

CARLETON UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF THE HUMANITIES  
RELI 3722A “Religion and Violence” (Winter 2016)

Instructor: Prof. Johannes Wolfart  
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**OFFICE HOURS**

Office hours will be held on Mondays from 12:00-14:00.

**E-MAIL COMMUNICATION**

Carleton communications policy states that faculty must communicate with students through their Carleton email account. To ensure that this policy is upheld without too much trouble, you should send email to me via CULearn. Please be advised, further, that students can normally expect up to a 24hour turn-around time on e-mail communication, especially during high volume times (i.e. before examinations, at essay time, etc.).

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Today, it is widely assumed that violence of many kinds – physical and non-physical, by and against individuals, amongst and within religious groups – plays an integral role in all religious traditions and systems. This course has two concurrent aims. First, this course explores diverse theoretical and empirical approaches to “religion and violence”. Secondly, it interrogates commonplace assumptions pertaining to “religion and violence” including the widespread tendency to naturalize the paradigm itself via the assumption that there is something unique and meaningful about the concepts like “religious violence”. After September 11, 2001 there has been a massive proliferation of public discourse, including academic, in this regard. This has had powerful effects both in the rarified atmosphere of the academy (in the form of a polarization of opinion on religion in general), as well as in the “real world”, where highly consequential political decisions, including the decision to wage war, have been felled in accordance with this notion.

Please note, finally, that while some of the worldviews studied in this course are explicitly theological, the academic procedures and critical methods employed in the academic study of religion are not. **This course presupposes your acceptance of the principles of the modern research university.** Your understanding of these, especially as they pertain to the study of religion, will undoubtedly develop further during this course.

## READINGS

All assigned readings for this course are on reserve and should be accessible to registered students via the ARES system of MacOdrum Library. Occasionally, I will make further materials available to you, generally via CULearn. Please note that readings are a prerequisite rather than a substitute for class attendance. Your ability to follow lectures and to participate effectively in question and discussion periods will depend on you keeping up with the reading.

## LECTURES

This is a lecture course, which means that my oral presentation is the primary mode of communication. Nevertheless, I shall also devote a certain amount of time (normally about 45 minutes) in each class to formal discussion, moderated conversation, etc. Readings are a prerequisite for participation in such activities, but (as above) they are not a substitute for lecture material. Thus I consider regular attendance in class essential in this course. As a matter of policy I don't post my own class notes. If you miss a class, it is up to you to find a classmate who will help you with notes. I absolutely will not repeat class materials in an email, over the phone, etc. Finally, in my experience (which is considerable) students who attend class enjoy considerably greater success than those who don't. Of course there is such a thing as the *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy...

Late arrivals are very distracting to both your fellow students and to me, so please be punctual. Finally, please be advised that I do not permit any recording during class time. PLEASE turn off all electronic communication devices during class.

## EVALUATION (detailed assignment briefs to be distributed in class)

- 1) Précis of an assigned reading – 10% (1-2 pages)
- 2) Critical response to an assigned reading – 20% (2-4 pages)
- 3) Proposal of a topic for on a course “Religion and Violence” – 30% (3-5 pages)
- 4) Case Description/Analysis (take-home exam) – 40% (5-8 pages)

**Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date specified in the class schedule (below).** Certainly it is my aim as a teacher to get to know you as individuals, to recognize your individual strengths and weaknesses, and to foster individual intellectual development. At the same time, however, I am obliged also to treat individuals equally in certain key respects. As a marker, therefore, I cannot take into consideration anything other than your actual performance on the items above. Similarly, for the sake of equity the following **penalties for late assignments** will be strictly enforced: 2 marks (i.e. 2% of total grade) per day or partial day. **No assignment will be accepted more than one week past its due date.** Exceptions will be made only in extreme cases (snow storm, documented medical emergency, etc.) and when an extension has been granted by me (and for very good reasons, of course) at least one week in advance of the due date.

## CLASS SCHEDULE

### Class I (11 January)

**Introduction to the Course:** Why should one study “Religion and Violence?” How should one study “Religion and Violence”? Why study only some “Religion and Violence”? Which “Religion and Violence” should one study?

**Reading:** Russell T. McCutcheon, “Redescribing “Religion and...” Film: Teaching the Insider/Outsider Problem” *Teaching Theology and Religious Studies* 1 (1998), 99-110.

### Class II (18 January)

**Topic:** “Humanist” Approaches to Religion and Violence

**Reading:** René Girard in: Mark Juergensmeyer and Margo Kitts, eds., *Princeton Readings in Religion and Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 127-140; Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 1-22.

### Class III (25 January)

#### ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE

**Topic:** “Reductionist” Approaches to Religion and Violence

**Reading:** L. P. Barnes, “Was the Northern Ireland Conflict Religious?” *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 20 (2005), 55-69. Anthony Gill, “Religion and Violence: An Economic Approach” in: Andrew R. Murphy, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Religion and Violence* (Chichester: Blackwell, 2011), 37-49.

### Class IV (1 February)

**Topic:** “Extensionist” Approaches to Religion and Violence in cultural criticism.

**Reading:** Paul C. Johnson, “Savage Civil Religion” in: Bryan Rennie and Philip Tite, eds., *Religion, Terror and Violence: Religious Studies Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2008), 41-65.

### Class V (8 February)

**Topic:** “Myth-critical” Approaches to the Religious Violence paradigm.

**Reading:** William T. Cavanaugh, “The Anatomy of the Myth” in: idem, *The Myth of Religious Violence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 15-56.

