

## **Syllabus. Violence and Religion. RELIGST 2VR3.**

Fall 2018. McMaster University, Religious Studies Department.

Tuesday & Friday, 11:30 AM – 12:20 PM; September 4 – December 4, 2018.

Instructor: Max Kennel ([kennem12@mcmaster.ca](mailto:kennem12@mcmaster.ca))

Office Hours: University Hall (basement), by appointment.

### **Course Description**

Religion and violence are often linked together in popular culture, news media, and academic discourse, frequently with the implication that religion necessarily leads to violence. This course provides critical resources for understanding both religion and violence by addressing major intersections of the two terms. By examining texts from the disciplines of religious studies, critical theory, and philosophy this course provides a broad overview of major contemporary theories and examples that both explain and critique religion and violence.

*Readings will be made available as a course-pack and/or for download on Avenue to Learn.*

### **Requirements and Evaluation:**

Participation \_\_\_\_\_ 25%

Students are expected to prepare for each class by carefully and thoroughly reading all assigned materials. A high participation grade requires close reading and attention to course texts throughout the term, demonstrated by engaged questions during class discussion.

Preparation Paper \_\_\_\_\_ 20%

A minimum 5 page and maximum 8 page essay that critically defines both religion and violence each on their own, and concludes with a section that addresses their relationship. Preparation papers must make substantial reference to at least two course readings and their perspectives on religion and violence. All essays must be typed, double-spaced, 12 pt. font in Times New Roman.

Mid-Term Quiz \_\_\_\_\_ 25%

The mid-term quiz will test basic knowledge of the theories of violence covered in the first six weeks of class, covering both readings and lecture material. The quiz will be made available on Avenue to Learn during reading week.

Final Essay \_\_\_\_\_ 30%

A minimum 15 page and maximum 20 page essay comparing two perspectives on the relationship between violence and religion, with substantial and critical reference to at least two course readings. Students are encouraged to consult with the instructor on their topics.

## Course Schedule

### Week 1. Introduction to the Course

- September 4<sup>th</sup> Karen Armstrong, "[The Myth of Religious Violence](#)." *The Guardian*.
- September 7<sup>th</sup> John D. Carlson, "Religion and Violence: Coming to Terms with Terms," in *The Blackwell Companion to Religion and Violence* (7-20).

### Week 2. What is Religion? What is Violence?

- September 25<sup>th</sup> J.Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious" (269-284), and Daniel Boyarin & Carlin Barton, *Imagine No Religion: How Modern Abstractions Hide Ancient Realities* (1-10).
- September 28<sup>th</sup> Bruce Lawrence and Aisha Karim, "Introduction" in *On Violence* (1-15).

### Week 3. Is Religion Violent? (For and Against)

- September 11<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God* (1-15).

### Week 4. Is Religion Violent? (For and Against)

- September 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence* (3-14).

### Week 5. What are the Origins of Violence? (Secular and Religious Responses)

- October 2<sup>nd</sup> George Bataille, *Theory of Religion* (9-25).
- October 5<sup>th</sup> René Girard, "Generative Scapegoating" (73-105).

### Week 6. Reading Week. October 8-14. Mid-Term Quiz Available.

### Week 7. Is Religion Violent? (Against the Question)

- October 16<sup>th</sup> Grace M. Jantzen, *Foundations of Violence* (3-11).
- October 19<sup>th</sup> Grace M. Jantzen, *Violence to Eternity* (1-9). [not in course-pack]

### Week 8. Case Studies in Religion and Violence #1. Terrorism

- October 23<sup>rd</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> James & Brenda Lutz, "What is Terrorism?" in *Terrorism* (1-14).

### Week 9. Case Studies in Religion and Violence #2. War

- October 30<sup>th</sup> and November 2<sup>nd</sup> Caroline Holmqvist, "Introduction," in *Policing Wars* (1-16) and "[Doesn't religion cause most of the conflict in the world?](#)" *The Guardian*.

### Week 10. Case Studies in Religion and Violence #3. Alienation

- November 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Rahel Jaeggi, "[Rethinking Alienation](#)" (podcast) and/or *Alienation* (1-10).

### Week 11. Case Studies in Religion and Violence #4. Economy

- November 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Göran Therborn, "The Killing Fields of Inequality" (579-589).

### Week 12. Case Studies in Religion and Violence #5. Violence Against Women

- November 20<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Audre Lorde "The Master's Tools will never dismantle the Master's House," (25-28), Marie Fortune and Cindy Enger, "Violence Against Women and the Role of Religion" (1-7).

Week 13. November 27<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> Review Sessions.

Week 14. December 4<sup>th</sup> Q&A Class for Final Assignments.

### **Faculty of Social Sciences Email Communication Policy**

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all Email communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University Email account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the University from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

### **Late Policy**

Extensions for course assignments will only be granted under conditions of medical, family, or other extraordinary circumstances. All other late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 5% per day. Late assignments will not be accepted after 7 days beyond the original deadline without appropriate documentation from the Office of the Associate Dean of Social Sciences.

### **Submission of Student Work**

Course work must be submitted through Avenue to Learn in Word or PDF format.

### **Course Modifications**

The instructor and University reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The University may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of students to attend class and check their McMaster Email and course website weekly during the term, and to note any changes.

### **Academic Integrity**

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the University. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty, including, but not limited to: Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained, improper collaboration in group work, and copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

### **Accommodations**

Academic accommodation of students with disabilities Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail at sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for Academic

Accommodation of Students with Disabilities 6 (<http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicAccommodationStudentsWithDisabilities.pdf>).

### **Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observations**

Information on accommodations for Religious, Indigenous, and Spiritual observations can be found here: <https://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicAccommodation-Observances.pdf>

### **Use of Technology**

The classroom is a professional environment. Computers/laptops are allowed so long as they are used for educational purposes (e.g., note taking, group work, etc.). Using your laptop for Facebook/social media or surfing the internet is not acceptable.

### **Accessibility**

The course outline and other materials can be made available in an accessible format upon request.