Course Description:

This course interrogates ancient and contemporary discourses on martyrdom in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Crucial questions to explore include: What is martyrdom and its relationship to ancient notions of a noble death? Why are notions of martyrdom so prevalent among Christian, Jewish, and Muslim fundamentalist groups today? How is the Torah, The Bible, and the Quran used to legitimate violence against the self and others? And, who counts as a Martyr and who does not? These questions intersect with various contemporary religious and political concerns including: religious violence, imperialism, colonialism, apocalyptic groups (e.g. Jonestown Branch Davidians), fundamentalism (Jewish, Christian, and Muslim), suicide bombings, church and school Shootings, and the rise of ISIS. In the last part of the course, students will also reflect on the multiplicity of ways in which martyrdom discourses have shaped their religious formation and spiritualities.

INSTRUCTOR: Roberto Mata
EMAIL: rmata@scu.edu
OFFICE HOURS: TBD
OFFICE: (300j)

CORE CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES:

Students taking this course will:

1.1 Describe and compare the central religious ideas and practices from several traditions or within one, and from at least two globally distinct regions. (Students will fulfill this core objective through group presentations, worship site visits, as well as through midterm and final examinations).
1.2 Use critical approaches to reflect on their own beliefs and the religious dimensions of human existence. (Students will fulfill this core objective through an introduction to the theories and methods from the study of religion, class discussions, reading responses, and both midterm and final exams).

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. Introduce the origins, development, and impact of notions of martyrdom in the Abrahamic traditions.
2. Explore the influence of martyrdom discourses on the American religious traditions, politics, and culture.
3. Provide theoretical tools and methods from the academic study of religion to help students interpret the various discourses on martyrdom as well as contemporary occurrences.
4. Help students engage global dialogues about the ways in which martyrdom intersects with imperialism, fundamentalism, migration, genocide, colonialism, slavery, apocalyptic war, and religious violence.
5. Challenge students to reflect on the influence of martyrdom discourses on their own spiritualities, traditions, and experiences.
6. Encourage students to map the implications of martyrdom discourses for interreligious dialogue and the common good.

REQUIRED TEXTS:


Additional reading material will be posted on Camino Course Site. There you should also find other course related materials including: reading response questions, field education experience response, drop boxes, online discussions, exam study guides, rubrics and other handouts.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT METHODS:

- **Class Participation (15%)**. Students will achieve 15% of their course grade through: (1) on-time attendance; (2) preparation (i.e. completion of readings assignments or discussion questions); and (3) thoughtful participation in course activities (e.g. small and large group discussions, and online discussions, and site visits). [Fulfills core curriculum objective]
1.1. Students will describe and compare various representations of Martyrdom in the sacred texts of Jews, Muslims, and Christians.

- **Reading Responses (20%)** Students are required to post weekly reading responses (1-2 pages each) on Camino throughout the quarter. Each response must engage an issue/theme/question in the readings from the students’ social location. **[Fulfills core curriculum objective 1.2. Students will have the opportunity to reflect on their own beliefs, religious experiences, or faith journeys through reading responses, as well as through class and online discussions.]**

- **Mid-term Examination (25%):** An essay that explores a relevant theme, issue, or practice of interest in the contemporary context, and that engages the question of martyrdom in one or all of three religious traditions (10 pages). The essay must engage the interpretive approach of at least one major thinker from the academic study of religion. **[Fulfills core curriculum objective 1.1 and 1.2. The midterm exam challenges students to identify, describe and interpret the role of martyrdom within sacred texts, contemporary issues, and religious practices. Students must also articulate the ways in which their social location impinges on their interpretative process.]**

- **Group Presentations (15%):** In class, multi-media group presentation on a contemporary issue or problem related to martyrdom in ancient or contemporary contexts. **[Fulfills core curriculum objective 1.1. This collaborative effort entails both description and comparison of Martyrdom themes within three distinct religious traditions, as well as serious engagement with the theory and methods from the study of religion.]**

