

Christians, the “Other,” and Violence

Instructor: Diane Fruchtman (dsf79@religion.rutgers.edu)

Course: 01:840:311:01, Fall 2020

Time: Online Asynchronous (with mandatory attendance at weekly writing accountability groups)

WebEx Room: <https://rutgers.webex.com/meet/dsf79>

Open WebEx Hours for Student Visits: Wednesday 1.00-3.00pm and by appointment

Overview:

In mainstream American public discourse, we frequently hear the refrain that Christianity is a religion of peace, and that “true” Christians would suffer violence, rather than inflict it. History shows us that the story is far more complicated, and that the terms “religion,” “Christian,” and “violence” must be used with attentiveness to their nuances and complexity.

This course offers history and analysis of Christians as both victims and perpetrators of violence from early Christianity to the present. Topics will include martyrdom, crusades, the European Wars of Religion in early modern Europe, 20th century religious conflicts, and contemporary political discourse.

The aim of the class is to complicate our thinking about Christianity, violence, and the creation of religious “Others,” and to give students tools to assess “religious violence” in any historical setting, even (and especially) our own.

This is also a Writing Intensive class, and we will spend a fair amount of time writing, revising our writing, and thinking about the process of writing.

Note on Course Structure:

- This is an online, asynchronous course, but every student will have to join a synchronous writing accountability group, based on their availability.
- With the exception of the first week, every week of the class will follow a similar pattern of consuming content and completing assignments (see Weekly Plan).
- Please follow the Modules and look out for emails from me to your Rutgers accounts!

Grade Breakdown:

1. **Participation and Preparation (20%)**—The grades in this category include viewing the Writing Videos, attending your Writing Groups, and participating in the post-class Discussion Boards. It also includes the Reading Quizzes and some smaller one-off assignments. These will be graded either on a complete/incomplete metric or on a 2-point scale that allows for extra credit. The lowest ten percent of your grades in this category will be dropped.
2. **Discussion Posts (30%)**—In addition to the Participation requirements, you will need to contribute at least once per week to the week’s main Discussion Board before Wednesday at 11AM EST. For more information, see “Assignment Instructions” below.
3. **Writing Assignment(s) (35%)**— The writing assignments for this class will be due October 9, November 13, and December 4. You will also write a reflection, due with your final exam, on the body of your writing. An optional re-draft of your choice of assignments is also due with your exam. NB: This is a complete re-submission, so your grade could go down.

- a. October 9 (10%): A 3-4 page paper due on any topic or question that has come up in class or as a result of class. You must engage with at least one primary source and one secondary source.
 - b. November 13 (10%): *Either* a 3-4 page paper due on any topic or question that has come up since the last paper (engaging at least one primary source and one secondary source) *OR* a 5-7 page paper due expanding on your first paper (engaging at least one primary source and three secondary sources).
 - c. December 4 (10%): *Either* a 3-4 page paper due on any topic or question that has come up since the last paper (engaging at least one primary source and one secondary source) *OR* a 5-7 page paper due expanding on your first or second paper (engaging at least one primary source and three secondary sources) *OR* a 10-12 page paper due expanding on any previous paper (engaging at least two primary sources and 6 secondary sources).
 - d. Reflection (5%): Due with your final exams. A 2-4 page reflection on your writing and what you've learned from your explorations in this class. What did you write about? How? Would you do it differently now? What did you learn that was valuable? Whether you wrote deeply on one topic or more cursorily on three, what are the overall takeaways from your writing for this class that you want to share?
4. **Final Exam (15%)**—The Final Exam will ask you to discuss selections from texts you have *not* read for class (and possibly by authors you will not have encountered in class). You must analyze these texts using the critical skills you have developed in class and compare/contrast them to texts and authors you *have* read for class.

Objectives:

Students will:

- Become familiar with a wide variety of Christian understandings of violence and Christian identity, both historical and contemporary.
- Exercise their ability to critically analyze primary source documents and secondary scholarship on the issue of religion and violence.
- Develop and refine their own thinking on the relationships between Christianity, violence, and the “other” with reference to various scholarly assessments.

And because this is a WCr course, students will also:

- Communicate complex ideas effectively, in standard written English, to a general audience.
- Respond effectively to editorial feedback from peers, instructors, and/or supervisors through successive drafts and revision.
- Evaluate and critically assess sources and use the conventions of attribution and citation correctly.
- Analyze and synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources to generate new insights.

Readings:

- Michael Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).
- All other readings are available, numbered, on Sakai under “Resources.”

