

**War, Peace, and Religion**  
Political Science W3962y (section 002)  
Spring 2016

Instructor: Jonathan S. Blake

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Office hours: Mon 10-12 & Thurs 12-1

513 MLK Tower, Riverside Church<sup>1</sup>

Undergraduate seminar

Day/Time: Thurs 10:10-12

Location: 711 IAB

**Course Description**

What is the relationship between religion and violence? Does religion cause war? Or does it cause peace? What are the roles of religious beliefs, practices, symbols, institutions, and identities? Could there be no connection whatsoever? In this seminar, we will debate these issues and try to understand the relationship between religion, violence, and peace. We begin by exploring what religion is and looking at the causes of violence generally. Then, in Section II, we delve into the relationships between religion and violence, looking at arguments about the many ways in which religion impacts war and violence. Finally, in Section III, we examine explanations of how religion contributes to peace and conflict resolution.

This is an upper-division political science course, and it assumes some familiarity with central social science methods and concepts. In particular, students should have some basic understanding of theories of war and peace from a comparative politics and/or international relations perspective. However, we will also draw on other social science disciplines to understand religion's role in conflict and its resolution, including sociology, anthropology, psychology, economics, history, and religious studies.

**Course Requirements**

1. Reading and participation (20%): This is a reading intensive seminar. You must come to class having done all required readings and be prepared to discuss them. Please be on time and please do not miss class without a documented excuse.

For each reading, please focus on the author's question, their argument, and the evidence they muster in support of the argument, as well as questions and criticisms you have. Some questions to ask yourself while reading: What are the author's starting assumptions? Are terms clearly defined and used consistently? What is the argument's logic? Is the evidence appropriate for the question and argument? What (hypothetical) evidence would refute the argument?

We will be reading extensively from the following books, which you may wish to purchase: William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*; Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of*

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<sup>1</sup> Getting here can be a bit tricky: Enter Riverside Church at 91 Claremont Ave., walk straight back past the reception desk, and take a left. You'll walk through an open room, and there will be an elevator bank on your left. Take the elevator to the 5th floor. Turn left out of the elevators and walk through the double doors. My office is in the third door on the right (suite 513).

*God*; and Sharon Erickson Nepstad, *Religion and War Resistance in the Plowshares Movement*. They have been ordered at Book Culture (536 W. 112 St.). Required reading is on reserve at Butler Library. Book chapters and articles that are unavailable online (via JStor and other databases) have been scanned and are available on courseworks. In the unlikely event that I change some readings, you'll be notified with plenty of time.

Please bring the readings to class to facilitate discussions and please make sure they are printed, as laptops are not allowed in class (unless you receive my explicit permission).

2. Short presentations (15%): Students are required to make a short (5-10 minute) introductory statement about the reading for one week. Sign up will be in class on January 28. The purpose is to briefly summarize the central argument of the week's reading, examine common themes and points where they disagree, place the reading in conversation with other readings, and raise critiques and questions. This will serve to launch our discussion for the day. Some weeks will have two students, so be sure to coordinate so as to not duplicate your presentation. In the case of two students, each will have five minutes for their presentation.

3. Blog posts (10%): Each week you will be asked to either post a recent news article on an issue related to the class or a comment about one of the stories. The comments (approx. 100-200 words) should be quick: reflections on the story, links to class readings and discussions, questions about purposed causal relations or evidence, or responses in some other way to the story and/or your colleagues' comments. News articles are due every week by Tuesday at noon; comments are due by Wednesday at noon. Late articles or comments will not be given credit. Please come to class having read all the stories and comments.

4. Paper proposal (5%): A proposal for your final paper. The paper can be on any topic you wish that is broadly related to this course. The proposal should include a title, the question you will research, some initial hypotheses, your research design, and potential data sources. The proposal is due the week of February 25 in class (3 pages, double-spaced; please print and bring to class; I will not accept emailed proposals). I will arrange time to meet with all students in small groups to discuss proposals between February 26 and March 4. There will be a penalty of 1/3 of a grade for each day late.

