

The Politics and Morality of War
POLS 363-01, Spring 2014
Syllabus (Revised 1/5/14)

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Office Hours: Thursday 1-4 pm at Café Diem

Prerequisites: POLS 202 (International Relations) and POLS 300 (Essentials of Political Thought). Other courses in international affairs, military history, the history of political thought, or philosophy will allow you to get more from the readings.

Course Description

This course aims at giving students an understanding of how thinkers and practitioners try to limit the violence of armed conflict and their varied reasons for doing so. To accomplish this, the class will engage with the major elements of the just war tradition and its realist, militarist, and pacifist critics. The course ends with an intensive examination of the moral issues presented by recent conflicts such as assassination, terrorism, counterinsurgency, occupation, and nation-building.

Course Goals

Students will improve their ability to interpret difficult texts and both their written and verbal expression. They will also acquire some understanding of the moral issues surrounding the political use of violence and various prominent attempts to grapple with these dilemmas. Knowledge of these ideas will help prepare students for understanding advanced concepts in politics.

Course Expectations

First and most importantly: Read this syllabus carefully. Clearly understanding the class requirements will save us all trouble later.

I will conduct the class primarily as a discussion. Some students get a great deal from participating in class discussions; others do not. For this reason, class participation will count for extra credit only. I do not count attendance. Come if you like, or don't – this is not high school. If you haven't done the reading, please keep silent.

Questions count as a form of participation. Class discussions should be respectful and considerate of others' views and opinions. Expect to be challenged, but look on it as an opportunity, not a threat.

Students should come to class with the assigned texts in hand and read, and your participation in class should directly reference the readings. The reading load will vary from week to week,

averaging between sixty and eighty pages per meeting (sometimes more or less, more in the first few meetings). In order to be prepared for this, you should take notes on the readings that identify key passages for discussion, or which you do not understand. Under each class meeting, I have listed a few questions designed to guide your reading of the texts. In preparing for class, you should try to outline answers to these questions in your reading notes. This effort will allow you to gain more from the class.

Some additional observations about reading for the class for those who haven't had me before: these are not standard textbooks with bold lettering around every word you need to know. A casual reading or one undertaken with various distractions present will probably not get you very far. Because of all this, you should probably allot three or more hours of focused attention per class meeting to the material. If you fail to do this, your ability to follow class discussion will be minimal and your chances of doing well on any of the writing assignments will be slim.

In terms of notes on the class readings, I recommend all students both mark up their books and take extensive notes with page references that essentially index the readings. You should type these up so that they are searchable. This is time-consuming, but will benefit you tremendously for the writing assignments.

Regarding note-taking in class, I have noticed that once some time has passed, most students have a very difficult time following their notes from a discussion based class like this. Because of the circuitous nature of most discussions, you will not leave class with a neat outline. This means that if you want decent notes you can use to help you with papers and the final, within a day or so of each class, you should rewrite or type up the class notes and attempt to provide a structure for them that you will understand later in the class. I strongly recommend you form a study group with one or more of your classmates. Discussing this material often is the best way to learn it.

Silence all cell phones, pagers, or other communication devices while in class. Keep distractions from the class conversation to a minimum, especially side-conversations. You may bring food, but please note that opening plastic food wrappers usually cannot be done quietly, so just tear it open and get the noise over. I will ask anyone who is consistently disruptive to leave.

This syllabus is subject to change, but I will always provide advance notice both in class and via email. You can always find a copy of the most up-to-date syllabus on Canvas.

Assignments and Grading

Because we will discuss the sections listed in class on the corresponding day, you must keep up with the reading and be ready to talk about it. Most students will complete two 8-10 page essays and a take-home final exam. Students who have taken a previous class with me and earned an A or A- may choose to complete only the first essay and then undertake a major research paper of 20 pages or more on a topic developed in consultation with me. All late essays will be marked down one minus step per day until I receive them. I will determine your grades using the following breakdown:

First Paper:	30%	or	First Paper	30%
Second Paper:	30%		Research Paper	70%
Final Exam:	40%			

Active participation in class discussions may increase your grade by up to two + steps. Uninformed participation – that is, talking a lot without having done the reading – will lower your final grade by up to two minus steps.

