

**From:** Inform  
**Subject:** EM: Religion, Politics & Violence and Hip Hop & Religion Courses

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**From:** Chavez, Linda

*Sent on behalf of Prof. Espinosa*

**Spring 2026**

**RLST 83 – Hip Hop, Religion and Revolution**

*Prof. Gastón Espinosa - Tuesday, 2:45-5:30 PM, CMC Roberts South 104*



This seminar explores the revolutionary intersections of race, religion and Hip-Hop from 1960-Present. It examines how Black and racial-ethnic Hip-Hop artists (Latino, Arab, Muslim, Jewish) have promoted a post-soul spirituality and kept alive the Civil Rights and Black Power critiques of anti-Black racism, poverty, urban violence and hopelessness, and many other forms of social marginalization and used their music as a form of religious, political, and social protest, criticism, and commentary. It explores how they leveraged their superstar power and platforms to promote racial justice, cultural empowerment, religious expression, and revolutionary social change and then assesses their struggles with commercialization, domestication, and harmful social practices. We will explore these artists considering theories about spiritual intelligence, disruptive religion, post-soul theology, music and social change, and Black resistance traditions via Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and Black Power. The seminar will explore how Hip Hop has served as a vehicle for social change. The class will be divided up into three parts. First, we will briefly explore the theoretical foundations and intersectionality of race, religion, music, and social change. Second, we briefly examine the critical role of Black Gospel and Secular music in the Black Civil Rights and Black Power movements from the 1950s-1970s through the life, activism, and lyrics of key artists like Sam Cooke, Mahalia Jackson, Nina Simone, and others. Third, we will spend most of our time drawing on these theoretical insights and historical influences to analyze the spiritual and racial-ethnic dimensions and messaging of Hip Hop artists like Tupac, N.W.A, Ice-Cube, Kanye West, Kendrick Lamar, Lauryn Hill, Beyoncé, Nicki Minaj, Drake, Queen Latifah, DJ. Khaled, Talib Kweli, Eminem, and Daddy Yankee, and others. In each class, we examine their song lyrics and music videos and other materials. Students write up song reviews and a final paper or create a Hip Hop video. We will end our class with a final dinner at the Athenaeum for presentations, reflections, and class photos. For more info, send a perm request/email to [gaston.espinosa@cmc.edu](mailto:gaston.espinosa@cmc.edu).

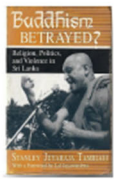
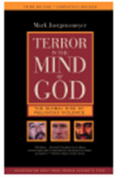


Spring 2026

**RLST 166b – Religion, Politics, and Global Violence**

**Dr. Gastón Espinosa, Claremont McKenna College**

Thursday, 2:45-5:30, Roberts South 104



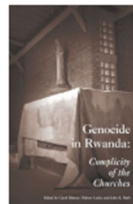
This seminar analyzes how sectarian Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, and other religious groups have invoked religious history, sacred texts, ideology, and just war and jihad to inspire, justify, and rationalize violence, war, genocide, and/or terrorism in the name of God. We explore external violence between religious traditions (e.g., Buddhist-Hindu, Christian-Muslim) and internal violence within religions (e.g., Sunni-Shia; Catholic-Protestant). It will focus on the historical roots and sociology, psychology, and theology of religious violence. One of our primary goals is to understand religious actors, activists, and movements on their own plane of reference from a critical scholarly perspective. We will analyze key theories on the sociology of religious violence, primary source speeches, interviews, sacred texts, documentaries, media propaganda clips, and guest speakers from different religious traditions. After examining the Crusades and Ottoman Empire expansion, the course examines conflicts since 1960 in Bosnia-Kosovo, Israel / Palestine, Iraq & Syria (ISIS), the U.S., Sudan, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, and/or India (Punjab, Gujarat, Orissa). Special attention will be paid to key leaders in ISIS, al-Qaeda, Israeli Zionist groups, Hamas, Serbian militias, the BJP, Sri Lankan Sinhalese Buddhist groups, and conflicts in Nigeria. After analyzing how religion, sacred texts, and history are used to animate and justify violence, we will reflect on secular and religious strategies for peacebuilding. The class will have short 1-page response papers to the some of the conflicts covered in the readings, a short four-page solution based public policy mid-term paper on a specific conflict, a final ten-page paper on the role of religion in animating violence in one hot spot around the world from 1960 to the present, and a final dinner at the Athenaeum or some other place. This class can count towards the Leadership Sequence and/or the Human Rights Sequence. For more info, send questions via perm requests via the portal or email to Dr. Espinosa: [gaston.espinosa@cmc.edu](mailto:gaston.espinosa@cmc.edu).

**Guest Speakers**

- \* Scholars & Authors
- \* Muslim Imam
- \* Religious Leaders
- \* Sri Lankan/Indian
- \* Palestinian
- \* Israeli
- \* Coptic
- \* Buddhist leader

**Additional Course Benefits**

- Fulfills GE Requirement
- Fulfills RS Major/Dual
- Counts for Human Rights Sequence
- Counts for Leadership Sequence
- International Relations - helpful
- Sociology of Religion - helpful
- Government - helpful
- Public Policy - helpful



**CLAREMONT  
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— COLLEGE —**

**Linda Chavez-Nunez (She/her/hers)**

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