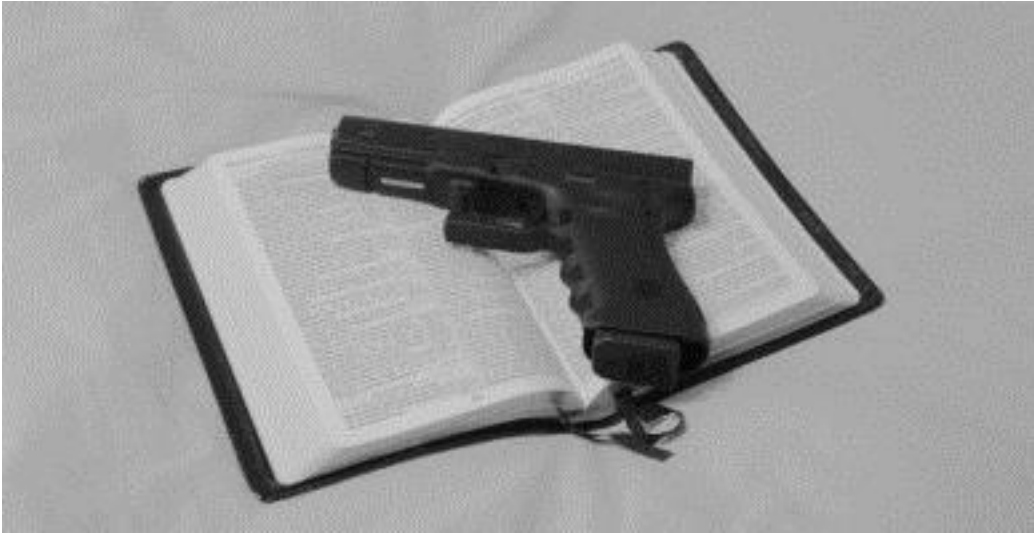


# RSOC 188, *Religion and Violence*

William J. Dohar, Ph.D.

Winter Quarter, 2017



## *Course Syllabus*

**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 they can also tend towards 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 capacity for violence, global terror and religion, radical dualism, sexual ethics and violence, religious exclusion, and apocalyptic conflicts.

**Core Learning Objectives:** This is an R-S-O-C course which, as you know, expands to “Religion and Society.” As such, our main focus is on religion and violence and how this combination occurs in various historical and contemporary **cultural settings**.

So, our first Core Learning Objective (**CLO 1**) is to **think critically and analyze diverse (and divergent) situations in which religion is crossed with violence**.

Second, we approach this broad phenomenon from **a variety of historical and theological source perspectives** including, scripture, law, fiction, documentary film, etc. How do these various cultural artifacts inform our understanding of religion-based violence? (**CLO 2**).

Since ventures into this controversial topic touch upon the core beliefs of others, we are invited **to consider our own world-views and ways of believing** (CLO 3).

Every assignment will actively pursue one or more of these objectives. (See the particular CLO in parentheses below.)

**Course materials:** We use one **book** in this course, Charles Kimball's *When Religion Becomes Evil* (Harper, 2002); all **other readings** are either found on the web or have been uploaded to our course site **at Camino**. Three **films** are also required, and so students should work out access to these films (available via Netflix, Amazon Prime, and YouTube). Our Camino course page will host at least twice-weekly **announcements** regarding the next class and will often include guide questions to assist more strategic reading and discussion. For any passages from the **Bible**, students may consult a printed copy of the scriptures or find pertinent passages online.

**Assessment, Evaluation and Feedback:** course learning objectives are achieved and assessed in three main ways—a **writing** component consisting of **five course journals** (2-3 pages). These will start either with a prompt provided by me or left to the student's imagination. Guidelines for writing journals are at our Camino course page. In a course that cries out for opinion and expression, **class participation** is a critical part of the learning experience. Since not everyone participates in the same way in a classroom, students will find each other, along with thought-out ideas and observations, in three **online discussions**. Those are three dates on which we will not meet as a class (see the schedule below). Lastly, students will get a chance to synthesize major themes of the course in take-home **final exam**.

To get a more precise look at how scoring is done in this course (and to decide what you're willing to work towards), take a look at the **"scoring rubric"** at the end of the syllabus.

**Instructor feedback** reaches students through comments on papers and online discussions and, in more general ways, during office hours.

