

WORLD RELIGIONS, DIPLOMACY, AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION
S-CAR CONF 653
Fall 2013
George Mason University

Dr. Marc Gopin
703-993-4473
Email: mgopin@gmu.edu
Office hours: By appointment –email is the most efficient way of communication

DATES AND TIMES:

Oct. 19, Nov. 9, 10, 23, 24, Dec. 7; ALL DAYS 10AM-5PM
Room: Founder's Hall 468, Arlington Campus

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is designed to analyze the ways in which world religions play a role in conflict, war, peace making and conflict resolution. Every religion has a broad range of cultural resources and values that have formed the basis of personal and communal values that prevent or successfully manage conflict. On the other hand, war, violence and repression have been justified at one time or another by important representatives of every major religion. Understanding each religion's values, world view, and, especially, the hermeneutics through which the religion changes and evolves, are the keys to discovering conflict resolution methodologies that may be effective in global and domestic violent contexts in which religion is playing some role.

Analyzing the role of religion in these phenomena is particularly challenging due to the fact that human beings come to be engaged in war or peace making out of a host of complex motivating factors, only one of which may be their religious beliefs and practices. Furthermore, religious language is often used as a mask by political leaders and perpetrators of violence that hides other motivating factors that may be less noble or persuasive to their cause.

Key questions that should be kept in mind as we explore these issues include: What are the warrants for making war and making peace in a given religious tradition? Are they at odds with each other or do they complement each other? Do they emanate historically from competing visions within the same religion? How do these varying traditions affect current practice and belief? What is the role of change and evolution in the religion's practices and beliefs, and how does change occur? How would you attempt to disentangle multiple motivations for war or peace among religious people? Is religious motivation a mask for economic, ethnic, or psychological needs? Always? Sometimes? For political leaders but not for followers? What would you do in a given region of the world where religion played a major role in violence? Would you attempt to secularize the public, redirect the religious motivations, or repress the violent representatives of religion? Would you attempt to employ a variety of conflict resolution strategies? If so, which ones, problem-solving workshops, mediation strategies, or psychodynamic approaches to interpersonal reconciliation? What is religious violence? Is it a more authentic or less authentic expression of a religion? How do you go about answering this question, by taking a poll of co-religionists, studying the primary sources of that tradition, or imposing a value that you and many others are convinced is universal, e.g., that killing of innocents by terror, for whatever reason, cannot be sanctioned by decent religion? Can you know what a religion has truly meant to its adherents if you only speak to or study male representatives of that faith? Is self-described religious

peace making that advocates for and relates to one side only to be considered peacemaking or conflict resolution, or is it something else? These are but a fraction of the questions that are raised by our subject matter. Some questions will be addressed in class. Other questions I would like you to ponder as you prepare innovative research.

REQUIRED BOOKS (available for purchase at the Arlington Campus Bookstore)

Gopin, Marc. 2002. *Holy War, Holy Peace: How Religion Can Bring Peace to the Middle East*. Oxford University Press, ISBN No. 0-19-514650-6

Gopin, Marc. 2000. *Between Eden and Armageddon*. Oxford University Press, ISBN No. 0-19-513432-X

Appleby, R Scott. 1999. *Ambivalence of the Sacred*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, ISBN No. 0-8476-8555-1. (Also available online at <http://wwics.si.edu/subsites/ccpdc/pubs/apple/toc.htm>)

Johnston, Douglas. 2003. *Faith-Based Diplomacy: Trumping Realpolitik*. Oxford University Press, ISBN No. 0-19-516089-4

Johnston, Douglas et al. (Eds). 1995. *Religion: The Missing Dimension of Statecraft*. Oxford University Press, ISBN No. 0-19-510280-0

Abu-Nimer, Mohammed. 2003. *Nonviolence and Peace Building In Islam: Theory And Practice*. University Press of Florida, ISBN No. 0813027411

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Thompson, Henry. 1988. *World Religions in War and Peace*. Jefferson, NC: Mcfarland [This is out of print. See what you can find and share.]

Queen, Christopher S. & Sallie B. King. 1996. *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*. State University of New York Press, ISBN No. 0-7914-2844-3

Said, Abdul Aziz, Nathan C. Funk & Ayse S. Kadayifci (Eds.). 2001. *Peace and conflict resolution in Islam: Precept and practice*. University Press of America, ISBN No. 0761820078

Smock, David (Ed.). 2002. *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding* United States Institute of Peace Press (USIP Press), ISBN No. 1-929223-35-8, Available Through: Baker & Taylor Books;Blackwell North America

REQUIRED EXCERPTS FROM BOOKS OR ARTICLES (available on e-reserve*):

Mitchell, C.R. "Psychological Dimensions of Conflict," in idem, *The Structure of International Conflict*. St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1981, pp. 71-98.

