

IS 478-01: Religion and War

Professor: COL Dennis Foster
Meeting Times: T/H 1050-1205
Course Location: 448 SS Hall

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Course Webpage (CANVAS): <https://vmi.instructure.com/courses/519>

Course Description:

The purpose of this course is to address the relationship between religion and political violence (including war), and how it has evolved through modern history. Is there something intrinsic about religion that makes it necessarily prone to violence? How can one reconcile religion's militating tendencies with its typically pacifistic core values? To what degree does religion truly remain a fundamental cause of political violence in the 21st Century? How have political actors used religion to mobilize popular support for the militarized prosecution of secular or material causes? We will address these questions and several others using theories and concepts in political science (such as those dealing with social mobilization, collective rationality and irrationality, and group psychology), as well as historical treatments of "holy war," including the Crusades, the shifting Islamic conception of *jihad*, and modern-day politico-religious terrorism.

Required Texts:

Gerges, Fawaz A. 2007. *Journey of the Jihadist: Inside Muslim Militancy*. Harcourt, Inc. (hereafter, "Gerges").

Juergensmeyer, Mark. 2003. *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, 3rd Edition. University of California Press (hereafter, "Juergensmeyer").

Kurzman, Charles. 2011. *The Missing Martyrs: Why There Are So Few Muslim Terrorists*. Oxford University Press (hereafter, "Kurzman").

Several additional readings will be posted on CANVAS (Denoted "C" in syllabus).

CANVAS: Important information for this course will be posted on VMI's new academic interface, CANVAS. This syllabus, lecture notes and readings will be posted on the course's CANVAS home page. Several assignments for this course will also be taken on or submitted to CANVAS. Feel free, also, to post questions about the material or other course-related matters in the "Discussions" section; I will answer them as time permits. We'll go over the operational details of CANVAS in class.

GRADING

1. **Participation (5%):** Participation in class will comprise five percent of each student's course grade (TWELVE points). Participation will include attendance, reasoned contribution to class discussions, and the introduction of current events topics and materials germane to class themes
2. **Quizzes (15%):** To help ensure the completion of readings and the comprehension of lectures, **six quizzes** will be administered throughout the term, dealing mainly with key concepts. The date of each quiz is noted in the course schedule. Each quiz will be worth SIX points (THIRTY-SIX points total).
3. **Exam 1 (15%):** This exam will cover material from Section 1 of the course, and will be administered on **30 September**. It will require cadets to answer SIX of the ten short questions asked. Each answer will be worth SIX points (THIRTY-SIX points total).
4. **Exam 2 (15%):** This exam will cover material from Section 2 of the course, and will be administered on **4 November**. It will require cadets to answer SIX of the ten short questions asked. Each answer will be worth SIX points (THIRTY-SIX points total).
5. **Term Paper (20%):** This paper, to be submitted to CANVAS on **11 December**, will require students to apply theories and other material covered in class to explain a historical, politically violent religious movement. Cadets have the option of submitting a rough draft of the paper for systematic review by the instructor on **18 November**. Details of this assignment are given on **pages 6 and 7** of this syllabus. The paper is worth FORTY-EIGHT points.
6. **Final (30%):** The final exam will generally require students to demonstrate their capacity to critically assess issues and answer questions via the application of knowledge gained throughout the course. In this sense, the final is cumulative. Students will be asked to answer three of six essay questions; these answers are worth TWENTY-FOUR points each (SEVENTY-TWO points total).

The proportion of the **240** total available points that each cadet attains determines his or her final grade. The final grading scale is as follows:

A:	216-240 points.
B:	192-215 points.
C:	168-191 points.
D:	144-167 points.
F:	0 - 143 points.

