

Christians, the “Other,” and Violence

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

Course: 01:840:311:01, Spring 2024

Time: Tuesdays, 3.50pm-6.50pm

Location: 64 College Ave, 103

[Zoom Room \(just in case!\)](#)

Office Hours:

Mondays and Thursdays 2.00-3.00pm (Zoom link above)
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. At the same time, we frequently hear the opposite narrative: that most of the violence in the world is caused by religions in general and Christianity in particular. History shows us that the story is far more complicated than either of these accounts, and that the terms "religion," "Christian," and "violence" must be used with attention 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 "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.

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

Grade Breakdown:

- 1. Attendance, Participation, and Preparation (15%)**—You will be expected to be prepared for, attend, and participate in every class, and you will also be expected to participate in a weekly Writing Accountability Group. See "Assignment Instructions" below for more information.
- 2. Leading Discussion (30%)**—Once in the semester, on a day of your choosing, you will lead a class discussion centering on one or two of the sources assigned for that day's

class, which I will assign to you. For more information, see “Assignment Instructions” below.

- 3. Writing Assignments (40%)**—The writing assignments for this class will be due in Weeks 6, 9, and 14. You will also write a reflection on your strengths and weaknesses as a writer AND submit the best possible version of any of your papers via a structured revision; these will be due May 8. For more information, see “Assignment Instructions” below.
 - a. Writing Assignment #1(10%):** A 3-4 page paper due in Week 6 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. Prior to submitting this paper, you must meet with me to discuss possible topics, framing, and sources.
 - b. Writing Assignment #2 (10%):** Due in week 9. This will be an expansion of your first essay to 5-7 pages based on a structured revision of your first writing assignment with revision memo; you must also incorporate one further secondary source.
 - c. Writing Assignment #3 (10%):** Due in Week 14. This will be an expansion of your second essay to 8-12 pages based on a structured revision, with revision memo, of your second paper; you must also incorporate two additional sources (primary or secondary).
 - d. Structured Revision (5%):** Due on May 8. You must revise one of your writing assignment submissions via a structured revision with revision memo.
 - e. Writing Reflection (5%):** Due on May 8. A 2-4-page (or 3-7 minute) self-assessment of your strengths and weaknesses as a writer, grounded in your work for this class.
- 4. Final Exam (15%)**—The Final Exam will be an oral exam; I will ask you to answer questions about texts you have not read for class (and possibly by authors you will not have encountered in class). These texts, along with some prompts and full instructions, will be given to you in week 14. You must analyze these texts using the critical skills you have developed in class and with reference 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 theories.

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 as PDFs via your Modules in Canvas

Schedule of Readings & Assignments	
Week 1: Introduction to Class and Concepts (Class meets January 16)	
<p>Tuesday:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend class <p>Before Saturday 11:59pm ET:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take Introductory Quiz • Take Syllabus Quiz • Sign up for Discussion Leading date • Sign up for Writing Accountability Groups 	
Week 2: “Christians,” the “Other”, and “Violence” (Class meets January 23) NB: This class will start LATE, at 5.00pm, and end at our usual time.	
<p>Before Tuesday:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read David Brakke, <i>The Gnostics</i>, 1-18 (focusing on highlighted portions) • Read William Cavanaugh, <i>The Myth of Religious Violence</i>, 1-14, 181-230. • Read Paul Bloom, “The Root of All Cruelty” (6 pages) <p>Tuesday:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend class at 5.00pm <p>Before Saturday 11:59pm ET (if you have not already done so):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take Introductory Quiz • Take Syllabus Quiz • Sign up for Discussion Leading date • Sign up for Writing Accountability Groups 	

Week 3: Violence and the Hebrew Bible (Class meets January 30)

Before Tuesday:

- Read Regina Schwartz, *The Curse of Cain*, ix-xi, 1-38, 143-176
- Read Robert Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism*, 3-64

Tuesday:

- Attend class

Before Saturday 11:59pm ET:

- Meet with your WAG
- Sign up for a meeting time to discuss your papers.

Week 4: Violence and the New Testament (Class meets February 6)

Before Tuesday:

- Read Selections from the New Testament
- Read Hector Avalos, *Fighting Words*, Introduction and Chapters 8-9: "Christianity and the New Testament"
- Read Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld, *Killing Enmity: Violence and the New Testament*, chapters 1, 3, and 4.

Tuesday:

- Attend class
- Discussion Leaders Lead Discussions

Before Saturday 11:59pm ET:

- Meet with your WAG
- Meet with me to discuss your papers.

