

**Christian Ethics and War, Rel 211 A/B**

Tues/Thurs. 10:20 and 12:50, Comenius 218

Instructor: Kelly Denton-Borhaug, Comenius 214

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Office Hours: Monday afternoons; TR 2-4

You're welcome to stop by, call or email for office appt. I encourage students to make time to speak with me regularly.

**Course Description:** What do Christians think about the urgent and simultaneously perennial human problem of war? Is war-making inherently compatible or incompatible with Christian faith? How have Christian thinkers contributed to broader societal understandings, values and practices related to conflict and war? This course will introduce students to the study of Christian ethics through focus on this social issue. Students will be exposed to Christian thinking about pacifism, just war theory, warrior codes and just peace-making. Emphasis will be on careful and deliberate reading to deeply understand the trajectories of various authors' thinking. Because Americans generally are protected from seeing and experiencing the realities of war, we also will focus on a specific case study and its human/material/experiential reality.

**Course Goals:**

- 1) Students will gain an introductory understanding of the complexity of Christian thought in relationship to the reality of war.
- 2) Students will better understand the ways in which supposedly "secular" ethical frameworks for judgment with respect to war are deeply embedded in religious traditions, practices and ideas.
- 3) Students will have the opportunity to develop their own philosophical/religious/moral frameworks in response to this social reality.
- 4) Students will improve their critical thinking, reading and writing skills.

**Required Course Books for Purchase:**

Gary M. Simpson, *War, Peace, and God: Rethinking the Just-War Tradition*

Glen Stassen, Ed., *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War*

Robert Jay Lifton, Greg Mitchell, *Hiroshima in America: A Half Century of Denial*

Sadako Teiko Okuda, *A Dimly Burning Wick: Memoir from the Ruins of Hiroshima*

**Books on Reserve in Reeves Library**

Shannon E. French, *Code of the Warrior: Exploring Warrior Values Past and Present*

Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination*

David L. Clough and Brian Stiltner, *Faith and Force*

*Note: Additional resources will also be on reserve in the library or may be accessible through Blackboard.*

**Required Films:**

*Body of War*, Docurama Films, 2008

*White Light, Black Rain*, HBO Films, 2007

### **Required Extra-class Experiences**

Jan. 20, Tuesday, Prosser Auditorium, 7:00 pm

“Torture and Democracy: What Now?” Fourth Moravian College Peace and Justice Scholar in Residence, Darius Rejali

### **Course Requirements**

- Prepared class participation (with readings thoughtfully prepared prior to each class period). Please be in class on time and ready to go. ***Bring whatever text we are reading with you to class!*** Read with a pen in hand, underlining key passages and writing your own shorthand in the margin with questions, notations, etc. Unexcused absences will mean a serious detraction in your grade. Your participation also includes your active, engaged presence in class. This includes:
  - participating in discussion, asking questions, taking lead and letting others provide the direction;
  - listening actively and showing understanding by paraphrasing or by acknowledging and building on others' ideas;
  - volunteering willingly in small group work and carrying your own share of the small group responsibilities, helping the group to stay on track.If you feel uncertain about speaking up in classroom settings, come and see me in the first week or two of our semester – I can help! The only excused absences are for serious illness, family emergency or religious observance and must be cleared with me in advance of the class you miss. Please make plans now to attend the various experiences I've planned for our semester together; speak with your employer and/or coaches if you need to be excused from other responsibilities in order to attend. 15% of grade.
- Periodic response papers, as indicated in the syllabus. Your papers will not require any additional research outside course materials, but demonstrate your own thoughtful and critical grappling with this material. Please plan on coming into my office at least once to talk about one of your papers with me (and/or anything else you wish to discuss). Your response papers will be worth 55% of your grade. **Unless you have made prior arrangements with me (and have an acceptable excuse related to those for excused class absence), NO LATE PAPERS ACCEPTED.**
- Final 10 page paper, covering our last unit of study in light of everything you have learned about Christian ethics and war. This paper will give you the opportunity to draw on the authors we have read, the films we have seen and everything you have learned in order for you to develop your own ethical response to the question: how shall human beings respond to the perennial problem of human conflict and war? 30% of grade.