CLASSROOM POLICIES

- Work for Grade Policy regulations are fully applicable and will be enforced for each of the assignments and tests (see pages 8-11).
- Qualified cadets are permitted to take 3.0 cuts with the prior approval of the instructor.
- Exams, quizzes, and other assignments will not be postponed except as provided by Institute regulations. Exams, quizzes, and due dates for assignments will be rescheduled only at the discretion of the instructor, and on his terms.
- Late submission of any written work is graded down six grade points per day. Regardless of the incurrence of late penalties, the failure to submit any written assignment by the end of the term will result in a grade of F for the course.
- Other than water in a closed container, no tobacco products, food, beverages, or gum are allowed in the classroom.
- Obscene language will not be permitted.
- The use of personal electronic devices for purposes not associated with classwork is prohibited. Such use includes, but is not limited to, (a) any form of communication (i.e., speaking and texting) with a cellular or “smart” phone; and (b) the use of a laptop or “pad” computer for tasks other than those pertaining to IS 478. The instructor reserves the right to confiscate devices used in contravention of these policies.

“VMI abides by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 which mandate reasonable accommodations are provided for all cadets with documented disabilities. If you have a registered disability and may require some type of instructional and/or examination accommodations, please contact me early in the semester so that I can provide or facilitate provision of accommodations you may need. If you have not already done so, you will need to register with the Office of Disabilities Services, the designated office on Post to provide services for cadets with disabilities. The office is located on the 2nd floor of the VMI Health Center. Please call or stop by the office of LTC Jones, Director of Disabilities Services, for more information, 464-7667 or jonesl10@vmi.edu.”

COURSE OUTLINE

Part 1: Overview

- 9/2: Introduction: Framing the Course's Central Questions
No Readings Assigned
- 9/4: What is Religion? (I)
(C) Excerpts from The Holy Qur'an, The Hadith, and The Holy Bible
- 9/9: What is Religion? (II)
(C) Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System"
IN CLASS: Quiz #1
- 9/11: Religion and Politics
(C) Gill, "Religion and Comparative Politics";
(C) Fox, "Religion as an Overlooked Element of International Relations"
- 9/16: Religion and Social Movements
(C) Kurzman, "Organizational Opportunity and Social Movement Mobilization"
- 9/18: Religious Fundamentalism
(C) Marty, "Fundamentalism as a Social Phenomenon"
IN CLASS: Quiz #2
- 9/23: Religion and Violence (I)
Juergensmeyer, Chapter 1
- 9/25: Religion and Violence (II)
(C) Hall, "Religion and Violence: Social Processes in Comparative Perspective"
- 9/30: **IN CLASS: Exam #1**

Part 2: A Theoretical Treatment of the Nexus of Religion and War/Violent Conflict

- 10/2: The Various Political Functions of Religion
(C) Fox and Sandler, "The Question of Religion and World Politics"
- 10/7: Religion as a Political Belief System/Doctrine
(C) Philpott, "Explaining the Political Ambivalence of Religion"
IN CLASS: Selection of Term Paper Topic
- 10/9: Belief Systems, Doctrines, and War/Violent Conflict
Juergensmeyer, Chapter 2
IN CLASS: Quiz #3
- 10/14: Religion as a Basis for Identity
(C) Seul, "Ours is the Way of God"
- 10/16: Identity and Violent Conflict
Juergensmeyer, Chapters 3 & 9;
(C) Wellman and Tokuno, "Is Religious Violence Inevitable?"

- 10/21: Religion as a Source of Political Legitimacy
(C) Razi, "Legitimacy, Religion, and Nationalism in the Middle East"
IN CLASS: Quiz #4
- 10/23: Legitimation in Violent Conflict
Juergensmeyer, Chapters 4 & 10
- 10/28: The Political Influence of Religious Institutions
(C) Young, "Confessional Protest: The Religious Birth of US National Social Movements"
- 10/30: Religious Institutions in Violent Conflict
(C) Brundage, "Holy War and the Medieval Lawyers"
- 11/4: **IN CLASS: Exam #2**
- Part 3: A Case Study in the Nexus of Religion and Political Violence – Contemporary Jihadism**
- 11/6: **IN CLASS: Discussion of Term Paper Projects**
Kurzman, Chapter 1;
Gerges, Chapter 1
- 11/11: **NO CLASS (Founders Day)**
- 11/13: The Political Necessity of Redefining Jihad
Kurzman, Chapters 2-4
- 11/18: Selling the New Jihad
Kurzman, Chapters 5 & 6;
(C) Post, "Reframing of Martyrdom and Jihad"
IN CLASS: Optional Submission of Term Paper Rough Drafts (in PDF on CANVAS)
- 11/20: Identity and Contemporary Jihad
Gerges, Chapters 2 & 3
IN CLASS: Quiz #5
- 11/25: **IN CLASS: Discussion of Term Paper Assignment** (*No Readings Assigned*)
- 11/27: **NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Furlough)**
- 12/2: Legitimizing Contemporary Jihad
Gerges, Chapter 4
- 12/4: Islamic Institutions in Contemporary Jihad
Gerges, Chapters 5 & 6
- 12/9: The Mutation of Radical Islam to Accommodate Contemporary Jihad
(C) Bloom, "Mother. Daughter. Sister. Bomber."
IN CLASS: Quiz #6
- 12/11: **IN CLASS: Wrap-Up and Faculty Evaluations**
Term Paper Due (Submitted NLT 1600 in PDF format on CANVAS)
- 12/19: **FINAL EXAM – 0830-1100 (Room TBD)**

