

840 (Religion):121—Martyrdom: From the Maccabees to ISIS

Mondays and Wednesdays 1:40-3:00

Beck Hall 111, Livingston Campus

Instructor: Prof. Diane Fruchtman (dsf79@rci.rutgers.edu)

Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 4:00-5:00 and by appointment

Office Location: Loree Building 110 (70 Lipman Drive, Douglass Campus)

Overview:

“Martyrdom” is a contentious term, both for scholars who want to define and examine a phenomenon and for those who claim to tell the stories of martyrs or want to venerate them. Who counts as a martyr, and why? How do martyrologists (those who write and argue for martyrs) establish their own authority and their martyr’s? And what does martyrdom signify? We can see controversy even in modern colloquial usage of martyrdom language, where “martyr” can take either a supremely positive tenor (to describe someone so selfless as to give up her life for a cause) or an extremely negative one (to describe someone so selfish as to always think that he is being wounded).

The object of this class is not only to familiarize students with martyrdom as a historical, literary, and religious phenomenon in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, but also to develop critical tools that will enable students to decipher martyrdom discourse in other contexts—including in interreligious conflicts (medieval and modern) and in American pop culture. While maintaining a focus on the historical circumstances surrounding martyr narratives, we will establish some of the commonplaces of martyr-stories, and begin to identify prevalent themes, such as witness, sex, gender, power, authority, dreams, memory, community, blood, violence, torture, sacrifice and death. With these themes in mind, we can examine how they are employed, how their use changes from context to context, how developments in history affect their reception, and how interreligious interaction helps to shape their use. We will discuss contested martyrs as well as multiple representations of accepted martyrs.

Martyrdom is a powerful and potentially dangerous discourse on the world stage today, and this class will aid you in recognizing the full significance of its use in any context that you might encounter.

Objectives:

Students will:

- Understand the history and diversity of martyrdom discourse in Abrahamic traditions and secular contexts.
- Converse intelligently in class and in online forums about martyrdom in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
- Appreciate, analyze, and critique current scholarship about martyrdom.
- Learn to recognize and evaluate martyrdom discourse in any cultural, religious, or historical context.

Grade Breakdown and Assignments:

1. Participation (20%): You are expected to prepare for, attend, and participate in every class period. Failure to prepare, attend, or participate will negatively affect your grade. Preparation includes having all readings accessible either in print or downloaded onto an electronic device so that they are accessible offline at the very beginning of class. Given that this is a mini-course, only one absence will be excused without documentation.
2. Homework (40%): Before every class but no later than two hours prior to the beginning of that day's class, you must comment on the reading for that class period. Once per week, you must originate a thread; once per week you must respond to another person's thread. In the first week of class we will designate Monday originators and Wednesday originators. Originators must post by 10pm the night before class, to give classmates ample time to respond. For more details, see "Assignment Instructions" below.
3. Article Reports (15%): Once during the course of the semester you will be responsible for reading and presenting to the class the argument of a scholarly article (or book chapter) on martyrdom. You will sign up for your report dates in the first week of class. For more details, see "Assignment Instructions" below.
4. Final Exam (25%): Your final exam will present you with three martyr-texts you have not yet seen. You will evaluate and answer questions about two of them using the critical tools you have developed in class. You will be asked to compare the exam texts to texts we have seen in class. The test will be open book and open notes.

Readings:

- Cook, David. *Martyrdom in Islam*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- All other readings will be available on Sakai. These are numbered in the "Schedule of Readings."

Schedule of Readings and Assignments (subject to change):

