

RELIGION 230 (2)—Religious Revolutionaries.

Course description:

"Religious Revolutionaries. John Brown, Gandhi, King, Desmond Tutu, Osama Bin Laden, and others: an interdisciplinary study of the intersection of love, power and justice."

Religious separatists, utopians and terrorists have in their various ways taken on their governments. We will be looking at those which have had a worldwide significance, revolutionizing religion, even leading political revolution. When faith graduates to politics, proponents make theological and philosophical appeals which create tensions inside and outside their institutions. Are these claims valid? Are they consistent with sacred scripture, with religious tradition? To what extent are these revolutionaries rooted in spiritual inspiration or in exercises of the ego? Have they created legacies or communities that survived them? What have religious revolutionaries added to historic social movements, like abolitionism, women's suffrage and women's rights, reproductive rights, civil rights, the anti-apartheid and peace movements, and unionism? Is violence precluded, permitted or mandated by the religious visionary venturing into the political sphere and why? What can we learn from religious revolutionaries about how we make our political decisions and what political actions we take?

Course objectives:

To understand the spiritual motivation of religious leaders who enter the political arena.

To differentiate between the different types and levels of religious leadership (healer, prophet, priest, etc.).

To learn the history of several 19th and 20th century social movements (abolitionism, Indian national independence, civil rights, and anti-apartheid).

To assess the impact of religious leadership in movements for social justice.

To develop criteria for evaluating the justice of some contemporary movements (anti-abortion violence, Tea Party, militia, etc.)

To assess the influence of religious thinking upon our individual political decisions.

Required texts:

Gandhi, *Autobiography*.

Burns, Stewart. *To the Mountaintop*.

Tutu, Desmond. *No Future Without Forgiveness*.

Bin Laden, Osama. *Messages to the World*.

Lincoln, Bruce. *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after 9/11*.

Selected articles.

Course Format:

We meet twice a week, Mondays and Wednesdays from 2:30 to 3:50, either in Ladd 206 or the ICC, for lecture and discussion. The course is designed as a collaborative endeavor, with students contributing through class reports and discussion leadership.

Course requirements:

1. To complete the reading assignments.
2. To complete all quizzes.
3. To maintain a notebook containing class notes, handouts, quizzes, research data, reports, and papers.
4. To write two essays, approximately 4-5 pages in length each, based on reports presented in class.
5. Final exam.

Attendance and participation:

Regular class attendance and active class participation are required. If you are late, absent, or unprepared, the work of the group as a whole suffers. Please be in class on time with assignments completed. Consistent effort will result in a better grade. Shut down and stow away all electronic devices upon arrival. Occasional absences because of illness are unavoidable, and you should not attend class if you are ill out of consideration of others. If you must miss class, please let me know by e-mail. Missed quizzes must be made up outside of class.

Grading:

2 formal papers based on prior reports:	33%
Notebook, quizzes, classroom performance, attendance:	33%
Final exam	33%

Late papers will receive an **F**, to be averaged with the actual grade whenever the paper is finally submitted. Extensions are granted only for emergencies. Hard copy of papers is due at the beginning of class time. You may revise any paper for a better grade; the original grade and the revision will be averaged together.

Paper format:

12-point font. Double space. 1" margins.

No title page; title goes on first page with Name, Date, and Paper#.

It is a good idea to save all papers to disk.

EXTRA HELP is always available. See me during my office hours (Case 309):

Tues/Wed 9 – 11 a.m.

or by appointment.

Academic integrity:

It is understood all Skidmore students will abide by the Skidmore Honor Code. All suspected cases of academic dishonesty (such as plagiarism) will be referred to the Dean of Studies and may incur such penalties as a failing grade on a part or the whole of course requirements or removal from the course, at instructor's discretion.