

Religion and Violence (syllabus)  
 (3 semester hours, RECU 65033/85033/95033)  
 Spring 2016, Brite Divinity School, Moore 209, Tuesday, 6:15-8:45

**Instructor:** Charles Bellinger [c.bellinger@tcu.edu](mailto:c.bellinger@tcu.edu) 817-257-7668

**Course Description:**

This course explores the highly ambiguous relationship between religious faith and violence. It provides an overview of situations in modern history that are examples of this ambiguous relationship, including terrorism and the responses it provokes. Students are exposed to authors who seek to comprehend violent behavior using explanatory theories. Students are also exposed to ethical perspectives on violent actions. The goal is to allow students in the course to develop an understanding of various dimensions (ethical, social, psychological, political, and theological) of the relationship between religious faith and intentional actions that result in ending human lives.

**Course Objectives:**

1. Students will be able to express informed views on the relationship between religious faith and violent behavior in the contemporary world.
2. Students will be able to articulate an understanding of violent behavior that is not only psychological or sociological, but also *theological*.
3. Students will be able to lead religious communities in reflection on these important issues in public theology.

**Instructional Methods:**

Lectures and discussion of assigned texts.

**Texts:**

Bellinger, Charles. *The Trinitarian Self: The Key to the Puzzle of Violence*. Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2008. ISBN: 1556352328, \$22

Girard, René. *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2001. ISBN: 1570753199, \$15

Juergensmeyer, Mark. *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*. 3rd ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003. ISBN: 0520240111, \$21

Each student will also choose one more book, to review.

There will also be shorter required readings made available online.

**65033 Grading Procedures:**

1. Attendance and class participation, 20% [missing more than one class and not contributing to discussion will negatively impact grade]
2. Four short papers (3-4 pp.\* each), 15% each
3. Book review (4-5 pp.\*), 20% [on a book chosen by the student, in consultation with the instructor; see links page for more info]

**85033/95033 Grading Procedures**

The final paper for Th.M., D.Min., and Ph.D. students will be 20-25 pages\*, on a topic approved by the instructor.

\* double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt preferred

**Schedule:** (reading assignments should be completed by the date next to which they are listed)

This syllabus represents current plans that are subject to change. Such changes, communicated by the instructor, are not unusual and should be expected.

NB: The live links to online readings are here: <http://lib.tcu.edu/staff/bellinger/rel-viol/rel-viol2016links.htm>

	date	themes	reading assignments	writing assignments
Week 1	Jan. 12	Introduction to Course		
Week 2	Jan. 19	cases and theories of violence	Juergensmeyer, ch. 1-3 Kenneth Burke, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle"	
Week 3	Jan. 26	continued	Juergensmeyer, ch. 4, 7-8 Ernest Becker, excerpts from <i>Escape from Evil</i>	
Week 4	Feb. 2	continued	Juergensmeyer, ch. 9-11 Wm. Cavanaugh, "Does Religion Cause Violence?"	response to Juerg.
Week 5	Feb. 9	continued	Alice Miller, excerpts from <i>For Your Own Good</i> Ruth Stein, excerpts from <i>For Love of the Father</i> Chantal Delsol, excerpts from <i>The Unlearned Lessons of the Twentieth Century</i> Paul Kahn, excerpts from <i>Out of Eden</i> Giorgio Agamben, excerpts from <i>Homo Sacer</i>	
Week 6	Feb. 16		<b>Minister's Week, no class</b>	
Week 7	Feb. 23	ethical perspectives	Reinhold Niebuhr, John Ford, John Howard Yoder, MLK	
Week 8	March 1	9/11 responses	Jean Bethke Elshtain, Stanley Hauerwas, George W. Bush, Brian McLaren, Bellinger, <i>The Trinitarian Self</i> , 130-140	response on 9/11
Week 9	March 8		<b>Spring Break, no class</b> [book choice due]	
Week 10	March 15	Girard's mimetic theory	René Girard, <i>I See Satan Fall Like Lightning</i> , 1-100	
Week 11	March 22	(Holy Week)	René Girard, <i>I See Satan Fall Like Lightning</i> , 103-94	response to Girard
Week 12	March 29	dimensional anthropology	Bellinger, <i>The Trinitarian Self</i> , 1-82	
Week 13	April 5		Bellinger, <i>The Trinitarian Self</i> , 82-156	response to Bellinger

Week 14	April 12		[attendance at 12pm Community Conversation recommended] book reports	
Week 15	April 19		book reports	
Week 16	April 26		<b>book review due April 28, noon, 4-5 pages</b>	

**Inclusion Statement:** Brite Divinity School values people of all cultures, nationalities, ethnicities, races, and religions, with regard to characteristics such as sex, gender, sexual identities, social class, age, and differing abilities. We are committed to promoting a diverse and just environment, in which language and practices support the achievement of inclusion. Brite seeks to remove all barriers to the maintenance and aspirations of its Mission Statement and Non-Discrimination Statement.

**Inclusive Language Statement:** Brite Divinity School promotes inclusive language. This includes such matters as language about God, humanity, cultures, nationalities, ethnicities, races, and religions, with regard to characteristics such as sex, gender, sexual identities, social class, age, and differing abilities. We are committed to promoting a diverse and just environment for all, in which language and practices encourage inclusion. To this end, Brite will maintain and update as necessary a webpage of resources for current best practices of inclusive language.

**Statement on Disability Services:** Brite Divinity School complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 regarding students with disabilities. Eligible students seeking accommodations should contact TCU's Coordinator, Student Disabilities Services, located in Sadler Hall 1010. Accommodations are not retroactive; therefore, students should contact the Coordinator as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations. Further information can be obtained from Student Disabilities Services, Sadler Hall 1010, TCU Box 297710, Fort Worth, TX 76129, or at 817-257-6567.

**Academic Misconduct (Sec. 5.14 of the Student Handbook):** Any act that violates the academic integrity of the institution is considered academic misconduct. The procedures used to resolve suspected acts of academic misconduct are available in the Student Handbook and the Office of the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

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