

George Mason University

Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution

The Religious Response to Genocide

CONF 695 41830 B02 Summer 2011

7:20 pm - 10:00 pm TR Arlington: Founders Hall 312

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Course Description and Objectives:

NEVER AGAIN.... These are words that haunt me.... As a student of the Holocaust I had uttered these words many times and yet with genocide occurring in Rwanda, I chose to speak to my congregation week after week about a white bronco and O.J. Simpson. I have never forgiven myself for not being more proactive in speaking against the horrors of the genocide in Rwanda. I am not naive enough to suspect that my one voice would have been enough to make a difference in the lives of the victims, and yet I believe I missed an opportunity to educate and perhaps impact upon members of the community I serve. One never knows who knows whom and what words or actions may make a difference. So...I taught this course for high school students who were seeking college credit and a similar course at another local university.

My goals are to look at genocide and religion and attempt to help students understand how one can respond to genocide and when in the midst of genocide, how others have responded. I also want students to wrestle with "what I might have done..." We also will take a look at what role G-d plays in the midst of genocide and whether G-d is responsible. We will examine the Holocaust in Europe in the most depth, although references will be made to Armenia, Darfur and Rwanda. Students will be able to examine other areas where there has been genocide or genocide like behavior and will be teaching about these areas to the class.

Finally, this class will challenge each individual to take ownership for seeking possible ways to prevent the future occurrences of similar atrocities.

Required Readings:

Adam Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*, Second Edition

Viktor E. Frankl, Man's *Search for Meaning*

Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*

Paul Rusesabagina, *An Ordinary Man*

Elie Wiesel, The *Trial of G-d*

Recommended Readings:

Omer Bartov and Phyllis Mack, *In G-d's Name: Genocide and Religion in the Twentieth Century*

Richard Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz: History, Theology, and Contemporary Judaism*

Assignments and Evaluation

Short Term Essay#1 (3-5 pages) 20% Due on June 16

Classroom Participation (will be measured by in class assignments to be given by discretion of instructor and by involvement in class discussions) 10%

Group or Individual Assignment (Details will be discussed early in the semester) 40%

These will be on June 30 and July 5

Final Assignment (8-10 pages) 30% Due on the Final Day of Class and is in lieu of a Final Exam

Outline of Sessions (Subject to Change, based upon speaker's schedules)

June 7-An introduction to Genocide; Guest Speaker

June 9- How Would I Have Responded if I Were German.... How would I have responded if I had been in the concentration camps? Reading: *Man's Search for Meaning*

June 14-Guest Speaker(s) Real Life Experiences in the Midst of Genocide...Reading: *Survival in Auschwitz*

June 16- First Paper Due; Genocide Film

June 21-The Power of Words: What We Say Makes a Difference...Reading, *An Ordinary Man* and handouts

June 23- An Open Session to Meet Needs of Students: Topics TBA

June 28- Who is Responsible: What Other Clergy Say about Genocide (Guest Speaker(s) Reading: To be Assigned

June 30, July 5 Class Presentations; Reading to be Assigned

July 7- Where Does G-d Fit In? Reading: ***The Trial of G-d***

Who is Responsible: What Other Clergy Say about Genocide (Guest Speaker(s))

Reading: To be Assigned

July 9-Genocide and Religion: What do Others Have to Say about the Religious Response? Reading: Students will read sections ***from In G-d's Name*** or ***After Auschwitz*** based upon areas of interest

July 14 and 16-Genocide Film and Guest Speaker(s)