- **Final Examination (25%):** Students will write a 15-page paper requiring description and comparison of select martyrdom accounts and its implications for interreligious dialogue and the common good. The paper must employ analytical frameworks from the study of religion and engage contemporary issues/problems related to the politics of martyrdom and its intersection with other topics (e.g. Religious Violence, Colonialism, Fundamentalism, Terrorism, and Apocalypticism). Students must also reflect on the ways in which their socio-religious location shaped their approach to the paper. **[Fulfills core curriculum objective 1.1 and 1.2. Students also employ critical tools to reflect on their own faith journeys and to articulate constructive solutions to the issues they identify.]**

**GRADING SCALE:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94%-100%</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90%-93%</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87%-89%</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83%-86%</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80%-82%</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77%-79%</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73%-76%</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70%-72%</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67%-69%</td>
<td>D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63%-66%</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60%-62%</td>
<td>D-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59% &amp; below</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The instructor will provide written feedback on reading responses, readings responses, and presentations. Group project feedback will be communicated via email or during office hours.
OTHER INFORMATION:

Disability Accommodation Policy

To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources located in The Drahmann Center in Kenna 101, (408) 554-4318; TTY (408) 554-5445. Students must provide documentation of a disability to Disability Resources prior to receiving accommodations.

Sexual Harassment and Discrimination (Title IX)

Santa Clara University upholds a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination, harassment and sexual misconduct. If you (or someone you know) have experienced discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence or stalking, I encourage you to tell someone promptly. For more information, please go to www.scu.edu/studentlife/about/osl.cfm and click on the link for the University’s Gender- Based Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct Policy or contact the University's EEO and Title IX Coordinator, Belinda Guthrie, at 408-554-3043 or by email at bguthrie@scu.edu. Reports may be submitted online www.scu.edu/osl/report or anonymously through Ethics point: www.ethicspoint.com or http://stage-www.scu.edu/hr/quick-links/ethics-point

Academic Integrity Policy

The University is committed to academic excellence and integrity. Students are expected to do their own work and to cite any sources they use. A student who is guilty of a dishonest act in an examination, paper, or other work required for a course, or who assists others in such an act, may, at the discretion of the instructor, receive a grade of F for the course. In addition, a student found guilty of a dishonest act may be subject to sanctions up to and including dismissal from the University as a result of the student judicial process as described in the Community Handbook. A student who violates copyright laws, including those covering the copying of software programs, or who knowingly alters official academic records from this or any other institution is subject to similar disciplinary action. For more information on the university’s policy on academic integrity see: http://www.scu.edu/provost/policies/upload/Academic%20Integrity%20Protocol.pdf

PEDAGOGY:

To create a collaborative, democratic, and empowering learning environment, this course will implement a form of Border Pedagogy. Such a pedagogical approach acknowledges the shifting borders of power and knowledge, and links the educational enterprise with the struggle for a more just and democratic society. The instructor’s version of this approach entails five interrelated
stages: Critical Awakening, Journeying, Crossing, Negotiating, and Transforming. Such an approach will translate into the following practical dimensions of our learning practices/experiences: (1) students and the instructor will reflect on their own socio-religious location and the ways it shapes their understanding of the three monotheistic religions; (2) students will collaborate with one another and engage in critical and constructive dialogue for class projects and discussions; (3) students will identify and address key issues/themes/ritual practices in the three religious traditions; (4) students will learn traditional and non-traditional paradigms for understanding religion, as well as methods of interpretation; (5) students will be prepared to articulate the implications of course content and methodologies for the struggle towards a more egalitarian society.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week &amp; Date</th>
<th>LECTURE TOPICS and READING ASSIGNMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wk. 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>PART I. “What is Martyrdom?”</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>April 3, 5, 7</strong></td>
<td><strong>Origins, Definitions, and Early Debates</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please read the primary sources marked in Red and ONE of the required readings for each class meeting.