	Date	Class Topic	Readings and Assignments	Article Reports
Week #1: Introduction, Method, and Background				
1	Wednesday, October 26	Methods and Backgrounds	No Readings Due	No Report Due
Week #2: Apocalyptic Death				
2	Monday, October 31	Noble Death in Apocalyptic Judaism	1. <i>2 Maccabees</i> Introduction and 6-7 2. <i>4 Maccabees</i> Introduction and 4:15-end. 3. Droge and Tabor, <i>Noble Death</i> , 53-76	4. Tessa Rajak, "Dying for the Law: The Martyr's Portrait in Jewish-Greek Literature," <i>Portraits: Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire</i> (1997), 39-68.
3	Wednesday, November 2	Apocalyptic Death and Christian Origins	5. <i>Gospel of Mark</i> Introduction and 1, 5-9:1, 13-16. 6. Deaths of Jesus: <i>Matthew 27, Luke 23, John 18-19</i> . 7. <i>Acts 7</i> 8. Droge and Tabor, <i>Noble Death</i> , 113-126.	9. Daniel Boyarin, "Martyrdom and The Making of Christianity and Judaism," <i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i> 6:4 (Winter 1998), 577-627.
Week #3: Early Christian Martyrdom				
4	Monday, November 7	Persecution, Power, and Identity	10. <i>Letter of the Martyrs of Lyons and Vienne</i> 11. <i>Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs</i> 12. <i>Passion of Perpetua</i>	13. Nicole Kelley, "Philosophy as Training for Death: Reading the Ancient Christian Martyr Acts as Spiritual Exercises," <i>Church History</i> 75:4 (December 2006), 723-747.
5	Wednesday, November 9		14. <i>Martyrdom of Polycarp</i> 15. Letters of Ignatius of Antioch to the Ephesians, Trallians, and Romans 16. Droge and Tabor, <i>Noble Death</i> 129-158	17. Robert F. Stoops, Jr., "If I suffer. . . Epistolary Authority in Ignatius of Antioch," <i>Harvard Theological Review</i> 80:2 (April, 1987), 161-178.

Week #4: Martyrdom at the End of Late Antiquity				
6	Monday, November 14	Monasticism, Asceticism, and Violence as Martyrdom	18. Michael Gaddis, "There is No Crime For Those Who Have Christ: Holy Men and Holy Violence in The Late Fourth and Early Fifth Centuries," in <i>There is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire</i> , 151-207.	19. Michael Gaddis, "The God of the Martyrs Refuses You: Religious Violence, Political Discourse, and Christian Identity in the Century after Constantine," in <i>There is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire</i> (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 68-102.
7	Wednesday, November 16	Martyrdom in Early Islam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cook, <i>Martyrdom in Islam</i>, 12-73 20. Quran Selections (in class) 21. Abu Mikhnaf, <i>Kitab maqatal al-Husayn</i> (in class) 22. Select Hadith from the Riyadh as-Salahin (in class) 	<p>23. Thomas Sizgorich, "Sanctified Violence: Monotheist Militancy as the Tie That Bound Christian Rome and Islam"</p> <p>24. Asma Afsaruddin, "Dying in the Path of God: Constructing Martyrdom," in <i>Striving in the Path of God</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 95-115.</p>
Happy Thanksgiving!				
Week #5: Medieval Martyrdom: Jews, Christians, and Muslims				
8	Monday, November 28	Martyrdom on Crusade	<p>25. Bernard of Clairvaux, In Praise of the New Knighthood (selection)</p> <p>26. Solomon bar Samson's Account of the First Crusade</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cook, <i>Martyrdom in Islam</i>, 74-97 	27. Danna Piroyansky, "'Thus may a man be a martyr': The Notion, Language, and Experiences of Martyrdom in Late Medieval England," in <i>Martyrs and Martyrdom in England c. 1400-1700</i> , ed. Thomas S. Freeman and Thomas F. Mayer (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2007), 70-87.
9	Wednesday, November 30	Martyrs as Heroes	<p>28. Einbinder, "Faith and Fury"</p> <p>29. Margolis, "The Mission of Joan of Arc" (selection)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cook, <i>Martyrdom in Islam</i>, 98-115 	30. Chaviva Levin, "Constructing Memories of Martyrdom: Contrasting Portrayals of Martyrdom in the Hebrew Narratives of the First and Second Crusade," in Nicholas Paul and Suzanne Yeager eds., <i>Remembering the Crusades</i> (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 50-68.