**Course Credit** is apportioned in the following ways:

Journals (5)	30%
Class Participation	20%
Online Discussions (3)	30%
In-class writing	5%
Final Exam	15%

**Due-dates and plagiarism:** All assignments—reading and writing—are due the day assigned. **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. For other administrative issues (Academic Integrity, Disabilities), please see pp 5-6 below.

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## *Class Meetings*

### **I. Administration:**

T Jan 10 Religion, Violence, and You

### **II. Approaches to Religion and Violence:**

R Jan 12 The Nature and Types of Violence  
C. Kimball, *Introduction* and Ch 1 (*Is Religion the Problem?*)

T Jan 17 Who is God?: God Images and Violence **Journal 1** (CLO 3)<sup>1</sup>  
“Eve’s Various Children” (The Brothers Grimm)  
Psalm 33; Genesis 3: 1-24  
*Dies irae* (“Day of Wrath”)  
“The Battle Hymn of the Republic” (YouTube)

R Jan 19 Are some religions more prone to violence than others?  
J. Galtung, ‘Religions Hard and Soft’

### **III. Absolute Truth and Blind Obedience:**

T Jan 24 Can Truth be Possessed? **Journal 2** (CLO 3)  
C. Kimball, Ch 2 (*Absolute Truth Claims*)

R Jan 26 News Hour: In-Class Discussion  
Selected articles from a variety of online news sources

T Jan 31 Read C. Kimball, Ch 3 (*Blind Obedience*)

**R Feb 2** A soldier in the Army of the Lord  
**Online Discussion 1** (based on a viewing of *Jesus Camp*) (CLO 1, 2)

### **IV. Does God Demand Sacrifice?**

T Feb 7 Making Sacrifices to God  
Genesis 22:1-19  
Shirley Jackson, ‘The Lottery’ **Journal 3** (CLO 3)

R Feb 9 Violent Ends: Martyrdom  
‘Martyrs and Demons’ (from Mark Juergensmeyer’s *Terror in the Mind of God* (Ch 9)

### **V. Sexuality and Violence**

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<sup>1</sup> All journals are due by midnight (on Camino) the day assigned.

- T Feb 14 Of Gods and *Men*: Gendering God  
R. Eisler, *Chalice and the Blade* (excerpt)
- R Feb 16** Sex, Power, and Abuse  
**Online Discussion 2** (based on a viewing of *Spotlight* (CLO 1, 2))
- T Feb 21 Sexual Bars to Holiness  
Leviticus 19, 20  
Peter Lewis Allen, "The Heinous Sin of Self-Pollution"  
**Journal 4** (CLO 3)

## VI. End of Days

- R Feb 23 The Last Days are Here Again  
C. Kimball, Ch 4 (*Establishing the 'Ideal' Time*)
- T Feb 28 Do the ends always justify the means?  
C. Kimball, Ch 5 (*The End Justifies Any Means*)

## VII. War, Terrorism, and Peace:

- R Mar 2 Holy War: Fighting under God  
C. Kimball, Ch 6 (*Declaring Holy War*)
- T Mar 7 The God of Terror  
Heather Gregg, 'Defining and Distinguishing Secular and Religious Terrorism'  
**Journal 5** (CLO 3)
- R Mar 9** Jews, Arabs, and the God of Abraham  
**Online Discussion 3** (based on a viewing of *With God on Our Side* (CLO 1, 2))
- T Mar 14 Spirituality and Alternatives to Violence  
Luke 6: 27-35  
C. Kimball, ch. 7 (*An Inclusive Faith Rooted in a Tradition*)
- R Mar 16 Religion and Violence in Retrospect  
Take-home exam

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## *Administrative Matters*

**Office Hours:** 305 Kenna  
TR 11 AM - 12 (and by appointment)

**Contact Info:** [wdohar@scu.edu](mailto:wdohar@scu.edu)

**Disabilities Resources:** *If you have a disability for which accommodations may be required in this class, please contact Disabilities Resources, Benson 216, <http://www.scu.edu/disabilities> as soon as possible to discuss your needs and register for accommodations with the University. If you have already arranged accommodations through Disabilities Resources, please discuss them with me during my office hours. Students who have medical needs related to pregnancy may also be eligible for accommodations.*

*While I am happy to assist you, I am unable to provide accommodations until I have received verification from Disabilities Resources. The Disabilities Resources office will work with students and faculty to arrange proctored exams for students whose accommodations include double time for exams and/or assisted technology. (Students with approved accommodations of time-and-a-half should talk with me as soon as possible). Disabilities Resources must be contacted in advance to schedule proctored examinations or to arrange other accommodations. The Disabilities Resources office would be grateful for advance notice of at least two weeks. For more information you may contact Disabilities Resources at 408-554-4109.*

