

The Violent and the Sacred

REL 101-001 3 Credit Hours

Lecture

Dr. Steve Jacobs

Contact Information

UA Campus Directory:

- Dr. Steve Jacobs (<https://www.ua.edu/directory/?i=sjacobs#listing>)

Prerequisites

UA Course Catalog Prerequisites:

N/A

Course Description

Course Description and Credit Hours

This introductory course examines the socio-cultural constructs called "religion" and "violence" with the help of academic theories and theorists in order to consider relationships between the two. The course introduces theories of evil, violence, and hatred, using historical and contemporary case studies on such topics as terrorism and genocide.

First, we address such topics as problems, theories & theorists, academic disciplines, and common elements as we attempt to answer the question "How do we study academically the socio-cultural construct we call 'religion' within the university?" Then, we apply it to the question of "Religion and the Problem of Human Suffering" by looking at such topics as theories of evil, violence, and hate. HU

Required Texts

Required Texts from UA Supply Store:

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

Course Objectives

1. Students will be introduced to the academic study of religion and all of its component parts: authority, definitions, insiders vs. outsiders, versus theology, "truth", theorists, academic disciplines, elements-- culture, community, doctrines & texts, ethics, myths, relevance, rituals, sacrality, symbols.
2. Students will apply that knowledge to the specific case of human suffering and theories of evil in the world's religious traditions, academic disciplines, and ways to go forward.

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 question 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 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 religions 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 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.

Other Course Materials

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

Outline of Topics

Part I: authority, definition, insider vs. outsider, context & setting, theology, truth, faith, theories & theorists, academic disciplines, elements common to religion.

Part II: evil & evil doers, the world's religions on evil, violence, and hate, academic disciplines on evil, violence, and hate.

Exams and Assignments

1. Four one-page responses to two articles in Part I and two articles in Part II.
2. Exam #1 on Part I and Exam #2 on Part II.
3. Two Response Papers (3-5 pages each) to Jacoby, *Blood Lust*, and Renard, *Fighting Words*.

Grading Policy

40% = 4 one-page article responses

15% = Exam #1

15% = Exam #2

15% = Response to Jacoby, *Blood Lust*.

15% = Response to Renard, *Fighting Words*.

Policy on Missed Exams and 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.

Notification of Changes

The instructor will make every effort to follow the guidelines of this syllabus as listed; however, the instructor reserves the right to amend this document as the need arises. In such instances, the instructor will notify students in class and/or via email and will endeavor to provide reasonable time for students to adjust to any changes.

Statement on Academic Misconduct

Students are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the official Academic Misconduct Policy (<https://catalog.ua.edu/undergraduate/about/academic-regulations/student-expectations/academic-misconduct-policy/>) provided in the Online Catalog.

Statement On Disability Accommodations

Contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) (<https://catalog.ua.edu/undergraduate/about/support-programs/disability-services/>) as detailed in the Online Catalog.

Severe Weather Protocol

Please see the latest Severe Weather Guidelines (<https://ready.ua.edu/severe-weather-guidelines/>) in the Online Catalog.

Pregnant Student Accommodations

Title IX protects against discrimination related to pregnancy or parental status. If you are pregnant and will need accommodations for this class, please review the University's FAQs on the UAct website (<https://www.ua.edu/campuslife/uact/information/pregnancy>) .

Religious Observances

Under the Guidelines for Religious Holiday Observances, students should notify the instructor in writing or via email during the first two weeks of the semester of their intention to be absent from class for religious observance. The instructor will work to provide reasonable opportunity to complete academic responsibilities as long as that does not interfere with the academic integrity of the course. See full guidelines at Religious Holiday Observances Guidelines (<https://provost.ua.edu/oa-guidelines-for-religious-holidays-observance>) .

UAct Statement

The UAct website (<https://www.ua.edu/campuslife/uact/>) provides an overview of The University's expectations regarding respect and civility.