

Religion and Cultural Conflict (Spring 2022)

(Rel 302: 3 CR. HUM).

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Office hours will be through Zoom: Friday 9-11am, and by appointment. Let me know when you would like to meet and I will send you a Zoom invitation.



Description

The power of religion to encourage violence and create conflict is well-known. The power of religion to create peace and harmony is also well-known. Each of these statements represents how much of the world views "religion" but also significantly misunderstands the complexity of how religions actually work. In this course we will explore some of the specific reasons that religions have the ability to both encourage violence and resolve conflict.

You will leave this class able to begin to answer these “big questions”:

- Do religions contribute to an atmosphere in which it makes sense for people to behave in violent and intolerant ways that create and maintain conflict and if so, how?
- Do religions contribute to an atmosphere in which it makes sense for people to behave in peaceful and tolerant ways that resolve or prevent conflict and if so, how?
- Under what conditions do elements of “religion” contribute to peace / violence / tolerance / intolerance / conflict / conflict resolution / hate / love?

Learning Outcomes:

This course offers you the tools necessary to achieve the following outcomes:

- **GEP Humanities 1:** Read closely, think critically, and write effectively about texts or cultural artifacts that reflect on perennial questions concerning the human condition (such as the search for truth and meaning, the confrontation with suffering and mortality, or the struggle for justice, equality, and human dignity).
- **GEP Humanities 2:** Investigate and thoughtfully respond to a variety of ideas, beliefs or values held by persons in situations other than one’s own.
- **RELIGIOUS STUDIES:** Demonstrate the ability to interpret, describe, and compare religious phenomena as they intersect with diverse historical, social, and cultural contexts.

Assessment of learning outcomes (“How we’ll know what you learned”):

- **Short Answer Questions** that will measure your understanding of specific concepts and your ability to create valid arguments supported by specific evidence. (GEP Humanities 1 and 2, GEP Global Awareness 1 and 2 and 3, Religious Studies).
- **Essay questions** that will ask you to construct and support with evidence an answer to a more complex question that pulls together information and concepts from across a unit. (GEP Humanities 1 and 2, Religious Studies).
- **Research Essay** that asks you to investigate a particular theme or case study in greater depth in a way that pulls together what you have learned over the course of the semester (GEP Humanities 1 and 2, Religious Studies).

Explanation of Alignment with GEP Learning Outcomes

Religions, almost by definition, center on "perennial questions concerning the human condition" because at their root religions help people to deal with being alive (GEP Humanities 1, Religious Studies). You will learn specific Religious Studies methods for encountering, analyzing, and responding to a diverse set of religious situations (GEP Humanities 2, Religious Studies) in a way that demonstrates an awareness of the importance of placing a specific example in its specific historical, social, and cultural context (Religious Studies). You will examine how specific behavior makes sense in the context of a specific religious worldview, which requires that you both imaginatively engage how the world feels to someone significantly different than you (GEP Hum 2, Religious Studies) and to read, think, and write in a careful analytic way about the specifics of particular examples (GEP Hum 1, Religious Studies).

Required Texts: Text Rental

Chidester, David. *Salvation and Suicide: An Interpretation of Jim Jones, the Peoples Temple, and Jonestown* (Revised). (Indiana University Press, 2003).

Juergensmeyer, Mark. *God at War: A Meditation on Religion and Warfare*. (Oxford University Press, 2020).

All other materials will be provided through CANVAS. ***You may be required to print out readings and bring them to class.***

Structure of Course

Unit 1: How Religious Worldviews Impact Human Behavior

Unit 2: Introduction to Religion, Conflict, and Violence

Unit 3: Engaging Juergensmeyer's *God at War*

Unit 4: Religion/Peace/Conflict Resolution; Individual Research Essays

Look at the Schedule of Assignments (found in the Important Course Documents module) to see which materials should be prepared for each class. Please note that the Canvas Calendar only tells you when assignments should be submitted, not what needs to be prepared for each class. As a rule, there are materials to be prepared for each class meeting. ***I reserve the right to change the Schedule of Assignments if necessary.*** If I make a change, I will announce it through email and Canvas.

