

RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE & NON-VIOLENCE (REL S 379)

Spring Semester 2005

Time: TTh 0930-1045

Classroom: SH-136

Dr. Khaleel Mohammed

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Offices: Living and Learning Center (Dormitory Section) & Adams Humanities #4224

Office Hours: Wednesday: Living and Learning Center (LLC: University Residence): 12-4

Friday: 11-1, AH 4224. p.m. and by appointment.

Special Arrangements can be made for working students to meet in LLC after 6 p.m. on M, W).

Course Description

RS 379 attempts to understand the ways in which religion is a motivating force for both violent and nonviolent action. We begin with examples of religious terrorism against others and religious forms of violence against oneself and move on to compare those practices to forms of religious compassion and nonviolent justice seeking.

Learning Objectives

- To understand the role religion/interpretation of religion plays in the formation of worldview
- To become more aware about the role of violence in our personal lives.
- To comprehend the ties between religion and violence.
- To understand the role of religious practice in living nonviolently.
- To distinguish authentic religion from religion used for personal and political ideology.
- To think about what we are willing to kill for and what we are willing to die for.
- To imagine nonviolent futures.
- To improve reading, oral, and written communication skills.

Texts:

1. Schmidt-Leukel, Perry (ed). *War and Peace in World Religions*. London: SCM Press, 2004.

2. Heft, James L (ed). *Beyond Violence: Religious Sources of Transformation in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*. N.Y: Fordham University Press, 2004.

3. Reader and Assignment Text

Course Requirements

- Regular Attendance, completion of homework assignments and classroom participation
- Computer/Internet access; unless specifically directed otherwise, you must submit all answers electronically. Note the onus is on YOU to update BLACKBOARD regarding your email address.
- Required reports and quizzes. Please note that the onus is on the student to ensure that all reports have been submitted on a timely basis

- Weekly group reports on material in San Diego Tribune/Mainstream Magazines relating to religious violence/incitement thereto/evidence of that which, while it may not be placed in the two foregoing categories, nonetheless demonstrates a mentality that condones bigotry/violence.
- By week 4, each group will have select a cult and a report on said cult and its views/practice of violence/non-violence. The basic rubrics of presentation will be: Beliefs of Cult, Genesis, View on Violence/non-Violence. Current Status. See professor for more details.
- See Week 8 for presentations. By week 5, each group will have to select a topic.

General Policies

This course is structured to promote scholarly discourse through the Socratic method rather than be a one-way channel of information. This is why, on the first day of class, I will request that you answer a questionnaire that tells me about you and your research interests. (You must fill this out by hand and produce it on the second day of class). With this information in hand, I will hopefully be able to further fine-tune the syllabus to meet the specific needs of the class. To fully harness the electronic facilities provided by SDSU I will try as much as possible to have reserve readings, class assignments and other required information placed on BlackBoard. Please note that BlackBoard allows you to have chat rooms, mail in assignments, and track your performance.

This upper-level course requires a lot of reading, and as such, to allow proper discussions on topics, do note that the dates you see on the syllabus are simply tentative ones to be used as a guide. In the same manner, important topics may arise that, at the time of my designing this syllabus, were not a matter of consideration. Please understand therefore, that there may be some slight changes in the subject material.

Since we only have fifteen weeks to cover our material, I have had to tailor the course to suit what I perceive to be the specific needs of American students. We will therefore focus on the material that is deemed of prime importance to the current state of American affairs, and only after we have fulfilled this requirement, will we seek to move on to other things. For instance, you note that in the course outline, there is reference to violence against the self (such as suicide, self-mutilation et cetera)—but we will leave this for the last part of the semester, and it will be condition on our having fully studied the aspect of violence against others.

Initially this course was designed as a seminar format since it was anticipated that the enrollment would not exceed 25. The current registration shows 70 students and therefore the approach has been changed. The result is that there will be group responsibilities allotted and some material will be researched by such groups for presentation to the class.

You are required to attend each class fully prepared to participate in that day's lecture. This means that **you will have completed the assigned readings, and be able to demonstrate this during the discussion of scheduled material. You will be able to do so either by contributing in a manner to be decided within the first week of classes. (Such change will be made to the on-line syllabus).** Although I do NOT take attendance, do note that I structure my lectures so that much material can only be gained by actually being in the class—the text book readings are merely guides.

