

POLS*3960 W26 Ethics of War and Violence

Credit Weighting: 0.50**Pre-/Co-Requisites:** 1.50 credits at the 3000 level in Political Science or equivalent**Restrictions:** N/A**INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION****Name:** Theresa Lee**Email:** tmlee@uoguelph.ca**Office Location:** MacKinnon 512**GENERAL DETAILS**

War and violence are both as old as recorded human history. Given that they are about the destruction of humans, war and violence are by their very nature ethical issues that cut across time and space. Accordingly, the course is a study of political thought that addresses several major ethical challenges posed by war and violence, including: 1) Can war and violence be justified on moral grounds? 2) How does the answer in turn relate to the actions that follow, such as the kind of weapons to be used, the treatment of soldiers, prisoners of war and civilians? 3) What does peace mean? Selected original writings of political thinkers constitute the bulk of reading materials in the course. They range from classical Greek philosophers to contemporary thinkers. Selected non-western political thinkers on the subject are also covered.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The course is informed by the following learning objectives (formerly known as University Learning Objectives):

1. Literacy

Insightful thinkers are usually powerful writers who are able to use their writing very effectively. In addition to studying the content of the thought itself, you will be analyzing how complex arguments are constructed. Course assignments aim to provide you with the opportunity to become an effective communicator by way of more precise use of language, both in oral and written forms.

2. Numeracy

Although the course does not include numerical data, including statistics, as a subject of learning, the course challenges you to consider numbers in the context of human suffering. For example, is one war more "ethical" than another because the death toll is lower? What is the difference between one person being wounded and one hundred people being wounded in varying degrees of severity?

3. Understanding Forms of Inquiry

The course attempts to achieve this objective in two ways. First, you will be introduced to a wide range of political thinkers (past and present; Western and non-Western) on the subject of war and violence. Second, the contrasts among the thinkers are explored to identify shared thematics on war and violence.

4. Sense of Historical Development and Global Understanding

The range of perspectives studied in the course aims to illustrate how war and violence cut across time and space in human history. This enhances your capacity to analyze the complexity of humanity.

5. Moral Maturity

Moral maturity includes the capacity to make judgments on ethical challenges. War and violence undoubtedly pose such challenge.

6. Independence of Thought

You will be reading texts written in a critical language that constantly challenges our political assumptions and perhaps complacency. You are encouraged to treat the course as an ongoing dialogue with thinkers you may or may not agree with. This intellectual exercise aims at the development of the independence of thought carried out by an informed and critical mind.

METHOD OF ASSESSMENT

1. Participation (in-class only) -- 15%
2. Two written assignments -- 20% each (total = 40%)
3. Final examination (in person during on-campus final exam period) -- 35%

REQUIRED READING

A selection of original writings by political thinkers on Ares.

Department of Political Science

50 Stone Road East, Guelph, Ontario, Canada N1G 2W1
(519) 824-4120 x 52184
pols.undergrad@uoguelph.ca
uoguelph.ca/polisci