

Christian Ethics and War, Rel 211
Fall, 2013

Tues/Thurs. 1:10 – 2:20 , Comenius 111

Instructor: Kelly Denton-Borhaug, Comenius 109

kdenton@moravian.edu; 610-625-7104

Office Hours: Monday afternoons; TR 10:30 – 11:30 and by appt.

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 (recent research on moral injury) and its human/material/experiential reality.

Course Goals:

- 1) Students will develop 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 in the Bookstore:

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

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

Denton-Borhaug, Kelly *U.S. War-culture, Sacrifice and Salvation*

Nakashima Brock, Rita and Lettini, Gabrielle, *Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury after War*

Selections from Additional books that will be posted on our BlackBoard Site

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*

Mark J. Allman, *Who Would Jesus Kill? War, Peace and the Christian Tradition*

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

Restrepo, Outpost Films, 2010

White Light, Black Rain, HBO Films, 2007

Required Extra-class Experiences

Mar. 14, Prosser Auditorium, 7:30 pm

Peace and Justice Scholar in Residence, Dr. James Lawson

(Please make plans now to attend this event: the only accepted excuse will be family emergency and/or serious illness. Note: work is not an excuse; let your employer know now that you need this evening off.)

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! Where we are studying BB materials, you are required to download, print out and bring them to class with you.*** Read with a pen in hand, underlining key passages and writing your own shorthand in the margin with questions, notations, etc.
- Regular Surprise Quizzes will be used to help keep us all honest in our serious preparation for class. Unexcused absences will mean a serious deduction 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 and analysis 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. Additional guidelines will be posted on Blackboard at least 1 week before each paper's due date. You should anticipate each of these papers being approximately 5 – 7 pages in length.**

- 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.

Academic Honesty

Students must abide by the conventions of scholarly work, most importantly, the conventions of citation. All students should read and be familiar with the college policy on Academic Honesty included in the student handbook. All written work must include full and proper citations. There are no exceptions, including ignorance. Cheating and plagiarism will result in failing this course.

Blackboard

There is a blackboard site for this course. Assignment guidelines, readings, and course announcements will be posted to the site. Course communication will take place through blackboard and Moravian email. Students are expected to check blackboard and their Moravian email account regularly.

Accommodations

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact the personnel in Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the office of Learning Services.

Student Assessment

Assessment will be based upon (1) written work; (2) active participation in the collective work of the class; and (3) Demonstration of careful and thoughtful study to prepare for engaged class participation.

Grades:

15% Participation, including quizzes

55% Three 5-7 page reflection/analysis papers, taking further the dialogue and analysis from class with your own good study and creative thinking

30% Your final written ethical statement: How should humans respond to the perennial problem of war?

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. 15 Introduction to our course

Jan 17 In class: Lecture on U.S. War-culture
Read for class: Denton-Borhaug, Chapter One “War-culture and Sacrifice” *U.S. War-Culture, Sacrifice and Salvation*

Week 2 *Early Christian perspectives and documents*

Jan. 22 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. *Also read:* Walter Wink, “Jesus’ Third Way: Nonviolent Engagement” *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* [BB]

Jan. 24 Read: Clough and Stiltner, “The Debate over War in a Christian Context” and “Sources and Methods for a Christian Ethic of War,” *Faith and Force: A Christian Debate about War* Bring with you to class your copies of the New Testament material and the chapter from Clough and Stiltner. [BB]

Week 3 *Introduction to Pacifism and Just War*

Jan. 29 In Class: *White Light, Black Rain* (view 1st half of the video)
Read: Clough and Stiltner, “Christian Pacifism and the Just War Tradition,” *Faith and Force: A Christian Debate*

Jan. 31 In Class: *White Light, Black Rain* (view 2nd half)

Due: First Reflection Paper

Unit Two: Delving More Deeply into Just-War Ethics, and the role of “sacrifice”

Week 4 *Just War and Sacrifice*

Feb. 5 Read: Gary M. Simpson, *War, Peace and God*, pp 9- 14, 25-37

Feb. 7 Read: Denton-Borhaug, Chapter Two, “Building and Maintaining the Drive to War”

Week 5 *Just War and Sacrifice*

Feb. 12 Read: Simpson, pp 39-72

Feb. 14 Denton-Borhaug, Chapter Three, “A Deadly Nexus”

Week Six *Warrior Ethics*

Feb. 19 Read: Shannon E. French, “Why Warriors Need a Code,” *Code of the Warrior*[BB]

Also read: Chris Hedges, “Introduction” and “The Moment of Combat,” *What Every Person Should Know about War* [BB]

Feb. 21 **Due: Second Reflection Paper**

In Class: *Restrepo*

Unit Three: Just Peacemaking

Week Seven

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

Feb. 28 Read: Stassen, Chapters 1 and 2

Week Eight: No Class Spring Break

Week Nine

Mar. 12 Read: Stassen, Chapters 3 and 4

Mar. 14 Read: Material on and about James Lawson [TBA]

Required Evening Event: Public Lecture, Prosser, 7:30 pm

**Dr. James Lawson, Moravian College's Seventh Peace and Justice
Scholar in Residence**

Week Ten

Mar. 19 Read: Stassen, Chapters 5 and 6

Mar. 21 Read: Stassen, Chapters 7 and 8

Week Eleven

Mar. 26 Read: Stassen, Chapters 9 and 10

Mar. 28 Read: Denton-Borhaug, Chapter Four, "Detranscendentalizing War"

Unit Four: The Moral Injury of War

Week Twelve

April 2 In Class: View *Body of War*

Due: Third Reflection Paper

April 4 Read: Nakashima Brock and Lettini, "Introduction," and "I became a Soldier"
In Class: View *Body of War*

Week Thirteen

April 9 Read: Nakashima Brock and Lettini, Chapters 2 and 3

April 11 Read: Nakashima Brock and Lettini, Chapters 4 and 5

Week Fourteen

April 16 Challenges to Christian Pacifism

Read: Mark J. Allman, *Who Would Jesus Kill?* pp 97-117

April 18 Challenges to and Adaptations of Just War Theory

Read: Allman, pp 210-241

Week Fifteen

April 23 TBA

April 25 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.