

SOCI 388 RELI 399  
**VIOLENCE AND RELIGION**  
 Spring, 2024

Instructor: Lester Kurtz

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Office Hours: 10:30 - 12:00 pm & by appointment - on [Zoom](#) - or Horizon 6277 (please email in advance)

We will explore the relationship between religion and violence, especially warfare, cross-culturally and historically, from a sociological, transdisciplinary, and global politics perspective. The course is organized around three themes: the warrior, the pacifist, and the nonviolent activist. It takes a comparative approach emphasizing the ways in which the world's major religious and ethical traditions legitimate both ends of a spectrum from holy war to pacifism.

Toward the end of the course, we will devote attention to recent developments of nonviolent action as a technique of demilitarized conflict, growing out of religious traditions and embodied in movements symbolized by Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. We explore the interface between politics and morality and the interface between national and transnational governance institutions (nation-states, the UN, etc.) on the one hand, and cultural and religious institutions, NGOs, and social movements, on the other.

### TEXTS

Kurtz, Lester R. *The Warrior and the Pacifist: Competing Motifs in Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. New York: Routledge, 2018. The eBook is available to download online in the GMU library and [HERE](#). All other readings are available on Blackboard or via links in the syllabus

|                                      |             |                         |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| <b>I. Gods &amp; Bombs</b>           | <b>1/16</b> | Attenborough's "Gandhi" |
| <b>II. Warrior Motif</b>             | <b>1/23</b> |                         |
| Ancient Hebrews                      |             |                         |
| <b>Warrior Dharma</b>                | <b>1/30</b> |                         |
| <b>Crusades</b>                      | <b>2/6</b>  | <b>Quiz 1</b>           |
| <b>III. Pacifist Motif</b>           | <b>2/13</b> |                         |
| Ahimsa                               | <b>2/20</b> | Extra Credit #1 due     |
| Christian Pacifism                   | <b>2/27</b> | Paper Proposal Due      |
| Taboo Lines                          |             | spring break 3/4-10     |
| <b>IV. Nonviolent Activist Motif</b> | <b>3/12</b> |                         |

|  |             |                            |
|--|-------------|----------------------------|
| <b>IV. Nonviolent Activist Motif</b>               | <b>3/19</b> | <b>Quiz 2</b>              |
| Gandhi to King                                     |             |                            |
| <b>NV Civil Resistance</b>                         |             |                            |
| <b>Human Rights</b>                                | <b>3/26</b> |                            |
| <b>V. Transforming Traditions</b>                  | <b>4/2</b>  | <b>Presentations begin</b> |
| Spirituality & Change                              |             |                            |
| <b>Interfaith Movements</b>                        | <b>4/9</b>  |                            |
| <b>Peace Testimonies</b>                           |             |                            |
| <b>Last class day</b>                              | <b>4/23</b> | <b>Quiz 3</b>              |
| <b>Extra Credit #2 due</b>                         |             |                            |
| <b>5/7 Final Paper Due (on date of final exam)</b> |             |                            |

## Course objectives

- Provide a scholarly introduction to a significant social problem and potential solutions;
- Enhance research skills and critical thinking;
- Facilitate global understanding, in this case, the similarities and differences in how humanity's religious and cultural traditions address the moral and ethical problems of war and violence. It also examines the ways in which these various traditions have interacted across time and affected one another, especially in the last century, when Gandhi and others initiated a global cultural innovation by bringing together elements of various traditions, reframing the idea of struggle. The results of that sociocultural and political development can be seen in the emergence of nonviolent civil resistance and social movements that have had a major impact on geopolitical processes worldwide.

## Course Outline

### I. Gods & Bombs

1/16

Lester R. Kurtz, "Rethinking Religion and Violence," Pp. 1-10 in *The Warrior and the Pacifist: Competing Motifs in Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity*, edited by L. R. Kurtz. New York: Routledge, 2018.

McClymond, Michael J. "Religious Traditions, Violence and Nonviolence." In *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, & Conflict (Third Edition)*, edited by Lester R. Kurtz, 391-400. Oxford: Academic Press, 2022. Online [here](#).

1/23

Juergensmeyer, Mark. "Is Religion the Problem?" *Orfalea Center for Global & International Studies*, March 1, 2004. Online [here](#).

Kitts, Margo. "Contemporary Perspectives on Religion and Violence." In *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, & Conflict (Third Edition)*, edited by Lester R. Kurtz, 276-86. Oxford: Academic Press, 2022. Online [here](#).

