

RELIGION 840: 515 (M.A. Level)

CHRISTIANS, THE “OTHER”, AND VIOLENCE

FALL 2015

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Office hours: Mondays, noon -2 p.m.; **appointments available at other times—just ask!**

The objectives of this course are

1. to introduce the history of various instances in which Christians are the victims or perpetrators of violence.
2. to introduce the primary texts in which Christians explain, justify, condone, or condemn that violence.
3. to introduce some of the (voluminous) secondary literature that seeks to interpret and analyze the relationship between Christianity or Christians, on the one hand, and violence, on the other.

By the end of the semester, students will be able to

1. describe various Christian attitudes toward the use of violence from the earliest Christian writings (1st century CE) to the Catholic and Protestant Reformations of the 16th century.
2. link specific Christian attitudes to the historical context in which they arose, formulating arguments about the relationship between context and ideas.
3. summarize the ideas of several influential scholars about the relationship between Christianity (or religion in general) and social conflict: specifically, to summarize the arguments of those who see an essential connection between religion and violence (for example, Hector Avalos) and those who consider such claims at best exaggerated, at worst completely invalid (for example, William Cavanaugh, Robert Eisen, Thomas Neufeld).

BOOKS:

It will be helpful to have a Bible, but that is optional. If you don't have a Bible, go to biblegateway.com. If you want to buy a Bible, I recommend either the Harper-Collins Study Bible (**ISBN-10:** 0060786841, **ISBN-13:** 978-0060786847) or the New Oxford Annotated Bible (**ISBN-10:** 019528478X, **ISBN-13:** 978-0195284782).

For M.A. students: there are several books which we are reading either all or most of. You may want to purchase these. If you cannot purchase them, please get a copy of each from the library; you will need to have them for extended periods—maybe for most of the semester. These are as follows:

- William T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict*. ISBN-10: 0195385047 ISBN-13: 978-0195385045 Also available in Kindle, Nook, and other e-book formats.
- Elizabeth Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory. Early Christian Culture Making*. ISBN-10: 0231129874 ISBN-13: 978-0231129879
- Thomas Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity. Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam*. ISBN-10: 0812241134 | ISBN-13: 978-0812241136

Self-Reporting of Absences

In accordance with University policy, if you expect to miss a class, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra> to indicate the date and reason for your absence

Attendance: I usually have one of those legalistic attendance policies where more than 3 absences = a grade penalty, etc. But this class is different. The topic does not lend itself to quizzes and tests and lectures. It DOES lend itself to collaborative learning. That is, if we are all going to benefit from the class, if we are all going to be more educated at the end of it, then we all need the input of everyone else in the class. This is material, in short, that needs discussion, challenge, questioning. If you do not want to do that, it will be your loss and ours. So, I am not going to lay down some set of laws. I am trusting you to come to class. I am hoping it's all so interesting that you look forward to coming to class.

The best way to teach is to do so in small groups. Instead of lecturing about *what I think you don't know* and should know, I can listen and get constant feedback about *what you actually don't know* and want to know. I can have a clear sense of which students need which bits of information. Most of all, we can spend less time delivering and receiving information (something, after all, that anyone can do on the internet) and more time processing, synthesizing, analyzing, and arguing about the meaning(s) of that information. This course has no right-or-wrong answers, no black-and-white issues. Everything comes wrapped in historical contexts. Some days everything will just seem completely confusing or even nonsensical. **It will only be a success if everyone participates. If everyone participates it will be far beyond a success—it will be educational and enlightening in the best possible way.**

What it means to participate, arranged (as students so often like it to be) in terms of grades:

First, please note: every PASSING grade depends upon your HAVING DONE THE READING!!!!

A: A student who receives an **A** for participation in discussion comes to every class with questions or comments about the readings. These questions or comments go beyond issues of

fact and background to address the central arguments of the readings. An **A** discussant engages others about ideas, respects the opinions of others, and consistently elevates the level of discussion. Needless to say, the **A** student has done the reading.

B: A student who receives a **B** for participation in discussion may not always come to class with questions about the readings or may have only questions about facts and background. A **B** discussant may wait passively for others to raise interesting issues. Some discussants in this category, while courteous and articulate, do not adequately listen to other participants or relate their comments to the direction of the conversation.