Stenger, Mary Ann. "Gadamer's Hermeneutics as a Model for Cross-Cultural Understanding and Truth in Religion," in *Religious Pluralism and Truth: Essays on Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Thomas Dean. Albany: State University Press of New York, 1995. pp. 151-168.

Montville, Joseph V. "Psychoanalytic Enlightenment and the Greening of Diplomacy" in Volkan, Vamik D., Montville, Joseph V., Julius, Demetrios A., *The Psychodynamics of International Relationships*. Lexington: Lexington Books, 1991. vol. II, pp. 177-192.

Volkan, Vamik. "Psychological Processes in Unofficial Diplomacy Meetings" in Volkan, Vamik D., Montville, Joseph V., Julius, Demetrios A., *The Psychodynamics of International Relationships*. Lexington: Lexington Books, 1991. vol. II, pp. 207-222.

Sandole, Dennis J.D. "Paradigm, Theories, and Metaphors in Conflict and Conflict Resolution: Coherence or Confusion?" in *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice*. Ed. Dennis Sandole. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993. pp. 3-24.

* To access e-reserves:

1. Go to library.gmu.edu/reserves/ereserves.php
2. Using the drop-down boxes, select the course [CONF 653-001] and instructor [Marc Gopin]
3. Enter in the password "religion" and click "submit" to view the item. It is case sensitive.
4. To view and print an article click on the small PDF button or the Link button if available

If you experience problems with an electronic reserve item or need additional help please contact the E-Reserves Coordinator at 993.9043. If you need additional assistance please e-mail ereserves@gmu.edu.

CLASS REQUIREMENTS:

- 3 journal responses to classes and learning process: 40%
- Final exam on content of reading: 60%
- Masters S-CAR students only: Research paper on religion and conflict resolution in consultation with professor: 40% (instead of journals)

READING ASSIGNMENTS

(Assignments listed according to the author of the selection)

I. THEORY

1. Religion and Conflict Resolution: Mapping a New Field
Gopin, *Eden*, 3-86, 199-228
Johnston, *Faith-Based*, 231-258
2. The Psychological and Social Foundations of Conflict
Montville, all
Volkan, all
Sandole, all

ABOVE DUE BEFORE OCTOBER 19

3. Hermeneutics, Religion and the Psycho-Social Dynamics of Religious Conflict and Violence

Mitchell, all
Stenger, all
Appleby, 57-120

II. APPLICATIONS

4. Peacebuilding in Islam I

Abu-Nimer:

Introduction

Chapter 1, The Study of Islam, Nonviolence and Peace

Chapter 2, Islamic Principles of Nonviolence and Peacebuilding: a Framework

ABOVE DUE BEFORE November 9

5. Peacebuilding in Islam II

Abu-Nimer:

Chapter 3, Peace building and Nonviolence in a Sociocultural context: Traditional Arab-Muslim Mechanisms for Dispute Resolution (24 pgs)

Chapter 4, Nonviolent Peace-Building Initiatives in Arab-Muslim Communities: Myths and Obstacles in a Training Framework (17 pages)

Conclusion (6 pages)

6. Christian Peacemaking: Introduction, France/Germany, East Germany

Appleby, 121-167

Johnston, *Religion*, 37-63, 119-152

Appleby, 207-244

Appleby, 281-307

Gopin, *Eden*, 139-166

ABOVE DUE BEFORE NOVEMBER 23

7. Christian Peacemaking: Bosnia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, South Africa, Zimbabwe

Johnston, *Religion*, 64-118

Johnston, *Faith-Based* 124-177

8. The Arab/Israeli Conflict: Religious/Secular and Inter-Monotheistic Conflict

Gopin, *Holy War*, 3-37, 92-102

Johnston, *Faith-Based*, 91-123

ABOVE DUE BEFORE NOVEMBER 24

9. The Arab/Israeli Conflict: Religious/Secular and Inter-Monotheistic Conflict

Gopin, *Eden*, 115-138

Gopin, *Holy War*, 38-92

10. The Arab/Israeli Conflict: Abrahamic Pathways Toward Relationship Transformation

Gopin, *Holy War*, 103-143, 160-228

Gopin, *Eden*, 167-198

11. Hindu and Buddhist Contexts

Johnston, *Faith-Based*, 33-75, 76-90

12. The Question of Interfaith Dialogue

Gopin, *Holy War*, 144-159

ABOVE DUE BEFORE DECEMBER 7