

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Department of Political Science/ASPECT
PSCI6234/ASPT/HIST/REL6124: Premodern Christian and Islamic Political Theory
Instructor: Dr. Bettina Koch

COURSE DESCRIPTION

“Crusade,” “Jihad,” “religious war”—these terms are still used to “explain” contemporary conflicts in which religion is invoked as a source of legitimacy. Most modes of justifying violence, however, are not modern inventions. Numerous contemporary justifications for the use of violence have their roots in premodern discourses and conflicts. The course examines the (ab)use of religious arguments for the justification of (political) violence in premodern Christian and Islamic political thought. During the course of the semester, we examine theoretical justifications for the use of violence against the religious “other.” We investigate how similar arguments were used to justify the oppression of the people and how (occasionally, the same) arguments have been used for the development of theories of resistance.

The course analyzes the interplay of religion, politics, and violence in three thematic sections: 1.) Jihad and Crusade; 2.) (Religious) dissent and violent oppression; 3.) (Religious) dissent and resistance. We read texts of different genres from the premodern Christian and Islamic traditions.

The course is geared towards students with an interest in political theory/history of political thought in general, students in Religious Studies (graduate certificate), and all students with an interest in Western and non-Western political thought, in particular those with research and teaching interests outside the Western tradition.

FORMAT The course is designed as a seminar. There will be no formal lectures, but rather the primary classroom work will be discussion of the assigned reading for the week. The professor will facilitate and direct discussion, and occasionally offer relevant background or conceptual information. Each student will be expected to contribute on a weekly basis to the debate and interchange within the class.

REQUIREMENTS Students are expected to be current with the reading assignments. They will be expected to make at least one presentation during the course of the semester (10%). These presentations will be critical engagements (NOT summaries) with at least one of the core readings. Each student is expected to hand in two shorter essays (approximately 2000-2500 words) reflecting on the previous readings (30%) and to be actively engaged in class discussion (20%). Students who are enrolled in the seminar for credit will also write a 6000-7000 words research paper on some aspects of the seminar’s themes (40%). Possible topics will be discussed with the instructor on an individual basis. All written assignments have to be delivered through the Scholar drop box and have to follow Chicago Style. Please keep in mind, “*No shows are anathema in academics. The entire enterprise depends on people showing up*” (Dennis Moran).

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY It is a sign of the times that the professor feels the need to warn students regarding plagiarism. Plagiarism is understood to be the representation of the words or ideas of another person as one’s own in any academic writing, essay, thesis, research report, project or assignment submitted in a course or program of study, or the representation as one’s own of an entire essay or work of another, whether the material so represented constitutes a

part or the entirety of the work submitted. In short, plagiarism is copying from any source whatsoever without proper acknowledgment or reference. Penalties for plagiarism are severe, so if you have any doubt whatsoever whether you have (even inadvertently) plagiarized, consult the professor prior to submitting your assignment.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities must be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you need adaptation or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in the case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction to the course

Reading: Rollin Armour *Islam, Christianity, and the West: A Troubled History* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002).

Week 2: Methods in Comparative Political Theory

Reading: Farah Godrej, *Cosmopolitan Political Theory: Method, Practice, Discipline* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

I. Jihad and Crusade

Week 3: Background I

Reading: Mahmoud Ayoub and Gary Legenhausen, "Introduction," in *Jihad and Shahadat: Struggle and Martyrdom in Islam*, ed. Mehdi Abedi and Gary Legenhausen (North Haledon: Islamic Publications International, 1986), 1-46. Ayatullah Sayyid Maḥmūd Ṭaleqani, "Jihad and Shahadat," in *Jihad and Shahadat: Struggle and Martyrdom in Islam*, ed. Mehdi Abedi and Gary Legenhausen (North Haledon: Islamic Publications International, 1986), 47-81 [on reserve]. David Cook, *Understanding Jihad* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), chap. 3: The Crystallization of Jihad Theory, 49-72. Michael David Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History: Doctrines and Practices* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), chap. 8: Empires, Armies, and Frontiers, 118-156.

Recommended: Reuven Firestone, *Jihad: The Origin of Holy War in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), Chap 4: The Qur'ān on war: A New Reading, 67-91.

Week 4: Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Rushd on Jihad

Reading: Averroes [Ibn Rushd], "The Chapter of Jihad from Averroes' legal Handbook *al-Bidāyah*, in *Jihad in Medieval and Modern Islam: The Chapter on Jihad from Averroes' Legal Handbook 'Bidāyat al-Mudjtahid' and The Treatise 'Koran and Fighting' by the Late Shaykh Al-Azhar, Maḥmūd Shaltūt*, trans. and annotated Rudolph Peters (Brill: Leiden, 1977), 9-25. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Ibn Taymiyyah Expounds on Islam: Selected Writings of Shaykh al-Islam Taqi ad-Din Ibn Taymiyya on Islamic Faith, Life, and Society*, compiled and trans. Muhammad 'Abdul-Haqq Ansari (Riyadh: General Administration of Culture and Publication, 2000), 533-568 (<http://islamfuture.files.wordpress.com/2009/12/ibn-taymiyyah-expounds-on-islam.pdf>).

