COURSE SYLLABUS

Religion, Conflict, and Peacemaking
(DI-648)

Winter/Spring 2016—Tuesdays from 9 am to 5:30 pm
January 26, February 23, March 15, April 12, May 3

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Course Overview:

This course will explore the paradox of religion as a source of division and conflict, on the one hand, and of peaceful aspirations and compassionate, sacrificial service on the other. Theoretical approaches to this paradox, drawn from the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions, will be supplemented by practical case studies, with particular attention given to the Israeli-Palestinian-Arab dispute over the “Holy Land”.

Topics to be covered:
1. Factors in religion that engender or exacerbate conflict
2. Factors in religion that help heal conflicts
3. How we can tap the healing potential in our religious traditions so that we can be faithful peacemakers ourselves
4. How to apply the lessons from case studies to promote genuine reconciliation

Rationale and Goals:

The course addresses a challenge in “applied theology,” namely, how to effectively apply our faith commitments in the service of intercommunal reconciliation. If we are to transform our culture of violence into one of peacemaking, we have to learn how to “wage peace” with the proper tools or methods. Most conflicts have a spiritual dimension that underlies the political and economic factors in dispute. Secular, rationalist, utilitarian models of “conflict resolution” fail to address this spiritual dimension and, hence, they overlook critical aspects of the peacemaking agenda. The course will attempt to rectify this secularist bias by blending theological and psychological insights into conflict transformation. The theoretical approaches will be supplemented by case studies that illustrate both the challenges and the resources inherent in this model of peacemaking.
The goals of the course are:

1. To impart theoretical information that can help students understand better the religious and cultural dimensions of intercommunal conflicts
2. To illustrate the challenges inherent in religiously-based peacemaking by examining some case studies
3. To stimulate the students’ own creative, faithful responses to the challenge, inviting their questions and practical recommendations
4. To create a group dynamic that facilitates collective approaches to the issues studied, using simulation exercises to illustrate conflict situations as well as the strategic steps involved in peacemaking

Anticipated Learning Outcomes:

1. Awareness of the religious and cultural dimensions of conflict and peacemaking
2. Greater understanding of how to apply faith commitments and sensitivities to the challenge of practical peacemaking
3. A deeper appreciation for how different faith traditions address conflicts
4. Enhanced skills in listening, developing empathy, and compassionate communication

Methods of Delivery: Lectures, videos, facilitated discussions, simulation exercises

Methods of Assessment: Classroom participation (20%), grasp of reading material as demonstrated in four two-page reflections due at the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th sessions (40%), and a final paper or project (40%). The final paper/project, approximating 15 double-spaced pages, is due at the last class. Students should communicate with the course instructor about the final paper before submitting it, to get feedback and approval for the topic, as well as suggested resources. (Note: the Seminary’s plagiarism policy will be strictly enforced; all written work must be original unless properly cited).

Attendance: Students are expected to be present and prepared for each class. If you know you will have to miss any class session, please inform the instructor in advance. Missing two days out of five will adversely affect the final course grade. Missing three or more days will result in automatic failure of the course.

Course Schedule: Topics and Readings

All readings will be on reserve in the Hartford Seminary Library. Books recommended for purchase (in bold italics followed by an asterisk*) are those by Appleby, Little, Abu-Nimer, Muller-Fahrenholz, and Gopin. Some articles and chapters will be disseminated as PDF files sent to students’ Hartford Seminary email accounts.

January 26: The Ambivalence of the Sacred

**In-class video:** *Voices of Peace* from CBS television, broadcast December 19, 2004

**February 23:** Morning: Case study: West Africa
Eliza Griswold, *The Tenth Parallel: Dispatches from the Fault Line Between Christianity and Islam*, pp. 17-73

**In-class video:** *The Imam and the Pastor* featuring Ashafa and Wuye

Afternoon: Case study: Northern Ireland
Reading: Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred*, chapter 5

**March 15:** Morning: Christianity and Peacemaking (with focus on South Africa)

**In-class video:** portions of *Long Night’s Journey into Day: South Africa’s Search for Truth and Reconciliation* directed by Frances Reid and Deborah Hoffman

Afternoon: Islam and Peace Building

**April 12: Morning: Judaism and Peacemaking**


**Afternoon:** Case study: Israel/Palestine #1

- **Reading:** Marc Gopin, *Holy War, Holy Peace: How Religion Can Bring Peace to the Middle East*, Part II: Practical Applications
- Articles on the OPEN HOUSE Center for Jewish-Arab Coexistence and Reconciliation in Ramle, Israel, including “Letter to a Deportee” by Dalia Landau, *The Jerusalem Post*, January 14, 1988
- In-class video: news reports on OPEN HOUSE from CNN and Israeli television

**May 3: Morning:** Case study: Israel/Palestine #2

- **Reading:** Selections from Yossi Klein Halevi, *At the Entrance to the Garden of Eden: A Jew’s Search for God with Christians and Muslims in the Holy Land*
- Yehezkel Landau, “The Land of Israel in Jewish-Christian-Muslim Relations” (Boston College e-journal, Vol. 3, Issue 1, article 17, CP1-12), 2008, accessible at [http://escholarship.bc.edu/scjr/vol3](http://escholarship.bc.edu/scjr/vol3)

**Afternoon:** Case study: The U.S.A.

- **Reading:** Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” April 16, 1963, in *Why We Can’t Wait*
- Selected chapters from Charles Marsh, *God’s Long Summer: Stories of Faith and Civil Rights*
- In-class video: Healing the Heart of America: An Honest Conversation on Race, Reconciliation, and Responsibility by Hope in the Cities/Initiatives of Change