Schedule of Readings and Assignments			
Day	Date	Class Theme	Readings/Assignments
Week 1: Introduction to Class			
1	9/2	1. [Videos]	
Week 2: "Christians," the "Other", and "Violence"			
2	9/7	2. J. Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious" selections (in class).	
3	9/9	3. William Cavanaugh, <i>The Myth of Religious Violence</i> , 1-14, 181-230. 4. Alan Page Fiske and Tage Shakti Rai, <i>Virtuous Violence</i> , xxi-16.	
Week 3: Violence and the Hebrew Bible			
4	9/14	5. Regina Schwartz, <i>The Curse of Cain</i> , ix-xi, 1-38, 143-176,	
5	9/16	6. Robert Eisen, <i>The Peace and Violence of Judaism</i> , 3-64	
Week 4: Violence and the New Testament			
6	9/21	7. Selections from the New Testament 8. Hector Avalos, <i>Fighting Words</i> , Introduction and Chapters 8-9: "Christianity and the New Testament".	
7	9/23	9. Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld, <i>Killing Enmity. Violence and the New Testament</i> , chapters 1, 3, and 4.	
Week 5: Early Christian Martyrdom			
8	9/28	10. Deaths of Jesus (Gospel Parallels) 11. Acts 7 12. Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs 13. Martyrdom of Polycarp 14. Nicole Kelley, "Philosophy as Training for Death."	
9	9/30	15. Arthur Droge and James Tabor, <i>A Noble Death</i> , 113-158 16. Passion of Perpetua 17. Passion of Papyrus, Carpus, and Agathonike	<i>Writing Deadline #1 9/29, 11.59pm</i>
Week 6: Early Christian Attitudes to War and Peace			
10	10/5	18. Tertullian, <i>On the Crown</i> 19. Despina Iosif, <i>Early Christian Attitudes to War, Violence and Military Service</i> , 1-18, 45-86, and 145-186.	
11	10/7	20. Tertullian, <i>Apology</i> (selection) 21. Justin Martyr, <i>First Apology</i> (selection) 22. Despina Iosif, <i>Early Christian Attitudes to War, Violence and Military Service</i> , 213-286.	<i>Writing Deadline #1 10/6, 11.59pm</i>
Week 7: Christian Identity after Constantine			
12	10/12	23. Paulinus of Nola, <i>Letters to Crispinianus</i> 24. Augustine of Hippo, <i>Letters to Boniface</i> 25. Despina Iosif, <i>Early Christian Attitudes to War, Violence and Military Service</i> , 187-212, 305-307.	
13	10/14	26. Prudentius, <i>Peristephanon</i> 3, 5, 9, 11, and 14	
Week 8: Making and Finding "Others" in the Late Ancient Church			
14	10/19	27. Augustine of Hippo on Coercion—Excerpts from Anti-Donatist Texts 28. Hal Drake, "Lambs into Lions: Explaining Early Christian Intolerance" 29. Maureen Tilley, "When Schism Becomes Heresy" (selection)	

15	10/21	30. Michael Gaddis, <i>There is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ</i> , Chapter 5
Week 9: Just War		
16	10/26	31. Alan Fitzgerald, <i>Augustine through the Ages</i> (s.v. "War") 32. Robert A. Markus, "Saint Augustine's views on the 'Just War'"
17	10/28	33. Frederich H. Russell, <i>The Just War in the Middle Ages</i> (selections)
Week 10: Crusade		
18	11/2	34. Urban II's Speech to the Council of Clermont 35. Thomas Asbridge, <i>The First Crusade</i> , ch. 1: "Holy War Proclaimed"
19	11/4	36. Jonathan Riley-Smith, "Crusading as an act of Love" 37. Bernard of Clairvaux, "In Praise of the New Knighthood"
Week 11: Reformation		
20	11/9	38. Martin Luther, "Eight Sermons at Wittenberg" 39. Martin Luther, "Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants."
21	11/11	40. William Cavanaugh, <i>The Myth of Religious Violence</i> , Chapter 3 <i>Writing Deadline #2 11/10, 11.59pm</i>
Week 12: Reformation, Continued.		
22	11/16	41. Balthasar Hubmaier, "Concerning Heretics and Those Who Burn Them." 42. Schleithem Confession 43. Melchior Hoffman, "The Ordinance of God" 44. Harold S. Bender, "The Pacifism of the Sixteenth-Century Anabaptists."
23	11/18	45. Natalie Zemon Davis, "The Rites of Violence"
Week 13: "The Troubles"		
24	11/23	46. [Video documentary on Troubles]
25	11/25	47. Claire Mitchell, <i>Religion, Identity and Politics in Northern Ireland</i> (selections) 48. Hempton, "The Fog of Religious Conflict" 49. Bourke, "Languages of Conflict"
THANKSGIVING RECESS		
Week 14: Christians, "Others," and Violence in Bosnia		
26	11/30	50. Michael Sells, <i>The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia</i> , ix-92
27	12/2	51. Michael Sells, <i>The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia</i> , 93-156. <i>Writing Deadline #3 12/4, 11.59pm</i>
Week 15: Contemporary Christians on War and Peace		
28	12/7	52. Reading TBA
29	12/9	53. Reflections
FINAL EXAM DUE DATE TBA <i>Writing Reflections due with Final Exam</i>		

