

Sacred Texts and Violence

CORE 2556, Section 1

Spring Quarter 2006; TR 11:00-12:50; Sturm Hall 333

Teacher/Facilitator: Dan Clanton

Office: Sturm Hall 408; Office Hours: By Appointment Only; Phone: 303-871-2908;

Email: dclanton@du.edu

Description: This course is an analysis of narratives and injunctions in sacred texts, specifically the Bible and the Qur'an, dealing with violence, which will serve as the basis for an examination of how modern terrorists use these sacred texts and images found therein to ground or justify their actions.

Objectives:

- (1) To familiarize ourselves with primary sacred texts that deal with violence.
- (2) To awaken ourselves to the various ways in which violence is viewed in these texts, e.g., holy violence, apocalyptic violence, and violence against bodies.
- (3) To engender critical reflection on and academic study of sacred texts, as well as challenge students to reflect upon the ways in which this literature has impacted modern understandings of religion, sacred texts, and violence.
- (4) To develop your own view(s) of the subject matter through reading primary and secondary sources, in-class discussion, and independent research.

Requirements: This course has four basic requirements and a total of three hundred and seventy five (375) possible points:

(1) **Attendance & Behavior:**

- (a) Regular class attendance and participation are a must, and thus will account for 50 possible points toward your grade. By class participation, I mean both answering questions and making relevant comments in the context of our in-class discussion.
- (b) **Roll will be taken every class session; if you are not present during the taking of attendance, you will be counted absent unless you speak with me that Session. If you are absent 3 (three) or more classes your grade will be lowered by one letter grade; if you are absent 5 (five) or more classes you will fail the course.** Please note that (a) excessive tardiness will result in a loss of participation points; and (b) if you are absent the first session, or if you incur absences because you had not yet registered for the class, these absences *will* be counted for the purposes of calculating the attendance penalties listed above.

- (c) When we watch videos in class, I expect you to behave as if you were in a theater, i.e., be polite to those around you by turning off cell phones, don't converse with each other, and try to be as quiet as possible.
- (2) Readings: Completion of the primary and secondary readings **prior to class** goes hand in hand with class participation, and thus is as important. I also expect you to bring any and all readings to class with you on the days we're scheduled to discuss it. I will post handouts on Blackboard, and it is your responsibility to print out, read, and bring these handouts to class with you on the appropriate days.
- (3) Reading Quizzes: There will be 12 (twelve) short quizzes that will consist of 5 (five) brief questions that will assess your knowledge of and familiarity with the topics and/or readings assigned for that day. Each quiz will be worth 10 (ten) points. The two quizzes with the lowest grades will be dropped, leaving a total of 100 (one hundred) possible points toward your final grade. Quizzes missed due to absences, either excused or unexcused, cannot be made up.
- (4) Essay: You will write an essay that will be 7-9 (2100-2700 words) pages long. First, you will submit a paper proposal containing a thesis, argumentative plan, and proposed sources, which will be due by the end of class on **April 25th (Session 9)**. The form for this proposal can be found online at Blackboard, and you will submit it to me electronically as an email attachment. Each student will be required to discuss these proposals with me prior to approval. Following approval, you will write a rough draft based on your proposal that will be due as a hard copy in class on **May 16th (Session 15)**. You must include your proposal with my comments along with your rough draft. I will evaluate these drafts and return them to you with comments and suggestions for improvements. You will then write a final draft of the essay based on my feedback. The final draft will be due as a hard copy by noon in my office on **Tuesday, June 6th**. You must include your proposal with my comments and your rough draft with my comments along with your final draft. Formal instructions and sample topics for this paper can be found online at Blackboard. The essay proposal will be worth 25 possible points toward your final grade, and both versions of the essay will be worth 100 possible points toward your final grade. Note: A good guide on how to write academic papers can be found at <http://www.mdx.ac.uk/www/study/Gloess.htm>.

Additional Course Information

- (1) No incompletes will be given unless the student contacts me well in advance of the end of the quarter. The circumstances must include serious medical problems or other extreme difficulties beyond the volitional control of the student, and must be in accordance with the following policy set forward by the Registrar's Office, "The assignment of an incomplete grade is appropriate when circumstances beyond the student's control, such as illness or necessary absence, have prevented the student from completing your course requirements by the end of the academic

- term. Only students who have attended your class through more than 60% of the term are eligible to receive a temporary incomplete grade.”
- (2) All requests for special accommodations, e.g., medical, athletic, or learning-related, must be presented to me the first day of class. All such requests must be accompanied by the appropriate paperwork to be considered.
 - (3) No absences will be excused except in the cases of (a) an emergent medical situation or severe illness, which must be accompanied by a doctor’s note; or (b) a death in the student’s immediate family. In-class quizzes missed due to excused absences may not be made up, since the two lowest quiz grades are dropped.
 - (4) Upon matriculation, all students implicitly agree to abide by the University’s Academic Honor Code. Any violations of that code in our class will be taken very seriously. If I find evidence that you’ve violated the Honor Code, *either intentionally or unintentionally*, you will either (a) receive no credit for the assignment in question; or (b) be expelled from the class and assigned a failing grade for the course. In extreme cases, you may also be reported to the Office of Citizenship and Community Standards for further review.
 - (5) No grade-related information will be released to any student via non-secure means of communication, e.g., email or telephone, without the student in question presenting me with a signed and dated release allowing me to do so. Students may request this information in person, but I must have the aforementioned document to release information via any other channels.

