Course Overview

About this Course
The twentieth century was the bloodiest century in history. It witnessed two world wars and countless local and regional conflicts. The twenty first century began with the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Since then the world has been engulfed in an endless cycle of terrorism and war that seems only to be getting more violent and ruthless. And yet, in contrast to previous periods of history, we live in an era of unprecedented peace. The twentieth century gave rise to many of the most successful non-violent protest movements. War kills less people; violent crime has dropped to record lows; individual rights are more common than ever across the globe. A recent Pew Research Study demonstrates that 33% of the 198 countries and territories analyzed in the study had “high religious hostilities” in 2012 - up from 20% in 2007. As the world moves toward a more peaceful existence, religious violence is on the rise. This course explores how different religious texts and their authors imagine the role of violence and non-violence in the world.

We begin in the ancient world and trace the competing realities of violence and non-violence into the modern age. We will investigate how different religions define violence, legitimize violence and warfare, and understand the violence of others around them. Our goal in this course is not to examine the reasons why people commit violence, though we may come to some understanding of this. We are interested in how individuals and societies utilize religion to promote violence or advocate for non-violence. We will read a wide selection of ancient and modern texts from both Western and non-Western religious traditions. We further explore the role of religious texts in framing several modern violent or non-violent movements that are not distinctly religious (e.g., Slavery, Civil Rights movement).
A Note about the Content of this Course
Almost certainly everybody in this course will have a connection with one of the religious traditions discussed over the semester. It may seem unsettling at times to see violence in one’s own religious tradition. I expect students to have strong feeling about many of the topics we discuss in class. This is a good thing. I expect that students will participate in class discussions with civility and respect toward others’ viewpoints. In addition, you will undoubtedly feel that the course does not cover specific topics that you feel should be covered. This is to be expected. I encourage you to bring this perspective to larger class discussions.

What is NYU’s Core Curriculum?
The goal of the Core curriculum is to provide all undergraduates at NYU with a foundational academic experience in the Liberal Arts. Liberal Arts refers to a longstanding commitment in universities to offer courses that teach students the skills needed for excelling in any aspect of professional life. Courses in literature, science, mathematics, or history, for example, don’t only provide students with information in these areas of study. The foundational goal of these courses is to provide students with advanced skills in critical analysis. This means the ability to examine evidence and draw sound conclusions. Courses are designed to build students’ critical, analytic, and communications skills, hone the imagination, and promote creative thinking. These skills are not just the foundation of a liberal arts course; they are the foundation for success in all aspects of academic and professional life.

Who Should Take this Class?
Many of your peers in this class will be majors in the College of Arts and Science (e.g., English, History, Economics). Other students will come from other schools and disciplines such as Education, Business, or Real Estate Management. Very few of you will be majors in Religious Studies or History. The Core Curriculum is designed for ALL of these diverse students. Everyone will benefit from the skills learned in a Core course and hopefully apply these skills successfully into their unique course of study and professional goals. I am hopeful that this course will spark an interest in the academic study of religion. There are many other fantastic courses offered at NYU on religion.

Course Expectations

Participation and Attendance (10%)
Attendance is required at all lectures and recitations. You are expected to come to lectures and recitations having completed all the assigned readings for that day and any assignments. Successful work in this course requires full attendance and active participation in the lectures and recitations. If you miss a class due to illness, please let your instructor know before class and then contact a fellow student to find out what you missed.

Weekly Study Questions and Key Terms Preparation (10%)
Each week, students are expected to answer 1–2 study questions that will be posted on NYU Classes (in the “assignments” section). The study questions will be connected to the assigned readings for the upcoming lectures and recitations. Your response should be approximately 300 words. Your responses should be submitted in hard copy to class and uploaded to the
“assignments” section on NYU Classes. It will considered on-time only with both these submission methods.

**Key Terms**: The study questions will also contain a brief list of key terms that you will need to familiarize yourself with in order to understand the readings. For these key terms, I would recommend doing a quick read of the associated Wikipedia article. Yes, a college professor is recommending Wikipedia!! Only for these key terms. You do not need to turn in any written work for the key terms.

**Writing Assignments (40%)**
A brief description of the assignments and their methods are described here. More detailed directions will be handed out in class.