In order that you get the maximum benefit from your readings, and encounter the most generous side of my leniency, you are required to take notes when you read, and to bring those notes to class. You should, from each chapter or assigned individual topic, be able to tease out the main points. You should be familiar with terminologies, dates, names, concepts expressed in the reading/s. Since I ask questions at random, and need quick responses, I must inform you that I will not permit you to be reading from the assigned material itself in order to seek the answer to my

question. You will be permitted to read only if you can demonstrate by your preamble that you feel a citation can prove your point. If you wish to not take notes in order to show them to me, that is your choice, but do know that the absence of said notes cannot corroborate any story of having read the assignments and suddenly forgotten crucial aspects of the material.

Answers to examination questions and any other assigned writing tasks must be handed in by the specified date. These must be carefully proofread—you will be penalized for grammatical and spelling mistakes. If your assignment is handwritten, do note that the same requirements apply. For each day that an assignment is late, the grade that is actually earned will be reduced by one full letter grade. Plagiarism and any other forms of cheating will be seriously penalized. See the Student Handbook for the University's policies on infractions of academic integrity.

To discourage plagiarism, as well as to conserve our natural resources, I require you, unless directed otherwise, to submit all written assignments via electronic mail. Do note that this allows me to access the software to check for plagiarism. Do also note that anything taken off the web and not cited may expose you to charges of plagiarism. For instructions on how to cite sources, see Kate Turabian's *Manual for Writers*. Please note that syllabus usage of certain URLs does not indicate course endorsement of such sites either by myself, support teaching staff or SDSU. You will therefore be required to peruse URLs with a critical eye.

GRADING POLICY

The following will be STRICTLY observed:

Grades will be issued on a letter-ranking basis in assessing the following:

Participation in class, demonstrated awareness of class reading, recommended reading, material obtained on own initiative, writing skills, cogency of arguments, creativity.

A =Extraordinarily high quality work

B=Praiseworthy performance, definitely above average

C=Average, Satisfactory performance, but treatment of material lacks depth.

D=Minimally passing. Treatment of material below expected level

F=Does not meet minimum acceptable requirements. Usually indicates that work done without due regard to requirements.

Do note too that if you are required to achieve a certain Grade Point Average (GPA) in order to qualify for special programs, the onus is on **you alone** to achieve that GPA. This means that you must carefully monitor your performance during the course of the semester and do what is necessary to maintain/achieve the requisite grade(s). If you have any concerns about your performance, then you should come arrange for an interview with me and/or a counselor. Students who, on receiving unsatisfactory grade, plead with the professor for an upgrade, insult the professor's integrity, and are unfair to their peers in requesting preferential treatment.

CLASS CONDUCT

- Turn off all cell phones before entering the class.
- Note that the professor serves as the moderator (you may interpret this to mean dictator) in class discussions, and decides when a discourse is to be terminated.

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at SDSU and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately

Allocation of Marks

You will have three quizzes for 5, 5, and 10 marks respectively: 20 marks total

Report on Cults and Violence:	10 marks
Mid-term: March 1:	20 marks
Attendance/Participation:	25 marks
Final Examination:	25
TOTAL.....	100 Marks

SCHEDULE

PART 1: VIOLENCE

Week 1 (Jan 25,27)

Outline of Our Approach to study of subject, explanation of requirements of course
 Preliminary Quiz
 Formation of Class into groups
 Required Readings:
 -The Study of Religion and Violence (Reader/Electronic Reserve)
 -Fighting for God-Scriptural Obligations

Note: Take special notice of Week 15's instructions.

Week 2 (Feb 1, 3)

Continuation of Week 1: Understanding perception of Violence as Scriptural Obligations
 Readings: Fighting for God (Reader/Electronic Reserve)
 Religion's Violent Accomplices (Reader)
 Violence as Sacred Duty (Reader/Electronic Reserve)
 Religion Matters (Reader)
 Religion and the Legitimization of Violence (Reader)

Violence in Eastern Religions

Week 3 (Feb 8, 10)

Preliminary Discussions. Class perception.
 Consult writings of Arundhati Roy. Report on Web Article "Let hope the darkness has passed." <http://www.commondreams.org/views04/0514-08.htm>
 Who was Ashoka?
 Readings:
 -Class Text: *War and Peace in World Religions* (hereinafter referred to as WP):
 -Introduction, Ch. 2 Hinduism. We will only focus on the material on violence.
 -Holy War: Violence and the Bhagavad Gita (Reader)
 -Buddhism: From WP: Chapter 3.