C: A student who receives a **C** for participation attends regularly but may be an infrequent or unwilling participant. A student may receive a **C** if it becomes obvious to the professor that s/he has not done the reading, not done it carefully, or not understood it *and not asked for help*. (In other words, it is no crime to not understand the reading, but if you don't understand then you need to get help: e-mail or talk to Professor Kolbaba; ask a classmate; ask a friend.) A student who has not done the reading carefully may receive a **C** even if s/he talks a lot in class.

D: A student who regularly fails to prepare adequately for discussion risks the grade of **D**. **Or even F.**

Some hints that may help you get started participating (especially if you are a bit shy):

- Take notes as you read of anything that you don't understand.
- Then try to phrase your confusion as a question or series of questions. Write them out, if that helps, and bring them to class.
- Take notes as you read of anything that seems illogical, of any flaws in the argument, and/or of anything that just makes you think, "No way!" You can note things that make you angry, as well, or that completely contradict everything you have been taught before now.
- Again try to phrase your objections and criticism as a question or series of questions. Write them out, if that helps, and bring them to class.

It is perfectly acceptable to read your question from a piece of paper or a computer or tablet screen—especially if you have a hard time speaking to the class. (I hope we will all quickly get comfortable enough to overcome shyness, but until then do whatever you need to be able to participate.)

GRADING:

For graduate students, approximately 50% of the grade for the course will be based on participation (including evidence that you have actually done the reading). The other 50% will be based on the final paper.

Early short assignments are primarily to help both you and me know where you stand in terms of understanding the material and writing about it.

Introduction and Definitions of Religion

Wednesday, Sept. 2: Introduction to the Course. Syllabus discussion. Looking at some New Testament passages.

Wednesday, Sept. 9:

DUE (everyone): Short paper (250-500 words) on your general impressions of Christianity and violence. This paper is due the DAY BEFORE CLASS, Tuesday, Sept. 8, before noon. Please submit on Sakai. Go to "Assignments 2" on the sidebar and follow the directions.

DUE (M.A. students only): a précis about 500 words in length of Cavanaugh, Chapter 1. A definition and explanation of what a précis IS can be found here: <http://bid4papers.com/blog/critical-precis/> This paper is due by 9 a.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 9. Please submit on Sakai. Go to "Assignments 2" on the sidebar and follow the directions.

Reading (everyone): *ALL READING SHOULD BE DONE before THE CLASS MEETING ON THE DATE FOR WHICH IT IS LISTED!!!!!!*

- Gary E. Kessler, *Western Ways of Being Religious*, "A Challenge", pp. 3-6; "What is Religion", pp. 17-20; "The Search for Family Resemblances in Religion", pp. 21-24. On Sakai.
- Sam Gill, "The Academic Study of Religion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 62 (1994): 965-975. On Sakai.

Reading (M.A. students only):

- William T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict*. Introduction and Chapter 1: "The Anatomy of the Myth."

Extra meeting, Professor and M.A. students: discussing Cavanaugh, definitions of religion, what you might be interested in researching for a final paper.

Violence and Identity in the Early Jewish Traditions

In what sense are the Hebrew Scriptures a cause or source or explanation for Christian toleration and use of violence? Is there an essential connection between violence and monotheism? Does a people's identity as God's Chosen People necessarily entail violence against other peoples?

Wednesday, Sept. 16:

Due (M.A. students only): a précis about 500 words in length of Cavanaugh, Chapters 2-3. A definition and explanation of what a précis IS can be found here: <http://bid4papers.com/blog/critical-precis/> This paper is due by 9 a.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 16. Please submit on Sakai. Go to "Assignments 2" on the sidebar and follow the directions.

Reading (everyone):

- Excerpts from the Hebrew Scriptures: Gen 4:1-16; Num 25:1-13; Josh 5-11; 1 Kings 18:20-40.
- "Introduction," "Chapter 6," "Chapter 7" in Hector Avalos, *Fighting Words*. On Sakai.
- Robert Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism. From the Bible to Modern Zionism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1-64. On Sakai.

