

**CONF 722-001: RELIGION, CONFLICT, AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION  
FALL TERM 2015  
INSTRUCTOR: RICHARD RUBENSTEIN**

**SYLLABUS AND SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS**

**General matters**

This course is offered on Tuesdays at 7:20-10:00 pm in Room 111 of Founders Hall. The **instructor** can be reached via telephone at 703-400-7674 (cell) or via email at rubenstein.richard@gmail.com. His office is Room 5070 of the Metropolitan Building, and office hours are by appointment. He is available to discuss either course-related matters or other matters of interest to students. All class members should join the S-CAR Community Forum group established for this course: CONF 722-001 Fall 2015: Religion, Conflict, and Conflict Resolution.

The course's **overall purpose** is to explore the relationship of religion to social conflict and conflict resolution. We will use historical, literary, and contemporary materials to shed light on the socioeconomic, psychological, cultural, 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, make presentations, and write research papers exploring some aspect of the topic in depth.

With regard to content, the course is **structured** as follows :

After a general overview, we begin by discussing ideas about the relationship of religion to violence. Then, we investigate communal conflicts fought under the banner of religion. We then focus on conflicts in which doctrinal differences play an important role, and 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 and peacemaking.

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 paper (25%), a report on a book or film on the recommended reading list (25%), and a final take-home exam or research paper (50%). Doctoral students will be expected to present their book or film reviews to the class and to write a final research paper. Master's students may make a public presentation or write a research paper at their option.

## **University Requirements**

These are listed immediately below in language suggested by the Provost's Office. We will take time in the first class to discuss any questions that you may have about this material, including questions about plagiarism.

### **Academic integrity**

GMU is an Honor Code university; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

All GMU 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. Regarding 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.

### **GMU email accounts**

Students must activate their GMU email accounts to receive important University information, including messages related to this class.

### **Office of Disability Services**

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. <http://ods.gmu.edu>

### **Other Useful Campus Resources**

WRITING CENTER: A114 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200;  
<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES "Ask a Librarian"  
<http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS): (703) 993-2380;  
COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS): (703) 993-2380;  
<http://caps.gmu.edu>

The UNIVERSITY CATALOG, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university affairs.

### **Required and recommended readings**

#### **Required books** (all in Arlington Campus bookstore):

Richard A. Horsley, *Religion and Empire: People, Power, and the Life of the Spirit*.  
Fortress Press, 2003. ISBN **10**: 0800636317

Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*.  
U. of California Press, 2003, 3d Ed. ISBN **10**: 0520240111

Richard E. Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God*. Harcourt, 1999. ISBN 10: 0-15-  
601315-0

#### **Assigned articles and chapters** (available on Blackboard or on line):

Angrosino, M. V. (2002). "Civil Religion Redux." *Anthropological Quarterly*, 75(2),  
239-267

Karen Armstrong, Talk about *Fields of Blood* at  
[https://search.yahoo.com/yhs/search;\\_ylt=A0LEVvLZhEZVvk0ANZsPxQt.?p=karen+armstrong+on+isis&fr2=sb-top&hspart=GenieoYaho&hsimp=yhs-fh\\_hp&type=a116410161](https://search.yahoo.com/yhs/search;_ylt=A0LEVvLZhEZVvk0ANZsPxQt.?p=karen+armstrong+on+isis&fr2=sb-top&hspart=GenieoYaho&hsimp=yhs-fh_hp&type=a116410161)

Reza Aslan, selection from *No god but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam*.  
Random House, 2006. ISBN 0-8129-7189-2

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).

Michel Foucault, "What Are the Iranians Dreaming About?" *Le Nouvel Observateur*. France (October 16, 1978). Retrieved from <http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/007863.html>

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

Marc Gopin, selections from *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence, and Peacemaking*. Oxford University Press, 2002

"Confronting the Ethical Dilemmas of Citizen Diplomacy," from *To Make the Earth Whole: The Art of Citizen Diplomacy in an Age of Religious Militancy* (pp. 161–188). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009. Also, check out Marc's blog: <http://www.marcgopin.com/>

Sudhir Kakar, selections from *The Colors of Violence: Cultural Identities, Religion, and Conflict*. University of Chicago Press, 1996

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

Joseph Montville, "Religion and Peacemaking". Chapter 5: Religion and Peacemaking. In R. G. Helmick & R. L. Petersen (Eds.), *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Religion, Public Policy & Conflict Transformation* (pp. 97–116). Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 2005

Luc Reyshler, "Religion and Conflict." *The International Journal of Peace Studies*, 2(1), 1997. Retrieved from [http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/ijps/vol2\\_1/Reyschler.htm](http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/ijps/vol2_1/Reyschler.htm)

Richard E. Rubenstein, "Religion and Violence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" (Public lecture at University of Montana, 2008)

"The Psycho-Political Causes of Terrorism," in Charles Kegley, ed., *The New Global Terrorism: Causes, Characteristics, Controls* (Prentice-Hall, 2003)

Isak Svensson, "Rebellion, Religion and Resolution: Exploring the Religious Dimensions of Peace Agreements" (2005)

Jeremy Townsley, "Rene Girard's Theory of Violence, Religion, and the Scapegoat" <http://www.jeramy.org/papers/girard.html>

**Recommended books (complete list to be distributed in class)**

R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred*. Rowman and Littlefield, 1999. ISBN: 10: 0847685543

Karen Armstrong, *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence* (Anchor, 2015) ISBN-10: 030794696

Reza Aslan, *No god but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam*. Random House, 2006.

