WAR AND MORALITY

Political Science 371
Portland State University, Fall 2014

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Office Hours: Monday, Friday 11:30-1:00

Description

When states or other human groupings abandon less primitive means of resolving their conflicts, they resort to war. Although many wars have been terribly bloody and destructive, history provides relatively few examples of wars of total annihilation. Rather, for reasons involving both self-interest and ethical conviction, political leaders and warriors have often observed limits in their resort to war and the conduct of battle. This course examines the historical, moral, and legal foundations of these limits, and their enduring relevance despite ongoing changes in world politics and the transformation of modern warfare.

Although we consider alternative perspectives, the course focuses primarily on the just war tradition, major elements of which are reflected in international law governing the legitimate resort to force and proper conduct during wartime. Topics include aggression and self-defense, genocide, humanitarian intervention, nuclear deterrence, noncombatant immunity, terrorism, treatment of prisoners, torture, and prosecution of war crimes. Discussion of these topics is informed by contemporary just war thinking as well as classical political and moral philosophy.

Learning Objectives

The general objective of this course is to develop the student's capacity to examine and judge the ethical foundations of wars and military interventions. This is to be accomplished by exposing students to a body of literature and debate drawn from international relations theory, international law, and political philosophy. By the end of the term, students should be able to:

- demonstrate mastery of the main theoretical and philosophical approaches to the ethics of warfare;
- identify the multiple ethical issues presented by specific historical and contemporary examples of war and intervention;
- apply relevant moral and legal principles when examining and evaluating ethical issues; and
- evaluate the role of moral discourse in current debates over the use of military force as an instrument of foreign policy.
Readings

Assigned readings come from two books:

- David Kinsella and Craig L. Carr, editors, *The Morality of War: A Reader* (Lynne Rienner, 2007)

In addition to the assigned readings, students should be reading, on a regular basis, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, or some other newspaper with thorough international coverage. Performance in the course will reflect familiarity with current international issues, and not just an understanding of lecture material and course readings.

Requirements and Evaluation

Course grades will reflect the degree to which students have met the learning objectives of the course, and are based on a midterm (40%) and final exam (60%). The exams will consist of questions requiring both short answers and longer essays. Attendance is expected; course grades will be adversely affected by excessive absence from class.

Code of Conduct

Students are responsible for being familiar with the PSU Student Code of Conduct, especially the section concerning academic misconduct—that is, plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty. If you are unsure of the definition or consequences of academic misconduct, consult your instructor.

Because they are distracting to others, cell phones (voice or text) and MP3 players may not be used during lecture and should be turned off at the start of class. Laptops and tablets may be used to take notes, but not for email, web browsing, or social media. Electronic devices may not be used to photograph, video, or stream course lectures or discussion, but lectures may be audio recorded with permission of the instructor.

COURSE CALENDAR and READING ASSIGNMENTS

The chapters assigned for each week are from the Kinsella and Carr reader. Finish the Klaidman book by the end of the eighth week (21 November).

**Historical and Philosophical Approaches to War and Morality**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Slides</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29 Sep - 3 Oct</td>
<td>Realism and Pacifism (chaps. 1-3)</td>
<td>Slides</td>
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<tr>
<td>6-10 Oct</td>
<td>Just War Theory (chap. 4)</td>
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Resort to War (*Jus ad Bellum*)

13-17 Oct  Aggression, Self-Defense, and Preemption (chaps. 5-6). [Slides](#)
20-24 Oct  Terrorism (chap. 7)
27-31 Oct  Intervention (chap. 8). [Slides](#)

3 Nov  **Midterm exam**

**Conduct of War (*Jus in Bello*)**

5-7 Nov  Combatant Rights (chap. 9). [Slides](#)
10-14 Nov Noncombatant Rights (chap. 10). [Slides](#)
17-21 Nov  Blockades, Sanctions, and High-Tech War (chaps. 11-12)

**War Crimes and Judgment (*Jus post Bellum*)**

24-26 Nov  War and Crime (chap. 13). [Slides](#)
1-5 Dec  Jurisdiction and Enforcement (chap. 14). [Slides](#)

10 Dec  **Final Exam, 10:15-12:05**

Materials for this course are *not* available on D2L. This syllabus is available online at [web.pdx.edu/~kinsella/ps371f14.pdf](http://web.pdx.edu/~kinsella/ps371f14.pdf) and all course materials can be linked from this address.

Last updated on 1 December 2014.