➢ **Short Essays Assignments (20%)**: There will be a series of 4 short essays (1–2 pages) assigned throughout the semester. The essays will ask you to analyze carefully a particular question or primary source. The primary source material will draw from assigned readings and new material.

➢ **Media Journal on Religion and Violence/Non-Violence (due March 6 and May 1; 20%)**: Over the course of the semester, you will be keeping up with contemporary religion-based violence and non-violence through media sources. Your journal should include the particular news report as well as your own analysis of the intersection of religion and violence or non-violence in the reports. Your journal should include five total news reports (3 due by Mar 6; 2 due by May 1) alongside your 1–2 page analysis of each incident.

➢ **Some of writing assignments will have mandatory periodic “peer-review” days in recitation linked to them**. These will be scheduled for the recitation day immediately preceding the due day. Students will be expected to come to recitation that week with a draft of their paper to share with other students. Other recitation meetings will also be devoted to discussing many practical aspects of writing a university level paper.

**Exams (40%)**
➢ The Midterm (20%) will take place in recitation on March 9.
➢ The Final (20%) will take place in recitation on May 4

**Classroom Policies and Useful Resources**

**Classroom Decorum and Use of Laptops**
Be sure to arrive in class on time. Unless there is an emergency, there is no reason to leave class early. Please do not use your cellphone or other electronic devices during classes. This is discourteous to your instructors and your fellow students and hinders your learning. Laptops are permitted for the exclusive purpose of taking notes. Please think carefully about whether having a laptop open will be beneficial to your learning or merely distract you. Note as well that all PowerPoint files, handouts, or other media used in lectures will be available on the NYU Classes site. You do not need to copy down the material that appears on PowerPoint slides.
**Late Work**
The writing assignments are due on the date in which they are assigned. E-mail submissions will not be accepted. If you have a justifiable reason for requiring an extension, you must make arrangements with me or your instructor before the due date. All late work will be dropped one third of a letter grade per late day (an “A” paper due on Tuesday that is turned in on Wednesday will be given an “A-.” Assignments over a week late will not be accepted and will be given a 0 grade.

**Grading**
Final course grades will be assigned according to the following scale: 100-95=A, 94-90=A-, 89-87=B+, 86-83=B, 82-80=B-, 79-77=C+, 76-73=C, 72-70=C-, 69-60=D, 59-0=F. (S/N: S=70%).

**Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**
All student work is expected to represent the independent thinking and research of each student. All students are expected to abide by NYU’s honor code ([http://cas.nyu.edu/page/honorcode](http://cas.nyu.edu/page/honorcode)) and expectation of Academic Integrity ([http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity](http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity)). We will spend some class time discussing proper ways to draw upon secondary scholarship and how to forge your own independent thinking in dialogue with earlier scholarship.

➢ Any student who is found to have committed plagiarism will received an automatic zero on the assignment. Further cases of plagiarism will be reported to the department Director of Undergraduate Studies and subject to further disciplinary action.

**Student with Disabilities**
The **Henry & Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities** (31 West 4th Street) facilitates equal access to the programs and activities of the College and NYU. Matters relating to students who visit the Center are strictly confidential. Services cover a wide range of disabling conditions. In addition to working with students who have mobility, visual, and hearing impairments, the Center assists a significant number of students with learning disabilities and many others with chronic impairments, such as diabetes, cancer, HIV infection, psychiatric illness, head trauma, and seizure disorders. The Moses Center is staffed by a group of specialists who have a wealth of experience in helping students obtain necessary academic adjustments and accommodations based upon individual needs. In order to receive services from the Center, students must provide appropriate documentation.

**Helpful Campus Resources**
**University Learning Center (ULC)** Any NYU student is eligible to receive academic support through the University Learning Center. Conveniently located: Academic Resource Center (ARC) 18 Washington Place (lower level); University Hall (UHall) 110 East 14th Street, UHall Commons (lower level). The ULC provides individual and group review sessions for specific courses as well as Academic Skills Workshops, absolutely free of charge. Late hours are available. Learn more at [www.nyu.edu/ulc](http://www.nyu.edu/ulc).
The Writing Center (411 Lafayette, 998-8866) is a part of NYU’s Expository Writing Program, College of Arts and Science. It is a place where one-on-one teaching and learning occur, where work always focuses on writing. [http://www.nyu.edu/cas/ewp/html/writing_center.html](http://www.nyu.edu/cas/ewp/html/writing_center.html)