Textbooks

Please purchase the following books from a source of your choice. They should all be at the bookstore relatively early in the semester. The Dean of Students Office runs a program where you can get a loan to purchase course materials. They are located on the 4th Floor of the Student Center. You can also find contact information for them at their website:

<http://www.montclair.edu/deanstudents/contact.html>

A.J. Coates, *The Ethics of War*, Manchester University Press, ISBN: 0719040469

David D. Corey and J. Daryl Charles, *The Just War Tradition: An Introduction*, ISI Books, ISBN: 19351911101

Michael L. Gross, *Moral Dilemmas of Modern War: Torture, Assassination, and Blackmail in an Age of Asymmetric Conflict*, Cambridge University Press, ISBN: 9780521685108

Gregory M. Reichberg, Henrik Syse, and Endre Begby (eds.), *The Ethics of War: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, Blackwell Publishing, ISBN: 9781405123785

Course Schedule and Readings

You should complete the readings for each class before the meeting where the material is covered. If you want to be prepared, please come to class with questions about the week's readings and a tentative answer to the discussion questions listed below. If you did not do the reading, please don't attempt to participate. Note: to avoid confusion, all assignments from the Reichberg, Syse, and Begby reader are listed as "Reader."

1/27: Realism versus the Just War Tradition

Read: Corey and Charles, *The Just War Tradition*, Ch. 1, pp. 1-21
Coates, *Ethics of War*, Introduction and Ch. 1, pp. 1-37
Excerpts from Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Clausewitz in Reader, pp. 3-17, 251-258, and 553-561

Discussion Questions:

- 1) How does realism differ from the just war tradition?
- 2) What assumptions do Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Clausewitz share?
- 3) How does a "just war" approach aim at containing or limiting war?

2/3: Militarism and Pacifism against Just War

Read: Coates, *Ethics of War*, Chs. 2-4, pp. 40-117
Excerpts from Erasmus and Anscombe in Reader, pp. 233-239 and 625-632

Discussion Questions:

- 1) In what ways might we view war as a positive benefit to society?
- 2) What moral justifications do pacifists provide for their position?
- 3) If we accept the idea that wars can be (and must be) morally justified, what criticisms must we level at both militarists and pacifists?

2/10: The Dawn of the Just War Tradition

Read: Corey and Charles, *The Just War Tradition*, Chs. 2-3, pp. 23-65
Excerpts from the Early Church Fathers and Augustine in Reader, pp. 60-90

Discussion Questions:

- 1) According to Corey and Charles, what motives drive just war thinking? Do the authors disagree in any way on this point?
- 2) What elements rest at the heart of the just war tradition?
- 3) How does early Christian thought deal with the problem of war?

2/17: A System Develops: Gratian, Aquinas, and Luther

Read: Corey and Charles, *The Just War Tradition*, Chs. 4-5, pp. 67-101
Excerpts from Gratian, Thomas Aquinas, and Martin Luther in Reader, pp. 104-124, 169-198, and 265-275

Discussion Questions:

- 1) How do these thinkers grapple with the rightfulness of serving one's country in war? How does this issue differ from the larger question of whether wars can be just at all?
- 2) To what degree do Gratian's and Aquinas' arguments rest on the authority of the Catholic Church? How do Luther's attempts alter the moral arguments about war?
- 3) What is the place of natural law in these arguments?

2/24: The Reformation and the Church

Read: Corey and Charles, *The Just War Tradition*, Chs. 6-7, pp. 103-144
Excerpts from Calvin, the Radical Reformation, Vitoria, and Suarez in Reader, pp. 276-287, 308-332, 339-346, and 357-359

Discussion Questions:

- 1) To what degree do these arguments rest on explicitly theological arguments? In what ways does an argument by natural reason or natural law/rights become prominent?
- 2) In what ways does the argument for limiting war rest on a belief in the limitation of political power?

Paper 1 Assigned, due on Canvas by Friday, March 7th

3/3: The Enlightenment Ponders War

Read: Corey and Charles, *The Just War Tradition*, Chs. 8-9, pp. 145-180
Excerpts from Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, Rousseau, and Kant, in Reader pp. 441-453, 462-468, 480-489, and 518-541

Discussion Questions:

- 1) On what basis do these arguments about the legitimacy of war reject the moral premises of earlier just war thinkers?
- 2) These thinkers vary greatly, but are there any points of implicit or explicit continuity between their arguments?