**Required Readings (SELECT ONE of the required readings for each class session):**

**Monday:** *The Politics of Dying for God (Introduction).*  
No reading due

**Wednesday:** *Defining Martyrdom*  
- Revelation 2:13  
- Daniel Boyarin, “Whose Martyrdom is This, Anyway,” 93-126.  
- Hussein Cicek, Martyrdom in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (PDF),  

**Friday:** *Theorizing Martyrdom*  
- Elizabeth Castelli, “Performing Persecution, Theorizing Martyrdom,” 32-68.  

**Recommended:**  

| Wk. 2 | **Martyrdom in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam** |
Apr 10, 12, 14

**Required Readings:**

**Monday:** Jewish Martyrs and a Noble Death
- Maccabees Chs. 6-7, Daniel 6

**Wednesday:** Early Christian Martyrs
- Revelation 2:12-17; The Martyrdom of Polycarp

**Friday:** Martyrdom in Islam
- Surah 3:169-170

**Recommended Readings:**
- Smith, *Fools, Martyrs, Traitors*, 3-20.

Wk. 3
Apr 17, 19, 21

**Part II. Who can become a Martyr? Qualifications, Justifications, and Benefits**

**Required:**

**Monday:** Justification for Martyrdom
- 4 Maccabees Chs. 5-18

**Wednesday:** Voluntary Martyrdom
**Friday: Rewards of the Martyr**
- Surah 2:154
- David Cook, “Legal Definitions, Boundaries, and Rewards of the Martyr” (Martyrdom and Islam), 31-35.

**Recommended Readings:**

---

**Wk. 4:**
**Apr 24, 26, 28**

**Remembering the Martyrs:**
**The Politics of Commemoration**

**Required:**

**Monday: Writing Martyrdom**

**Wednesday: Remembering the Martyrdom of Dietrich Bonhoeffer**
- Luke 22:19
- Castelli, Collective Memory and the Meaning of the Past, (Martyrdom and Memory), 10-30.

**Friday: Commemorating Palestinian Women Martyrs**
- Surah 3:139-40
- David Cook, Martyrdom and Islam, 74-97.

**Recommended:**
Wk. 5: May 1, 3, 5

Martyrdom and Mysticism

### Required

**Monday: Contemplative Death**

**Wednesday: The Blood of Martyrs**
- Acts 6

**Friday: Sufi Martyrs**

### Recommended:

Wk. 6: Apr. 8, 10, 12

**PART III. Political Martyrdom: Colonialism, State Repression, and Civil War**

### Required

**Monday: Palestinian Anti-Colonial Struggles**
- Lotte Buch Segal, “The Grammar of Suffering in Occupied Palestine,” in No Place for Grief, 26-47.
- Frantz Fanon, “On Violence” in *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1-50.

**Wednesday: Martyrs in The Third Reich**
### Friday: The Jesuit Martyrs (Romero and Grande)

**Recommended:**

### Wk. 7: Racialized Martyrdom: Cases from The Civil Rights Movement

**Required**

**Monday: Jewish “Freedom” Martyrs**

**Wednesday: Martyr Luther King**
- Martin Luther King, “I have been to the Mountain Top”
- Frantz Fanon, “The Lived Experience of the Black Man” in *Black Skins/White Masks* (PDF).

**Friday: Malcolm X**

**Recommended**

### Wk. 8: Part IV. Martyrdom and Religious Intolerance
### Week 9: May 22, 24, 26

**Mosque, Church, and School Shootings**

**Required:**

**Monday: Synagogue Shootings**

**Wednesday: Columbine & The Emmanuel AME Church**

**Friday: Mosque Shootings**

**Recommended:**

---

### Week 9:

**May 29, 30-June 2**

**Part V. Martyrdom and The Common Good: Fundamentalism, “Terrorism,” and Jihad**

**Required:**

**Monday: Jewish Fundamentalism**
- *Between Terrorism and Civil War: The Al-Aqsa Intifada (Contemporary Security Studies in)* (Edited by Clive Jones, Ami Pedahzur and Associate Professor of Government Ami Pedahzur. Routledge, 2013),

**Wednesday: Christian Fundamentalism**

**Friday: Martyrdom and Jihad**


**Recommended:**

**Wk. 10:**
**June 5, 7, 9**  
**Martyrdom & Interreligious Dialogue**

**Required:**
**Monday: Martyrdom or Suicide?**

**Wednesday: Martyrdom and Interreligious Dialogue**

**Friday:** “The Pluralistic Hypothesis”
- Michael Barnes, *Religious Pluralism*, in (TRCSR), 426-442.

**Recommended:**
- Liepert, *finding a Path to Peace Our Faiths Can Share*, 157-175.

**Wk. 11:**  
**FINAL EXAMS WEEK**