



CET Syllabus of Record

Program: CET Jordan

Course Title: (AM/RELS 372) Ideology vs. Faith: Roots of Religious Conflict

Total Hours: 45

Recommended Credits: 3

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

Language of Instruction: English

Prerequisites/Requirements: None

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 these religions has been a source of joy and hope, resulting in peaceful co-existence and respect for others. In this same region, a series of conflicts arose throughout history, and affected changes in geographic borders, cultural identities, and demographic distribution. The question arises – are violent conflicts the result of faith and its interpretations or ideologies shrouded in beliefs?

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, Sunni and Shi'a, and the West's war on terrorism.

This syllabus explores the nature of the Abrahamic religions, delving deeper into their legitimacy and how they are disseminated and received by believers, and shedding light on the roots of the differences between them, which later turned into conflict. Emphasis is placed on the formation of identity and the creation of majority/minority dynamics through varying interpretations, moderate and extreme, of religious texts. A comparative approach is taken to explore how these faiths and their followers view and relate to each other.

Students are encouraged to reflect on the power dynamics that arise because of standards derived from a divine energy that cannot be discussed, resisted, or rejected, and how they affect relationships and communities, particularly when it comes to expressing opinions or practicing personal beliefs that do not align with those of the majority.

The course leverages Amman to visit sites that are directly related to course topics, for example: a crusader castle, important pilgrimage sites, and local religious institutions that are on the front lines of discussions regarding religion and conflict. Students may visit a mosque to draw links to the Arab Spring and mass movements or visit a church to learn about regional Christian history and local building laws that dictate ratios for churches and mosques.

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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.
- 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.
- Learn to adopt a respectful and academic perspective on the topic through the course material, class trips, and group discussions, without prejudice or stereotypes.
- Understand dynamics between major religions and freedom of expression/practice for non-dominant faiths.

Course Requirements

Class attendance, as outlined in the CET Attendance Policy, is critical for success in the course. Students are expected to 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 local community members.
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 is discussed during the first class to assist students.

Grading

The final grade is determined as follows:

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| • Participation | 20% |
| • Textual Analysis | 20% |
| • Homework and class readings | 10% |
| • Quizzes | 10% |

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- Paper 15%
- Presentation 10%
- Final Exam 15%

Readings

- 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.
- 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 Judensstaat – 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.

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- 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.

Outline of Course Content

Course topics are covered in approximately one week each.

Judaism

Topic 1—Conflict in Scripture

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

Topic 2—Conflict in History

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

Topic 3—Conflict in Contemporary Middle East politics

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

Christianity

Topic 4—Conflict in Scripture

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

Topic 5—Conflict in History

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

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Topic 6—Conflict in Contemporary Middle East politics

- 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

- What is Jihad جهاد?
- Islam, the ‘People of the Book’ and the infidels/*kufaar*.
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Topic 8—Conflict in History

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

Topic 9—Conflict in Contemporary Middle East politics

- 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

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