Assignment Instructions

1. Discussion Board Posts: Original and Response Posts on Canvas

- a. In every Module, there is a Discussion Board for the week’s topic. You must post in the current week’s Discussion Board by 11:00am EST every Wednesday, **in response to** another student’s thread. Four times in the semester (you will sign up for your preferred dates in the first week of class), you must **originate** a thread.
- i. **Original Posts:** You will originate a thread. This must be posted, at latest, by 11:59pm on Monday night. Late submissions will receive no credit.
- Your post may be a comment, question, rant, poem, or thought experiment, but it must include quotations from at least one of the texts assigned for that day.
 - ❖ I highly recommend giving your post an illustrative and compelling title, so your classmates want to click through and read your comment.
 - ❖ While these are not essays, they should have a foregrounded thesis or a take-away point or question that your classmates can easily discern. In other words, to be intelligible, these posts must be focused.
 - ❖ While there is no set word-count, a post that is shorter than 250 words is unlikely to be in-depth enough to satisfy the rubric criteria and a post that is longer than 1000 words is unlikely to be focused enough to satisfy the rubric criteria.
 - Your lowest grade will be dropped, and each original post will be graded on a 5-point scale according to the following rubric:

Grade	Criteria
5	Thoughtful, insightful, thorough, and focused, with excellent choice of quotes, excellent use of quotes, and clear, elegant writing. (Outstanding)
4	Thoughtful and focused, with good choice and use of quotes and clear writing. (Good)
3	Thoughtful but unclear or confused, with passable choice and use of quotes. (Satisfactory)
2	Unclear or confused, with questionable or insufficient use of quotes. (Unsatisfactory)
1	Unclear or confused, with questionable or insufficient use of quotes, demonstrating serious misconceptions and/or minimal effort. (Poor)
0	No assignment submitted by deadline

- ii. **Response Posts:** For every class period (****even on the days that you have originated a thread****) you will respond to another student’s post. Your response must be posted by 11am EST on Wednesday.
- Your post may be a comment, question, rant, or thought experiment, but it must engage with *both* the original post *and* the material for that day’s class.
 - ❖ i.e. You cannot just say “Good job!” or “I agree!”—You must further the discussion and add insights of your own, without going too far afield from the day’s readings.
 - Your lowest 2 grades will be dropped, and each response will be graded on a 5-point scale according to the following rubric:

Grade	Criteria
5	Thoughtful, clear, and insightful, with excellent and respectful engagement with the material and your classmates’ comments. The response is clear and elegantly written. (Outstanding)
4	Thoughtful and clear, with good, respectful engagement with the material and your classmates’ comments. The writing is easily intelligible. (Good)
3	Thoughtful but unclear or confused, with passable but respectful engagement with the material. (Satisfactory)
2	Unclear or confused. (Unsatisfactory)

1	Unclear or confused, demonstrating serious misconceptions, minimal effort, and/or disrespect for your classmates. (Poor)
0	No assignment submitted by deadline.

- b. **Questions:** If you are passionate about something (or just plain confused about it) and you want to test out your ideas on me before or instead of sharing it with your classmates, you may, instead of a Discussion Board response post, email me a question or something you want to address about the readings or what is happening in class. To be clear: you may always email me, for any reason at all, but a few times in the semester a thoughtful email will count as an assignment and you will receive credit for it. This is, essentially, a venue for asking questions or making comments without all of your classmates seeing it, and thus not something to be done frequently.

Classroom Policies:

1. **Civility:** This semester we will at times be discussing most of the things you are not supposed to discuss in polite company. In order to ensure that everyone feels comfortable participating in these discussions, we must all show respect to one another, to one another's ideas, and to the material we are discussing. Dismissive or abusive comments will not be tolerated. Any offensive posts to the discussion boards (or other spaces visible to the whole class) will be deleted and the student will be alerted and asked to revise.
2. **Academic Honesty:** Do not represent someone else's work as your own. Give credit where credit is due. Plagiarism will result in your being asked to redo the assignment in question, and repeated offenses will result in official action per Rutgers' Academic Integrity policy: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>.
3. **Revision Policy:** Your Writing Assignments and Final Exams may be revised for complete re-grades **IF** you handed in a plausible version of the assignment on the actual due date (that is, the date listed in the syllabus and on Canvas).
 - a. If you handed in a version of the assignment on the actual due date, you may revise as many times as you like until you get the grade you want, as soon as you've gotten feedback.
 - i. If you did *not* hand in a version of the assignment on the actual date, late work may be submitted only after you receive permission from me.
 - b. You may re-do as many assignments as you wish, as many times as you like, provided that you handed in a version of the assignment on its actual due date.
 - c. Before you revise your work you must talk with me to get feedback. ***I will only re-grade work that I have discussed with you and/or been able to comment on.***
 - d. Participation items and Discussion Board submissions are not revisable, but there are alternative assignments available to anyone who is concerned about their grades on account of their performance in those categories.
 - e. There is no deadline for any revision, other than your own graduation. I am happy to re-grade items after the end of the semester if you would like to change your grade.

****Nota Bene:**

By far the least labor-intensive and most efficient way to do well in this class is to do all the work as well as you can the first time around, on the same schedule as everyone else. If you are at all concerned about your performance in the classroom, please talk with me as soon as possible.