COURSE DESCRIPTION: This seminar has been designed to help students gain a critical understanding of (a) religion; (b) the role of religion (and its corollary, secularism) in international relations; (c) the dialectical relationship between various religious traditions and the media (as the purveyor of global culture); and (d) how the media shapes perceptions of religion among the public and the foreign policy elite. Among other approaches, the course will analyze the ways in which religion appears in major news stories, emphasizing how particular religions are portrayed in their interaction with other forces in society (i.e., politics and government) and who is quoted as representative of specific religious practices.

COURSE PHILOSOPHY: You should consider this seminar a collective exercise in critical thinking. Our role is to steer class discussion and engender an informal participatory class environment where we can all search collectively for a broader understanding of the subject matter. The readings and videos will introduce you to some of the important scholarship and controversies related to Religion, Media and International Relations (RMIR). Please keep in mind that the present structure of the course reflects our interests. However, we welcome a broadening of aims and interests. Also, please take note of the fact that this syllabus represents anticipated scheduling of lectures/readings/assignments; changes may be made to suit the actual composition and competencies of the class or as warranted by current events.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance: Attendance in this class is mandatory.

Participation: In addition to being physically present, we expect you to be mentally present as well! Therefore, you should complete all assigned readings before each class meeting (an average of 100 pages a week) so that will be familiar with the concepts, facts, theories, and controversies we bring up. Furthermore, you are required to engage in discussion through the course page in Blackboard (http://Blackboard.syr.edu) and the course listserv (RMIR@listserv.syr.edu). We will use these mediums to post interesting or informative e-mails about the subject matter of the course and respond to points and issues raised by the instructors or your peers.
Reaction Papers: At the beginning of each class students are expected to hand in a 1-2-page (single-spaced) paper in which they reflect critically on - not summarizing - the readings for that week. In these short pieces, you will tell us what questions you have developed considering the readings and present what you find to be the major strengths and weaknesses of the works. These reaction papers will frame class discussion.

Oral Presentations: To ensure class participation and to spread out the work a bit, each student is required to make one oral presentation in class concerning one of the topics listed in the syllabus that interests them. Presenters will provide a critical summary of the assigned and/or suggested readings pertaining to their chosen topic. They are expected to answer such questions as: (a) what is the author's thesis? (b) what is the major point s/he is trying to make?; (c) what are the major assumptions the author makes (and expects readers to accept) in arguing their thesis?; (d) what are some useful concepts s/he presents?; (e) how does the reading relate to previous readings?; and (f) what are the implications for research practice if the author's thesis and underlying assumptions are valid or true? Each presentation should last 15 to 25 minutes and should be accompanied by a class handout of 2-3 single-spaced pages. You will sign up for the presentations during our first meeting.

Research paper: Students are required to write one major research paper, 20-25 double spaced pages long, focusing on a subject examined in class. We ask that you first clear your subject choice in individual discussions with us. You will need to provide us with a one page précis (summary) and a brief bibliography no later than February 27. The outline should contain a title, main argument/finding, and a preliminary bibliography. Ideally, the papers should take the form of a critical/analytical case study. Worthy papers can be posted on the website of the RMIR Project. Further guidelines on how to write the papers will be provided in class. The research paper is due on April 23.

Please note that in this course we follow the university’s policy regarding academic honesty (http://provost.syr.edu/provost/units/academicprograms/academicintegrity/). Those who engage in plagiarism will get an automatic F and will be referred to university officials for further disciplinary action.

Students who may need special consideration because of any sort of disability should make an appointment to see the instructors in private.

GRADING CRITERIA

Quality and degree of participation in class and listserv discussions 10%
Reflection Papers 20%
Oral presentation and handout 20%
Research Paper 50%

REQUIRED TEXT

Course Reader (#1053) available at the Copy Center located in Marshall Square Mall.
CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

Jan. 16: **What is RMIR?**
- Logistics, trajectory, expectations, goals of the course, and signing up for the oral presentations
- Timothy Samuel Shah, Monica Duffy Toft, “Why God is Winning,” *Foreign Policy* (July/August 2006).
- Video: “War Spin: The Media and the Iraq War”

**Recommended:**
- Video: “Triumph of Evil”

Jan. 23: **Religion and Identity (I)**

Jan. 30: **Religion and Identity (II)**
- Peter Berger, “Max Weber is Alive and Well and Living in Guatemala: The Protestant Ethic Today” (on Blackboard)
- Video: “Faces of the Enemy”

**Recommended:**
Feb. 6: Negligence of Religion in Political Science and International Relations

- Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” Foreign Affairs 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 22-49. (on Blackboard)
- Video: Stories My Country Told Me: With Eqbal Ahmad (VC 10140; 56 minutes)

Recommended:

- Video: The Myth of Clash of Civilizations (VC 8110; 55 minutes)
- Madeleine Albright, The Mighty and the Almighty: Religion’s Role in International Affairs. Audio files of author’s discussion of the subject at United States Institute of Peace @ http://www.usip.org/events/2006/1004_albright.html

Feb.13: Religion and Globalization


**Recommended:**

Feb. 20: **Religion and Violence (I):** [Guest Speaker: Professor Michael Barkun]

**Recommended:**

Feb. 27: **Religion and Violence (II)**

**Recommended:**
• Video: *In the Name of God* (VC 6573; 97 minutes)
• Video: *Bombay: A Myth Shattered* (VC 7082; 25 minutes)
Mar. 5: **Media and Religion**

Recommended:

Mar. 12: **Spring Break**

Mar. 19: **Media and International Relations** [Guest Speaker: TBA]

Recommended:
- Video: “Letter to America: How Arabs View the United States”
- Video: “Glass Eyes”

Mar. 26: **Faith-based Diplomacy**
- Jeff Hayes, “Transnational Religious Actors and International Politics,” *Third World Quarterly* 22, no. 3 (June 2001): 143-158. (on Blackboard)

Apr. 2: **Religion and Democracy** [Guest Speaker: TBA]

Recommended:

Apr. 9: Old and New Media in the Muslim World [Guest Speaker: Mona Eltahawy]
• Video: Al Jazeera: Voice of Arabia (VC 10862; 52 minutes)
• Steven R. Corman and Jill S. Schiefelbein, “Communication and Media Strategy in the Jihadi War of Ideas” (on Blackboard)

Recommended:
• Hugh Miles, Al-Jazeera: The Inside Story of the Arab News Channel That is Challenging the West (Grove Press, 2006), pp. 1-12, 327-389.

Apr. 16: Controversies: Rushdie’s Satanic Verses, Danish Cartoons
• Lars Erslev Andersen, “Freedom of Speech, Battle over Values, and the Political Symbolism of the Muhammad Drawings” http://www.erslev-andersen.dk/comments.php (on Blackboard)
• The Danish Cartoon Fiasco http://silvers.progressiveislam.org/The_Danish_Cartoon_Fiasco (on Blackboard)

Recommended:

Apr. 23: Concluding Reflections on the Course (Term papers are due)
• Evaluations & Open Discussion about the Course