

IP-611 Peace, Justice, and Violence in Sacred Texts

Hartford International University

Spring 2026

Time: Tuesdays 5-7pm, (Hybrid Synchronous)

Instructors

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Course Description

Students in this course will examine the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and the Qur'an and study the aspects of these holy texts that relate to peace, justice, and violence. Students will learn to engage in hermeneutics of sacred texts and situating them in their original socio historical contexts. Simultaneously, they will explore the diverse ways Jewish, Christian and Muslim sources confront and interpret these texts. Students will take a case study approach to investigate how texts from all three Abrahamic traditions can and have been used to legitimate violent conflict and injustice toward others in real-life settings (e.g., imperialism, religious persecution, colonialism, misogyny, racism, Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism), as well as how they can and have been used to promote peaceful practices and just relations (peace movements, provision of care for the poor and sick by religious orders and communities, peaceable co-existence and cooperation with religious and ethnic others, liberation and justice movements). Students will be able to identify how others are using scriptural hermeneutics to form persuasive arguments drawing on the authority of scripture for living in the world.

Relevant Program Learning Outcomes

- Demonstrate an understanding of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam that includes attention to their origins, ritual practices, theologies, organizational forms, and internal diversity.
- Analyze concepts of peace, justice and violence in the sacred scriptures of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, explaining how the scriptures of each religion have been used to promote both violence and peaceful relations, both oppression and justice.
- Reflect on the experience of getting to know people of other faiths and experiencing substantive dialogue with others who view the world differently than you do.
- Connect the concepts of *conflict transformation* to the concepts of *just peace*, *positive peace* and *negative peace*.
- Critique your own faith's teachings, history, and leadership in terms of their contributions towards peace and their role in injustice.
- Identify scriptures, theologies, and exemplary figures from Judaism, Christianity and Islam contributing to traditions of nonviolence.
- Interrogate your own biases and their impact on peacebuilding practices.
- Define *moral imagination* and identify examples of it. Recognize patterns of injustice from your home community which may require moral imagination to transform.

Readings

Required: Readings each week will include primary scriptural texts from Judaism, Christianity and

Islam.

Recommended translations are

- a. [JPS translation](#) of the Hebrew Bible
- b. [New Revised Standard Version](#) (NRSV) of the Christian Bible
- c. [Abdel Haleem](#) translation of the Quran.

- Secondary readings, consisting of scholarly articles and extracts from books (pdfs will be provided in Canvas)

Class Requirements

Pre-reading:

If you have not formally studied any Judaism, Christianity or Islam in the past, then read a basic introduction to these religions, from the following book or any other comparable textbook:

- John Esposito, Darrel Fasching & Todd Lewis, *Religions of the West Today* (Oxford University Press, 2017), or Chapters 3, 4, 5 from the book *World Religions Today* by the same authors
- Mary Pat Fisher, *Living Religions*, chapter 8, 9, 10.
- Tamara Sonn and John Morreall, *The Religion Toolkit: A Complete Guide to Religious Studies* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), chapter 6 (Western Monotheisms)
- Video on narratives of exclusion: https://youtu.be/5ErUgXa6S1c?si=cSGIgtg3ev6zX_hv
- Video on peacebuilding and narratives: <https://youtu.be/lvGfxU1FkBkx?si=JhM5DtIR8FyP854v>

Evaluation

Attendance	10%
In-Class Presentations	25%
Forum Discussion & Class Participation	35%
Response papers (Three)	30%

- *Attendance:* Class is held weekly. You must attend class regularly and promptly, either in person, or remotely if you signed up for this modality. More than two absences will reduce your grade in the course, unless there are extenuating circumstances. Significant patterns of tardiness may add up to an absence as well.
- *Presentations:* Students will be assigned to groups of 2-3, and in Weeks 6-15 each group will take a turn presenting on the topic (or some aspect or manifestation of it) listed for that

week. Presentations should be 20-30 minutes and should show that you have all read the relevant material closely and pondered the relevant issues.

