuss either course-related matters or other matters of interest to students.

The **overall purpose** of the course is to explore the relationship of religion to conflict and conflict resolution. We will use historical and contemporary materials to shed light on the social, psychological, and political sources of religious conflicts, the connections between these sources and religious beliefs and practices, and the possibilities of resolving conflicts involving religion non-violently. In the course of our studies, we will do research, practice making oral and written presentations, and write research papers exploring some aspect of the topic in depth.

With regard to content, the **structure** of the course is as follows: After a general overview, we begin by investigating communal conflicts fought under the banner of religion. We then focus on conflicts in which doctrinal differences play an important role, and then discuss how to relate doctrinal disputes to social factors in conflict. After discussing theories that help explain the relationship of religious violence to politics and the state, we examine the relationship between religion and empire. Finally, we explore theories and practices that illustrate the role that religious beliefs and practices play or might play in conflict resolution.

The **methods** used to teach this course will be those of a graduate seminar, including lectures, discussions, and media presentations. Students are expected to attend each class thoroughly prepared to discuss the assigned readings. **Grades** will be based on a take-home midterm exam (25% each), a preliminary research paper (25%), and a final research paper (50%). Doctoral students will also be expected to present their research findings to the class. Please see the schedule below for relevant dates and deadlines.

#### **Honor Code and plagiarism:**

All George Mason University students have agreed to abide by the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code. You can find a copy of the Honor Code

at [academicintegrity.gmu.edu](http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu). All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee for review. With specific regards to plagiarism, three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. If you have questions about when the contributions of others to your work must be acknowledged and appropriate ways to cite those contributions, please talk with the professor.

ICAR requires that all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit a student's work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. ICAR's policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace or substitute for it.

### **Required and recommended readings**

#### **REQUIRED BOOKS** (all in Arlington Campus bookstore):

John Dominic Crossan, *GOD AND EMPIRE: JESUS AGAINST ROME, THEN AND NOW*. HarperOne, 2008. ISBN **10**: 006085831

Mark Juergensmeyer, *TERROR IN THE MIND OF GOD: THE GLOBAL RISE OF RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE*. U. of California Press, 2003, 3d Ed. ISBN **10**: 0520240111

Sudhir Kakar, *THE COLORS OF VIOLENCE: CULTURAL IDENTITIES, RELIGION, AND CONFLICT*. U. of Chicago Press, 1997, ISBN **10**: 0226422852

Michael Kirwan, *DISCOVERING GIRARD*. Cowley Books, 2007. ISBN **10**: 1561012297

Richard E. Rubenstein, *WHEN JESUS BECAME GOD*. Harcourt, 1999. ISBN **10**: 0-15-601315-0

#### **ASSIGNED ARTICLES AND CHAPTERS** (sources noted below):

Karen Armstrong, "The Role of Religion in Today's Conflict" (PDF)

Reza Aslan, selections from *NO GOD BUT GOD: THE ORIGINS, EVOLUTION, AND FUTURE OF ISLAM*. Random House, 2006. ISBN **10**: 0-8129-7189-2

Hector Avalo, "A New Theory of Religious Violence," from FIGHTING WORDS: THE ORIGINS OF RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE (Prometheus Books, 2005) (PDF)

Robert N. Bellah, "Biblical Religion and Civil Religion in America." *Dædalus, Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, Winter 1967, Vol. 96, No. 1, pp. 1-21. (JSTOR)

N.J. Demerath and Karen S. Straight, "Religion, Politics, and the State: Cross-Cultural Observations." *Cross Currents*, Spring 1997, 47:1. [www.aril.org/Demerath.htm](http://www.aril.org/Demerath.htm).

Richard Falk, "The Religious Foundations of Humane Global Governance," from RELIGION AND HUMANE GLOBAL GOVERNANCE (Palgrave, 2001)

Johan Galtung, "Religions Hard and Soft." *Cross Currents*, Winter 1997-98, 47:4. [www.crosscurrents.org](http://www.crosscurrents.org)

Ronald Inglehart and Pippi Norris, "The True Clash of Civilizations," *Foreign Policy* (March-April 2003) (PDF)

Benjamin J. Kaplan, "One Faith, One Law, One King," from DIVIDED BY FAITH: RELIGIOUS CONFLICT AND THE PRACTICE OF TOLERATION IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE. Harvard U. Press, 2007 (PDF)

Catherine Madsden, "Notes on God's Violence." *Cross Currents*, Summer 2001, 51:2. [www.crosscurrents.org](http://www.crosscurrents.org)

Richard E. Rubenstein, "Religion and Violence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" (2008) (e-mail).

