

RELIGION, CONFLICT ANALYSIS AND RESOLUTION
S-CAR CONF 399/CONF 695
Spring 2012
George Mason University

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Office hours: By appointment –email is the most efficient way of communication

DATES AND TIMES:

This is an online course so there are no in-class meetings.

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 and on a 4-hour reserve at the Arlington Campus Library):

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 (available for purchase at the Arlington Campus Bookstore and on a 4-hour reserve at the Arlington Campus Library):

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 in blackboard*):

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 blackboard:

1. Go to <https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp>
2. Login using your GMU email login ID and password
3. Click on the tab in the top right-hand corner that says courses
4. Scroll through the course list until you find the appropriate course and click on it
5. Select "Course Content" from the list on the left-hand side of the screen
6. The reading excerpts will be available in the appropriate learning module

CLASS REQUIREMENTS (More details on assignments in blackboard.):

CONF 399 STUDENTS:

- 12 journal responses to videos, readings and learning process: 30%
- Midterm exam on content of reading: 30%
- Final exam on content of reading: 40%

CONF 695 STUDENTS:

- 12 journal responses to videos, readings and learning process: 30%
- A 20-25 page paper showing the role that religion plays in a conflict of your choice using the theories presented in the class: 30%
- Final exam on content of reading: 40%

Course Learning Modules

(assignments listed according to the author of the selection)

The class is composed of 12 learning modules, each of which has video lectures on the topic, assigned readings, and a journal component. Each module is laid out in detail in the "Course Content" folder in blackboard. Below you will find the specific reading requirements for each learning module.

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

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

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, 168-308
 - Gopin, *Eden*, 139-166

MIDTERM EXAM ON THE FIRST SIX MODULES DUE AT 11:59 PM ON SUNDAY MARCH 11, 2012

7. Christian Peacemaking: Bosnia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, South Africa, Zimbabwe
 - Johnston, *Religion*, 64-118, 177-257
 - 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

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

FINAL EXAM ON THE REMAINING SIX MODULES FOR CONF 399 STUDENTS AND ALL TWELVE MODULES FOR CONF 695 STUDENTS DUE AT 11:59 PM ON SUNDAY MAY 13, 2012

HONOR CODE:

All George Mason University students have agreed to abide by the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code. You can find a copy of the Honor Code at academicintegrity.gmu.edu. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee for review. With specific regards to plagiarism, three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. If you have questions about when the contributions of others to your work must be acknowledged and appropriate ways to cite those contributions, please talk with the professor.

S-CAR requires that all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit a student's work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. S-CAR's policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace or substitute for it.