5. Research paper (50%): The final research paper is due on the last day of class, April 28 (approximately 20 pages, double-spaced; please print and bring to class; I will not accept emailed papers). There will be a penalty of 1/3 of a grade for each day late.

## Weekly Reading Assignments

### January 21: Introduction

- In-class readings from the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and Qur'an

## Section I: Key Concepts

### January 28: What Is Religion? Classical Approaches

How have classical social theorists approached religion? What do they see as the central aspects of religion?

- Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, translated by Karen E. Fields (New York, 1995), Introduction and Book I, ch. 1 (pp. 1-44) and Book II, ch. 7 (pp. 207-41) .
- Max Weber, “The Protestant Sects and the Sprit of Capitalism,” in H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber* (Oxford, 1958), pp. 302-22.
- Karl Marx, “On the Jewish Question, Part I” in Robert Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York, 1978), pp. 26-46.

### February 4: What Is Religion? Modern Approaches

How have modern theorists thought about religion? In what ways do they build on the classical theorists and in what ways do they differ?

- Clifford Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System,” in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, 1973), pp. 87-125.
- Jonathan Z. Smith, “Religion, Religions, Religious,” in Mark C. Taylor, ed., *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (Chicago, 1998), pp. 269-84.
- Martin Riesebrodt, *The Promise of Salvation: A Theory of Religion* (Chicago, 2010), pp. 71-91.

### February 11: What Is War? Why Does It Happen?

What are the causes of war in the modern world? Is war the result of individuals and personalities, the type of state and government, or the structure of the international system?

- Hans J. Morgenthau, “Six Principles of Political Realism,” in Robert Art and Robert Jervis, eds., *International Politics: Enduring Concepts and Contemporary Issues*, 9th ed. (New York, 2009), pp. 7-14.
- Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder, “Democratization and War,” *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 1995), pp. 79-97.
- Kenneth N. Waltz, “The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Spring 1988), pp. 615-28.
- Barry R. Posen, “The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict,” *Survival*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Spring 1993), pp. 27-47.

## Section II: Religion and War

### February 18: What Is Religious Violence? I

What is religious violence? What is specifically religious about religious violence? How is it different from “secular” violence?

- Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, 3rd edition (Berkeley, 2003), entire book.

### **February 25: What Is Religious Violence? II**

Is “religious violence” a useful or legitimate distinction to make? What does calling violence “religious” mean and do?

- William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (Oxford, 2009), entire book.
- Paper proposal due at beginning of class

### **March 3: Religion as a Cause of Violence**

Does religion cause violence? In what ways? What do we even mean when we say that religion causes violence?

- Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1993, pp. 22-49.
- Ron E. Hassner, “To Halve and to Hold: Conflicts over Sacred Space and the Problem of Indivisibility,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Summer 2003), pp. 1-33.
- R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (New York, 2000), ch. 3, “Violence as a Sacred Duty,” pp. 81-120.

### **March 10: Religion and Form of Violence**

How does religion affect the form that violence takes? What are the subtle ways that religion shapes violence short causing it?

- Natalie Zemon Davis, “The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth-Century France,” *Past & Present*, Vol. 59 (May 1973), pp. 51-91.
- Ron E. Hassner, “Sacred Time and Conflict Initiation,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (2011), pp. 491-520.
- Stanley Tambiah, *Leveling Crowds: Ethnonationalist Conflicts and Collective Violence in South Asia* (California, 1996), pp. 221-243.
- Michael Sells, “Crosses of Blood: Sacred Space, Religion, and Violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina,” *Sociology of Religion*, Vol. 64, No. 3 (Autumn 2003), pp. 309-331.

### **March 17: Spring Break!**

### **March 24: Religion and Terrorism**

Is terrorism a uniquely religious phenomenon or is religion particularly prone to terrorism? Does religion cause suicide terrorism?

