

Religion and Violence Spring 2004

First-Year Seminar
Mon/Wed 4:10-5:25pm
Office hours: Wednesday 2-4pm

Professor Tanya Erzen
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Course Description:

The goals of the First-Year Seminar are to give you an opportunity to examine the relationship between religion and violence, to improve your ability to read critically and analyze texts from a variety of disciplines, to develop your ability to articulate ideas and arguments in discussion, and to help you learn how to write college-level essays based on readings and class discussion. In this course, we will consider religious violence, nonviolence and intolerance in different historical periods and diverse societies. Students will explore key issues within the study of religion such as fundamentalism, apocalypticism, conversion, religious warfare, colonialism, and post-colonialism.

Course Requirements:

Readings: All readings are required and may be obtained at the Barnard Reserve Room or at Labyrinth Books (536 W. 112th, 865-1588). You should be prepared to discuss the readings on the dates they are assigned. There will be a small packet with articles at Broadway Copy, 3062 Broadway at 120th (call ahead to order 865-6501).

Salman Rushdie, *Shame* (1983)
E.M. Forster, *A Passage to India* (1924)
Tony Kushner, *Angels in America* (1993)
Euripides, *The Bacchae* (404 BC)
William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* (1619)
Fray Bartolome de las Casas, *The Devastation of the Indies, A Brief Account* (1542)
Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (1958)

Written Assignments:

Paper #1: Students will write a 3-page, typed, double-spaced response paper to the readings on the first section of the course. A response paper can be a close reading of a particular passage or an interdisciplinary synthesis of the reading. I will distribute questions to guide the response paper.

Paper #2: This paper will be a revised version of your response paper (5-6 pages). You will be asked to undertake a substantial rewriting and expansion of your response essay, taking into account my comments and your growing understanding of the material.

Papers #3&4: There will be two short papers (4-5 pages) on topics related to the readings. Topics will be distributed in class one week prior to the paper's due date. Each paper will be submitted for peer review. Peer editing will be done in groups of three or four in which students comment on the essays of each group member. Students will be provided with a form to complete for each member, to be returned to the author and then submitted for evaluation with the revised draft of the paper.

All essays should be submitted in their best form—written in 12-point, double-spaced type, with standard margins, and pages numbered and stapled. *All written work should be thoroughly proofread.* There are no extensions, and all assignments are marked down one-third of a letter grade for every late day.

Grading:

Class participation: 15%

Response Paper: 10%

Expanded Response Paper: 15%

Papers on Selected Topic: 25 points x 2= 50%

Peer Editing and Revision: 10%

Writing Center: You are encouraged to consult with a Writing Fellow from the Writing Center (121 Reid Hall). Any Barnard student is welcome to confer on a particular writing project or to discuss some broader aspect of her writing.

Student Conferences: You should plan to meet with me at least once during the semester to discuss one of your papers. However, feel free to stop by office hours or schedule an appointment if necessary. Email is always the fastest way to reach me.

Attendance: I expect students to be active participants in their educations. This means that each student should come to class having carefully read the assigned readings and be prepared to discuss them. Because knowing how to articulate your ideas is a crucial part of the learning process, you will be expected, as a member of the seminar, to contribute your own unique perspective to our discussions. The real action of our seminar takes place in the classroom. Therefore, it is important and expected that you will be at every session. Chronic lateness and/or more than one unexcused absence will detract from your participation grade. If you have any special needs or concerns with this course, please feel free to come and talk with me.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

January 21- Introduction: Religious Violence and Intolerance

Part I. Love, Shame and the Roots of Religious Violence:

January 26- Rushdie, *Shame*, chapters 1-5

January 28- Rushdie, *Shame*, chapters 6-10
(response paper questions distributed)

February 2- Rushdie, *Shame*, chapters 11- end

February 4- Readings from *the Koran*

Response Paper Due

February 9- Forster, *A Passage to India* Part 1 Mosque

February 11- Forster, *A Passage to India* Part 2 Caves

February 16- Forster, *A Passage to India* finish Caves and Part 3 Temple

February 18- FILM: *East is East*

Expanded Response Paper Due

Part II. Apocalypse and Utopia

February 23 - Bible (King James version): Book of Daniel, Mark, Book of Revelations and selections from the book of Matthew, Timothy, Ezekiel, Genesis, Psalms

Discussion of Writing Techniques: The Introduction and Conclusion

February 25 Review the online teaching resource:
<http://www.nyu.edu/fas/projects/vcb/ChristianMedia>

March 1- Kushner, *Angels in America*

March 3- Kushner, *Angels in America*

March 8- FILM: *Angels in America*

March 10- Discussion and in-class writing on *Angels in America*, Apocalypse and Utopia

SPRING RECESS

Part III. War and the Violence of Religious Conversion: Two Plays

March 22 Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, part I and II
(paper assignment distributed)

March 24- Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, part III, IV and V

March 29- FILM: *The Merchant of Venice* (set in the 1930s)

**Second Paper Due for Peer Review
Peer editing in class**

March 31- Euripides, *The Bacchae*

April 5- - Euripides, *The Bacchae*

April 7- Discussion of gender in Euripides and Shakespeare

Revised Version of Second Paper Due

Part IV. Indigenous Religious Belief, Missionaries and Colonialism: Two Perspectives

April 12- de las Casas, *The Devastation of the Indies*, pp.1-68

April 14- de las Casas, *The Devastation of the Indies*, pp. 68-132

April 19- Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, pp.1-66

April 21 - Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, pp. 67-118
(paper assignment distributed)

April 26- Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, pp. 121-end

April 28- Philip Gourevitch, "After the Genocide" and "Letter from Rwanda: The Return"

Third Paper Due for Peer Review
Peer editing in class

May 3- Debate: Religious Violence and the Question of Reparations
Samantha Power, "Rwanda: The Two Faces of Justice"

May 10- **Revised Version of Third Paper Due**