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The Violent and the Sacred:

Religion and the Problem of Human Suffering

REL 101 Section 001

Spring 2016, Lecture

Dr. Steven Jacobs

Office Hours and Contact Information

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Office Hours: **Tuesday & Thursday, Before 9:30 (By Appt.), 11:00-12:15, & By Appt.**

Prerequisites

[UA Course Catalog Prerequisites](#)

No prerequisites or none listed.

Course Description

[UA Course Catalog Information](#)

Catalog description not available.

This new course first explores how we study what we commonly call religion within the boundaries of the public university. Then we apply this method of study to investigate the problem of human suffering by looking at such topics as theories of evil, violence, and hate; and terrorism and genocide—drawing on examples from various traditions and historical periods.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will be able to access their understanding of the problems associated with the academic study of religion as demonstrated by their answers to the questions on Exam #1.
2. Students will be able to assess their understanding of the theories and theorists associated with the academic study of religion by their answers to the questions on Exam #1.
3. Students will be able to assess their understanding of the various academic disciplines associated with the academic study of religion by their answers to the questions on Exam #1.
4. Students will be able to recognize the common elements associated with the academic study of religion by their answers to the questions on Exam #1.
5. Students will be able to demonstrate their analytical and reasoning abilities by their written responses to two (2) additional articles associated with Part I.
6. Students will be able to assess their understanding of the various theories associated with the concepts of Evil, Violence, and Hate in relation to the world's religions by their answers to the questions on Exam #2.
7. Students will be able to assess their understanding of the concepts of Terrorism and Genocide associated with the world's religions by their answers to the questions on Exam #2.
8. Students will be able to assess their understanding of Violence associated with the world's religious traditions by their answers to the questions on Exam #2.
9. Students will be able to assess their understanding of the academic perspectives of various disciplines on the question of Religion and Violence by their answers to the questions on Exam #2.
10. Students will be able to demonstrate their analytical and reasoning abilities by their written responses to two (2) additional articles associated with Part II.

Required Texts

UA Supply Store Textbook Information

- NYE / RELIGION: THE BASICS **(Required)**
- NYE (RENTAL) / (RENTAL) RELIGION: THE BASICS **(RENTAL)**
- LANKFORD (RENTAL) / (RENTAL) MYTH OF MARTYRDOM **(RENTAL)**
- LANKFORD / MYTH OF MARTYRDOM **(Required)**
- LAW / TERRORISM **(Required)**
- LAW (RENTAL) / (RENTAL) TERRORISM **(RENTAL)**
- COCKBURN / RISE OF ISLAMIC STATE **(Required)**
- COCKBURN (RENTAL) / (RENTAL) RISE OF ISLAMIC STATE **(RENTAL)**
- JACOBY, RUSSELL (RENTAL) / (RENTAL) BLOODLUST: ON THE ROOTS OF VIOLENCE FROM CAIN AND ABEL TO THE PRESENT **(RENTAL)**

- JACOBY, RUSSELL / BLOODLUST:ON THE ROOTS OF VIOLENCE FROM CAIN AND ABEL TO THE PRESENT **(Required)**
- RENARD (POD) / FIGHTING WORDS:RELIGION, VIOLENCE, AND THE INTERPRETATION OF SACRED TEXTS **(Required)**
- RENARD (POD) (RENTAL) / (RENTAL) FIGHTING WORDS:RELIGION, VIOLENCE, AND THE INTERPRETATION OF SACRED TEXTS **(RENTAL)**

Other Course Materials

Additional course materials during the semester will be supplied by the instructor.

Outline of Topics

PART I: Authority, Definition, Insider versus Outsider, Context & Setting, Theology, Truth, Faith, Murphy & Pals, Tylor & Frazer, Freud, Durkheim, Marx, Eliade, Evans-Pritchard, Geertz, Anthropology, History, Phenomenology, Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology, Culture, Community, Doctrines & Texts, Ethics, Myths, Relevance, Rituals, Sacrality, Symbols

PART II: Hitler, Stalin & Mao, Mass Murderers, Crucifixion, Devil, Hell, Heresy, Holy Wars/Crusades, Martyrdom, Original Sin, Sacrifice, Scapegoatism, Suffering, Judaism, Christianity--Roman Catholicism & Orthodoxy, Christianity--Protestantisms, Islam & Jihad, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Baha'i, Zoroastrianism, African Traditional Religions, Pacific Island Religions, Chinese Religions, Japan & Aum Shinrikyo, Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, Political Science, Literature, Theology, Future

Exams and Assignments

Exam #1 will cover the topics presented in Part I of this course in addition to the book by Mallory Nye, *Religion: The Basics*. It will consist of 50 multiple-choice questions.

