



UNIVERSITÀ  
CATTOLICA  
del Sacro Cuore



**Franklin University Switzerland  
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore  
Forum-Nexus Program  
Course Syllabus**

**REL 481-SIS  
Religion, Conflict, and Religious  
Violence in European History**

**Course Description**

This course provides an in-depth examination of the role of religion in European conflicts, from the medieval period to the present. It explores the theory of just war, religious wars, persecution, the impact of secularization on religious violence, and religious conflict in Europe today. Students will critically engage with historical case studies, theological debates, and political developments that have shaped religious conflict in Europe. Topics include the Crusades, the Wars of Religion, the rise of secularism, and contemporary religious tensions.

**Learning Objectives**

By the end of this course, students will:

- Understand the role of religion in historical and contemporary European conflicts.
- Analyze the causes, motivations, and consequences of religious violence.
- Evaluate primary and secondary sources on religious conflicts.
- Develop critical perspectives on the intersection of religion, politics, and violence.
- Compare historical religious conflicts with modern religious tensions in Europe.

**Course Requirements**

This course requires independent research, organization, and academic discipline. Students are expected to complete the required and additional readings in pace with their assignments and the course outline. Each student is required to participate in a minimum of three professional visits and eight independent cultural visits (ICVs). Students are expected to meet with their SIS Coordinator regularly throughout the course for consultation and assistance. Please note that your SIS Coordinator may ask you to attend a regularly-scheduled class when that material is relevant. Grading will consist of four essay assignments, a midterm, an oral presentation, and a final, handwritten exam.

**Participation in “Europe Today: An International IQ Seminar”**

All students also attend **Europe Today: An International IQ Seminar**, a daily session with occasional distinguished guest lectures. In this seminar, students learn about the culture of each country, gain an

understanding of essential European geography and current events, discuss their experiences and cross-cultural interactions, get language tips, and identify ways to have an even more immersive study abroad experience. The material covered in the seminar complements the syllabus for this course, and there will be some exam questions based on the seminar. Knowledge from and participation in the International IQ Seminar is factored into the grade for this course.

## **Assignments and Grading:**

### **Essays**

After completing the reading assignment for the unit, students are expected to write 900-1300 word essays responding fully to the prompts listed below. Students are expected to make explicit reference to the readings and to cite their references properly (Chicago footnotes style). An essay should have an introduction and conclusion.

1. **The Crusades and Religious Warfare:** Analyze the motivations and justifications behind the Crusades. Compare religious and political factors in different Crusades.
2. **The Protestant Reformation and Wars of Religion:** Assess the role of religious doctrine in the wars between Catholics and Protestants in France.
3. **Religion and Nationalism in the 19th Century:** Despite a period of dechristianization associated with the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, describe how religion interacted with growing nationalist movements in the long nineteenth century, and how it was used to justify violence in the First World War.
4. **Religion and Nationalism in the 20th Century:** Analyze how religious institutions navigated fascism, communism, and post-war Europe, up to and including today. Be sure to discuss the role of Christian Democracy in the formation of the European Union.

### **Presentation**

Deliver a 10-minute PowerPoint presentation summarizing the main findings of your independent study. You should reflect not just on the material from the essays, but also from all the assigned readings. Presentations are expected to be synthetic, placing all the knowledge learned in context, and drawing general conclusions on trends in the history of European religious violence. After your presentation, the professor will ask questions to assess your knowledge.

### **Midterm & Final Exams**

The midterm and final exams will assess your overall progress throughout the study abroad semester. You will be asked not only to demonstrate knowledge based on the readings, but also to make connections between the various course units and reflect holistically on the knowledge you have gained in this independent study.

### **Required Textbook**

The required readings for this class are based on primary sources (original documents from the time period) introduced with contextual descriptions. The goal is to have students interact with the words of the past, so that they can better understand the thoughts, motivations, and fears of past peoples. Students are expected to purchase Rubenstein & Diefendorf, which are available as ebooks, though if they have problems they should see the professor before the program starts.

