DESCRIPTION

For over half a century René Girard’s publications have changed the way we look at the origins of humanity, relationships, meaning-making, and, more particularly, conflict and reconciliation. Supplemented by the analyses of hundreds of scholars from around the world and six international academic societies, his work has found its way into many disciplines, addressing a host of research issues in many fields: early childhood development, neuroscience, dynamics of emotions, religious studies, theology, psychology, political science, anthropology, etc. This course systematically explores, in a transdisciplinary way, key concepts of Girard’s thought and their implications for an understanding of conflict and reconciliation. Classes are highly interactive with a combination of facilitated processes, small group interactions, and presentation of key concepts. Starting with the second class students are expected to have read the required readings.

GOAL

Students will gain a profound understanding of Girard’s thought, critical issues raised about conflict and reconciliation, and a capacity to apply theory to an analysis of contemporary conflicts and the implications for intervention strategies.

OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the basic concepts of mimetic theory and how they apply to conflict studies.
2. To explore in greater depth the interconnections of Girard’s thought and a variety of disciplines including neuroscience, biblical studies, psychology, and political science.
3. To gain an awareness of key Girardian scholars.
4. To collectively analyze violent conflicts in the light of mimetic theory and generate creative responses to them.

WORKLOAD AND EVALUATION

1. Weekly reflections (10) 10
2. Short essay 10
3. Survey Reading 20
4. Research Paper 40
5. Final Exam or Assignment 20
1. Weekly reflections (10)

After each class, students will submit a critical reflection on the class, which will include key insights, connections with ideas from other classes or courses, questions raised, and suggestions for subsequent classes.

2. Short analytical essay

This five-page essay will address the question: Why (or why not) is the work of René Girard important for conflict studies?

3. Survey Reading

In addition to the required reading each week, students will read a minimum of fifty pages from the suggested texts for survey reading. Two survey reading reports are to be turned in, the first will be due on October 22 (after reading week) and the second on December 3. Each report will indicate which pages were read along with a critical reflection on each reading.

4. Research Paper

5. Final Exam or Assignment

SCHEDULE

September 3 – Overview of Girard’s Life and Thought
   Sources: James Williams, The Girardians; Girard’s books

BASIC CONCEPTS

September 10 – Mimetic Desire
   Recommended: R. Girard: Deceit, Desire, and the Novel; “Part 1” Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World

September 17 – Scapegoating, Hominization, Surrogate Victims, and Sacrificial Systems
   Recommended: R. Girard: Violence and the Sacred; The Scapegoat
   V. Redekop, Chapter 4, “The Scapegoat Function,” From Violence to Blessing.

DEEPENING THE THEORETICAL BASE

September 24 – Girard and the Jewish and Christian Sacred Texts
   Short Essay Due
Recommended: R. Girard: Job: The Victim of His People
V. Redekop, Chapter 14, “Theological Reflections,” From Violence to Blessing.

October 1 – Intervoiduality and Psychological Challenges
Recommended: R. Girard: “Part 3” Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World

October 8 – Mimesis, Mirror Neurons, and Scientific Inquiry
Scott Garrels, Chapter 1, “Human Imitation: Historical, Philosophical, and Scientific Perspectives” and “ Chapter 11, “ Mimesis and Science: An Interview with René Girard,” Mimesis and Science.
Recommended Reading: Additional chapters in Mimesis and Science.

October 15 - READING WEEK

October 22 – Loving Mimesis, Blessing, and Reconciliation
Recommended Reading: Martha Reineke, Chapter One, “Transforming Intersubjective Space: From Ruthlessness to Primary Creativity and Loving Mimesis,” in V. Redekop and T. Ryba, René Girard and Creative Mimesis.

October 29 – Girard, Conversion, and Reflexivity: What does mimetic theory mean to you?
Required Reading: René Girard, “The Conclusion,” Deceit, Desire, and the Novel; Chapter 12, “A Method, a Life, a Man” (especially 129-132), When These Things Begin; Chapter 12, “How Should Mimetic Theory Be Applied?” The One By Whom Scandal Comes.

THEORY APPLICATION

November 5 – Levels of Conflict: Interpersonal, Intranational (criminal justice), National

November 12 – Genocide and Terrorism
Required Reading: TBA

**Research Paper Due**

November 19 – Case Study Analysis: Conflict in Iraq and Syria
Required Reading: TBA
November 26 – Girard’s Apocalyptic Challenge: From Clauswicz’ Runaway Violence to Blessing-Based Reconciliation
Required Reading: “Introduction,” and Chapter 1, “The Escalation to Extremes,” *Battling to the End*.
V. Redekop, Chapter 4, “Blessing based Reconciliation in the Face of Violence,” in *René Girard and Creative Reconciliation*.

December 3 – FINAL EXAM/ASSIGNMENT
*Second reading report due.*

**TEXTBOOKS**


**Other Books in Required Reading**
Garrells, Scott


Girard, René


Oughourlian, Jean-Michel


Redekop, Vern Neufeld


Swartley, Willard


**INTERNET RESOURCES**

_Institutional Resources_

Colloquium on Violence and Religion: http://www.uibk.ac.at/theol/cover/
Imitatio: http://www.imitatio.org
Raven Foundation: http://www.ravenfoundation.org
Theology and Peace: http://www.theologyandpeace.org

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

_Books by René Girard_


*Books and Articles by Girardian Scholars*

**Adams, Rebecca**


**Alison, James**


**Dumouchel, Paul**


**Gans, Eric**


**Garrells, Scott**


**Goodhart, Sandor**

Hammerton-Kelly, Robert

Kaptein, Roel

Oughourlian, Jean-Michel

Palaver, Wolfgang

Redekop, Vern Neufeld

Schwager, Raymund

Willard Swartley

Williams, James