Reading (M.A. Students only): Cavanaugh, *Myth of Religious Violence*, Chapter 2, "The Invention of Religion." SKIM Cavanaugh chapter 3: This chapter is a detailed refutation of the idea that the "Wars of Religion" were really wars of religion. SKIM the long lists of evidence. Look for Cavanaugh's MAIN POINT, which is made over and over and therefore rather easy to find.

Extra meeting (M.A. Students): Discuss Cavanaugh.

Violence and Identity in the Early Christian Traditions

In what sense are the New Testament Scriptures a cause or source or explanation for Christian toleration and use of violence? Is there an essential connection between violence and monotheism? How do we get from the well-known New Testament record of Jesus' sayings about peace, loving one's enemies, and so on, to Christians committing violent acts against non-Christians and other Christians?

Wednesday, Sept. 23: SHORT DAY. CLASS WILL END AT 11:00.

Review (everyone) the excerpts from the New Testament that we read on the first day of class: Mt 5:38-48; Mt 10; Mt 13:24-30; Mt 18:15-35; Mt 21:12-22:22; Mt 25; Lk 6:27-42; Lk 12:49-53; Lk 22:35-38; Acts 5:1-11; Gal 1; Phil 3; 2 Cor 11; Rom 16.

Read (everyone):

- Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld, *Killing Enmity. Violence and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), chapters 1 and 4. On sakai.
- Hector Avalos, *Fighting Words*, chapters 8-9: "Christianity and the New Testament". On sakai.

Read (M.A. students only):

Cavanaugh, *Myth of Religious Violence*, Chapter 4.

Extra Meeting (M.A. Students): discuss Cavanaugh; hand out and discuss assignment for topic and bibliography for final paper.

Wednesday, Sept. 30: Professor Kolbaba abroad; Professor Wasserman, guest. Apocalypses.

READING ASSIGNMENTS TO BE ANNOUNCED.

M.A. Students: Begin looking for a research-paper topic by doing some preliminary reading on a subject or two that interests you. Ask Professor Kolbaba if you need some suggestions about where to start.

No extra M.A.-student meeting.

Martyrdom and the Formation of Christian Identity

How does the Christian experience of martyrdom before the fourth century shape Christian communities' senses of themselves? What happens to the memory of martyrdom after the persecutions stop? What role does violence play in the formation of a Christian culture (or Christian cultures)?

Wednesday, Oct. 7:

DUE (M.A. students): group presentations of Castelli's arguments to the class.

Reading (everyone)

- "The Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas", online:
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/perpetua.asp>
- Socrates Scholasticus, "Martyrs at Merum in Phrygia under Julian", Ecclesiastical History 3:15.
Online at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf202.ii.vi.xv.html>

Reading (M.A. students only):

Elizabeth Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*. Early Christian Culture Making (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), ALL.

No extra M.A.-student meeting.

Early Christian Attitudes toward War and Peace

Wednesday, Oct. 14:

No new reading.

Extra Meeting (M.A. Students): present your ideas for research project to one another. Discuss. Get advice.

Wednesday, Oct. 21:

Due (M.A. students): 500-word proposal for your research project with a bibliography. Due **BY EMAIL** to Professor Kolbaba Thursday, Oct. 21 by 9 a.m.

Reading (all):

Tertullian, "On the Crown," chapters 11-12: http://www.tertullian.org/anf/anf03/anf03-10.htm#P1089_449041

Additional reading to be announced.

Violent Monks, Bishops, and Councils

What kinds of conversations do Christians have among themselves about righteous versus unrighteous anger and violence? Is righteous anger always on one's own side and unrighteous anger on the opponents' side? Who uses coercive power legitimately and who illegitimately?

Wednesday, Oct. 28:

Reading (everyone):

- Augustine of Hippo, Letter 93, chapters 1-15, sections 1-19.
<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf101.vii.1.XCIII.html>
- H.A. Drake, "Lambs into Lions: Explaining Early Christian Intolerance." On Sakai.
- Peter Brown, "St. Augustine's Attitude to Religious Coercion." On Sakai.

Additional reading for M.A. students to be announced.

Wednesday, Nov. 4:

Reading (everyone):

David N. Bell, ed. and trans. *Besa: The Life of Shenoute* (Cistercian Studies Series, vol. 73; Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1983). Excerpts on Sakai.

