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406-02 Ethics of War and Peace

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Few activities raise so many ethical questions as the activity of war. And no wonder: war involves the massive destruction of lives and property. Any serious reflection on war must begin with an attempt to appropriate an existential sense for what it is like to go to war, as difficult as that might be.

Over the centuries, just war theorists have produced a vast literature that attempts to address many of the ethical quandaries raised by war. The purpose of just war theory was not to foster war but to determine guidelines for prudent governance and rules for engagement if and when war seemed inevitable.

While there may be circumstances when war is justified, there are certainly other times when war could be avoided. But the alternative to war is more that the mere absence of conflict: it involves the creation of just institutions, the formation of virtuous leaders and the challenging practice of reconciliation.

Needless to say, the topic of this course is controversial as are many other ethical and political issues today. But one of the ulterior objectives of this course is for all of us to learn how to recover the lost art of democratic conversation – something vitally essential (but, unfortunately, increasing rare) - within our democracy.

**Introduction:** The Experience of War (Karl Marlantes, *What It Is Like To Go To War* or Roxana Robinson, *Sparta*)

- A. A brief overall introduction to the different ethical positions on war (realism, pacifism, just war theory) and their underlying philosophical assumptions.
- B. Through reading and testimonies of war veterans from recent conflicts, we will attempt to acquire an existential sense of what it is like to be in a situation of combat and to return from it.
- C. With this overview in place, the goals and objectives of the course will be presented. We will also explain clearly the course requirements and what is expected from each participant.

**Part I:** Realism (Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War* (selections) and Hobbes, *Leviathan* (selections).

- A. The realistic position: This position argues that human beings do what they must do to save themselves or their communities; morality and law have no place (“*inter arma silent leges – in times of war, the law is silent*”)
- B. Its Hobbesian underpinnings: The philosophical underpinnings of this position can be found most succinctly in one of the sections of the *Leviathan* (I:XIII, 1-8)
Part II: Just War Theory (Brian Orend, *The Morality of War*)
A. The History of the Just War Tradition
   1. Classical Just War Thought
   2. Contemporary Just War Thought
B. Jus ad Bellum
   1. The Logic of Jus ad Bellum
   2. The Limits of Jus ad Bellum
C. Jus in Bello
   1. The Logic of Jus in Bello
   2. The Limits of Jus in Bello
D. Jus post Bellum
   1. The Logic of Jus Post Bellum
   2. The Limits of Jus Post Bellum

Part III: The Option for Peace (Immanuel Kant, *On Perpetual Peace*) and Daniel Philpott, *Just and Unjust Peace*
A. Pacifism
B. Kant’s Cosmopolitan Ideal: Then and Now
C. Reconciliation as a Concept of Justice
D. The Role of Religion in the Practice of Reconciliation
   1. Buddhism and Reconciliation
   2. Judaism and Reconciliation
   3. Christianity and Reconciliation
   4. Islam and Reconciliation
E. Positive Measures

Bibliography:

Required Reading:
Karl Marlantes, *What It Is Like To Go To War* (Grove, 2011) or
Selections from Thucydides and Hobbes (Blackboard)
Immanuel Kant, *Towards Perpetual Peace* (1795) – on line

Suggested Reading:
Rachel Maddow, *Drift* (Crown, 2011)
Thomas Massaro, S.J. *Catholic Perspectives on Peace and War* (Sheed, 2004)
Anas Malik, “Reconciliation between Muslims and Christians” (2013)
Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars* (Basic, 1977)
Lisa Cahill, *Love Your Enemies* (Fortress, 1994)
David Chan, *Beyond Just War* (Palgrave, 2013)
John Sniegocki, “Catholic Teaching on War and Peace”
1. The course begins with a reflective reading of either Karl Marlantes, *What It Is Like To Go To War* or Roxana Robinson, *Sparta*. At the same time, students will listen to the experiences of veterans who were engaged in recent armed conflict (Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan). The purpose of this initial section is to ground our subsequent philosophical consideration on the harsh reality of war. Students will submit journal reflections on their chosen text.

2. After this important introductory portion of the course, we will now proceed to examine the three major positions on war: realism, just war theory and pacifism. During the course of the semester, students will be expected to adopt and cogently articulate each of these positions in the form of position papers (statement of thesis, supporting reasons, consideration of counter-arguments, etc.). Each essay should be, roughly, 5-7 pages in length. Whereas the journal essay intended to engage our affects, in these three essays, the goal is to arrive at a reasoned argument.

3. In the final section of the course, we will be reflecting upon the role of religion in the (often difficult) task of peacemaking. We all know that religion can sometimes be an obstacle to peace, but it clearly can and has served in many contexts as an agent of reconciliation. As a final exercise for this course, each student will be asked to write a critical book review of Daniel Philpott’s *Just and Unjust Peace*.

4. Although philosophy certainly begins in wonder, solitude and critical thinking, it leads to dialogue and debate with others. An important part of doing philosophy involves the ability to engage in critical but constructive conversation with others. With that in mind, class participation becomes an essential component of this course. Each student is expected to contribute regularly. But the goal of true dialogue is not so much to change the other person but to change ourselves! And, moreover, we want this course to be an exercise in “civil conversations” in the hope that we can heal our fractured democracy that has become excessively polarized.

5. With the above in mind, the grading for this course will be:

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journal Essay on Marlantes/Robinson</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Three Position Papers (20 points each)</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Book Review: The Role of Religion in Peacemaking</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10</td>
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</tbody>
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