CANADIAN SCHOOL OF PEACEBUILDING
CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY
8-19 June 2020
BTS-3895C Does Religion Cause Violence?
Undergraduate Course Syllabus

Instructor: Dr. Bill Cavanaugh
Email: wcavana1@depaul.edu
Online class times: 9am-12pm, Monday to Friday
Last date for voluntary withdrawal without academic penalty: July 15

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course examines the common notion that religion has a peculiar tendency to promote violence. We will analyze secularist treatments of religion and violence and narratives of the European “Wars of Religion,” questioning what is meant by “religion,” whether secular ideologies are more peaceful, and how and why the distinction between “religious” and “secular” is constructed in the first place. We will then examine René Girard’s theory of violence and his argument that Christianity is the “religion” that ends religious violence.

OBJECTIVES
After successful completion of this course students should have:

• an understanding of critiques of religion as inherently violent
• an understanding of what is meant by the terms “religion” and “violence”
• an understanding of the “Wars of Religion” in Europe
• an understanding of the relationships of Christianity and Islam to violence
• an understanding of René Girard’s theory of mimetic violence

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS
It is the participant’s responsibility to order texts ahead of time, whether online, as e-books, or from local book-sellers.

• Mark Juergensmeyer, Terror in the Mind of God, fourth edition
• Matthew Curtis Fleischer, The Old Testament Case for Nonviolence
• René Girard, I See Satan Fall Like Lightning

Other required readings are available in the following OneDrive folder: https://studentcmu-my.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/personal/gwiebe_cmu_ca/EjjW2k4_qV1CoP8YY4My888GUBrGBDa7_AKULvPtES0frDfw. Students should have the readings accessible during class.
TEACHING APPROACH
The online format will be a challenge, but emphasis in this class will be on the active engagement of all students. There will be some lecturing by the professor, but the class will be structured around discussion and debate, both in small groups and in the class as a whole. Students will be responsible for presenting material and asking questions for discussion. Students will be expected to keep up with all readings and actively engage in class activities.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINES (for credit)
The following are the requirements for those taking the class for credit. Others are encouraged to read as much as possible in order to receive maximum benefit from the course.

Assignments are due as scheduled. Marks will be deducted for lateness (5% per day), unless previous arrangements have been made with the instructor. Assignments should be submitted to the instructor via email.

ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
<th>VALUE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Analysis of terms</td>
<td>Monday, June 8</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Analysis of argument</td>
<td>Monday, June 15</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Book review</td>
<td>Monday, June 29</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Research paper</td>
<td>Monday, August 10</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<td>5. General discussion participation</td>
<td>throughout the class</td>
<td>5%</td>
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ASSIGNMENT GUIDELINES
1. Analysis of terms
   Due: Monday, June 8
   Length: 3 pages
   Value: 20%
   Description: Analyze the terms “religion” and “violence” as used by any two of the following authors: Kimball, Marty, Juergensmeyer, and Avalos. What do they mean by “religion” and what do they mean by “violence”?

2. Analysis of argument
   Due: Monday, June 15
   Length: 3 pages
   Value: 15%
   Description: Omer and Springs ask the question “Nationalism: A Religion?” How do they answer that question? Do they think that nationalism is a religion? Why or why not?

3. Book review
   Due: Monday, June 29
   Length: 3 pages
   Value: 20%
Description: Fleischer argues that the Old Testament makes a case for nonviolence. What do you think of his arguments? Do they make a convincing case? Concentrate on the portions of the book that we read in class.

4. Research paper
Due: Monday, August 10
Length: 8-10 pages
Value: 40%
Description: Describe and critique René Girard’s theory of how violence comes about and how Christianity is the antidote to violence. This assignment requires you to find and engage with any critique of Girard other than the ones we read for class. After laying out Girard’s theory, describe the critique, and then make your own argument. What parts of Girard’s theory and the critique of it do you find convincing, and what parts unconvincing? Why?

STYLISTIC REQUIREMENTS
CMU has adopted the following as its standard guide for all academic writing:
The final paper should follow an accepted academic format for citations, bibliography, etc. (e.g. APA, Chicago, MLA). You may choose the format but whichever you use, be sure to use it properly and consistently.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS
Academic Integrity—All material referred to in any assignment MUST be appropriately referenced. Plagiarism is a serious matter. Students should be aware of CMU Academic Policies, particularly those regarding academic misconduct (plagiarism and cheating), which apply to all University courses. These are detailed on CMU’s website (http://www.cmu.ca/students.php?s=registrar&p=policies) and in the CMU Calendar. If you still have questions about appropriate referencing and what plagiarism is, a useful tutorial can be found here: http://www.indiana.edu/~istd/.

Attendance—In order to maximize the potential of the educational process, and given the intensive nature of CSOP courses, it is necessary that each student attend all classes. On occasion, a student may need to miss some class time. One day of class (3 total hours) is the maximum allowable absence, and any student missing more than this may be barred from further class attendance. In such cases the student is responsible to advise the instructor before the class occurs. It is the responsibility of the student to become familiar with all academic policies, including those pertaining to attendance, academic misconduct, and grading.