**Academic Integrity Pledge:** *The Academic Integrity pledge is an expression of the University's commitment to fostering an understanding of -- and commitment to -- a culture of integrity at Santa Clara University. The Academic Integrity pledge, which applies to all students, states:*

*I am committed to being a person of integrity. I pledge, as a member of the Santa Clara University community, to abide by and uphold the standards of academic integrity contained in the Student Conduct Code.*

*Students are expected to uphold the principles of this pledge for all work in this class. For more information about Santa Clara University's academic integrity pledge and resources about ensuring academic integrity in your work, see [www.scu.edu/academic-integrity](http://www.scu.edu/academic-integrity).*

**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/dating violence, or stalking, I encourage you to tell someone promptly. For more information, please consult the University's Gender-Based Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct Policy at <http://bit.ly/2ce1hBb> or contact the University's EEO and Title IX Coordinator, Belinda Guthrie, at 408-554-3043, [bguthrie@scu.edu](mailto:bguthrie@scu.edu). Reports may be submitted online through <https://www.scu.edu/osl/report/> or anonymously through Ethicspoint <https://www.scu.edu/hr/quick-links/ethicspoint/>*

### **Accommodations for Pregnancy and Parenting:**

*In alignment with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and with the California Education Code, Section 66281.7, Santa Clara University provides reasonable accommodations to students who are pregnant, have recently experienced childbirth,*

*and/or have medically related needs. Pregnant and parenting students can often arrange accommodations by working directly with their instructors, supervisors, or departments. Alternatively, a pregnant or parenting student experiencing related medical conditions may request accommodations through Disability Resources.*

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### *Assignment Scoring Rubric:*

All course assignments in RSOC 188 have a 5-point value (5, 10, 15 points-worth of credit). Reaching the maximum of any of these categories represents ‘**outstanding**’ work matched with the letter-grade A. The evaluation of each assignment also focuses on three areas: **critical thinking**, **expression** and **participation** (both in timeliness and overall quality). The final score of any one assignment is the average of all points scored in each of these three areas. Here follow more specific descriptions of the scoring rubric:

#### **Critical Thinking:**

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|------------|--|
| 15, 10, 5  | The work shows that the student has a real grasp of the key concepts in a reading or presentation; there’s an independence of thought and a willingness to critique respectfully the work of others as well as provide <b>solid evidence for points made</b> . This evidence appears in the form of references to content from the readings, audio presentation, videos, etc. It also helps to raise questions and comments that take the discussion to a <b>deeper</b> level. |
| 13, 9, 4   | The student has a good idea of the key concepts but shows a tendency to withhold rather than follow through with his or her ideas.   |
| 12, 8, 3   | There’s more summary of basic points than there is critical thinking.  |
| 10, 6, 2   | Effort is minimal and overly casual or repetitious of points others have made; simple agreement with a point rather than engagement.   |
| < 10, 6, 2 | There’s very little by way of critical thinking or personal involvement in the assignment. The student was a no-show.  |

#### **Expression:**

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 15, 10, 5 | The student uses well-constructed, grammatically correct sentences; expression is creative, clear, concise and logical. The writer uses vocabulary emergent in the course. There are no mistakes in spelling, usage or grammar. (This kind of correctness is <b>not so much expected</b> in discussion forums, though too little attention paid to form in those settings can soften the impact a student wants to make in those discussions.) |
|-----------|--|

13, 9, 4	There's an effort at sound and creative expression, but there's too much imprecision or mistakes in form.
12, 8, 3	The student makes his or her point but without much originality or quality of expression.
10, 6, 2	A minimalist contribution with too many errors in form; lacks focus.
< 10, 6, 2	The argument or points are sketchy and rushed; many errors in form.

**Participation (in timeliness and overall quality):**

15, 10, 5	Contributions are prompt, relevant and proactive; remarks are posted freely on all assignments within the guidelines set out for the assignment.
13, 9, 4	The overall quality of participation is good but some critical contribution is missing such as thoughtfulness, creativity, promptness, etc.
12, 8, 3	Something of the above but with greater compromises to the quality of participation.
10, 6, 2	The contribution is sketchy, hasty or off-point; errors in form make it difficult to understand or respond to
<10, 6, 2	Some important aspect of the activity is missing (e.g., one response is given when two are asked for); the central point of the discussion has been lost or not understood; contributions are minimal and the content hard to follow.

**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	