John Dominic Crossan, *God and Empire: Jesus Against Rome, Then and Now*. HarperOne, 2008.

Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979. ISBN-10: 0801822181

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

Sudhir Kakar, The Colors of Violence: Cultural Identities, Religion, and Conflict. University of Chicago Press, 1996. ISBN-10: 0226422852

Michael Kirwan, Discovering Girard. Cowley Books, 2007. ISBN 10: 1561012297

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

David Little, Ed. Peacemakers in Action. Cambridge University Press, 2007. ISBN-10: 0521618940

Richard E. Rubenstein, Aristotle's Children. Harcourt, 2003. ISBN 0-15-603009-8

Thus Saith the Lord: The Revolutionary Moral Vision of Isaiah and Jeremiah. Harcourt, 2006

Anthony Santoro, Exile and Embrace: Contemporary Religious Doctrine and the Death Penalty (Northeastern Univ. Press, 2013)

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

Huston Smith, The World's Religions. HarperOne, 2009. ISBN-10: 0061660183

## **SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND ASSIGNMENTS**

### **Sep. 1: Intro to course: world religions and conflict**

Read Richard Rubenstein, "Religion and Violence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (posted on Community Forum and Blackboard)

Global Religious Landscape (Pew Foundation)

<http://www.pewforum.org/2014/04/04/global-religious-diversity/>

Muslims to Surpass Christians as World's Largest Religion

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2015/04/02/397042004/muslim-population-will-surpass-christians-this-century-pew-says>

The Big Religion Chart

[http://www.religionfacts.com/big\\_religion\\_chart.htm](http://www.religionfacts.com/big_religion_chart.htm)

Theories About Religions

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theories\\_about\\_religions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theories_about_religions)

### **Sep. 8: Labor Day holiday**

**Sep. 15: Religious doctrines and violence.**

Read the book of Genesis in any bible of your choice

Johan Galtung, "Religions Hard and Soft"

<http://www.crosscurrents.org/galtung>

Karen Armstrong, Interview about *Fields of Blood* at

[https://search.yahoo.com/yhs/search;\\_ylt=A0LEVvLZhEZVVk0ANZsPxQt.?p=karen+armstrong+on+isis&fr2=sb-top&hspart=GenieoYaho&hsimp=yhs-fh\\_hp&type=a116410161](https://search.yahoo.com/yhs/search;_ylt=A0LEVvLZhEZVVk0ANZsPxQt.?p=karen+armstrong+on+isis&fr2=sb-top&hspart=GenieoYaho&hsimp=yhs-fh_hp&type=a116410161)]

Catherine Madsen, "Notes on God's Violence"

<http://www.crosscurrents.org/madsen0701.htm>

Jeremy Townsley, "Rene Girard's Theory of Violence, Religion, and the Scapegoat"

<http://www.jeramy.org/papers/girard.html>

**Sep. 22: Religion and communal conflict**

Read Sudhir Kakar, *The Colors of Violence*, 1-51, 143-198

**Sep. 29: Connecting religious doctrines with social situations**

Read Richard E. Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God*, 1-21, 48-88, 169-210

**Oct. 6: Connecting modern social conflicts with religious doctrines**

Read Reza Aslan, selection from *No god but God*, 220-266; Karen Armstrong, selection from *Fields of Blood*". Recommended: Michel Foucault, "What Are the Iranians Dreaming About?" <http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/007863.html>

**Midterm paper topics distributed via email**

**Oct. 13: Columbus Day Holiday**

**Oct. 20: Return midterm papers via email before 5:00 p.m.**

View and discuss film with guest lecturer Carol Daniel

**Oct. 27: Religion, politics, and the state**

Read N.J. Demerath and Karen S. Straight, "Religious Politics and the State: Cross-Cultural Observations"; Robert N. Bellah, "Biblical Religion and Civil Religion in America"; and Martin Agrosino, "Civil Religion Redux"

**Nov. 3: Religion and terrorism**

Read Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 3d Ed., 1-18, 119-163; Richard E. Rubenstein, "The Psycho-Political Causes of Religious Terrorism." **Final instructions given for report on book or film**

**Nov. 10: Religion and empire:** Read Richard A. Horsley, *Religion and Empire: Power, People, and the Life of the Spirit*.

**Nov. 17: Submit report on book or film by 5:00 p.m.**

View film

Nov. 24: **Religion and conflict resolution I.**

Read selections from Marc Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon* and *To Make the World Whole*. **Students doing research paper clear topics with instructor**

Dec. 1: **Religion and conflict resolution II.** Read Luc Reyhler, "Religion and Conflict"; Joseph Montville, "Religion and Peacemaking"; Isak Svenson, "Rebellion, Religion and Resolution: Exploring the Religious Dimension of Peace Agreements."  
**Final paper topics distributed via email**

Dec. 8: **The future of conflicts involving religion.** Discussion with visiting scholars and course wrap-up

Dec. 18: **Final papers due via email by 5:00 p.m.**