Week 5: Martyrdom (maybe?) in the New Testament (Class meets February 13)

Before Tuesday:

- Read Gospel Parallels and John on the Death of Jesus
- Read Luke 22.1-23.49
- Read Acts 7
- Read Arthur Droge and James Tabor, *A Noble Death*, 113-126

Tuesday:

- Attend class
- Discussion Leaders Lead Discussions

Before Saturday 11:59pm ET:

- Meet with your WAG

Week 6: Early Christian Martyrdom (Class meets February 20)

Before Tuesday:

- Read *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs*
- Read *Martyrdom of Polycarp*
- Read *Passion of Perpetua*
- Read *Passion of Papyrus, Carpus, and Agathonike*
- Read Nicole Kelley, “Philosophy as Training for Death.”
- Read Arthur Droge and James Tabor, *A Noble Death*, 129-158

Tuesday:

- Attend class
- Discussion Leaders Lead Discussions

Before Saturday 11:59pm ET:

- Meet with your WAG
- Submit Writing Assignment #1

Week 7: Early Christian Attitudes to War and Peace (Class meets February 27)

Before Tuesday:

- Read selections from Despina Iosif, *Early Christian Attitudes to War, Violence and Military Service*
- Read Tertullian, *On the Crown*
- Read Paulinus of Nola, *Letters to Crispinianus*
- Read Augustine of Hippo, *Letters to Boniface*

Tuesday:

- Attend class
- Discussion Leaders Lead Discussions

Before Saturday 11:59pm ET:

- Meet with your WAG

Week 8: Making & Finding “Others” in the Late Ancient Church (Class meets March 5)

Before Tuesday:

- Augustine of Hippo on Coercion—Excerpts from Anti-Donatist Texts
- Hal Drake, “Lambs into Lions: Explaining Early Christian Intolerance”
- Michael Gaddis, *There is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ*, Chapter 5

Tuesday:

- Attend class
- Discussion Leaders Lead Discussions

Before Saturday 11:59pm ET:

- Meet with your WAG

Week 9: Just War (Class meets March 19)

Before Tuesday:

- Alan Fitzgerald, Augustine through the Ages (s.v. “War”)
- Watch video on “Just War Theory”

Tuesday:

- Attend class
- Discussion Leaders Lead Discussions

Before Saturday 11:59pm ET:

- Meet with your WAG
- Submit Writing Assignment #2

Week 10: The Crusades (Class meets March 26)

Before Tuesday:

- Watch Crash Course Video on Crusades
- Read Urban II’s speech to the Council of Clermont
- Read Thomas Asbridge, *The First Crusade*, ch. 1: “Holy War Proclaimed”
- Read Bernard of Clairvaux, “In Praise of the New Knighthood”

Tuesday:

- Attend class
- Discussion Leaders Lead Discussions

Before Saturday 11:59pm ET:

- Meet with your WAG

Week 11: Reformation (Class meets April 2)

Before Tuesday:

- Watch Video on Reformation
- Read Martin Luther, “Eight Sermons at Wittenberg”
- Read Martin Luther, “Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants.”

Tuesday:

- Attend class (ZOOM ONLY)
- Discussion Leaders Lead Discussions

Before Saturday 11:59pm ET:

- Meet with your WAG (WAGs scheduled to meet during Thanksgiving Break should do this week as a self-timed email check-in!)

Week 12: Reformation, Continued (Class meets April 9)

Before Tuesday:

- Read Schleithem Confession
- Read Harold S. Bender, “The Pacifism of the Sixteenth-Century Anabaptists” (selections)
- Skim William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, Chapter 3

Tuesday:

- Attend class
- Discussion Leaders Lead Discussions

Before Saturday 11:59pm ET:

- Meet with your WAG

Week 13: “The Troubles” (Class meets April 16)

Before Tuesday:

- Watch Documentary: “My Dad, the Peace Deal, and Me”
- Claire Mitchell, *Religion, Identity and Politics in Northern Ireland* (selections)
- Hempton, “The Fog of Religious Conflict”

Tuesday:

- Attend class
- Discussion Leaders Lead Discussions

Before Saturday 11:59pm ET:

- Meet with your WAG

Week 14: Christians, “Others,” and Violence in Bosnia (Class meets April 23)

Before Tuesday:

- Read Michael Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia*, ix-156 (whole book)

Tuesday:

- Attend class
- Discussion Leaders Lead Discussions

Before Saturday 11:59pm ET:

- Submit Writing Assignment #3

Final Exam (Oral) May 5-8

Writing Reflections & Writing Assignment Revisions due by May 8, 9.00am

Assignment Instructions

1. **Attendance, Participation and Preparation (15%)**
 - a. **Expectations for Attendance:** You must be present in class, for the entirety of the session, in person. Zoom may be available IF you let me know the morning of class, so I can bring the correct equipment with me. You must also attend your WAG sessions, however they are set up.
 - i. If you join class via Zoom on a day when others are in person, you will need to use your video and audio; the class is too big to rely on the chat during a hybrid session.
 - ii. Your WAG will meet once per week, at a time to be arranged during the first weeks of class.
 1. Each WAG will have a facilitator, who will earn 3 points of Extra Credit on their semester grade for convening the WAG and reporting attendance.
 2. If you miss your WAG in any given week, you will be able to join another or set up an alternative time with me.
 - iii. You may miss two classes or WAGs with no grade penalty
 - iv. If you miss more than two classes, you will have to do extra credits to make them up. These extra credits will be participation-based (e.g. attendance at a lecture related to the course topic).
 - b. **Expectations for Preparation and Participation:** You must participate productively in class discussions. Participation can include verbal participation, chat participation (IF we are all on Zoom), small group work, active listening, and (for anyone reluctant to speak in public settings) emailing comments or questions to me *before* class that I can introduce anonymously. Productive participation in class requires preparation, so I expect that everyone will come to class having done the readings and considered their implications.
 - i. There will be occasional quizzes and in-class writing assignments to assess your preparation and discover areas of interest, understanding, and confusion.
 - c. **I will be recording all classes and posting them to Canvas.**
2. **Leading Class Discussion (30%):** In the first week of class, you will sign up for one week of class in which you will lead discussion on one or two texts assigned for that day. You will choose the day; I will make the text assignments (though please email me if you have a particular text you want to cover!).
 - a. [I will provide guidelines for discussion leaders](#). These guidelines will include a worksheet for you to fill out with ideas for discussion strategies and ideas for general discussion objectives linked to the learning objectives for this course. It also includes a rubric on which discussion leadership will be graded. For full credit, you **MUST** hand the worksheet in to me 24 hours before the class in

which you are leading discussion, and set aside a little time to course correct if need be. The discussions should last 20-30m, and leaders must hand in a copy of their final “lesson plans” to me at the start of class.

- b. If you are, at the last minute, unable to lead class discussion on your selected day, you must propose to me (and, after I approve it, complete) an alternate assignment that would meet equivalent learning goals for you and for your classmates—e.g. you might come up with an instructional resource that shows your mastery of the material and helps guide your classmates to understand it better.
- 3. Writing Assignments (40%):**
- a. **Writing Assignment #1:** The topic is entirely up to you—so long as it addresses some aspect of Christianity, Violence, or any of the dynamics of “othering.” In Week 4, we will meet via Zoom or in person to discuss your topic, framing, and sources. The meeting will not be graded, but I will not grade any paper I have not discussed with you first.
 - b. **Writing Assignment #2 (10%):** You will hand in this paper via Word in track changes mode or via a Google Doc in Suggestion mode or via an annotated PDF so I can see your changes; you will annotate this via comments and use one of the structured revision techniques we have discussed in class; you will also write a revision memo explaining the changes you made. With your focus and approach clarified by the revision process, you will expand the paper’s analytical content and incorporate a further secondary source.
 - c. **Writing Assignment #3 (10%):** Due in Week 14. This will be an expansion of your second essay to 8-12 pages, incorporating two additional sources (primary or secondary). You will also write a revision memo explaining the changes you made.
 - d. **Structured Revision (5%):** Due on May 8. You must revise one of your writing assignment submissions to be the best possible version of itself. You will hand this paper with a revision memo, having used one of the structured revision techniques we discussed in class. *Not only does this count for 5% of your grade, I will also use the grade of this paper to replace the grade of your initial submission.*
 - e. **Writing Reflection (5%):** Due on May 8. A 2-4-page (or 3-7 minute) self-assessment of your strengths and weaknesses as a writer, grounded in your work for this class. This must itself be polished and clear (though not necessarily formal). Video and audio submissions also accepted.

Classroom Policies:

1. **Technology:** No laptops allowed except during small group work. Tablets that you can use with a stylus are OK.
2. **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. I will address any concerning behavior with the students involved; please contact me with any concerns.

3. **Academic Honesty:** Do not represent someone else's work as your own. Give credit where credit is due, even if that is to an AI text generator or a translation tool. 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/>
4. **Revisions:** All writing assignments in this class may be revised for full credit. You may revise all your work as many times as you wish to get the grade you want.
 - a. You may only revise work that I have seen and commented on.
 - b. This policy is only possible if you hand in your work in a timely fashion. If you do not hand in your work on or near the due date, I will not be able to comment and grade your initial submission in time for you to revise it effectively. Late work is fine, but if you submit work more than one week (seven days) past its deadline, I may not be able to grade it until the reading days at the end of the semester.
 - c. If you submit your work more than a week late and you want feedback before the end of the semester, please set up a meeting with me.
 - d. 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.
5. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** *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.* The full truth: For whatever reason, students rarely submit work/revisions after the end of the semester, even when they have expressed (to me) the intention of doing so. Life happens, the semester ends, new classes begin, students move on. If you are at all able to do the work according to the class schedule, I highly recommend that you do that.
6. *If you are at all concerned about your performance in the classroom, please talk with me as soon as possible.*