Week #6: Modern Martyrdom				
10	Monday, December 5	Martyrdom in Modern America: Desire and Discomfort	31. Justin Watson, <i>The Martyrs of Columbine: Faith and the Politics of Tragedy</i> (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002). (selections)	32. Scott Hoffman, "'Last Night I prayed to Matthew....' Matthew Shepard, Homosexuality, and Popular Martyrdom in Contemporary America," <i>Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation</i> 21:1 (Winter 2011), 121- 164.
11	Wednesday, December 7	Martyrdom in Contemporary Islam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cook, <i>Martyrdom in Islam</i>, 134-164 33. Asma Afsaruddin, "Modern and Contemporary Debates on Jihad and Martyrdom, I," in <i>Striving in the Path of God</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 205-235. 34. Osama Bin Laden, "Letter to America"	35. Daniel Brown, "Martyrdom in Sunni Revivalist Thought," in <i>Sacrificing the Self</i> , ed. Margaret Cormack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 107-117.
Week #7: Contemporary Martyrdom and Course Reflections				
12	Monday, December 12	Martyrdom and Militancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cook, <i>Martyrdom in Islam</i>, 165-183. 36. ISIS, <i>Dabiq</i> (excerpts)	37. Arie Kuglanski, Xiaoyan Chen, Mark Dechesne, Shira Fishman, and Edward Orehek, "Fully Committed: Suicide Bombers' Motivation and the Quest for Personal Significance," <i>Political Psychology</i> 30:3 (June 2009), 331-357.
13	Wednesday, December 14	Contemporary Martyrdom and Reflections	38. Arthur Chu, "Trolls and Martyrdom" 39. Candida Moss, <i>The Myth of Persecution</i> , 1-21; 216-260. 40. Faisal Devji, <i>The Terrorist in Search of Humanity</i> 25-56.	41. Candida R. Moss, "The Discourse of Voluntary Martyrdom: Ancient and Modern," <i>Church History</i> 81:1 (September 2012), 531-551.
FINAL EXAM WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21 8:00-11:00 AM				

Assignment Instructions:

1) Homework Assignments:

- a) Forum posts on Sakai: Under "Forums" in Sakai there is a Forum for every week of class. You must post in the current week's forum twice per week, once as a post originator and once as a post respondent. Your post may be a comment, question, rant, or thought experiment, but it must include quotations from at least one of the texts assigned for that day.
- i) Original Posts: Once per week you will originate a thread. This must be posted by 10pm the night before class. You must quote at least one of the assigned readings for that day. Your lowest grade will be dropped, and each assignment will be graded on a 5-point scale according to the following rubric:

Grade	Criteria
5	Thoughtful, insightful, and thorough, with excellent choice of quotes, excellent use of quotes, and clear writing.
4	Thoughtful and clear, with good choice and use of quotes.
3	Thoughtful but unclear or confused, with passable choice and use of quotes.
2	Unclear or confused, with questionable or insufficient use of quotes.
1	Unclear or confused, with questionable or insufficient use of quotes, demonstrating serious misconceptions and/or minimal effort.
0	No assignment submitted

- ii) Response Posts: Once per week you will respond to other students' posts. This must be posted by noon on the day of class. You must quote at least one of the assigned readings for that day. Your lowest grade 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, respectful engagement with the material and your classmates' comments.
4	Thoughtful and clear, with good, respectful engagement with the material and your classmates' comments.
3	Thoughtful but unclear or confused, with passable but respectful engagement with the material.
2	Unclear or confused.
1	Unclear or confused, demonstrating serious misconceptions, minimal effort, and/or disrespect for your classmates.
0	No assignment submitted

- iii) **NB:** These forums will get a bit chaotic. Don't worry if you don't know where to put your post—you will generally be ok so long as you do not ignore posts written by other students and do not derail ongoing conversations. If you don't know where your thoughts will fit, begin a new conversation but reference the other conversations you are building from.
 - 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 sharing it with your classmates, you may, instead of a Forum 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.
- 2) Article Reports:
- a) On the day assigned, you will take 15 minutes to present your article and answer your classmates' questions. Your presentation must answer the following questions:
 - i) What is the author's main argument?
 - ii) How do they support that argument (i.e. with what evidence)? Give one or two examples/illustrations.
 - iii) How does the article relate to or give us a different perspective on any of the readings for that day's class?
 - iv) **NB: Handouts may be very helpful.** If you would like to make a handout and would like me to print copies for your classmates, you must send it to me by 10am the day of class.
 - b) In addition, your classmates will have questions about the article; you must be prepared to answer them.

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.
2. **Technology:** Any and all technology is welcome in the classroom, with a few caveats:
 - a. **All texts must be available to you at the beginning of the class period.** Whether that means printing them out or downloading them so they are ready to go on whichever devices you intend to use, you must have all of the day's readings accessible for your reference during class. You should be able to reference texts easily, without having to wait for a page to load. Not having your texts ready to go at the start of class is akin to coming to class unprepared, and your participation grade may suffer accordingly.
 - b. **Do not become distracted.** If I notice that you are distracted, you will lose half of your participation points for the day.
 - c. **Do not distract your classmates.** If I notice that you are distracting your classmates, you will lose all of your participation points for the day. If you are being distracted by another student, please let me know so that I can let them know they are being distracting.