Writing Center consultants are studying for or already hold advanced degrees. Many are published writers. They receive significant training in the teaching of writing, and they teach writing courses for undergraduates across the University. At the Writing Center, students work with consultants in private one-on-one sessions to become better writers and thinkers. Students work with consultants at every stage of the writing process and on any piece of writing except for exams. Schedule an Appointment Online: [https://nyu.mwyconline.com](https://nyu.mwyconline.com)

**Textbooks and Readings**

** Textbooks are all available at the NYU bookstore. All are also available from online booksellers for much cheaper (some in digital editions). If you order from an online site, please make sure you get the assigned editions (i.e., fourth edition; search by ISBN) and that the books will arrive in time for the dates on which they will be used. **

  * Reading marked with an asterisk are found in this book *


➢ All other readings will be posted on NYU Classes

**Strategies for Preparing for Class**

➢ **Readings**: Read all the assigned readings prior to the day in which they appear. This is the only way you will understand what we are talking about in the lectures and recitations. Use the associated study questions to help you make sense of the readings. Many of the readings are provided in editions with introductions and various levels of annotation. Read all this material. Read with an open mind. Almost all of the texts you will be reading will be foreign in some sense. Try to enter into the world of the religions associated with the texts. Try to read without casting judgment values on the texts.

➢ **Key Terms**: see above for more details. Look up all the key terms that are included with the study questions. A full understanding of these key terms will make the reading much more understandable.

➢ **Study Questions**: see above for details.

➢ **Difficult Words/Concepts**: Look up any unfamiliar words or concepts in the dictionary.

➢ **More Questions?**: Come to class and recitation with questions. I will set up a spot on NYU Classes to post ongoing questions.
Course Schedule

I. Introduction to Course

1. January 23 – Goals of the Course


II. Ancient Texts and Ideas

3. January 30, February 1 – Ancient Near East
   Enuma Elish (= Epic of Creation); Mesha Stele; Poem of Erra

4. February 6, 8 – Ancient Greece and Rome

5. February 13, 15 – South Asia
   *Kautilya, The Arthashastra; *The Bhagavad Gita; *Soho Takuan: Annals of the Sword;
   Pali Canon, Suttapitaka (Dandavagga: Violence); Jataka, The Story of the Tigeress;
   Sravakaprajnapti and commentary by Haribhadra

6. February 20, 22 – The Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and Ancient Israel
   Exodus 14-15:19 (especially vv. 14:14, 21; 15:3); *Exodus 23; *Deuteronomy 20; Joshua 1-6; Isaiah 2:2-5; Isaiah 32; Micah 4:1-5

7. February 27, March 1 – The New Testament and Early Christianity
   Matthew 5:38-48; Matthew 10:34-35; Matthew 18:21-35; Romans 13:1-10; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-9; Revelation

8. March 6, 8 – The Quran and Early Islam

9. March 9 (Recitation) – Midterm

10. March 13, 15 – Spring Break

III. Modern Texts and Ideas

11. March 20, 22 – Christianity
    Juergensmeyer, *Terror*, 19-40

12. March 27, 29 – Judaism
13. April 3, 5 – Islam
Juergensmeyer, *Terror*, 68-102
Osama bin Laden, “Declaration of Jihad,” “To the Americans,” Videotaped address, October 7, 2001

14. April 10 – Sikhism
Juergensmeyer, *Terror*, 103-27
Mahmood, *Fighting for Faith and Nation: Dialogues with Sikh Militants* (excerpts)

15. April 12 – Buddhism
Juergensmeyer, *Terror*, 128-46; *“Shoko Asahara “Declaring Myself the Christ” and “Disaster Comes to the Land of the Rising Sun”*

IV. Texts and Ideas in Comparative Settings

16. April 17, 19 – Violence against Women

17. April 25, 26 – Slavery and Civil Rights

Genesis 9 and modern interpretations
“Joint Declaration of Religious Leaders against Modern Slavery” (Dec 2, 2014)

18. May 1, 3 – Final Thoughts and Review

19. May 4 (Recitation) – Final Exam