

RSOC 188, *Religion and Violence*

William J. Dohar, Ph.D.

Summer Session I, 2009

Course Description: Most of the wars being fought in the world today have at some place in their complex ideologies religious incentives. Religion and religious attitudes are powerful sources of transformation but also destruction. War is a major theme in this course, but in a sense war is only one result of enthusiasms, memories, and ideas that can give a violent edge to religion. Other themes include images of God and their tendency to violence, radical dualism, sexuality and violence, religious exclusion, and apocalyptic terror.

Course Readings: Two books are used in this course, Charles Kimball's *When Religion Becomes Evil* and Sam Harris' *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason*. All other readings are in Angel. All students should have an Angel account—for course readings, picking up discussion questions and being involved in online discussions. The password for this course on Angel is **Jerusalem**. There will be regular brief reading assignments from the Christian Scriptures (the Bible); students may consult a printed copy or find pertinent passages online at: <http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/>

Course Requirements: Since this is a third-level course in Religious Studies, there are reasonable but higher expectations in learning and performance, especially where writing and discussions are concerned. One fundamental expectation (mine and, I hope, yours) is an **intellectual commitment** to the subject. This shows up in regular attendance—a physical and intellectual presence—along with a careful, critical and timely reading of all assigned texts. **Participation** is crucial; please bring every assigned **text to class** on the day due so that participation can be all the more meaningful; failure to do so will affect your participation score. Two short quizzes and a final **exam** (essay) chart factual and conceptual understanding of course themes. You have choices in written work: two brief **essays** (3-4 pp) chosen out of four possible topics **or** a single essay of greater length (8-10 pp) on a topic of your choice. If you go with the latter, you need to clear your topic with me no later than July 2.

Course Credit:

Writing:	30%
Participation:	35% (including two 5-point online discussions)
Quizzes:	20%
Final Exam:	15%

Due dates, late submissions, plagiarism, etc.: All assignments—reading and writing—are due the day assigned. Extensions are rare but possible, depending on justifiable circumstances and consultation with me. For the sake of fairness, some **grade reduction results with later submissions**. The key here is to plan ahead and meet the deadlines as best you can. Avoid reaching a crisis situation; if in doubt (about this or any other requirement), **see me** and we can work things out. Any student with a learning disability should see me immediately with paperwork from the Drahnann Center so that we can work out necessary accommodations. **Plagiarism in any form** will result in certain failure of the project in question and may result in a failing grade for the entire course according to University policies and procedures (please see: <http://www.scu.edu/studentlife/resources/academicintegrity/>).

Class Meetings

R Jun 18 Introduction to the Course

Religion and Violence in the Judeo-Christian Tradition

M Jun 22 The Nature and Types of Violence
*Shirley Jackson, "The Lottery"
*J. Galtung, "Religions, Hard and Soft"

W Jun 24 Violent God, Violent People?
**"Eve's Various Children" (The Brothers Grimm)
Psalm 33; Genesis 3: 1-24; 18:16-33; 22:1-19; Exodus 14:19-31; 15:1-21
**Dies irae* ("Day of Wrath")
**"The Battle Hymn of the Republic"

TH Jun 25 The Bigger Picture **Paper Option 1**
*Raine Eisler, *The Chalice and The Blade* (excerpts)

M Jun 29 Patriarchy and Power
C. Kimball, chs. 1-4
"Jesus Camp"

Violence, Religion, and the Body

W Jul 1 Why God Must Die: Atonement Theology **Paper Option 2**
*J. Dennis Weaver, "Violence in Christian Theology"
QUIZ 1

TH Jul 2 **Online Discussion:** Sexuality and Violence
*Peter Lewis Allen, "The Heinous Sin of Self-Pollution"
Leviticus, chapters 11-12, 15-20

M Jul 6 Martyrs and Heroes **Paper Option 3**
*Lacey Baldwin Smith, "The Debate over Definition"
*Martyrdom of a Young Christian Woman (the death of St. Perpetua)

Sam Harris and 'The End of Faith'

W Jul 8 Harris, chs 1-4: Discussion

TH Jul 9 **Online Discussion:** Sam Harris, Right or Wrong?
Harris, chs 5-Afterword

Religion and Waging War

M Jul 13 Can War be Holy?
C. Kimball, chs 5-6
*G. Weigel, "Moral Clarity in a Time of War"

W Jul 15 The Ultimate Religious War: Apocalypse **Paper Option 4**
*C. Berlet, "Dances With Devils" **Longer Paper Due**
QUIZ 2

TH Jul 16 Religion and Violence in the Afterlife: Why Heaven Has Gates
Ezekiel, 38, 39; Matthew, chs 24: 4-44; 25: 31-46
**Left Behind* and its Critics'

Religion and Peace

M Jul 20 Spirituality and Alternatives to Violence
Luke 6: 27-35
C. Kimball, ch 7

W Jul 22 Religion and Violence in Retrospect

TH Jul 23 Final Exam

Grading Scale:

A	100 – 95	exceptional
A-	94-90	excellent
B+	89-87	very good
B	86-83	good
B-	82-80	solid performance
C+	79-76	average
C	75-72	
C-	71-69	
D	68-64	
D-	63-60	
F	< 59	

Contact Info:

Office Hours: 9:30 – 10:30 TR
and by appt
Email: wdohar@scu.edu
Office: 305 Kenna