- *Forum Discussions:* Each student will post TWO reflections per week to the Online Forums. The first reflection should be 200-250 words and should show that the student has read and thought about the assigned reading(s) for that week. The second reflection should be 50-100 words and should be a substantive response to another student's post.
 - The main discussion post is due on the Monday following the class (11:59pm).
 - The response to someone else's post is due by the following Wednesday (6:00pm).
- *Reaction Papers:* Each student will, working individually, submit 3 reflection papers over the course of the semester. Each paper should be 1000-1500 words long. Papers will be due as follows:
 - *Paper 1:* (on interpretation and justice in monotheistic traditions): February 18th, 2026
 - *Paper 2:* (on non-/violence in monotheistic traditions): March 23rd, 2026
 - *Paper 3:* (on one of the contemporary themes of the course): April 28th, 2026

SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY TOPICS

Part 1- Peace and Justice in the Abrahamic Traditions

Week 1- January 20th

- No readings assigned

Week 2- January 27th: Religious Peace and Religious Violence

- William T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (OUP USA, 2009), 3-14.
- Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred*, 1999, introduction.
- Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1969), pp. 167-191.

Week 3- February 3rd: Scriptural Interpretation and Justice in Judaism

- Deuteronomy 16:19-20; Isaiah 58:1-12; Micah 6
- Nancy C. Ring, et al., "Scriptures, Canons, and Creeds," 209-213, in *Introduction to the Study of Religion*, second edition. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012.
- VISOTZKY, BURTON L. "Jots and Tittles: On Scriptural Interpretation in Rabbinic and Patristic Literatures." *Prooftexts*, vol. 8, no. 3, 1988, pp. 257-69.

- Maurice Friedman, "Social Responsibility in Judaism," *Journal of Religion and Health*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (October 1962):42-60

Week 4- February 10th: Scriptural Interpretation and Justice in Islam

- Quran, 3:7, 4:40, 16:90, 17:33-35, 21:47, 39:69-70, 38:29, 50:37,
- Jane Dammen McAuliffe, "The Tasks and Traditions of Interpretation." In *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'ān*, edited by Jane Dammen McAuliffe, 181–210.
- Jonathan Brockopp, "Justice and Injustice", from *The Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, vol. 2, pp. 69-74.

Week 5- February 17th: Scriptural Interpretation and Justice in Christianity

- Matthew 5:17-18; John 1:1-5, 17-18; Micah 6:8; Romans 12:1-2, 14-21
- Nancy C. Ring, et al., "Scriptures, Canons, and Creeds," 218-222, in, *Introduction to the Study of Religion*, second edition. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012.
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/18/opinion/social-justice-christianity.html> ○ David Cloutier, "Justice," in, *Redemption and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Restorative Justice*, eds. McCarthy, David Matzko, et al. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017), 3-20.

RESPONSE PAPER # 1 DUE February 18th

Part 2- Violence and Non-violence in the Western Monotheistic

Traditions Week 6- February 24th: Violence and Non-Violence in Islam

- Quran, 2:190, 4:77, 9:5-6, 22:39, 60:8
- Talal Asad, *On Suicide Bombing* (Columbia University Press, 2007)
- Dialogue between Mahan Mirza and Yehezkel Landau
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAe0BgbMKTA>

Week 7- March 3rd: Violence and Non-Violence in Judaism

- Genesis 4:15, 9:6; Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 10:19; Deuteronomy 20:16-18
- Robert Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism: From the Bible to Modern Zionism*, chapter 2 (The Bible)
- Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Laws of Kings and War, Chapter 6* ([Available in English on Sefaria.org](https://www.sefaria.org))
- Susan Niditch, *War in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford UP, New York, 1993), Chapter 3

Week 8- March 10th: Violence and Non-Violence in Christianity

- Matthew 5:38-48; Revelation 9:13-21
- Michel Desjardins, *Peace, Violence and the New Testament*, chapters 2 and 3

Week 9- Spring Break/Reading Days- March 17th: NO CLASS

Response Paper #2 DUE 3/23/26

Part 3- Global Discourses on Peace, Justice, and

Violence Week 10- March 24th: Peace and Justice in the Face of Oppression

- Genesis 1:28, 4:10, 12:6-7; Leviticus 25:44-46; 1 Samuel 15:1-9; 1 Peter 2:18-20; Qur'an 4:135; 6:152
- Jason Springs, "Structural and Cultural Violence in Religious Peacebuilding" in Omer, Atalia, et al., eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding*. Oxford University Press, 2015.
- John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*, 2004, introduction.

Week 11- March 31st: Slavery and Racism

- Deuteronomy 10:17-19; Acts 10:9-35; Quran, 7:11-12, 30:22, 49:13
- Morrison, Larry R. "The Religious Defense of American Slavery Before 1830." *Journal of Religious Thought* 37. no. 2 (1981).
- Cone, James. "Theology's Great Sin: Silence in the Face of White Supremacy." *Black Theology : An International Journal*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2004, pp. 139–52.

