POLITICS AND WORLD RELIGIONS BLHV 261-01

Wednesdays, 8:00 PM – 10:30 PM, 640 Mass. Ave, NW

Course Description
Even a cursory glance at world affairs will show that religion and politics is at the heart of today’s ongoing struggle between nations and ideology. Religion may be a motivator and catalyst in rallying popular support for waging war, and in fact may play a significant role in nurturing communal strife among various faith groups in their struggle to achieve governmental control.

This course is designed to acquaint students with the analytical study of religion, politics and conflict on the world stage. By design, the course is interdisciplinary, covering areas in religion (theology/philosophy), sociology (ethno-religious & identity conflicts), ethics and politics. Students will have an opportunity to focus on one or more of these areas for their semester paper. This course will help students comprehend the global resurgence of religion in intra-state and international affairs, and will focus on specific areas in the world where religion is the primary issue.

Through classroom lecture and discussion, reading assignments, media and student presentations, we will address the role religion and politics play in various global conflicts, the determination of whether religion is the basis of a given conflict, and possible resolutions to these conflicts.

Instructor
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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM, 640 Mass. Ave, NW

Course Goals
To provide an intellectual framework and analytical tools for students to discuss, reflect upon, understand, and propose solutions to a variety of religion and conflict issues throughout the world.

Evaluation
Students are expected to attend lectures, read assigned texts, submit term paper & essays, and participate in discussion, as well as display an ability to absorb, comprehend, and analyze the course material.

Course Requirements
- Reading Assignments
Submit three short analytical essays (3 pages each, max) on assigned readings. Topics will be distributed for take home one week in advance.
- Mid-Term Evaluation
- Submit one 15-20 page paper
- Oral Presentation: a 10 minute review of your semester paper

**Study Groups**
Depending on class size, study groups (usually four) will be formed to prepare class presentations on world “hot spots.” These 15-20 minute group presentations will take place near the end of the semester

**Grading Policy**
Final grade for the course will be based on the following:

1. Class Participation 10%
2. Analytical Essays 30% (10 X 3)
3. Term Paper 30%
4. Mid Term Evaluation 10%
4. Oral Presentation 20%

**Grade Table**

- 93-100 % = A
- 90 - 92 % = A-
- 87 - 89 % = B+
- 83 - 86 % = B
- 80 - 82 % = B-
- 77 - 79 % = C+
- 73 - 76 % = C
- 70 - 72 % = C-
- 67 - 69 % = D+
- 60 - 66 % = D
- Below 60 % = F

**Learning Objectives**
The following objectives are built into the pedagogy of this course syllabus:

1. To provide awareness, knowledge & understanding of the global resurgence of religiously motivated conflict and violence
2. To help students understand the cultural, psychological, political & religious/theological foundations for religion and conflict on the world stage
3. To provide the building blocks for students to develop models of reconciliation and peace to religion and conflict issues on the world stage

**Disabilities Statement**
If you believe you have a disability, then you should contact the Academic Resource Center (arc@georgetown.edu) for further information. The Center is located in the
Leavey Center, Suite 335. The Academic Resource Center is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policies.

**Georgetown Honor System**

All students are expected to follow Georgetown’s honor code unconditionally. We assume you have read the honor code material located at [www.georgetown.edu/honor](http://www.georgetown.edu/honor), and in particular have read the following documents: *Honor Council Pamphlet*, “What is Plagiarism?”, “Sanctioning Guidelines”, and “Expedited Sanctioning Process.”

Submitting material in fulfillment of the requirements of this course means that you have abided by the Georgetown honor pledge:

*In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.*

Work that appears to have been plagiarized or otherwise violated the Honor Code will be reported to Georgetown’s Honor Council. If the Council finds that the work violates the university’s standards of academic honesty, the work will receive a grade of zero for the assignment for the first offense; a second infraction will earn an F for the course. The Honor Council may impose sanctions of its own as well.

**Devices**

All electronic devices will be turned off at the beginning of class.

**Readings Assignments**

Required readings for each class are listed below, and should be completed before the class period. All others are highly recommended, and may be referred to in class. Shorter articles will be uploaded to Blackboard. Additional websites and recently declassified government documents will be made available in class.

**Attendance and Late Arrival**

Attendance is mandatory, and roll call will be taken at the beginning of each class. Being late by 10 minutes or more will constitute an absence. Students with two absences for any reason may receive a failing grade for the course. If you miss a class it is your responsibility to make up any assignments on time and obtain class handouts. Students are expected to behave in class in accordance with the Code of Campus Conduct.

**Late Assignments**

No credit will be given for any assignment that is submitted late without the prior approval of the instructor. Prior Approval means the student has communicated with the instructor before the assignment deadline. An assignment that is submitted late with the instructor’s approval will have its grade reduced by 10 percent for every day it is late.
**Required Texts**


**Course Syllabus**

**Week 1, First Class Sep 9**

**Introduction to the Course**

**Foundations of Religious Conflict**


**Week 2, Sep 16**
What Initiates Religious Conflict?


Week 3, Sep 23
**Religious Conflict from Family Myth and Culture**
*First Analytical Essay questions distributed*


Week 4, Sep 30
**Organized Religion as a Locus of Blame**
*First Analytical Essay Due: 3 pages max*


Week 5, Oct 7
**On the Road to Transformation**


Week 6, Oct 14
**Models of Reconciliation in Abrahamic Religions**
*Second Analytical Essay questions distributed*

Tzvi Marx, “Theological Preparation for Reconciliation in Judaism,” Gort, 93-104.

Week 7, Oct 21

**Models of Reconciliation: Judaism**

*Second Analytical Essay due: 3 pages max*

**Mid-Term Evaluation**


Marc Gopin, Chapter Six, “Patterns of Abrahamic Reconciliation,” *Holy War & Holy Peace*, 103-143.


Week 8, Oct 28

**Models of Reconciliation: Islam**

Anton Wessels, “Can the Children of Abraham be Reconciled: Ishmael and Isaac in the Bible and the Qur’an,” Gort, 134-144.


Week 9, Nov 4

**Models of Reconciliation: Islam, continued**

*Third Analytical Essay questions distributed*

**Topics Due for Semester Research Paper**


Week 10, Nov 11

**Patterns in Abrahamic Reconciliation**

*Third Analytical Essay due: 3 pages max*


Week 11, Nov 18

Models of Reconciliation: the Balkans


Marc Gopin, Holy War, Holy Peace, 186-197.


Week 12, Nov 25

No Class: Eve of Thanksgiving

Week 13, Dec 2

Practical Applications of Reconciliation Models
Marc Gopin, Holy War, Holy Peace, 198-228.


Week 14, Dec 9

The Road to Peace
Student Oral Presentations
Last Class


United States Department of State, Annual Report on International Religious Freedom. [http://www.state.gov/g/drl/irf/](http://www.state.gov/g/drl/irf/)

**FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE:** December 20, 2015 by 11:59 PM

### READING LIST

#### Primary Sources


**Secondary Sources**


Lee Griffith, _The War on Terrorism and the Terror of God_ (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).


**United Nations and U.S. Government Documents**

Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. [http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/religion.htm](http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/religion.htm)


The Oslo Declaration on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

Additional documents will be made available during the semester.