3/10: Spring Break, no class

3/17: Authority and Justice

Read: Coates, *Ethics of War*, Chs. 5-6, pp. 123-163
Excerpts from Grotius in Reader, pp. 385-437

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What criteria does Grotius suggest to help us understand the concepts of just cause and legitimate authority? How do those differ from the account Coates provides?
- 2) Why is legitimate authority a problem for just war thinking today?
- 3) Coates argues that to conflate legitimate war only with self-defense is a mistake. Why?

3/24: Issues of Timing and Scale

Read: Coates, *Ethics of War*, Chs. 7-8, pp. 167-208
Excerpts from Molina, Gentili, Wolff, and Webster in Reader, pp. 333-338, 371-378, 469-474, and 562-564

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Describe the spectrum of opinion about when war becomes a legitimate option. How do the arguments about what “last resort” really means differ?
- 2) If a moral recourse to war requires some kind of real or threatened injury, what criteria do these authors suggest we might use to judge in these matters?

Paper 2 assigned, due on Canvas by Friday, April 11th. Students completing the research paper instead must have topic approved and preliminary outline/bibliography submitted by April 11th as well.

3/31: The Moral Problems of Waging War

Read: Coates, *Ethics of War*, Chs. 9-10, pp. 209-264
Excerpts from Cicero, Vattel, and Lieber in Reader, pp. 50-59, 504-517, and 565-573

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What reasons do the authors provide for limiting the scope of conflicts once they have started? Does this mandate conflict with the needs of the military strategist?
- 2) What defines the status of the non-combatant? In what ways does this definition suffer problems because of changes in the way states and non-state actors wage modern war?

4/7: Intervention, Peacemaking, and Other Moral Issues

Read: Coates, *Ethics of War*, Ch. 11, pp. 273-291

Excerpts from Plato, John of Salisbury, Hostiensis, More, Mill, Marx, Wilson, Ramsey, and Rawls in Reader, pp. 18-30, 125-130, 160-168, 259-264, 574-599, 614-624, and 633-641

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Compare and contrast three or more of these authors on the question of what conditions will form a lasting peace.
- 2) What does it mean to claim as Coates does that the just war tradition aims at not being necessary at all?

4/14: Equality Between Combatants?

Read: Gross, *Moral Dilemmas of Modern War*, Preface and Chs. 1-2, pp. ix-xi and 1-50

Excerpts from Walzer and Nagel in Reader, pp. 642-659

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What is Gross' puzzle of combatant equality? How does it relate to previous readings in the course?
- 2) How does Gross justify his focus on the specific means so common to asymmetric war? Where does his account fit in the history of just war thinking?
- 3) If we are to believe the authors we encountered this week, is terrorism substantially different from war? If so, how?

4/21: Puzzles of Means in Uncertain Times

Read: Gross, *Moral Dilemmas of Modern War*, Chs. 3-5, pp. 51-121

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What reasoning might we use to ban specific weapons? Does this reasoning carry over to non-lethal weapons?
- 2) What reasons does Gross give for and against viewing assassination as a legitimate instrument of politics?

4/28: On Respecting People in War

Read: Gross, *Moral Dilemmas of Modern War*, Chs. 6-8, pp. 122-204

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What does Gross believe the current prevalence of terrorism changes in the debates about torture, rendition, and non-combatant status?
- 2) According to Gross, how ought we to morally classify and treat irregular warriors and terrorists?

5/5: Presumptions: Against War or Against Injustice?

Read: Gross, *Moral Dilemmas of Modern War*, Chs. 9-11, pp. 205-263
Excerpts from Johnson and Catholic Bishops in Reader, pp. 660-681

Discussion Questions:

- 1) According to Gross, to what degree is humanitarian intervention a matter of duty? What factors might mitigate against seeing it as one?
- 2) Which traditions of thought in the just war canon does Gross most closely resemble? Why?
- 3) Describe the fundamental difference between having a presumption against war and a presumption against injustice.

Final Exam or Research Paper Due on Canvas by Monday, May 12th