Texts: (All Required; other assigned readings can be found on e-reserve at the Penrose Library’s website)

- (1) Michael Joseph Brown. *What They Don’t Tell You: A Survivor’s Guide to Biblical Studies*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000. (Henceforth abbreviated as Brown)
- (2) John J. Collins. *Does the Bible Justify Violence?* Facets Series. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005. (Henceforth abbreviated as Collins)
- (3) Reuven Firestone. *Jihad: The Origin of Holy War in Islam*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. (Henceforth abbreviated as Firestone)
- (4) Mark Juergensmeyer. *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*. 3rd ed. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003. (Henceforth abbreviated as Juergensmeyer)
- (5) Bruce Lincoln. *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2003. (Henceforth abbreviated as Lincoln)

- (6) Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer. *Is Religion Killing Us? Violence in the Bible and the Quran*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003. (Henceforth abbreviated as Nelson-Pallmeyer)
- (7) Susan Niditch. *War in the Hebrew Bible: A Study in the Ethics of Violence*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. (Henceforth abbreviated as Niditch)
- (8) Regina Schwartz. *The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997. (Henceforth abbreviated as Schwartz)
- (9) Charles Selengut. *Sacred Fury: Understanding Religious Violence*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2003. (Henceforth abbreviated as Selengut)
- (10) The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Bible, preferably with the Apocrypha. I recommend and have ordered the HarperCollins Annotated Study Bible for our class. If you wish to use any other translation besides the NRSV, please make sure you talk to me. Some versions are unacceptable for our purposes.
- (11) ‘Abdullah Yūsuf ‘Alī, trans. *The Meaning of the Holy Qur’an*. New Ed. Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications, 2004.

Schedule

I. Introduction(s)

March 28th (Session 1): Introduction to Course (Syllabus, Readings, Assignments, Responsibilities)

Reading: Nelson-Pallmeyer, “Introduction: The Elephant in the Room,” and Chs. 1-2, “Lunatics and Messengers,” and “Religion and Violence,” pp. xi-25.

March 30th (Session 2): Introduction to the Bible and the Qur’an

Reading:

- (1) Brown, Chs. 1-2, “The Aims of Bible Study and the Aims of Biblical Scholarship,” and “Rules of Thumb for Reading and Interpreting Biblical Texts: A Basic Approach,” pp. 1-52 and 57-69.
- (2) Frederick M. Denny, “Islam: Qur’an and Hadith,” in *The Holy Book in Comparative Perspective* (eds. Frederick M. Denny and Rodney L. Taylor; Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1985), 84-108.

II. Violence within the Bible and the Qur'ān

April 4th (Session 3): Covenant and Exodus

Primary Reading: Genesis 12-22; Exodus 7.9-24.18

Secondary Reading: Schwartz, "Introduction: Rebuilding Babel," and Ch. 1, "Inventing Identity: Covenants," pp. 1-38.

April 6th (Session 4): Occupation of the (Their) Land

Primary Reading: Joshua 1-11, 23-24; Judges 19-21

Secondary Reading:

(1) Schwartz, Ch. 2, "Owning Identity: Land," pp. 39-76.

(2) Robert Allen Warrior, "A Native American Perspective: Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians," in *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World* (ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah; new ed.; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995), 277-285.

April 11th (Session 5): (Holy) War

Primary Reading: Deuteronomy 13.12-18; Deuteronomy 20; Numbers 31; 1 Samuel 15; 2 Kings 9-10

Secondary Reading: Niditch, chs. 1-3, "The Ban as God's Portion," "The Ban as God's Justice," and "The Priestly Ideology of War in Numbers 31," pp. 28-89.

April 13th (Session 6): Apocalyptic (Violence) in the New Testament

Primary Reading: 1 Thessalonians 4.13-5.11; Revelation

Secondary Reading: Tina Pippin, "Apocalyptic Fear," in *Apocalyptic Bodies: The Biblical End of the World in Text and Image* (London & New York: Routledge, 1999), 100-116.

April 18th (Session 7): Allah and Eschatology in the Qur'an

Primary Reading: Surahs 22, 24, 27, 59, 81, 84, 98, 112

Secondary Reading: Falzur Rahman, "God," and "Eschatology," in *Major Themes of the Qur'ān* (Minneapolis, MN: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1994), 1-16 and 106-120.

April 20th (Session 8): War and Jihad in the Qur'an

Primary Reading: Surahs 2, 4, 8-9

Secondary Reading: Firestone, chs. 1, 3-4, "Islam and Holy War," "The Qur'an: The Traditional Reading and Its Inherent Weakness," and "The Qur'an on War: A New Reading," pp. 13-18 and 43-91.