TERM PAPER ASSIGNMENT

The first aim of social scientific analysis is to acquire knowledge of important events; the second aim is to develop and apply logically consistent approaches or constructs to explain these events and perhaps to predict future occurrences, for the general purpose of facilitating our understanding of a complex world. The Term Paper Assignment, to be submitted at 1600 on the last day of class (11 December) on CANVAS, takes both of these central aims into consideration.

1. In class on **7 October**, choose one historical campaign of politico-religious violence from the list below:

The Great Judean Revolt, 66 C.E.	Anti-Jewish Pogroms in Russia, 1881-1884
Muhammad's Arabian Conquests, 622-32	The Armenian Genocide, 1915-18
The First Crusade, 1096-99	The Zionist Irgun's Insurrection, 1944-48
The Albigensian Crusade, 1209-29	The Vietnamese Buddhist Uprising, 1966
The French Wars of Religion, 1562-98	Lebanese Civil War, 1975-1990
The Thirty Years' War, 1618-1648	Algerian Civil War, 1991-2002
The "Glorious" Revolution (UK), 1688	The Bosnian Civil War, 1992-1995
The Indian Rebellion, 1857	The Al-Aqsa (Second) Intifada, 2000-05

2. Write a **12-15 page paper** (double-spaced, in standard 12-point font, with page numbers and proper annotation and citation) that accomplishes the following goals:
 - a. Effectively discuss the details of a specific violent behavior (or set of behaviors) undertaken by one the participants in the campaign you've chosen, and clearly delineate the role that religious beliefs played in that violent behavior.
 - b. Referencing the assigned readings and lectures/class discussions, use one of the various theoretical perspectives advanced in this class to explain how religion intersected with political/social concerns to produce, perpetuate, or extend violence. This effort may include (but is not limited to) detailed reference to the following concepts:
 - i. The use of violence to more clearly delineate the cultural-religious boundaries of the group (e.g., Geertz);
 - ii. The use of violence to enhance waning unity or identity within the religious group (e.g., ;
 - iii. The framing of violence in a religious context to enhance the legitimacy of political leadership;
 - iv. The reliance upon religious dogma and/or institutions to justify, sanction, or mobilize support for violence that otherwise seems motivated by political interest;
 - v. The use of religion to reframe, redirect, or expand the scope of existing violence, as seemingly dictated by political interest;
 - vi. The adaptation of established religious doctrine/dogma to "meet the needs" of "politically necessary" violence.
 - c. As should be evident, you will need to be able to gather sufficiently descriptive historical information AND possess sufficient knowledge of the course material to do well on this assignment. These requirements should be foremost in your mind when choosing a conflict.

- d. Cadets have the option to submit a rough draft of this paper by **18 November**. Though not graded, this draft represents the best opportunity for cadets to receive systematic feedback by the instructor on the structure, flow, and arguments of the paper.

Cadets should actively avoid “stretching” theories to fit events. Failure to explicitly lay out both the theory and the evidence, and to make a compelling and well-reasoned argument linking the theory to the evidence, will result in a subpar grade. As with all assignments for this course, frequent consultation with the instructor at each stage of your work will likely result in a much better finished product.

In accordance with the Institute’s and Department’s Work for Grade Policies (see pages 8-11 of this syllabus), you are required to submit “Help Received” information for this assignment, in the form of a “Works Cited” page, and you are required to include some form of “in-text” citation linking specific portions of your paper to the appropriate sources listed in the works cited. I will answer any questions about this process that you may have.