ACCESSIBILITY
CMU strives to provide a fair and supportive learning environment for academically qualified students with disabilities. If you are eligible for these services or have questions about becoming eligible, please contact Sandra Loeppky, Coordinator of Accessibility Programs at sloeppky@cmu.ca or 204.487.3300 x.340.
EVALUATION

Good communication skills are essential for justice and peacebuilding work. The instructor looks for quality writing that adheres to the assignment guidelines, expresses ideas clearly, concisely, and persuasively, and demonstrates engagement with readings and class sessions. All written work should be well informed, well organized and well documented.

Students should take up any concerns or questions regarding grades first with the instructor. If this does not produce a satisfactory result, the student should submit a written appeal to the Registrar (spenner@cmu.ca).

For more information on CMU policies regarding grades, academic misconduct, appeals, and other matters, please see the CMU Student Handbook.

LETTER GRADE/PERCENTAGE SCALE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade Points</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>95-100</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Exceptional</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>88-94</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>81-87</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>74-80</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Good</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>67-73</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>60-66</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Adequate</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Marginal</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-49</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Failure</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>A - Excellent</th>
<th>B - Competent</th>
<th>C - Below Expectations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CONTENT</td>
<td>- has clarity of purpose</td>
<td>- has clarity of purpose</td>
<td>- has clarity of purpose</td>
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<tr>
<td>(quality of the information/ideas and sources/details used to support them)</td>
<td>- has depth of content</td>
<td>- has substantial information and sufficient support</td>
<td>- lacks depth of content</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- displays insight or originality of thought</td>
<td>- contains some originality of thought</td>
<td>- and may depend on generalities or the commonplace</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- demonstrates quality and breadth of resources</td>
<td>- uses quality resources</td>
<td>- has little originality of thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRUCTURE</td>
<td>- is coherent and logically developed</td>
<td>- is coherent and logically developed</td>
<td>- is coherent and logically (but not fully)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(logical order or sequence of the writing)</td>
<td>- uses very effective transitions</td>
<td>- uses smooth transitions</td>
<td>developed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- has some awkward transitions</td>
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EXTENSIONS
The last date within the semester an instructor can grant as an extension is August 15. If a student is unable to complete the requirements of a course by this date, the student must submit a written appeal for an “incomplete” to the Registrar’s office (spenner@cmu.ca). The student should seek the instructor’s support for the appeal and must submit it by August 16.

If the student’s appeal is granted, the instructor will enter a grade of I (for incomplete) accompanied by a temporary grade (which is based on completed work and assigns a value of zero for uncompleted work). Instructor grades are due by August 21. If the student completes the remaining work within the extension period, the grade will be recalculated and the incomplete status will be removed. If the student does not complete the work within the extension period, the incomplete status will be removed and the provisional grade entered alongside the “incomplete” will become the final grade. The maximum extension for courses ending in August is December 1.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS
This schedule, along with assigned readings, may be adjusted slightly in response to contingencies. The instructor will provide advance notice of any changes.

Monday, June 8
Charles Kimball, When Religion Becomes Evil, chapter 1
Martin Marty, Politics, Religion, and the Common Good, intro and chapter 1
Hector Avalos, “Religion and Scarcity”

Tuesday, June 9
Mark Juergensmeyer, Terror in the Mind of God, fourth edition, chapters 1, 7-8, 11

Wednesday, June 10
World Health Organization, “Definition and Typology of Violence”
Wilfred Cantwell Smith, The Meaning and End of Religion, pp. 15-60
William Arnal, “Definition”

**Thursday, June 11**
Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies*, chapter 1
Peter Beyer, “Defining Religion in Cross-National Perspective”

**Friday, June 12**
William T. Cavanaugh, “Secularization of the Holy”
Philip Benedict, “Were the French Wars of Religion Really Wars of Religion?”

**Monday, June 15**
Christopher Hitchens, “An Objection Anticipated”
Atalia Omer and Jason Springs, “Nationalism: A Religion?”

**Tuesday, June 16**
Jonathan Ebel, “Christianity and Violence”
Matthew Fleischer, *The Old Testament Case for Nonviolence*, chapters 1-5, 12

**Wednesday, June 17**
Bernard Lewis, “The Roots of Muslim Rage”
Asma Afsaruddin, “Islam and Violence: Debunking the Myths”

**Thursday, June 18**
René Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, Foreword, chapters 1-2, 4, 9-11, Conclusion

**Friday, June 19**
Wolfgang Palaver, “Mimetic Theories of Religion and Violence”
Espen Dahl, “Girard on Apocalypse and Terrorism”
Critiques of Girard by Pierre Manent and Richard Landes

**SCHEDULE NOTES**
July 15 The final date to withdraw from the course without academic penalty.
Aug 15 Instructors cannot grant extensions past this date.
Aug 16 The last day for students to appeal in writing to the Registrar’s office for extensions past Aug 15.
Aug 21 Last day for instructors to submit grades.