- David C. Rapoport, “Fear and Trembling in Three Religious Traditions,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 78, No. 3 (September 1984), pp. 658-677
- Robert Pape, “The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 3 (August 2003), pp. 343-361.
- Ivan Strenski, “Sacrifice, Gift and the Social Logic of Muslim Human Bombers,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Autumn 2003), pp. 1-34.
- Assaf Moghadam, “Motives for Martyrdom: Al-Qaida, Salafi Jihad, and the Spread of Suicide Attacks,” *International Security*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (Winter 2008/9), pp. 46-78.

### **March 31: ISIS Case Study**

In the past few years, ISIS has dominated headlines and the political conversation about religion and violence. How do the theories and concepts we've studied help us understand this group?

- Graeme Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants," *The Atlantic*, March 2015.
- Mehdi Hasan, "How Islamic is Islamic State?" *New Statesman*, March 10, 2015.
- Stathis N. Kalyvas, "Is ISIS a Revolutionary Group and if Yes, What Are the Implications?" *Prospectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (2015), pp. 42-47.
- Watch *ISIS in Afghanistan* (PBS Frontline, Nov 17, 2015) at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/isis-in-afghanistan/> or *The Islamic State* (Vice News, Dec 26, 2014) at <https://news.vice.com/video/the-islamic-state-full-length> or *The Rise of ISIS* (PBS Frontline, Oct 28, 2014) at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/rise-of-isis/>

## **Section III: Religion and Peace**

### **April 7: Religious Peacemakers**

How does religion lead to peace? Does it even? What is the role of religious actors in conflict resolution and peacemaking?

- R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* (New York, 2000), ch. 6, "Religion and Conflict Transformation," pp. 207-244.
- Marc Gopin, *Bridges across an Impossible Divide: The Inner Lives of Arab and Jewish Peacemakers* (Oxford, 2012), ch. 4, "Sheikh Abdul Aziz Bukhari," and ch. 5, "Gabriel Meyer," pp. 79-111.
- Nukhet Ahu Sandal, "Religious Actors as Epistemic Communities in Conflict Transformation: The Cases of South Africa and Northern Ireland," *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (July 2011), pp. 929-949.

### **April 14: Religion and Nonviolence**

What are the religious origins of nonviolent mobilization? Does religion cause nonviolence?

- Sharon Erickson Nepstad, *Religion and War Resistance in the Plowshares Movement* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 1-130.
- Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter From Birmingham Jail" (1963), this version: <http://www.christiancentury.org/sites/default/files/downloads/resources/mlk-letter.pdf>

### **April 21: Religion and Humanitarianism**

What is the role of religion in international peaceful causes, such as humanitarianism and human rights? Do these movements have religious origins?

- Chaim D. Kaufmann and Robert A. Pape, "Explaining Costly International Moral Action: Britain's Sixty-Year Campaign against the Atlantic Slave Trade," *International Organization*, Vol. 53, No. 4 (Autumn 1999), pp. 631-668.
- Michael Barnett and Janice Gross Stein, "The Secularization and Sanctification of Humanitarianism," in Barnett and Stein, eds., *Sacred Aid: Faith and Humanitarianism*, (Oxford, 2012), pp. 3-36.

- Samuel Moyn, “Personalism, Community and the Origins of Human Rights,” in Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, ed., *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 85-106.
- Peter Stamatov, “Activist Religion, Empire, and the Emergence of Modern Long-Distance Advocacy Networks,” *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 75, No. 4 (August 2010), pp. 607-628.

#### **April 28: Religious Restraints on War**

Can religion restrain war and make it more just? Is a “just war” even possible?

- Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, 3rd ed., (New York, 2000), ch. 3, “The Rules of War,” pp. 34-47.
- Gregory M. Reichberg and Henrik Syse, eds., *Religion, War, and Ethics: A Sourcebook of Textual Traditions* (Cambridge, 2014), pick one chapter of interest!
  - “Judaism,” “Roman Catholic Christianity,” “Eastern Orthodox Christianity,” “Protestant Christianity,” “Sunni Islam,” “Shia Islam,” “Hinduism,” “Theravada Buddhism,” “Chinese and Korean Religious Traditions,” “Japanese Religious Traditions,” “Sikhism.”
- Final paper due.