WORK FOR GRADE POLICY

Development of the spirit as well as the skills of academic inquiry is central to the mission of VMI's Academic Program. As a community of scholars, posing questions and seeking answers, we invariably consult and build upon the ideas, discoveries, and products of others who have wrestled with related issues and problems before us. We are obligated ethically and in many instances legally to acknowledge the sources of all borrowed material that we use in our own work. This is the case whether we find that material in conventional resources, such as the library or cyberspace, or discover it in other places like conversations with our peers.

Academic integrity requires the full and proper documentation of any material that is not original with us. It is therefore a matter of honor. To misrepresent someone else's words, ideas, images, data, or other intellectual property as one's own is stealing, lying, and cheating all at once.

Because the offense of improper or incomplete documentation is so serious, and the consequences so potentially grave, the following policies regarding work for grade have been adopted as a guide to cadets and faculty in upholding the Honor Code under which all VMI cadets live:

1) Cadets' responsibilities

"Work for grade" is defined as any work presented to an instructor for a formal grade or undertaken in satisfaction of a requirement for successful completion of a course or degree requirement. All work submitted for grade is considered the cadet's own work. **"Cadet's own work"** means that he or she has composed the work from his or her general accumulation of knowledge and skill except as clearly and fully documented and that it has been composed especially for the current assignment. No work previously submitted in any course at VMI or elsewhere will be resubmitted or reformatted for submission in a current course without the specific approval of the instructor.

In all work for grade, failure to distinguish between the cadet's own work and ideas and the work and ideas of others is known as **plagiarism**. Proper documentation clearly and fully identifies the sources of all borrowed ideas, quotations, or other assistance. The cadet is referred to the VMI-authorized handbook for rules concerning quotations, paraphrases, and documentation.

In all written work for grade, the cadet must include the words **"HELP RECEIVED"** conspicuously on the document, and he or she must then do one of two things: (1) state "none," meaning that no help was received except as documented in the work; or (2) explain in detail the nature of the help received. In oral work for grade, the cadet must make the same declaration before beginning the presentation. Admission of help received may result in a lower grade but will not result in prosecution for an honor violation.

Cadets are prohibited from discussing the contents of a quiz/exam until it is returned to them or final course grades are posted. This enjoinder does not imply that any inadvertent expression or behavior that might indicate one's feeling about the test should be considered a breach of honor. The real issue is whether cadets received information, not available to everyone else in the class, which would give them an unfair advantage. If a cadet inadvertently gives or receives information, the incident must be reported to the professor and the Honor Court.

Each cadet bears the responsibility for familiarizing himself or herself thoroughly with the policies stated in this section, with any supplementary statement regarding work for grade expressed by the academic department in which he or she is taking a course, and with any special conditions provided in writing by the professor for a given assignment. If there is any doubt or uncertainty about the correct interpretation of a policy, the cadet should consult the instructor of the course. There should be no confusion, however, on the

basic principle that it is never acceptable to submit someone else's work, written or otherwise, formally graded or not, as one's own.

The violation by a cadet of any of these policies will, if he or she is found guilty by the Honor Court, result in his or her being dismissed from VMI. Neither ignorance nor professed confusion about the correct interpretation of these policies is an excuse.

2) Faculty members' responsibilities

Each academic department will publish an official statement of supplementary departmental policies regarding work for grade, titled "Departmental Statement Concerning VMI's Policies Regarding Work for Grade." Each departmental statement will include explicit policies on the following: (a) tutoring* [e.g., Writing Center, Learning Center, athletic tutors, private tutors], (b) peer collaboration*, and (c) computer aids, including calculators, translators, spelling, style, and grammar checkers. Individual course assignments that deviate from the departmental work for grade policies must be approved by the department head in advance and must be explained to cadets in writing.