**Suggested Viewing:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-tb1ZHISfJk>

FAMILY DAY/ BREAK

### Class VI (22 February)

#### ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE

**Topic:** Applying Theory to a Particular Case: Ivan Strenski on “Human Bombers”

**Reading:** Ivan Strenski, “Sacrifice, Gift and the Social Logic of Muslim “Human Bombers”” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 15 (2003), 1-34.

### **Class VII (29 February)**

**Topic:** Empirical Study of Religion and Violence in a “shifted frame.”

**Reading:** C. G. Ellison, J.P. Bartkowski and K. L. Anderson, “Are there Religious Variations in Domestic Violence?” *Journal of Family Issues* 20 (1999), 87-113; M. B. Brinkerhoff, E. Grandin and E. Lupri, “Religious Involvement in Spousal Violence: The Canadian Case” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 31 (1992), 15-31.

### **Class VIII (7 March)**

**Topic:** Ritual Violence, for example in southern Italian popular Catholicism.

**Reading:** Michael P. Carroll, “Mezzogiorno Masochism” in: idem, *Madonnas that Maim: Popular Catholicism in Italy Since the Fifteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 129-137.

### **Class IX (14 March)**

#### **ASSIGNMENT #3 DUE**

**Topic:** Symbolic Violence, for example in Southeast Asian Buddhist iconology

**Reading:** Bernard Faure, “Buddhism and Symbolic Violence” in: Andrew R. Murphy, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Religion and Violence* (Chichester: Blackwell, 2011), 211-226. Images via CULearn

### **Class X (21 March)**

**Topic:** Religion and Violence Against the Self I: Christian motifs

**Reading:** Daniel Caner, “The Practice and Prohibition of Self-Castration in Early Christianity” *Vigiliae Christianae* 51 (1997), 396-415.

### **Class XI (28 March)**

**Topic:** Religion and Violence Against the Self II: Muslim motifs

**Reading:** M. E. Hegland, “Flagellation and Fundamentalism: (Trans)forming meaning, identity, and gender through Pakistani women’s rituals of mourning” *American Ethnologist* 25 (1998), 240-266.

### **Class XII (4 April)**

**Topic:** The concluding meeting of this course will be focused on topic(s) suggested by the class (including in executing assignment #3).

**Reading:** TBA

**TAKE HOME EXAM DUE AS DETERMINED BY UNIVERSITY REGULATIONS.**

## REGULATIONS COMMON TO ALL HUMANITIES COURSES

### COPIES OF WRITTEN WORK SUBMITTED

Always retain for yourself a copy of all essays, term papers, written assignments or take-home tests submitted in your courses.

### PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in “*substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.*”

Plagiarism is a serious offence which cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of “F” for the course

### GRADING SYSTEM

Letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100 (12)	B = 73-76 (8)	C - = 60-62 (4)
A = 85-89 (11)	B- = 70-72 (7)	D+ = 57-59 (3)
A- = 80-84 (10)	C+ = 67-69 (6)	D = 53-56 (2)
B+ = 77-79 (9)	C = 63-66 (5)	D - = 50-52 (1)

F	Failure. Assigned 0.0 grade points
ABS	Absent from final examination, equivalent to F
DEF	Official deferral (see “Petitions to Defer”)
FND	Failure with no deferred exam allowed -- assigned only when the student has failed the course on the basis of inadequate term work as specified in the course outline.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean.

### WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT ACADEMIC PENALTY

The last date to withdraw from **FALL TERM** courses is **DEC. 7, 2015**. The last day to withdraw from **FALL/WINTER (Full Term)** and **WINTER** term courses is **APRIL 8, 2016**.

### REQUESTS FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term because of disability, pregnancy or religious obligations. Please review the course outline promptly and write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at: [carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/](http://carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/)

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Documented disabilities could include but not limited to mobility/physical impairments, specific Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/psychological disabilities, sensory disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and chronic medical conditions. Registered PMC students are required to contact the PMC, 613-520-6608, every term to ensure that your Instructor receives your Letter of Accommodation, no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations. If you only require accommodations for your formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, please submit your request for accommodations to PMC by **Nov. 6, 2015** for the Fall term and **March 6, 2016** for the Winter term. For more details visit the Equity Services website: [carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/](http://carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/)

### PETITIONS TO DEFER

If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a **FINAL** assignment by the due date because of circumstances beyond your control, you may apply a deferral of examination/assignment. If you are applying for a deferral due to illness you will be required to see a physician in order to confirm illness and obtain a medical certificate dated no later than one working day after the examination or assignment deadline. This supporting documentation must specify the date of onset of the illness, the degree of incapacitation, and the expected date of recovery.

If you are applying for a deferral for reasons other than personal illness, please [contact](#) the Registrar’s Office directly for information on other forms of documentation that we accept.

Deferrals of a final assignment or take home, in courses without a final examination, must be supported by confirmation of the assignment due date, for example a copy of the course outline specifying the due date and any documented extensions from the course instructor.

Deferral applications for examination or assignments must be submitted within **5 working days** of the original final exam.

### ADDRESSES: (Area Code 613)

College of the Humanities 520-2809	300 Paterson
Greek and Roman Studies Office 520-2809	300 Paterson
Religion Office 520-2100	2A39 Paterson
Registrar's Office 520-3500	300 Tory
Student Academic Success Centre 520-7850	302 Tory
Paul Menton Centre 520-6608/TTY 520-3937	501 Uni-Centre
Writing Tutorial Service 520-2600 Ext. 1125	4 <sup>th</sup> Floor Library
Learning Support Service 520-2600 Ext 1125	4 <sup>th</sup> Floor Library