- Jay Rubenstein, *The First Crusade: A Brief History with Documents*. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2015.
  - **selected readings:** Part 1, as well as Part 2 Chapters 1-3.
- Barbara B. Diefendorf, *The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre: A Brief History with Documents* Bedford/St. Martin's, 2019.
  - **selected readings:** Part 1, as well as Part 2 Chapters 1-3.
- McLeod, Hugh. 2015. "Christianity and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Europe." *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 15 (1): 7–22. [doi:10.1080/1474225X.2015.1020009](https://doi.org/10.1080/1474225X.2015.1020009).
  - (see professor if you do not have institutional access to the article)
- Chamedes, Giuliana. "The Vatican, Nazi-Fascism, and the Making of Transnational Anti-Communism in the 1930s." *Journal of Contemporary History* 51, no. 2 (2016): 261–90. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24671840>.
  - (see professor if you do not have institutional access to the article)
- Selected Primary Sources ([intro](#), sources [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#)) from CVCE's unit on "Christian Culture in Making of Europe" unit, published by the University of Luxembourg's Centre for Contemporary & Digital History ([link](#))

### **Additional Readings**

If you wish to read more on these topics, the following works may be of interest. You are not required to buy or read these works.

- Jill N. Claster, *Sacred Violence: The European Crusades to the Middle East, 1095-1396*, University of Toronto Press, 2009.
- Diarmaid MacCulloch. *A History of Christianity*. Penguin, 2010.
- Dale Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution*, Yale University Press, 1999.
- Peter Wallace, *The Long European Reformation: Religion, Political Conflict, and the search for Conformity, 1350-1750*, Palgrave, 2012.
- Peter H. Wilson, *The Thirty Year's War: Europe's Tragedy*, 2009

### **Course Outline:**

#### **Module 1: Introduction to Religious Conflict**

- Defining religious violence
- Theories of religious conflict and "just war"

#### **Module 2: The Crusades and Holy Wars**

- The concept of Holy War
- Religious and political motivations

#### **Module 3: The Inquisition and Persecution**

- Heresy, blasphemy, and control
- Case studies: Spain and the Papal Inquisition

#### **Module 4: Reformation and the Wars of Religion**

- Protestant vs. Catholic conflicts in Germany and in France
- The Thirty Years' War

#### **Module 5: The Enlightenment and Religious Tolerance**

- Secularism and the decline of religious violence

#### **Module 6: The French Revolution and De-Christianization**

- State vs. Church conflicts

#### **Module 7: Religion and Nationalism in the 19th and 20th Centuries**

- Religion in nationalism and revolution

#### **Module 8: Religion and Conflict in the World Wars**

- Religious institutions under fascism and communism

#### **Module 9: Secularization and Religious Identity in Post-War Europe**

- The role of religion in modern conflicts

- How Christian Democracy influenced the foundation of the EU

**Module 10: Contemporary Religious Tensions in Europe**

- Islamophobia and antisemitism
- Secularism and religious freedom

**Components of Final Grade**

Essay #1	10%
Essay #2	10%
Essay #3	10%
Essay #4	10%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%
Final Presentation	20%

**Grading Scale**

93-100 %	A
90-92.9 %	A-
87-89.9 %	B+
83-86.9 %	B
80-82.9 %	B-
77-79.9 %	C+
73-76.9 %	C
70-72.9%	C-
67-69.9 %	D+
63-66.9 %	D
60-62.9 %	D-
Below 60 %	F

**Attendance Policy**

Attendance is a critical component of this course. Students are expected to attend all scheduled class sessions throughout the program, including International IQ as well as meetings with your SIS professor. Excused absences are granted only under specific circumstances: documented illness, physical injury requiring medical attention, or other situations that Forum-Nexus staff determine to be valid and appropriate reasons for missing class. Any unexcused absence will lead to a reduction to the overall grade.

**Academic Integrity**

Franklin University Switzerland, and Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore place a high value on the integrity, good conduct, and academic honesty of all students. Students are expected to maintain high standards of academic integrity at all times. Any instance of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will result in a grade of F for the course.

**AI Policy**

The use of generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Dall-e, Grammarly, etc.) is permitted in this course for the following activities:

- Brainstorming and refining your creative ideas for specific writing assignments;
- Finding information on relevant topics related to the course;
- Checking spelling on your writing assignments and presentations.

The use of generative AI tools is not permitted in this course for the following activities:

- Generating a draft of your writing assignments and final presentation.
- Writing entire sentences, paragraphs or responses to complete class assignments.

In sum, any content that you hand in must not be generated by AI software, but it has to represent your intellectual contribution. Unauthorized use of artificial intelligence tools to write your paper or disguise plagiarized work is considered unauthorized assistance in this course and will result in a failing grade on the assignment.