Week 4 (Feb 15, 17)

Violence in Eastern Religions (continued)

Sikhism, Jainism: Presentation from individual groups.
 Chinese Religion (Chapter 4: WP)
 Group Discussions

Violence in the Abrahamic Religions

Week 5 (Feb 22, 24)

Judaism

The Violent imagery in Abrahamic Religion (from Professor)

Reading: Ch 5: WP, Ch 4 from *Beyond Violence* (Hereinafter referred to as BV)

Baruch Goldstein, Women in Green. Biblical Verses (Group present from different books of Hebrew Bible)

Martyrdom

Week 6 (Mar 1, 3)

Christianity

Readings: Ch 6 (WR), Martyrdom

-Apocalyptic Violence (Reader)

Reconstructionist Christianity/ Christian Right/ Role in Iraq Invasion. Role of Preachers in New American Religious views on Bellum Iustum

Crusades (see blackboard—In the year 1066)

Slave Trade/Slaughter of Natives/Autochtones of the Americas

Week 7 (Mar 8, 10)

Islam

Readings: Chapter 7 (WR)

Jihad on internet link: <http://www.muslim.org/light/light044.pdf>

See other articles Jihad on: <http://www.muslim.org/islam/intro.htm>

Martyrdom

Osama b. Ladin

Dar al-islam

Week 8 (Mar 15, 17)

New Religions/Cults

Readings: Challenging Misconceptions About The New Religions-Violence Connection (Reader)

Reread: Religion's Violent Accomplices (Reader)

Drinking the Kool-Aid (Reader).

Report of Professor Moore's Website re Jonestown. Start of research for other Cults as chosen from week 4—to be presented in Week 14.

Violence Against Self as Ritual: FGM, Male Circumcision, Prescribed Penalty from Scripture, Atonement, Flagellation (Christians in Philippines, Muslims at Ashura, Thayapusam in Malaysia etc.) Groups will have to produce evidence of research on this. Each will speak for 5 minutes on subject.

PART 2: NON-VIOLENCE

Week 9 (Mar22, 24)

Theories of non-Violence, Ahimsa, Martin Luther King, Jainism, Ideal of Abrahamic Religions.

Readings: WP: Chapters 8,9, B.V: 1-42, Internet

MARCH 28-APRIL 1: SPRING BREAK

Week 10 (April 5, 7)

Hinduism: From WP, Ch. 2

Reader: Sanctions for Peace.

Gandhi: Ahimsa.

Week 11 (Apr 12, 14)

Buddhism: Ch 3, WP

Reader: Thich Nhat.

Jainism/Sikhism/Chinese Religion (Guest speakers?)

Week 12 (Apr 19, 21)

Judaism

Readings:

From Rabbi Eisendrath (reader)

Reuven Kimelman (reader)

Ch 5, BV

Internet, verses from Hebrew Bible/Talmud

Week 13 (Apr 26, 28)

Islam

Readings: Ch 7, WP

Chapters 2, 3, BV

Internet Resources, verses from Qur'an

Also Appropriate Readings in Sanctions for Peace in Class Reader.

Ahmadiyya doctrine. April 28: Please note that we will have a guest speaker on this

Day: Mr. Eusi Kwayana.

Week 14 (May 3, 5)

Christianity Focus on American Groups/International Sects that we have not discussed in previous weeks.

SUBMISSION OF OUTSTANDING MATERIAL, ESSAYS ETC

Week 15 (May 10)

Review of Questions: Note this is not a session on "what will come in the examinations". You should have been formulating questions from each week, based on what you were told would be possible questions. You may pose questions for the professor/your peers to provide possible ways of answering them.

Final Examination Date: Tuesday May 17
Time: 10:30-12:30; Place: Classroom

Questionnaire for Rel S 379

Professor Mohammed

(All information will be treated as confidential)

Name
Email:
Phone:
Address:

What year are you scheduled to graduate?

What is your major?
If you do have a minor, what is it?

Have you spoken to Dr. Rebecca Moore about the minor in Religious Studies? (Her telephone number is 594-6252) If not, please strongly consider doing so.

Why are you taking this course?

What computer system are you using, IBM/PC or MAC?

On a scale of 1-10, with 10 denoting maximum importance, to what extent do you think in-class discussion, by group format, helps in learning?

What are your present extracurricular interests?

Are there any particular topics that you expect, or would like this course to cover?

What would you absolutely NOT want the professor to do in this course?

How do you wish to be addressed? (By your first name, or as Ms./Mr.)

Is there anything else that you would like to tell me?