Week 12- April 7th: Gender, Sexism, and Sexual Violence

- Judges 19:22-30; Galatians 3:27-28; 1 Timothy 2:8-15; Qur'an, 3:35-6, 4:34; 33:35
- Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Sexism and Misogyny in the Christian Tradition: Liberating Alternatives," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 34 (January 2014): 83-94.
- "Sexual Violence and Qur'anic Resources for Healing Processes." In *Sexual Violence and Sacred Texts*, edited by Amy Kalmanofsky, 75–93.
- Hadia Mubarak, "Is the Quran To Blame? Domestic Violence and Scriptural Interpretation," <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/altmuslim/2017/07/is-the-quran-to-blame-looking-at-domestic-violence-and-scriptural-interpretation/>

Week 13- April 14th: Ecology: Violence Against the Earth

- Isaiah 24:4-6, Hosea 4:1-3; Revelation 11:16-18; Quran, 2:30, 6:38, 6:99, 30:41-43
- Pope Francis, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*, ¶1-2, 20-26, 65-75
- Afsan Redwan, "When the Earth Speaks Against us," <https://yaqeeninstitute.org/read/paper/when-the-earth-speaks-against-us-environmental-ethics-in-islam>

Week 14- April 21st: Religious Minorities and Genocide

- Deuteronomy 17:2-7; Matthew 7:15-20, 27:24-25; Quran 9:26-35
- Film: Selections from “Shoah” (1985)

Week 15- April 28th: Religious Extremism

- Psalm 144:1-11, Obadiah 1:17-21, Matthew 24:1-8; Quran, 5:3-5, 16:126-128
- Film: Timbuktu (2014)

Response Paper #3 DUE 4/28/26

ADDITIONAL COURSE POLICY NOTES:

Additional Policies and Procedures

For additional information on format, proper footnotes, acknowledgments, etc., students are directed to consult the Hartford Seminary General Guidelines for a Research Paper. These guidelines can be picked up in the student forms center or downloaded from our website at: <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/student-writing-resources/>. Students may also consult Kate L. Turabian's, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations* (at least the 9th Ed., 2018). The Seminary research paper guide can be found at: <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/student-writing-resources/>.

Seminary Grading Scale

A (95-100) Demonstrates excellent mastery of the subject matter, a superior ability to articulate this, and provides helpful connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.

A- (90-94) Demonstrates mastery of the subject matter, ability to articulate this well, and makes connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course. B+ (87-89) Demonstrates a very good understanding of the subject matter, able to articulate lessons learned in the assignment well. Meets expectations of the course.

B (83-86) Demonstrates an understanding of the subject matter and the ability to articulate lessons learned. Meets expectations of the course.

B- (80-82) Demonstrates an understanding of the material at hand, has some difficulty articulating this, and basic connection of the material to daily life or contemporary issues/life. Meets basic expectations for the course.

C+ (77-79) Demonstrates a basic comprehension of the subject matter, weak articulation and connections. Does not meet expectations for the course.

C (70-76) Demonstrates a minimal comprehension of the subject matter and has difficulty making connections. Does not meet expectations of the course.

F (below 70) Unable to meet the basic requirements of the course.

AI Usage: Please do not use AI generated content in your writing. It is often incoherent and does not provide proper citations or factual information.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity: Academic honesty and integrity are expected of all students. Plagiarism exists when: a) the work submitted was done, in whole or in part, by anyone other than the one submitting the work, b) parts of the work, whether direct quotations, ideas, or data, are taken from another source without acknowledgement, c) the whole work is copied from another source [especially a web based source], or d) significant portions of one's own previous work used in another course. See “Plagiarism” at <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/policies/>. **Inclusive**

Language: Hartford Seminary is committed to a policy of inclusion in its academic life and mission. All members of the community are expected to communicate in language that reflects the equality of genders, openness to diverse cultural and theological perspectives, and sensitivity to one another's images of God.

Official Handbooks: For all other questions you might have regarding policies or procedures, please check the student handbook <https://www.hartfordinternational.edu/current-students/student-resources/student-handbook> and seminary policies at Academic policies are listed at <https://www.hartfordinternational.edu/current-students/academics/academic-policies>.