

CET Syllabus of Record



Program: Intensive Middle East Studies & Internship in Amman

Course Title: Violence and Religion in the Middle East

Course Code: AM/RELS 372

Total Hours: 45

Recommended Credits: 3

Primary Discipline / Suggested Cross Listings: Religious Studies / Middle East Studies, Peace Studies

Language of Instruction: English

Prerequisites/Requirements: Open to all program participants

Description

The Middle East is the birthplace of the three Abrahamic faiths: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. For millions of people, faith in the teachings and traditions of the Middle East religions have been a source of joy and hope, resulting in peaceful co-existence and respect for others. However, conflict and violence have also been an undeniable reality in the Middle East, with followers of the three Abrahamic faiths having been both victims and perpetrators of religiously-inspired violence.

This course aims to study the themes of violence and conflict in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This will be accomplished through analysis of the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic scriptures and traditions, investigation of key events in the history of each faith, and analysis of the contemporary political situation in the Middle East. This will include consideration of central theological themes in each faith, key events such as the conquest of Canaan, the spread of Islam, the Crusades, biographical analyses of central figures, and consideration of the religious elements that fuel the modern-day conflicts between Israelis and Palestinians, Sunnis and Shiites, and the West's war on terrorism.

It is a privilege to study these matters in the center of the Middle East. The course utilizes our location in Amman, Jordan to visit sites that are directly related to our class studies: a crusader castle, a Palestinian refugee camp, and local religious institutions that are on the front lines of discussions regarding religion and violence. This course focuses on issues that are complex and sensitive but also of tremendous importance and consequence. While the topics are sobering, for those who wish to understand the historical, political, and theological issues that plague the Middle East, the study of religion and violence is essential.

Objectives

In this course, students:

- Analyze connections between religious texts and current political conflicts in the Middle East.
- Learn to integrate various sources of information from multiple perspectives and debate opinions different from their own, using important and contested theological vocabulary of religion, violence, war, and peace.
- Build a foundational understanding of key theological texts that arguably condone violence, and of how religious wars from centuries ago continue to fuel contemporary political conflicts in the Middle East.

CET Syllabus of Record

- Observe how lay adherents as well as religious scholars of the three Abrahamic faiths respond to the accusation that their religion has committed and continues to commit violence against others.
- Conduct research in an Arab environment and present findings to colleagues.
- Adopt a respectful and academic perspective on the topic through the course material, class trips, and group discussions, without prejudice or stereotypes.

Course Requirements

Students are required to attend all class sessions and actively participate in classroom discussions and lectures.

They are also required to prepare an oral presentation and accompanying paper, the topic of which must be approved by the professor. The requirements for that project are as follows:

1. Identify and use relevant academic and primary sources on the chosen topic.
2. Incorporate current views of Jordanians through information gathered by conversations with language partners and roommates.
3. Present reasoned, thoughtful conclusions on the topic.
4. Give a 30-minute presentation, with additional time allocated for student Q&A.
5. Submit a paper, written in English, and 8-10 pages in length, on the topic.

Additionally, students are expected to provide textual analysis of 4 key religiously-influenced political texts and 2 chapters from the Quran and the Bible (Surah 9 and Deuteronomy 20). Students are required to submit a 2-page response to each of these texts. A guide for textual analysis will be discussed during the first class to assist students.

Methods of Evaluation

The final grade is determined as follows:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| • Participation and attendance | 20% |
| • Presentation and paper | 25% |
| • Textual Analysis | 20% |
| • Homework and class readings | 10% |
| • Quizzes | 10% |
| • Final Exam | 15% |

Primary Texts

Armstrong, K., 2001. *The Battle for God: A History of Fundamentalism*. New York: Ballantine Books.

- 2015. *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence*. New York: Vintage Canada.

Ateek, N., 1989. *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.

Ben - Gurion, D., 2008. *Ben-Gurion Looks at the Bible*. New York: Jonathan David Publishing.

Burge, G., 1993. *Who are God's people in the Middle East?* Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House.

- 2003. *Whose Land? Whose Promise? What Christians are not being told about Israel and the Palestinians*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press.
- 2010. *Jesus and the Land*. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing.