"The Psycho-Political Causes of Terrorism," in Charles Kegley, ed., THE NEW GLOBAL TERRORISM: CAUSES, CHARACTERISTICS, CONTROLS (Prentice-Hall, 2002) (PDF)

Mary Ann Stenger, "Gadamer's Hermeneutics as a Model for Cross-Cultural Understanding and Truth in Religion," from Thomas Dean, ed., RELIGIOUS PLURALISM AND TRUTH (SUNY Press, 1995) (PDF)

Denny Weaver, "Violence in Christian Theology." *Cross Currents*, Summer 2001, 51:2. [www.crosscurrents.org](http://www.crosscurrents.org)

**RECOMMENDED BOOKS** (all ordered by Arlington bookstore):

R. Scott Appleby, THE AMBIVALENCE OF THE SACRED: RELIGION, VIOLENCE, AND RECONCILIATION. Rowman and Littlefield, 1999. ISBN: **10:** 0847685543

Karen Armstrong, THE BATTLE FOR GOD. Ballantine Books, 2001. ISBN **10:** 0345391691

Marc Gopin, BETWEEN EDEN AND ARMAGEDDON. Oxford University Press, 2002. ISBN 10: 0195157257

HOLY WAR, HOLY PEACE: HOW RELIGION CAN BRING PEACE TO THE MIDDLE EAST. Oxford U. Press, 2005. ISBN 10: 0195181034

Richard A. Horsley, RELIGION AND EMPIRE: PEOPLE, POWER, AND THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT. Fortress Press, 2003. ISBN 10: 0800636317

Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, LEFT BEHIND. Tyndale House Publishers, 1995. ISBN 978-0-8423-2912-5

Richard E. Rubenstein, ARISTOTLE'S CHILDREN. Harcourt, 2003. ISBN 0-15-603009-8

Stuart B. Schwartz, ALL CAN BE SAVED: RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE AND SALVATION IN THE IBERIAN ATLANTIC WORLD. Yale U. Press, 2008. ISBN 10: 0-300-12580-1

Omit Shami, COMMUNALISM, CASTE, AND HINDU NATIONALISM: THE VIOLENCE IN GUJARAT. Cambridge U. Press, 2007. ISBN 10: 0521683696

G.F. Treverton, et al., Exploring Religious Conflict. RAND Corporation, 2005 (PDF)

## **SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND ASSIGNMENTS**

Aug. 30: **Introduction to course.** Read Karen Armstrong, "The Role of Religion in Today's Conflict" and Richard Rubenstein, "Religion and Violence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" (PDFs will be emailed).

Sep. 6: LABOR DAY HOLIDAY. Over Labor Day holiday, read Sudhir Kakar, THE COLORS OF VIOLENCE.

Sep. 13: **Religion and communal conflict:** discuss Sudhir Kakar, THE COLORS OF VIOLENCE, and compare with Ronald Inglehart and Pippi Norris, "The True Clash of Civilizations."

Sep. 20: **Religious doctrines and violence:** read Johan Galtung, "Religions Hard and Soft"; Catherine Madsen, "Notes on God's Violence"; Denny Weaver, "Violence in Christian Theology." ALSO please read the book of Genesis in any bible of your choice.

Sep. 27: **New theories of religion and violence:** read Hector Avalo, "A New Theory of Religious Violence" and Michael Kiwan, DISCOVERING GIRARD.

Oct. 4: **Connecting religious doctrines with social situations:** Read Richard E. Rubenstein, WHEN JESUS BECAME GOD, 1-125

Oct. 12: Complete WHEN JESUS BECAME GOD

Oct. 18: (NOTE HOLIDAY SHIFT OF DAY TO TUESDAY) **Religion, politics, and the state:** Read Benjamin J. Kaplan, "One Law, One Faith, One King"; N.J. Demerath and Karen S. Straight, "Religious Politics and the State: Cross-Cultural Observations"; and Robert N. Bellah, "Biblical Religion and Civil Religion in America." MIDTERM TAKE-HOME EXAM DISTRIBUTED VIA E-MAIL

Oct. 25: SUBMIT TAKE-HOME EXAM VIA E-MAIL. No reading assignment. View film (TBA)

Nov. 1: **Religion and terrorism:** read Mark Juergensmeyer, TERROR IN THE MIND OF GOD, 1-163. INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRELIMINARY RESEARCH PAPER GIVEN VIA E-MAIL

Nov. 8: Complete Juergensmeyer.

Nov. 15: **Religion and empire:** Read Richard Rubenstein, "The Psycho-Political Causes of Religious Terrorism," and Reza Aslan, selections from NO GOD BUT GOD. Start John Dominic Crossan, GOD AND EMPIRE

Nov. 22: Complete Crossan. SUBMIT PRELIMINARY RESEARCH PAPERS VIA E-MAIL

Nov. 29: **Religion and conflict resolution: key theories.** Read Richard Falk, "The Religious Foundations of Humane Global Governance": Mary Ann Stenger, "Gadamer's Hermeneutics"; and Bernard Lonergan, selection TBA.

Dec. 6: **Religion and conflict resolution: key practices.** Examine Marc Gopin's blog, [www.marcgopin.com](http://www.marcgopin.com). Discussion with guest practitioners.

Dec. 16: FINAL RESEARCH PAPERS ARE DUE AT ICAR OFFICE BY 5:00 PM