Optional Reading: Ella Landau-Tasseron, "Jihad," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an* (ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe; 5 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 3:35-43.

April 25th (Session 9): Conclusion(s), Part One

Reading:

(1) Collins

(2) Nelson-Pallmeyer, Chs. 3-5, "Violence-of-God Traditions in the Hebrew Scriptures," "Violent Story Lines in the Hebrew Scriptures," and "Violence-of-God Traditions in the New Testament," pp. 27-71.

***** Paper Proposal Due *****

April 27th (Session 10): Conclusion(s), Part Two

Reading: Nelson-Pallmeyer, Ch. 6, "Violence-of-God Traditions in the Quran," pp. 73-94.

III. Violence Outside the Bible and the Qur'an

May 2nd (Session 11): Scriptural Violence

Reading: Selengut, Ch. 1, "Fighting for God: Scriptural Obligations and Holy Wars," pp. 17-48.

Video: Excerpt from *In the Name of God: Scenes from the Extreme*

May 4th (Session 12): Apocalyptic Violence

Reading:

(1) Selengut, Ch. 3, "Apocalyptic Violence," pp. 95-139.

(2) Juergensmeyer, Ch. 8, "Cosmic War," pp. 148-166.

Video: Excerpt from Frontline: *Apocalypse!*

May 9th (Session 13): Violence, Gender, and the Body

Reading:

- (1) Selengut, Ch. 5, "Religious Suffering, Martyrdom, and Sexual Violence," pp. 183-221.
- (2) Fareed Zakaria, "How to Stop the Contagion," *Newsweek* 1 August 2005, p. 40; online at <http://www.fareedzakaria.com/articles/newsweek/080105.html>.
- (3) Christopher Dickey, "Women of Al Qaeda," *Newsweek* 12 December 2005, pp. 27-34, 36; online at <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/10315095/site/newsweek/>.

Video: Excerpt from *Avoiding Armageddon*, Episode 3: "The New Face of Terror: Upping the Ante"

May 11th (Session 14): Jewish and Christian Case Studies

Reading:

- (1) Juergensmeyer, Chs. 2-3, "Soldiers for Christ," and "Zion Betrayed," pp. 19-60.
- (2) Aref M. Al-Khattar, "Jewish Justifications," and "Christian Justifications," in *Religion and Terrorism: An Interfaith Perspective* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 47-59.

May 16th (Session 15): Christian Domestic Terrorism: A Deeper Look

Reading:

- (1) Rev. Michael Bray, *A Time to Kill: A Study Concerning the Use of Force and Abortion* (Portland, OR: Advocates for Life Publications, 1994), 15-61.
- (2) Rev. Paul Hill, "I Shot an Abortinist," online at http://www.armyofgod.com/PHill_ShortShot.html.
- (3) Dallas A. Blanchard and Terry J. Prewitt, "Violence against Abortion and the Abortion of Violence," in *Religious Violence and Abortion: The Gideon Project* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1993), 250-272.

Online Resources:

- (1) Paul Hill Memorial Tour: <http://www.christiangallery.com/PaulHillTour.html>.
- (2) Official Paul Hill Website: <http://www.armyofgod.com/Paulhillindex.html>.

***** Rough Draft of Essay Due in Class *****

May 18th (Session 16): Islamic Case Studies

Primary Reading: Osama bin Laden, "Declaration of *Jihad*," and "To the Americans," in *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden* (ed. Bruce Lawrence; trans. James Howarth; London & New York: Verso Books, 2005), 23-30 and 160-172.

Secondary Reading:

- (1) Juergensmeyer, Ch. 4, "Islam's 'Neglected Duty'," pp. 61-84.
- (2) Aref M. Al-Khattar, "Islamic Justifications," in *Religion and Terrorism: An Interfaith Perspective* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 61-68.

Optional Reading: J. Harold Ellens, "Jihad in the Qur'an, Then and Now," in *The Destructive Power of Religion: Violence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Volume 3: Models and Cases of Violence in Religion* (ed. J. Harold Ellens; Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 39-52.

IV. Implications and Conclusions

May 23rd (Session 17): Implications for the Study of Religion

Reading: Lincoln, Chs. 1-3 and Appendices A-D, "The Study of Religion in the Current Political Movement," "Symmetric Dualisms: Bush and bin Laden on October 7," and "*Jihads*, Jeremiads, and the Enemy Within," pp. 1-50 and 93-107.

May 25th (Session 18): Where Do We Go From Here? Part One

Reading: Nelson-Pallmeyer, Chs. 7-9, "Room for Doubt?" "Saved by Enemies," and "Saved by Doubt," pp. 95-149.

May 30th (Session 19): Where Do We Go From Here? Part Two

Reading:

- (1) Juergensmeyer, Ch. 11, "The Mind of God," pp. 219-249.
- (2) Selengut, "Conclusion: Toward a Holistic Approach to Religion and Violence," pp. 223-241.

June 1st (Session 20): Conclusion to Course

***** Final Draft due by noon in my office on Tuesday, June 6th *****