

# 2015 FFRF Brian Bolton Graduate/Older Student Essay Contest

## FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS / STUDENTS AGE 25 TO 30



**First Place: Brian Bolton Memorial Award - \$3,000**

**Second Place — \$2,000**

**Third Place — \$1,000**

**Fourth Place — \$750**

**Fifth Place — \$500**

**Sixth Place - \$400**

**Optional Honorable Mention(s) - \$200**

### **Religion and violence: What is to blame for religious terrorism?**

**Eligibility:** Currently enrolled graduate student up to age 30, or undergrads ages 25–30, attending a North American college or university, including but not limited to someone graduating or earning a degree in the spring or summer of 2015.

**Prompt:** Write a persuasive analysis dissecting the common claim that religion cannot be held responsible for violence in its name. For example, President Obama has said of the Islamic State: “They are not religious leaders, they are terrorists. No religion is responsible for terrorism. People are responsible for violence and terrorism.” He also said “no god condones the killing of innocents.” Analyze the claim that it’s only a handful of extremists who are “perverting” religion who are to blame for the violence, and not religion itself. Provide supporting arguments to back up your position (religious pronouncements such as biblical or Koranic verses, historic or contemporary violence, underlying factors, etc.). Are there solutions to religious terrorism?

**Length:** 750-950 words

**Other requirements:** Essay must be submitted both by mail and email by postmark deadline. No faxes. Typed, stapled, with standard margins, double-spaced. Include word count. Place name and essay title on each page. Choose own title and include one-paragraph biography on separate page at end of essay. Include name, age and birth date, hometown, university or college, year in school, intended major and interests, previous degrees and anticipated graduation date. Don’t attach a résumé.

Provide both summer and fall 2015 addresses (campus and home), phone numbers and email addresses for notification. Winners may be asked to send verification of student enrollment. FFRF monitors for plagiarism.

*Do not write under or over word minimums and maximums.* For a chance to win \$50 bonus, indicate the name of the secular school or college club you belong to (or join the Secular Student Alliance, free at [www.secularstudents.org/studentmember](http://www.secularstudents.org/studentmember)) and mention it). The bonus is provided by a kind couple.

**Deadline: Postmarked no later than July 1, 2015.** Winners announced by end of September.

**Submission rules:** Essays must be both mailed (postmarked) and emailed no later than July 1 to [gradessay@ffrf.org](mailto:gradessay@ffrf.org) with subject heading “Essay [and Your Full Name],” e.g., Essay (Your Full Name), and to:

Graduate/Older Student Essay Contest  
FFRF  
PO Box 750  
Madison WI 53701

*The competition is generously endowed by Brian Bolton, an FFRF Lifetime Member who is a retired psychologist, humanist counselor and university professor emeritus at the University of Arkansas.*