*Students are advised to review the Academic Honesty Policy in the Student Handbook (available online) and required to follow the guidelines therein.*

**Important Note:** Various course resources will be posted on Blackboard. Students are advised to become familiar with this Moravian online course resource. Let me know if you need assistance.

**Additional Note:** This syllabus will be posted on Blackboard, and updated with any changes we find we need to make as we progress through the semester.

## ***Unit One: Getting acquainted with the Landscape of War-culture, Christianity and Ethics***

### **Week 1 Getting Started**

Jan. 20 Introduction to our course

Evening: Prof. Rejali's lecture, 7:00 pm

Jan 22 In class: Lecture on U.S. War-culture

Read for class: Denton-Borhaug, "War-culture and Sacrifice" (available in Blackboard Course Documents; bring your copy to class)

### **Week 2**

Jan. 27 In class: *Body of War*

Read: the Sermon on the Mount/Plain (Matthew 5:1-7:28; Luke 6:17-7:1) – then re-read these sermons again – what do they tell you about Jesus of Nazareth and his early followers' response to the perennial problem of human conflict and violence

Jan. 29 Read: Clough and Stiltner, "Sources and Methods for a Christian Ethic of War," *Faith and Force: A Christian Debate about War* (available on reserve at Reeve's Library) Bring with you to class your copies of the New Testament material and the chapter from Clough and Stiltner.

### **Week 3**

Feb. 3 In class: finish watching *Body of War*

Read: Clough and Stiltner, "Christian Pacifism and the Just War Tradition," *Faith and Force: A Christian Debate*

Feb. 5 Read: Walter Wink, "Jesus' Third Way: Nonviolent Engagement" *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (available on reserve at Reeve's Library) **Due: First Reflection Paper**

## ***Unit Two: Delving More Deeply into Just-War Ethics***

### **Week 4**

Feb. 10 Read: Gary M. Simpson, *War, Peace and God*, pp 9-37

Feb. 12 Read: Simpson, pp 39-72

### **Week 5**

Feb. 17 Read: Simpson, pp 73-101

Feb. 19 Read: Shannon E. French, "Why Warriors Need a Code," *Code of the Warrior*  
Also read: Chris Hedges, "Introduction" and "The Moment of Combat," *What Every Person Should Know about War* (both these resources on reserve in Reeve's Library)

**Week 6**

Feb. 24 **Due: Second Reflection Paper**

***Unit Three: Just Peacemaking***

Feb. 26 Read: Glen Stassen, ed., *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War*, Introduction

**Week 7** (No class: Spring Break)

**Week 8**

Mar. 10 Read: Stassen, Chapters 1 and 2

Mar. 12 Read: Stassen, Chapters 3 and 4

**Week 9**

Mar. 17 Read: Stassen, Chapters 5 and 6

Mar. 19 Read: Stassen, Chapters 7 and 8

**Week 10**

Mar. 24 Read: Stassen, Chapters 9 and 10

Mar. 26 **Third Reflection Paper**

***Unit Four: A Case Study: Hiroshima***

**Week 11**

Mar. 31 Lifton and Mitchell, *Hiroshima in America*, Introduction –p 64

Apr. 2 Lifton and Mitchell, 65 -- 114

**Week 12**

Apr. 7 Lifton and Mitchell, 207—262

In class: *White Light, Black Rain*

Apr. 9 Lifton and Mitchell, 264 – 297

In class: *White Light, Black Rain*

**Week 13**

Apr. 14 Sadako Teiko Okuda, *A Dimly Burning Wick*, Forward – 51.

Apr. 16 Okuda, 53 -- 100

**Week 14**

Apr. 21 Okuda, 101 -- 137

Apr. 23 Okuda, 139 -- 189

**Week 15**

Apr. 28 Lifton and Mitchell, 301 -- 360

Apr. 30 Final Paper outline/discussion

Hard copy of final paper due in professor's door box on May 4, 10 am. No late papers will be accepted without previous approval of the professor.