CET Syllabus of Record

- Butler, J., 2012. *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Cavanaugh, W., 2009. *Myth of Religious Violence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chomsky, N., 2003. *Power and Terror*. New York: Seven Stories Press.
- Copman, P., 2011. *Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God*. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing.
- Esposito, J., 2003. *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Girard, R., 2013. *Violence and the Sacred*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Hedges, C., 2014. *War: A Force that gives us Meaning*. New York: Public Affairs.
- Herzl, T., 1896. *Der Judenstaat – The Jewish State*. Available at: <http://www.mideastweb.org/jewishstate.pdf> [Accessed December 16, 2017].
- Izzelbin, A. E., 2011. *I Shall Not Hate: A Gaza Doctor's Journey on the Road to Peace*. Toronto: Vintage Canada.
- Juergensmeyer, M., 2003. *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- & M. Kitts, 2011. *Princeton Readings in Religion and Violence*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Loden, L. & Munayer, S., 2013. *Through my Enemy's Eyes*. Paternoster: Milton Keys.
- Lutstick, I., 1988. *For the Land and the Lord: Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel*. Washington: Brookings Institution Press.
- Maalouf, A., 1989. *The Crusades through Arab Eyes*. New York: Schocken.
- Maher, S., 2016. *Salafi – Jihadism: The History of an Idea*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Murphy, B., 2011. *The Blackwell Companion to Religion and Violence*. New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Niditch, S., 1995. *War in the Hebrew Bible: A Study in the Ethics of Violence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pennington, B., Ed. 2012. *Teaching Religion and Violence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Qutb, S., 1964. *Milestones*. Available at: <https://www.kalamullah.com/Books/Milestones%20Special%20Edition.pdf> [Accessed December 16, 2017].
- Raheb, M., 2014. *Faith in the Face of Empire: The Bible through Palestinian Eyes*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Renard, J. 2012. *Fighting Words: Religion, Violence and the Interpretation of Sacred Texts*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Sacks, R., 2015. *Not in God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence*. New York: Schocken.
- Schwager, R., 2000. *Must there be Scapegoats? Violence and Redemption in the Bible*. Leominster: Gracewing.
- Selengut, C., 2017. *Sacred Fury: Understanding Religious Violence*. Minneapolis: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Sizer, S., 2005. *Christian Zionism: On the Road to Armageddon?* Downer's Grove: Intervarsity Press.
- Stark, R., 2010. *God's Battalions: The Case for the Crusades*. San Francisco: HarperOne.
- Volf, M., 2011. *Allah*. San Francisco: Harper Collins.
- Wiesel, E., 2006. *Night*. New York: Hill and Wang.

CET Syllabus of Record

Supplementary Texts

Additional articles, films, interviews and presentations.

Outline of Course Content

Judaism

Topic 1—Conflict in Scripture (1 week)

- The violent verses and the issue of *Herem*
 - The Conquest of Canaan: “Show them no mercy”
 - The Gentiles
 - Slavery

Topic 2—Conflict in History (1 week)

- A persecuted past.
- The origins of Zionism and the 1948 war.

Topic 3—Conflict in Contemporary Middle East Politics (2 weeks)

- The State of Israel and the Palestinian *Nakba*.
- The settler movement and the Biblical land promises: The theology of Rabbi Kook.
- The complicated relationship between Judaism and Israel.

Christianity

Topic 4—Conflict in Scripture (1 week)

- Violence in the New Testament
- “Turn the other cheek” Did Jesus teach pacifism?

Topic 5—Conflict in History (1 week)

- Christian Colonialism
- The wars of the cross: Contemplating the lasting impact of the Crusades

Topic 6—Conflict in Contemporary Middle East Politics (2 weeks)

- The Lebanese Civil War: The Sabra and Shatila camp massacre
- Christian Zionism as “God’s foreign policy statement”
- Liberation Theology, the Palestinian Christians and non-violent resistance. A Study of Kairos Palestine
- The ‘War on Terror’ through Arab eyes: Another “crusade”?

Islam

Topic 7—Conflict in Scripture (1 week)

- What is Jihad جهاد?

CET Syllabus of Record

- Islam, the 'People of the Book' and the infidels/*kufaar*.
- Guest Speaker: An Islamic response to violence in the name of Islam

Topic 8—Conflict in History (1 week)

- The spread of early Islam
- The Sunni – Shiite divide
- Oxford Debate Christopher Hitchens and Tareq Ramadan. Is Islam a religion of peace?

Topic 9—Conflict in Contemporary Middle East Politics (2 weeks)

- The Gaza wars: 2008/9, 2012 and 2014
- Case study: Hamas
- The religious elements of Syria's civil war
- Considering the Caliphate: The origins, theology and practice of ISIS
- The Amman Message

Topic 10—Conclusion (1 week)

- Religion and violence: 10 key questions
- Jews, Christians and Muslims in constructive conversation
- Peace, tolerance and reconciliation: ideas for moving forward