Grading and Student Expectations

Short Answer Questions: 25%. These will be short (100-200 word) mini-essays due in some weeks that will ask you to apply your understanding of the week's material to a specific question.

Short Essays (x 3): 30%. Each of the first three units ends with a 600-800 word essay based on materials from that unit.

Research Paper: 40%. Our semester concludes with a 1000-1200 word research essay on a specific topic related to the material we have studied this semester. You will work on this project in stages, each of which receives a separate grade.

- Preliminary Research Worksheet: 2.5%
- Research Paper Progress Worksheet: 2.5%
- Research Prospectus: 10%
- Oral Presentation: 2.5%
- Research Essay: 22.5%

Self-Evaluation: 5%. Four times in the semester I will ask you to answer a series of self-evaluation questions. All thoughtful, detailed answers will receive 100%.

- 1) What are you finding interesting and/or useful in this class?
- 2) What are you finding challenging or confusing in this class?
- 3) In terms of your work for this class, what are you doing well?
- 4) Do you come to class well-prepared? Do you contribute to the learning of your peers in small group discussions? Do you ask questions or make comments (either inside or outside of class, in person or through Canvas or email) that help your learning and the learning of others in the class?
- 5) In terms of your work for this class, where (if anywhere) is there room for improvement? Are you satisfied with your study skills (notetaking, reading strategies, memorization and comprehension strategies, time management, assignment preparation)?
- 6) Describe your workflow for this class. When do you prepare class materials? How much time do you spend preparing for class? Do you take notes in class? Do you take notes on assigned class materials? What is your notetaking method? Do you review notes on a weekly basis?
- 7) Is there anything you'd like me to know about how the semester is going that would help me to support your learning in this class?

Percentage to Letter Grade Conversion

A: 94-100, A-: 90-93, B+: 87-89, B: 83-86, B-: 80-82, C+: 77-79, C: 73-76, C-: 70-72, D+: 67-69, D: 65-66, F: 64 or lower.

Attendance Policy

Attendance will be taken each class. There is not a separate attendance grade in this class. Instead, after the first two unexcused absences **a point will be deducted from your OVERALL grade for each unexcused absence.** I intend to be very flexible with excused absences because of the challenging nature of this semester. *If you miss more than three weeks (six meetings) of class we should meet to determine whether or not you will still be able to succeed in this class.*

Here is what qualifies as an excused absence: illness (which includes COVID), personal emergency, family emergency, school/team-related event. If you wish for an absence to be excused you should send an email in advance (wherever possible) requesting that the absence be excused. I will write back with a reply. You should then keep a copy for your records and copy and place a copy of my email response into the "Absence-Related Information" Assignment section on Canvas. It is your responsibility to keep track of excused absences over the course of the semester.

Please do not send an email asking what was missed in class. Before seeking assistance from the professor, it is the responsibility of the student to prepare all assigned materials, review notes from colleagues, and review materials posted to Canvas. At that point, we can schedule whatever meetings are necessary to clarify specific concepts or assignments. I am extremely ready to help committed students succeed in this class.

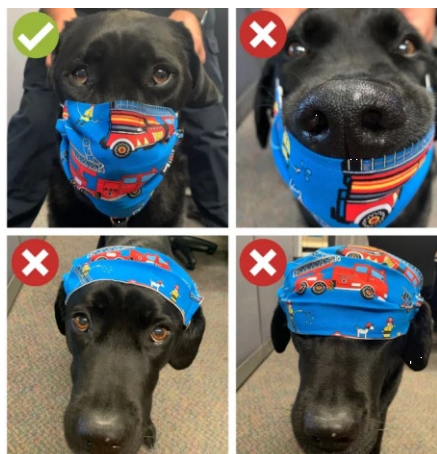
Inclusivity Statement

My goal in this course is to create and maintain a learning community that feels welcoming to students from all different kinds of backgrounds and experiences. Diversity (of sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture) makes our learning better, but only if our class feels like a safe space for learning and growth. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. *Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally, or for other students or student groups.*

If you have experienced a bias incident (an act of conduct, speech, or expression to which a bias motive is evident as a contributing factor regardless of whether the act is criminal) at UWSP, you have the right to report it using this [link](#). You may also contact the Dean of Students office directly at dos@uwsp.edu.

