IPI 5/717 (3) Religion and Violence

Instructor: Rabbi Dr. Laura Duhan-Kaplan
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Office hours during term: by appointment

Purpose: This course offers an opportunity to prepare for, attend, and reflect on VST’s Inter-Religious Conference on Religion and Violence. At the conference, participants will discuss religious violence and non-violence, recognizing that religious groups have been both perpetrators and victims. Violence will be understood in spiritual, theological, historical economic, linguistic, political, sexual, and psychological contexts. Multiple disciplines, religious communities, and cultural traditions will be represented. Students in this course will also have the opportunity to reflect on how their own views of violence and nonviolence are expressed in their leadership and scholarship.

Competence Objectives:
Students will be expected to learn and demonstrate the ability to:

- Articulate informed definitions of “violence” and “nonviolence”
- Describe issues relating to religious violence in our historical context
- Respond to issues of religious violence from a spiritual, theological, historical, psychological, sociological or philosophical perspective
- Describe teachings about violence and non-violence in at least two religious traditions
- Reflect on your own principles surrounding violence and nonviolence, and their role in your leadership and scholarship
- Offer objective summary and critical assessment of scholarly papers

Format: Summer term 2019, 30 hours total.

- Attendance at Inter-religious Studies Conference:
  - May 26 (7:00-9:00 pm followed by reception)
  - May 27 (8:30 am – 4:30 pm; 7:00-9:00 pm)
  - May 28 (8:30 am – 5:00 pm)

- Pre- and Post-conference class sessions:
  - May 24 (10am – 4pm)
  - May 31 (10am – 4 pm)

Off-site students can attend the two additional class times on May 24 and May 31 via Zoom, but must be in full attendance for the conference.

Identification of the levels at which the course can be taken: Certificate, Basic (Diploma/MA/M.Div) or Advanced (Th.M).
Required reading:

On the Rise of Radical Religious Violence (due May 24):
Available on Amazon.ca in paperback and kindle format:

On Defining Violence (due May 24):
Posted on Canvas

By Keynote Speaker Peter W. Klein (due May 24):
Available on-line to read and/or watch; links also posted to Canvas:
- http://www.kzoo.edu/praxis/conversation-about-torture/
- http://strangers.globalreportingcentre.org/
- https://globalreportingcentre.org/lytton-water/

On Religiously Motivated Nonviolence (due May 24):
Essays and Chapters posted on Canvas:

Selected papers presented at the conference: Due May 31
- TBA as they arrive

Assignments:
For all students:
(1) Full attendance at all events, as described above in “format.” Attendance should be in accordance with VST policies; thoughtful, engaged participation in class discussion, course activities, and conference.
(2) Completion of assigned readings.
(3) One two-hour volunteer shift at the conference, e.g., greeting, registration, logistical support. – Conference administrator will be in touch.
A 750-1000 word written response to a selected conference paper. Assignments will be made no later than May 24. A 10-minute oral presentation of your draft response is due in class on May 31. The final written version will be due June 21. The instructor will review your response, request revisions if necessary, and then email it to the paper’s author, with a request for the author to reply directly to you.

In your response, please address the following points:

- What is the main idea of the paper?
- How does the author present or develop it?
- What relevant background knowledge of the topic do you bring to it?
- What new idea, insight, or information do you receive from it?
- Explain one thing you agree with, or feel positively about in the paper, and why.
- Explain one thing you disagree with, feel negatively about, or would like to criticize in the paper, and why?
- Of the ideas presented in the paper, what would you want to know more about?
- What further research questions into the topic would you like to see the author pursue?

Additional for certificate students only:
A 750 word reflection paper on one important idea, theme, or presentation from the conference, due no later than August 31, via email to ldkaplan@vst.edu.

Additional or basic-level students only:
A 3000-word paper, exploring interests related to the conference theme, referencing at least 5 conference papers, due no later than August 31, via email to ldkaplan@vst.edu.

Additional for advanced-level students only:
A 4000-word paper, exploring interests related to the conference theme, referencing at least 5 conference papers and at least 5 additional sources due no later than August 31, via email to ldkaplan@vst.edu.

Prerequisites: None.

Student presentations of responses to conference papers, followed by discussion of each.