#### Recommended

Lester Kurtz, "Warriors and Pacifists: Dilemmas, Paradoxes, Alternatives." Pp 298-331. in *The Warrior and the Pacifist*.

1/23

### II. THE WARRIOR MOTIF

#### A. Hebrew God as Warrior

Niditch, Susan. *War in the Hebrew Bible: a study in the ethics of violence*. Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 3-27.

Selections from the *Tanakh*: Exodus 14-15, Deuteronomy 20, 23:9-14, 32, Joshua 5:13, 8-12, Judges 5-8, Psalm 68. Authoritative translation available online [here](#).

1/30

#### B. The Warrior Dharma

Hymns of the Samaveda - see the selections on Blackboard taken from [here](#).

*The Bhagavad Gita*. Juan Mascaro, tr. London: Penguin, 1992, pp. 6-16, and 55-58. On Blackboard - full text [available free for 1-hour](#)

Iselyn Fydenlund, "Buddhism and Violence: An Oxymoron?" Pp. 11-35 in *The Warrior and the Pacifist*.

6 February Quiz 1

2/6

#### C. The Crusades

Russell, Frederick H. "Introduction: A History of the Idea of Pacifism." *The Just War in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge University Press, 1977, 1-15.ss

Pope Urban II (1088-1099): Speech at Council of Clermont, 1095. Online [here](#).

Albert of Aix and Ekkehard of Aura: "Emico and the Slaughter of the Rhineland Jews." Online [here](#).

Osama bin Laden, "Bin Laden's Warning: Full Text" Available only [here](#).

George W. Bush, "Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People [20 September 2001]" Available [here](#).

Honoré, Maj. Gen. Russel L., and Maj. Robert P. Cerjan, "Warrior Ethos: Soul of an Infantryman." Online [here](#).

#### Recommended

"Open Letter To Dr. Ibrahim Awwad Al-Badri, alias 'Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi', And to the fighters and followers of the self-declared 'Islamic State'" 24th Dhul-Qi'da 1435 AH / 19th September 2014 CE. Online [here](#).

2/13

### III. THE PACIFIST MOTIF

Cady, Duane L. *From Warism to Pacifism: A Moral Continuum*. Temple University Press, 2010, 64-78.

Love your Enemies: selections from the world's scriptures. Available online [here](#).

Peace: selections from the world's scriptures. Available online [here](#).

Recommended:

Mark Twain, *The War Prayer*. New York: Harper Colophon Books. Online [here](#).

2/20

#### A. Ahimsa and Nonviolence in the East

Balcerowicz, Piotr. "Nonharmfulness (Ahimsā) in Classical Indian Thought." In *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, & Conflict (Third Edition)*, edited by Lester R. Kurtz, 354-68. Oxford: Academic Press, 2022. Online [here](#).

"The Hindu Ethic of Non-Violence" - read just the selections from Hindu sacred texts [here](#).

*The Dhammapada*. Betty Radice, ed. Juan Mascaro, tr. London: Penguin, 1973, pp. 35, 50-51, 54-55, 64-65, 68-69

*Buddhist Scriptures*, Edward Conze, tr. London: Penguin, 1959, pp. 48-49, 70-73.

Mo Tzu, "Mo Tzu's Doctrines of Universal Love, and Social Welfare. Pp. 211-217 in *A Sourcebook of Chinese Philosophy*, ed. Wing-Tsit Chan. Princeton Univ. Press, 1963.

Lao Tzu, *Tao de Ching*, Verses 30-31, 46, 72, 76-79. See parallel translations [here](#).

Recommended:

Chapple, C. *Nonviolence to animals, earth, and self in Asian traditions*. State Univ. of New York Press, 1993.

*Rig Veda*, "The Cosmic Sacrifice [of Purusha]." Pp. 226-228 in Mircea Eliade, ed., *From Primitives to Zen*. NY: Harper & Row, 1967

Tam Wai Lun, "Subverting Hatred: Peace and Nonviolence in Confucianism and Daoism." Pp. 49-66 in *Subverting Hatred*.

4-10 March Spring break

2/27

#### B. Christian Pacifism

Roland Bainton, *Christian Attitudes toward War and Peace*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960, pp. 66-84.

*The Sermon on the Mount* (Matthew 5)

Sanderson Beck, "Tolstoy on Love" online [here](#).

#### C. Taboo Lines: Setting Boundaries on Violence

Nigel Biggar, "Peace and War in Christian Thought: A Partisan Guide" Pp. 135-161 in *The Warrior and the Pacifist*.