No departmental or individual assignment policies may contradict or compromise the Institutional principles expressed in the Academic Regulations, particularly notions of academic integrity and the requirement to document borrowed material and help received. Each departmental statement must be approved by the Deputy Superintendent for Academics and Dean of the Faculty following review by the Academic Policy Committee of the Academic Board. A copy of the document must be filed with the Superintendent, the Deputy Superintendent for Academics and Dean of the Faculty, and the Superintendent's Representative to the Honor Court. Such a statement must be signed by the department head and must be posted in each classroom used by the department.

As an essential part of the duty of teaching and a matter of professional citizenship, faculty are expected to adhere to established work for grade policies and to communicate clearly and regularly with their cadets about the values and practices of academic honesty and integrity. Each faculty member must therefore include work for grade policies in a syllabus for every course he or she teaches. Each syllabus must include an exact transcription of the section titled "Cadets' Responsibilities" from "Work for Grade Policies" in the VMI Academic Regulations and a full statement of the established departmental policies regarding work for grade, plus any approved course-specific policies.

Furthermore, all faculty members are responsible for discussing with all of their students the details, definitions, and implications of (1) the entire section of the Academic Regulations entitled "Work for Grade Policies"; (2) the relevant sections on quotations, paraphrasing, and documentation in the current VMI-authorized handbook; and (3) the departmental and any approved course-specific policies regarding Work for Grade. This discussion must take place before any work is submitted for grade, and it should be treated with the gravity and level of detail that it merits.

Faculty must also review the Institute policy regarding the discussion of quizzes and exams with their classes. Specifically, faculty must remind cadets that they are prohibited from discussing the contents of a quiz/exam with anyone except the professor until it is returned to them or final course grades are posted.

If a member of the faculty believes that a cadet has violated one or more of VMI's, the department's, or the instructor's work for grade policies, he or she should report the evidence to the head of the department. The department head will decide whether the collected evidence justifies referral to the Deputy Superintendent for Academics and Dean of the Faculty. If the department head decides that the evidence does not justify referral, then he or she will conclude the investigation. Otherwise, the department head will submit a written report to the Deputy Superintendent for Academics and Dean of the Faculty. The report must contain both

a recommendation for action and all relevant documents, including a statement signed by the faculty member who reported the violation.

The instructor will assign a grade of “F” following a formal charge of an Honor Court academic violation in his or her course until the issue is resolved.

* Departmental policies must include a statement on whether tutors and peers may offer cadets **critical comments** on their papers. Offering **critical comments** means giving general advice on such matters as organization, thesis development, support for assertions, and patterns of errors. It does not include proofreading or editing.

Proofreading means correcting errors (e.g., in spelling, grammar, punctuation). It is the last step taken by the writer in the **editing** process. In addition to the corrections made in proofreading, **editing** includes making such changes as the addition, deletion, or reordering of paragraphs, sentences, phrases, or words. **A cadet may not have his or her work proofread or edited by someone other than the instructor.** [Instructors may grant exceptions to this rule only if they have received written permission from the department head for a particular assignment.]

Department of International Studies & Political Science
Work for Grade Policy

Work for Grade in this department is generally of the following types.

1. Written quizzes, tests, or examinations
2. Book reviews
3. Research Papers, policy memoranda, briefing papers, and discourse analysis--
identification and analysis of the critical differences in the findings and opinions of
scholars on issues of interest to the discipline.

1. Cadets are permitted and encouraged to study with their peers to prepare for quizzes, tests and exams. However, when a cadet takes either written or oral quizzes, tests, and examinations, answers must be his/her own work without help from any other source including notes or consultation with others.

2. In the case of book reviews, research and other papers, as described in "2" and "3" above, research and composing of such works must be done by the cadet alone. Cadets are permitted to use spell and grammar-checking facilities.

IS cadets are encouraged to make use of all VMI tutoring services to receive critical comments (defined above). Cadets who do so and mark "Help Received" will not receive a lower grade on an assignment. Cadets are also permitted to seek critical comments on their written work from their peers. However, proof-reading and editing (**defined above**) of a cadet's written work is not permitted.

Any exceptions to these rules, including the use of tutors, collaboration among cadets, and the use of computer style, spell and grammar checkers; must be explained in writing by the course instructor. Instructors are at liberty to stipulate exceptions only with the written approval of their department head.

If you have any questions about the application of these rules, consult your instructor. Do not leave anything to chance.

Colonel James J. Hentz
Professor and Head