Reading (only M.A. students):

Gaddis, *There Is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ*, chapters 5-6. On Sakai.

Violence, Boundaries, and Identity: Some Theoretical Approaches

An intermission to look at more explicitly theoretical material about religious identity and religiously motivated violence.

Wednesday, Nov. 11:

Due (M.A. students): thesis, outline, full bibliography of research paper due. Please submit **BY EMAIL** to Professor Kolbaba

Due (M.A. students): Assess the paraphrase of Sizgorich, chapter 1, on Sakai. Are there places where something was lost in the translation? How would you improve the paraphrase? Write a very brief—one page or so—reflection on the use of such a paraphrase in a course. If you were teaching, would you consider such an approach? Would it be better to just make the students read the original and try to guide them through it? **Bring this reflection to class.**

Reading (everyone):

- Inger Furseth and Pål Repstad, *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion*, chapters 9 and 10. On Sakai.
- Paraphrase of Sizgorich, chapter 1. On Sakai.

Reading (M.A. Students only):

Sizgorich, chapters 1-4.

Violent interpretation of Christianity in another context: “Germanic” Christianity

In what ways does a “Germanic” culture with a ruling warrior-class shape Christianity, and vice versa? Are there parallels with the Christianization of the Roman Empire? Are some things unique about the Germanic experience? Of the models for understanding violence, boundaries, and identity that we’ve studied so far, which do you find helpful for understanding early medieval Christianity in western Europe?

Wednesday, Nov. 18

Reading (everyone):

- James C. Russell, *The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), chapters 4 and 5. . On sakai.

Reading (M.A. students):

Lesley Abrams, “Germanic Christianities,” in *Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 3, *Early Medieval Christianities*, c. 600-1100, ed. Thomas F.X. Noble and Julia M.H. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pages 107-129. Available online through Rutgers University Libraries:

- ❖ go to libraries.rutgers.edu;
- ❖ search for *Cambridge History of Christianity*;
- ❖ click on the entry for *Early Medieval Christianities*, c. 600-1100;
- ❖ at the bottom of the catalogue entry there is a hyperlink that says, “Full text available from Cambridge Histories Online”; click on that;
- ❖ if you are not at a campus computer you will be asked to login with your netid and password; if you are at a campus computer you should be sent straight to a website with the full text of *Early Medieval Christianities*;
- ❖ “Germanic Christianities” is chapter 5.

No extra meeting for M.A. students. Meet with Professor Kolbaba individually if it seems helpful.

Crusades

Wednesday, Dec. 2

Where does this new kind of Christian violence come from? Is it new? Does it share features with earlier manifestations of Christian violence?

Reading (everyone):

- Thomas Asbridge, *The First Crusade*, ch. 1: "Holy War Proclaimed". On sakai.
- Accounts of the speech Pope Urban II made to get the ball rolling. Online at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/urban2-5vers.asp>
- Jonathan Riley-Smith, "Crusading as an Act of Love," *History* 65 (1980): 177-192. Available online at <http://zapasy.blox.pl/resource/love.pdf>

No extra meeting for M.A. students. Individual meetings with Professor Kolbaba MANDATORY.

Reformation and "Wars of Religion"

Wednesday, Dec. 9

Due (M.A. students): complete draft of final paper. Please submit on Sakai **before 5 p.m.** Go to "Assignments 2" on the sidebar and follow the directions.

Reading (everyone):

- Martin Luther, "Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants. Online: <http://www.scrollpublishing.com/store/Luther-Peasants.html>
- Balthasar Hubmaier, "Concerning Heretics and Those Who Burn Them", from Denis R. Janz, *A Reformation Reader. Primary Texts with Introductions*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), pp. 202-203. On sakai.
- "The Schleithem Confession", early Anabaptist summary of their beliefs, including pacifism, from Janz, *Reformation Reader*, pp. 208-211. On sakai.
- Harold S. Bender, "The Pacifism of the Sixteenth-Century Anabaptists." On sakai.

For M.A. students: Final paper is due December 20, 2015, by 5 p.m. Please submit on Sakai. Go to "Assignments 2" on the sidebar and follow the directions.