*The I Ching*, Richard Wilhelm, tr. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 415-21.

Abraham's sacrifice, *Genesis* and the *Qur'an*

Roland Bainton, *Christian Attitudes toward War and Peace*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960, 85-100.

U.S. Catholic Conference, *The Challenge of Peace*. Washington, D.C.: NCCB, 36-48.

*The Qur'an* (selections on Blackboard)

Recommended:

The United Methodist Council of Bishops, *In Defense of Creation*. Nashville: Graded Press, 1986.

### IV NONVIOLENT ACTIVIST MOTIF

3/12

M. K. Gandhi, *The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi*. Ed. R. K. Prabhu and U. R. Rao. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press, 1967, 121-125.

World scriptures on Liberation: online [here](#).  
<http://origin.org/ucs/ws/theme070.cfm>

Recommended

Irving Abrams, ed. *The Words of Peace: Selections from the Speeches of Winners of the Nobel Peace Prize*. NY: Newmarker Press, 1999, 88-99.

3/19

Quiz 2

#### A. From Gandhi to King

Nadine Gordimer, "Our Century." *Transition* 71 (1996):4-5 (read pp. 19, 22)

Lester R. Kurtz, "Gandhi and His Legacies." *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace and Conflict*, ed. L. R. Kurtz (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2022). online [here](#).

Abu-Nimer, Mohammed. "A Framework for Nonviolence and Peacebuilding in Islam." *Journal of Law and Religion* 15, no. 1/2 (2000): 217-65. Online [here](#).

3/26

## B. Nonviolent Civil Resistance

Gene Sharp, "The Methods of Nonviolent Action."  
From *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*. Vol. 2.  
Boston: Porter Sargent, 1974.

Stephan, Maria J., and Erica Chenoweth. 2008.  
"Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic  
Logic of Nonviolent Conflict." *International  
Security*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (Summer), pp. 7–44.

Isaac, Larry W., Daniel B. Cornfield, Dennis C.  
Dickerson, James M. Lawson, and Jonathan S.  
Coley. "'Movement Schools' and Dialogical  
Diffusion of Nonviolent Praxis: Nashville  
Workshops in the Southern Civil Rights  
Movement." In *Nonviolent Conflict and Civil  
Resistance*, edited by Sharon Erickson Nepstad  
and Lester R. Kurtz, 155–84, 2012. online [here](#)

Paula Green "Engaged Buddhism East and West."  
Pp. 36-56 in [The Warrior and the Pacifist](#).

### Recommended

Abu-Nimer, Mohammed, "Islamic approaches to  
nonviolence and peacebuilding" Pp. 242-262  
in [The Warrior and the Pacifist](#).

DuVall, Jack. 2008. "Civil Resistance and  
Alternatives to Violent  
Struggle." *International Centre for the Study  
of Radicalisation and Political Violence  
(ICSR)*, London. Available online [here](#).

Souad Dajani, "Nonviolent Resistance in the  
Occupied Territories: A Critical  
Reevaluation." Pp. 52-74 in *Nonviolent Social  
Movements*.

Stephen Zunes, "The Origins of People Power in the  
Philippines." Pp. 129-157 in *Nonviolent Social  
Movements*.

Chaiwat Satha-Anand, "Imagery in the 1992  
Nonviolent Uprising in Thailand." Pp. 158-173  
in *Nonviolent Social Movements*.

Ronald Pagnucco and John D. McCarthy,  
"Advocating Nonviolent Direct Action in Latin  
America: The Antecedents and Emergence of  
SERPAJ." Pp. 235-258 in *Nonviolent Social  
Movements*.

Stephen Zunes and Lester R. Kurtz, "Conclusion."  
Pp. 302-322 in *Nonviolent Social Movements*.

## C. Human Rights

United Nations, *International Declaration of  
Human Rights*. Online [here](#).

Martin Luther King, Jr., "An Experiment in Love"  
and "A Christmas Sermon on Peace." Pp. 253-

258, 16-20 in *A Testament of Hope*, ed. by J. M.  
Washington. San Francisco: Harper & Row,  
1986.

Charles Chatfield, "Nonviolent Social Movements  
in the United States: A Historical Overview."  
Pp. 283-301 in *Nonviolent Social Movements*.