Week 5: Background II

Reading: Armin Maalouf, *Crusades Through Arab Eyes* (New York: Schocken, 1989). Author Collective, "Islam and Christianity: A Shared Heritage and History," in *The Crescent and the Cross: Muslim and Christian Approaches to War and Peace*, ed. Harfiyah Abdel Haleem, Oliver Ramsbotham, Saba Risaluddin, and Brian Wicker (Houndsmills: Macmillan, 1998), 1-21.

Week 6: Campaigning for Crusades

Reading: *The Crusades: Idea and Reality, 1095-1274*, ed. Louise Riley-Smith and Jonathan Riley-Smith (London: Edward Arnold, 1981), Part I: The Preaching of the First Crusade, 37-54 [on reserve]. Author Collective, "Christian Perspectives on War and Peace," in *The Crescent and the Cross: Muslim and Christian Approaches to War and Peace*, ed. Harfiyah Abdel Haleem, Oliver Ramsbotham, Saba Risaluddin, and Brian Wicker (Houndsmills: Macmillan, 1998), 22-59. Jill N. Claster, *Sacred Violence: The European Crusades to the Middle East, 1095-1396* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 3-96.

Week 7: Why Crusading?

Reading: *The Crusades: Idea and Reality, 1095-1274*, ed. Louise Riley-Smith and Jonathan Riley-Smith (London: Edward Arnold, 1981), Part II: The Attraction of Crusading, 54-117.
Recommended: Jean de Joinville, *The Life of Saint Louis*, in Joinville & Villehardouin, *Chronicles of the Crusades*, trans. M.R.B Shaw (Baltimore: Penguin, 1963), II, 2 "Preparation for Crusade," II, 7 "The Battle of Mansourah," II, 10 "Negotiations with the Saracens," II, 13 "The Tatars," II, 19 "A Fatale Crusade."

II. (Religious) Dissent and Violent Oppression

Week 8: The Saljuq Empire & the Nizari Isma'ilis

Reading: Nizam al-Mulk, *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings: The Siyāsāt-nāma or Siyar al-Mulūk of Nizām al-Mulk*, trans. from the Persian Hubert Darke, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), Book II [on reserve]. Farhad Daftary, "Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ and the Origins of the Nizārī Isma'ili Movement," in *Medieval Isma'ili History and Thought*, ed. Farhad Daftary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 181-204. Neguin Yavari, "Mirrors for Princes or a Hall of Mirrors? Nizam al Mulk's *Siyar al-muluk* Reconsidered," *al-Masāq: Islam and the Medieval Mediterranean*, 20 (2008): 47-69.

Week 9: Al-Mawardi and al-Ghazali

Reading: Al-Mawardi, *The Ordinances of Government: al-aḥkām al-sulṭāniyya w'al-wilāyāt al-dīniyya*, trans. Wafaa H. Wahba (Reading: Garnet, 1996), chap. 5 and 19. Al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers: A Parallel English-Arabic Text*, trans. Michael E Marmura (Povo: Brigham Young University Press, 2000), xv-xxvii; 96-109. Frank Griffel, "Toleration and Exclusion: Al-Shāfi'i and al-Ghazālī on the Treatment of Apostates," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, 64 (2001): 339-354. Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology* (London: Oxford University Press, 2009), 97-122.

Oct 10: Christian Heresies

Reading: *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe*, ed. Edward Peters (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980), pp. 1-11; 103-163; 251-264.

Week 11: A Manual Against Heretics

Reading: Bernard Gui, *The Inquisitor's Guide: A Medieval Manual on Heretics*, ed. Janet Shirley (Welwyn Garden City: Ravenhall Books, 2006).

III. Oppression and Resistance

Week 12: John of Salisbury

Reading: John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. and trans. Cary J. Nederman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Cary J. Nederman, "A Duty to Kill: John of Salisbury's Theory of Tyrannicide," *The Review of Politics* 50 (1988): 365-389.

Week 13: William of Ockham

Reading: William of Ockham, *Dialogus: Latin Text and English Translation*, ed. John Kilcullen, George Knysh, Volker Leppin, John Scott and Jan Ballwe (<http://www.britac.ac.uk/pubS/dialogus/ockdial.html>) 2002-2006, I, Dialogus V-VI; III Dialogus II, i-ii. John Scott, *Theologians vs Canonists on Heresy* (<http://www.britac.ac.uk/pubS/dialogus/frmIntro1d1.html>).

Week 14: An Underrepresented Muslim Perspective

Reading: Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Week 15: Summary