

CONF 795.005
Ethics and Conflict

Thursdays, 4:30 pm - 7:10 pm
Arlington: Founders Hall 476

Daniel Rothbart
Professor of Conflict Analysis and Resolution
Office: S-CAR: Truland 701H
drothbar@gmu.edu
phone: 703-993-4474

Description

For this course students explore issues and controversies in our field that are what is just and unjust, morally right and wrong, and good and bad. Such issues are relevant to analysis and practice before, during, after the occurrence of conflict; they are vital to the sound work of third party interveners in a conflict setting, such as conflict resolution practitioners.

The major topics include the following: validity of pacifism, the notions of a just war, the challenges of genocide prevention, non-violent resistance, humanitarian interventions, and human rights activism. The course is organized around four major questions. First, what is the nature of right and wrong, good and bad, virtue and vice in the context of violent conflict? For this question, we draw upon the insight of moral philosophers and religious thinkers. This question calls for attention to arguments of pacifists, such as M.L. King and M. Gandhi. Second, what constitutes a just intervention in violent conflict? Just war theory addresses this question by offering normative criteria for a state's rightful use of force in settling disputes with another state. These insights and challenges are applied to a critical reflection on contemporary violence. Third, can wars be fought justly (or humanely), and if so, how? This question centers on the need to balance two moral imperatives—first, the obligation [moral, political, legal] of state militaries to protect their own forces during combat, and second, the moral imperative to act humanely towards the innocents of war—prisoners, children, and the infirmed. We give special attention to experiences of civilian noncombatants in modern warfare—their plight as unwilling 'participants' of war's tumult represents a major segment of modern warfare. Fourth, in "post-conflict" settings, what constitutes a just peace? This question includes a range of moral quandaries for those engaged in peacebuilding—how to bring "justice" to a war-torn country, how to protect genuine reconciliation throughout society, and how to provide 'human security' to the innocents of war.

Required Books

1. Richard J. Regan, Just War: Principles and Cases. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of American Press. ISBN 0-8132-0856-4. Paper
2. D. Rothbart, K. Korostelina, and M. Cherkaoui, eds., (co-edited), Civilians and Modern War: Armed Conflict and the Ideology of Violence, 2012, Routledge Press. [no charge to students]
3. D. Rothbart and K. Korostelina, Why they Die: Civilian Devastation in Violent Conflict, 2011, Routledge Press.

Optional Text: Hugo Slim, Killing Civilians: Method, Madness, and Morality in War. New York: Columbia University Press.

Teaching Technology: Blackboard

<https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp>

username:

password:

Required Reports, Articles, Chapters

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, “What is Morality?”

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, “Virtue Ethics”

Winifred Louis, “Intergroup Positioning and Power”

Martin Luther King, “Non-Violence”

Mahatma Gandhi, “Writings on Non-Violence”

Gene Sharp, “Non-Violence”

Gareth Evans, “Responsibility to Protect” <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/key-issues/responsibility-to-protect.aspx>

Brosché and Rothbart, “Violence in Darfur,” Violent Conflict and Peacebuilding: The Continuing Crisis in Darfur, Chapter 1.

Brosché and Rothbart, “Complementary Conflicts,” Violent Conflict and Peacebuilding: The Continuing Crisis in Darfur, Chapter 2

“Pray the Devil Back to Hell”

Course Content and Readings

Week 1 [January 24]: Introduction

Unit I: Ethics, Self and Other

Week 2 [January 31]: Nonviolence, Pacifism, and Morality

Martin Luther King, “Non-Violence”

Mahatma Gandhi, “Writings on Non-Violence”

Gene Sharp, “Non-Violence”

Week 3 [February 7]: Ethics and Morality

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, “What is Morality?”

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, “Virtue Ethics”

Week 4 [February 14]: The Self and Other

Winifred Louis, “Intergroup Positioning and Power”

Unit II: Pacifism and War

Week 5 [February 21]: Justifying War

Regan, “Justifying War,” Just War, Chapter 1

Regan, “the Just War Decision: Legitimate Authority,” Just War, Chapter 2

Regan, “The Just War Decision: Traditional Just-Cause Considerations,” Just War, Chapter 3

Week 6 [February 28]: Justifying Humanitarian Intervention

Regan, “The Just War Decision: Just Cause and Interventionist Wars,” Just War, Chapter 4.

Gareth Evans, “Responsibility to Protect” <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/key-issues/responsibility-to-protect.aspx>

Unit III: The “Just” Conduct of War

Week 7 [March 7]: Civilians in Limited War

Regan, “Just War Conduct,” Just War, chapter 6.

Neta Oren, "Israeli Soldiers' Perceptions of Palestinian Civilians during the 2009 Gaza War," Civilians and Modern War: Armed Conflict and the Ideology of Violence, Chapter 7

Week 8 [March 21]: Ideology of War and International Media

Mohammed D. Cherkaoui, "Civilians Overshadowed by Soldiers: Faceless Victims of the Public Media Narrative" Civilians and Modern War: Armed Conflict and the Ideology of Violence, Chapter 9

Unit III: Towards a Just Peace

Week 9 [March 28]: Peacemakers

"Pray the Women Back to Hell: The Story of Leymah Gbowee"

"The Road Ahead" in Civilians and Modern War: Armed Conflict and the Ideology of Violence, Chapter 16.

Course Requirements:

Each class session will include a discussion component that calls for active participation. Of course, regular attendance is expected.

The course grade is determined by the grades for the following assignments: (a) three exams each of which addresses a topic within a course unit, and (b) a concept paper. The course grade is also determined as follows:

1. Exam #1 will be distributed week 4 [Feb. 14] and returned the following week. 25% of course grade.
2. Exam #2 will be distributed week 7 [March 7] and returned the following week. 25% of course grade.
3. Exam #3: distributed week 9 [March 28]. 25% of course grade.

HONOR POLICY

GMU is an Honor Code university; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be

conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct.

Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using MLA or APA format. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me.