COVID-Related Policies

UWSP is committed to offering students a face-to-face learning environment that is as safe as possible. Here is how we'll handle face-to-face classes unless the university decides to change COVID-related policy. For our class to meet together, everyone needs to sit in their assigned seat (for contact tracing). Everyone needs to wear their masks properly or we cannot meet face-to-face.



The only exception to this rule is if you have a mask exemption that has been granted to you directly from the Disability and Assistive Technology Center (DATC). If this is the case, you and I will both know because we will have received official notification from the DATC. All of the above guidelines have been set by the University and are not subject to my individual discretion.

Policies and Resources

Assignment Submission and Late Work Policy

All assignments for this course will be submitted electronically through Canvas unless otherwise instructed. Assignments must be submitted by the given deadline or special permission must be requested *before the due date*. Without instructor permission, late or missing assignments may affect the student's grade.

I am always ready to work with students who are struggling.

Student Support

UWSP offers students support in many different ways: technology, study skills, subject-specific tutoring, counseling, and medical services. There is a special section of our Canvas course with links to all of the ways that the university is ready to help you.

Religious Beliefs Accommodation

It is UW System policy ([UWS 22](#)) to reasonably accommodate your sincerely held religious beliefs with respect to all examinations and other academic requirements.

Equal Access for Students with Disabilities

If modifications are required due to a disability, please inform the instructor and contact the [Disability and Assistive Technology Center](#) to complete an Accommodations Request form. Phone: 346-3365 or Room 609 Albertson Hall.

Title IX

UW-Stevens Point is committed to fostering a safe, productive learning environment. Title IX and institutional policy prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, which includes harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. In the event that you choose to disclose information about having survived sexual violence, including harassment, rape, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, and specify that this violence occurred while a student at UWSP, federal and state laws mandate that I, as your instructor, notify the Title IX Coordinator/Office of the Dean of Students.

Please see the information on the [Dean of Students webpage](#) for information on making confidential reports of misconduct or interpersonal violence, as well as campus and community resources available to students. For more information see the [Title IX page](#).

Academic Misconduct

Copying off of someone's test, plagiarism, claiming credit for work that is not yours, and all other forms of academic misconduct are not tolerated at UW-Stevens Point. If a student is confused about what exactly academic misconduct is, there is information available regarding rules and procedures for the [process](#). You can also visit with your faculty or learn how to cite the work of others at the [Writing Center](#).

Emergency Procedures

See UW-Stevens Point Emergency Procedures at www.uwsp.edu/rmgt/Pages/em/procedures for details on all emergency response at UW-Stevens Point.”

FERPA

The [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#) (FERPA) provides students with a right to protect, review, and correct their student records.

Lecture materials and recordings for Rel 302 Spring 2022 are protected intellectual property at UW-Stevens Point. Students in this course may use the materials and recordings for their personal use related to participation in this class. If a lecture is not already recorded, you are not authorized to record my lectures without my permission unless you are considered by the university to be a qualified student with a disability requiring accommodation. [Regent Policy Document 4-1] Students may not copy or share lecture materials and recordings outside of class, including posting on internet sites or selling to commercial entities. Unauthorized use of these copyrighted lecture materials and recordings constitutes copyright infringement and may be addressed under the university's policies, UWS Chapters 14 and 17, governing student academic and non-academic misconduct.