Exam #2 will cover the topics presented in Part II of this course in addition to the books by Russell Jacoby, *Bloodlust* and Renard, *Fighting Words*. It will consist of 50 multiple-choice questions.

Articles Review: Students will submit four (4) 1-2 page responses to two (2) articles each from Part I and Part II.

Comparison Review: Students will submit one (1) 3-5 page paper comparing Cockburn, *The Rise of the Islamic State*, Lankford, *The Myth of Martyrdom*, and Law, *Terrorism: A History*.

Grading Policy

20% = Exam #2

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40% = Articles Review (10% each)

20 % = Comparison Paper

+ **Extra-Credit Opportunities**

Policy on Missed Exams & Coursework

All make-up work is to be determined in consultation with the instructor.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is *required* unless otherwise noted in the syllabus.

Severe Weather Guidelines

The guiding principle at The University of Alabama is to promote the personal safety of our students, faculty and staff during severe weather events. It is impossible to develop policies which anticipate every weather-related emergency. These guidelines are intended to provide additional assistance for responding to severe weather on campus.

UA is a residential campus with many students living on or near campus. In general classes will remain in session until the National Weather Service issues safety warnings for the city of Tuscaloosa. Clearly, some students and faculty commute from adjacent counties. These counties may experience weather related problems not encountered in Tuscaloosa. Individuals should follow the advice of the National Weather Service for that area taking the necessary precautions to ensure personal safety. Whenever the National Weather Service and the Emergency Management Agency issue a warning, people in the path of the storm (tornado or severe thunderstorm) should take immediate life saving actions.

When West Alabama is under a severe weather advisory, conditions can change rapidly. It is imperative to get to where you can receive information from the National Weather Service and to follow the instructions provided. Personal safety should dictate the actions that faculty, staff and students take.

The Office of University Relations will disseminate the latest information regarding conditions on campus in the following ways:

- Weather advisory posted on the UA homepage
- Weather advisory sent out through UA Alerts to faculty, staff and students
- Weather advisory broadcast over WVUA at 90.7 FM
- Weather advisory broadcast over Alabama Public Radio (WUAL) at 91.5 FM
- Weather advisory broadcast over WVUA-TV/WUOA-TV, and on the website

at <http://wvuatv.com/content/weather>. WVUA-TV Home Team Weather provides a free service you can subscribe to which allows you to receive weather warnings for Tuscaloosa via e-mail or cell phone. Check <http://wvuatv.com/content/free-email-weather-alerts> for more details and to sign up for weather alerts.

In the case of a tornado warning (tornado has been sighted or detected by radar; sirens activated), all university activities are automatically suspended, including all classes and laboratories. If you are in a building, please move immediately to the lowest level and toward the center of the building away from windows (interior classrooms, offices, or corridors) and remain there until the tornado warning has expired. Classes in session when the tornado warning is issued can resume immediately after the warning has expired at the discretion of the instructor. Classes that have not yet begun will resume 30 minutes after the tornado warning has expired provided at least half of the class period remains.

Policy on Academic Misconduct

All students in attendance at The University of Alabama are expected to be honorable and to observe standards of conduct appropriate to a community of scholars. The University of Alabama expects from its students a higher standard of conduct than the minimum required to avoid discipline. At the beginning of each semester and on examinations and projects, the professor, department, or division may require that each student sign the following Academic Honor Pledge: "I promise or affirm that I will not at any time be involved with cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, or misrepresentation while enrolled as a student at The University of Alabama. I have read the Academic Honor Code, which explains disciplinary procedure resulting from the aforementioned. I understand that violation of this code will result in penalties as severe as indefinite suspension from the University."

See the [Code of Student Conduct](#) for more information.

Emergency Contact Information

UA's primary communication tool for sending out information is through its web site at www.ua.edu. In the event of an emergency, students should consult this site for further directions. Additional course information will be posted using Blackboard Learn.

Disability Statement

If you are registered with the Office of Disability Services, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss any course accommodations that may be necessary.

If you have a disability, but have not contacted the Office of Disability Services, please call (205) 348-4285 (Voice) or (205) 348-3081 (TTY) or visit 1000 Houser Hall to register for services. Students who may need course adaptations because of a disability are welcome to make an appointment to see me during office hours. Students with disabilities must be registered with the Office of Disability Services, 1000 Houser Hall, before receiving academic adjustments.

UAct: Ethical Community Statement

The University of Alabama is committed to an ethical, inclusive community defined by respect and civility. The UAct website (<http://www.ua.edu/uact>) provides a list of reporting channels that can be used to report incidences of illegal discrimination, harassment, sexual assault, sexual violence, retaliation, threat assessment or fraud.