### Recommended

Mark D. Jacobs and Lester R. Kurtz. "The Cultural  
Sociology of Human Rights" *The Handbook of  
Sociology and Human Rights*. Ed. David L.  
Brunsma, Keri Lyall Smith, and Brian Gran.  
Boulder, CO:: Paradigm, 2013. 187-196.  
Available online

David Nicholls, "Richard Cobden and the  
International Peace Congress Movement, 1848-  
1853. *The Journal of British Studies* 30 (Oct.,  
1991): 351-376.

John Donaghy, ed. 1981. *To Proclaim Peace:  
Religious Statements on the Arms Race*.  
Nyack, NY: Fellowship of Reconciliation.

G. Russell Evans and C. Gregg Singer, *The Church  
and the Sword: How the churches and peace  
movement are disarming America – and what  
you can do about it*. Fletcher, NC: New Puritan  
Library, pp. 1-7.

Ashild Kolas, "Tibetan Nationalism: The Politics of  
Religion." *Journal of Peace Research* 33 (Feb.,  
1996): 51-66.

4/2

## V. TRANSFORMING THE TRADITIONS & THE MEANS OF STRUGGLE

4/2 Presentations Begin

### Spirituality, Politics, and Change

Gopin, Marc. "Spirituality and Peacemaking." In  
*Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, & Conflict*  
(Third Edition), edited by Lester R. Kurtz, 407–  
16. Oxford: Academic Press, 2022. Online [here](#).

Dalai Lama, "Relevant Comments by HH The Dalai  
Lama Subsequent to the Sept. 11, 2001 Terrorist  
Attack on the US." Online [here](#).

Rumi, "What Jesus Runs Away From;"  
"Muhammad and the Huge Eater." Pp. 64-69  
204 in *The Essential Rumi*, tr. Coleman Barks.  
Edison, NJ: Castle Books, 1997.

4/9

Thich Nhat Hanh, "Peace Treaty." Pp. 60-71 in  
*Touching Peace: Practicing the Art of Mindful  
Living*. Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1992.  
*The Qur'an* (selections on Blackboard)

### Recommended

*Declaration on the Role of Religion in the Promotion of a Culture of Peace*, UNESCO Seminar, Barcelona, 1994.

Kamalesha Datta Tripathi, "Interfaith Dialogue: The Hindu View." *Dialogue & Universalism* 12345792 Vol. 11. Database: Academic Search Premier.

Walid Saif, "An Assessment of Christian-Muslim Dialogue." <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/interreligious/cd36-07.html> Available 28 May 2004.

4/16

#### A. Interfaith Movement

Cohen, Shana. "Assessing the Impact of Interfaith Initiatives." *Evaluating Interreligious Peacebuilding and Dialogue: Methods and Frameworks* 3 (2021): 197. Online [here](#).

### 23 APRIL LAST CLASS

#### QUIZ 3

#### A. PEACE TESTIMONIES

Afra Jalabi, "Making Peace with Islam: The Muslim as Peacemaker." Pp. 195-215 in *The Warrior and the Pacifist*.

Fox, George. "A Declaration to Charles II (1660). Online [here](#).

Adams, David. "Culture of Peace." In *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, & Conflict (Third Edition)*, edited by L. R. Kurtz, 52-59. Oxford: Academic Press, 2022. Online [here](#).

Edward Schillebeeckx, "Documentation: Religion and Violence." Pp. 129-46 in *Religion as a Source of Violence?* Ed. Wim Beuken and Karl-Josef Kuschel. London: SCM Press, 1997.

#### Extra Credit #2 Due

### 7 MAY FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE BY MIDNIGHT

#### ASSIGNMENTS

Participants in the course are expected (1) to contribute actively to class discussions, (2) to write reflection papers on course readings and discussions as well as analyses and observations of salient experiences during the course, (3) to take 3 online multiple choice quizzes on major ideas in readings, lectures. The core assignment (4) will be a research paper on the

relationship between violence and religion that applies the tools of the course to a case study or relevant theme.

Grades will be assigned on the quality of the following assignments:

|                     |              |
|---------------------|--------------|
| Quiz 1              | 10           |
| Quiz 2              | 10           |
| Quiz 3              | 10           |
| Reflection papers   | 10           |
| Discussion Forum    | 10           |
| Paper proposal      | 10           |
| Paper presentation  | 10           |
| Research paper      | 30           |
| Zotero              | extra credit |
| Class participation | extra credit |

#### REFLECTION PAPERS

Reflection papers are due almost weekly for a minimum of 10 (during the 15 weeks of the semester). Although you will get feedback, your grade for this assignment will be based on the following scale:

- 10+ papers A
- 8-9 papers B
- 6-7 papers C
- 4-5 papers D

These reflections should provide an analysis of class readings and discussions, as well as scholarly sources related to your research paper. Some of them may, therefore, be incorporated into that paper at the end of the term if they are related to the topic you are studying and the sources for your research.

#### RESEARCH PAPER

Choose a case study of religion and violence, preferably an empirical study of a particular religious tradition, or ahistorical event or period. For more details, see the paper guide posted on Blackboard.

At least 1/3 of the references should include sources outside of the relevant assigned readings, which must also be included, and on topics of related interest obtained through a Google Scholar (or other appropriate online) search, preferably combined with posting on Zotero. Identify sources you post in Zotero with an asterisk (\*) for 3 points extra credit.

#### Criteria for grading:

Grasp of the major issues of the course\_\_\_\_\_

\* warrior-pacifist-nonviolent activist framework

\* violent vs. nonviolent conflict

\* role of religious beliefs, institutions, and rituals in conflict \_\_\_\_\_

Case study or theory about religion and violence/nonviolence \_\_\_\_\_

Rich use of texts & course materials \_\_\_\_\_

\* Accuracy of interpretation

\* Reflection on class discussions

\* **Use of course readings (required for an A)**

Use of sources in addition to course materials

\* Appropriate bibliography & citations

**Analysis:** applications of theoretical approaches, use of the various elements of the conflict transformation grid

Appropriateness of topic, length, & substance \_\_\_\_

Style (not a grading criterion)

\* composition & organization

\* spelling & grammar

#### PAPER PROPOSAL

**300-500 words in length due 27 February**

- Briefly name and describe the topic
- Research design: how will you study it?
- Minimum of 2 potential scholarly sources (brief bibliography)
- add to Zotero if possible

See the guide on Blackboard.

#### EXTRA CREDIT OPTIONS

**A. Class attendance:** You are expected to attend all classes unless you have exceptional circumstances that prevent you from doing so. You simply will not learn as much if you are not in class.

**B.** Participants are encouraged to do a maximum of **two extra credit essays** (or three if you do critical reviews), which give you a chance to explore sources and experiences we do not have time to cover formally in the course -- and to improve your grade. Most projects should take the form of a short paper that analyzes (rather than simply summarizes) any relevant speeches, films, books, articles, or events appropriate for the course.

Papers should provide a critique and application of issues and ideas discussed in the course. Readings, films, etc. that are an assigned part of the course are not, of course, acceptable for extra credit.

Due Dates:

Extra Credit 1            2/20

Extra Credit 2            4/23

Length            1,250-1,500 words

You will be given 3-5 points on a quiz (100-point scale) for each paper that meets the requirements of the assignment.

#### The Gandhi Grid

| Nonviolent Strategies           | Beliefs | Rituals | Institutions |
|---------------------------------|---------|---------|--------------|
|                                 |         |         |              |
| <b>Protest &amp; Persuasion</b> |         |         |              |
| <b>Noncooperation</b>           |         |         |              |
| * Economic                      |         |         |              |
| * Social                        |         |         |              |
| * Political                     |         |         |              |
| <b>Intervention</b>             |         |         |              |



## OFFICIAL MASON NATION

### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

GMU is an Honor Code university; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

### GMU EMAIL ACCOUNTS

Students must activate their GMU email accounts to receive important University information, including messages related to this class.

### OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. <http://ods.gmu.edu>

## USEFUL CAMPUS RESOURCES:

### WRITING CENTER:

Johnson Center, Room 227E Phone: 703-993-1200  
Email: [wcenter@gmu.edu](mailto:wcenter@gmu.edu);

<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

### LIBRARIES

The GMU library can be accessed online at <https://library.gmu.edu/>. You can also review the Library's Online Education Services webpage at [library.gmu.edu/for/online](http://library.gmu.edu/for/online). If you want to find out more about sociology and/or read sociological research, check out the library's [sociology subject guide](#) and feel free to contact our subject librarian Young-Joo Lee. Most of the databases listed here will contain full text versions (what you want) of sociology's most important journals. We also have access to most books through the Washington Area Consortium, Interlibrary Loan, and even the world's largest library just minutes away, the [Library of Congress](#), where you can get access by applying for a Reader's Card to do research.

### COUNSELING AND

### PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS):

(703) 993-2380; <http://caps.gmu.edu>

### UNIVERSITY POLICIES

The University Catalog, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university affairs.