

First Year Seminar: War and Peace

Gallatin School, NYU, Fall 2009
Course No. K10.0066
T/Th 2-3:15
715 B'way, Rm. 501

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“We make war that we may live in peace.” Thus did Aristotle justify war in his time. This explanation has since been echoed, adapted, and refuted by many who have grappled with the brutality and devastation of war in their own time. Ben Franklin argued that, “There never was a good war or a bad peace.” And John F. Kennedy pronounced it an “unfortunate fact that we can secure peace only by preparing for war.” Explanations of war and peace have been especially important in the last one hundred years, the bloodiest in human history. All told, as many as 170 million people died in wars in the twentieth century. In addition to the dead, there are the wounded and survivors, who struggle with the loss and destruction left in war’s wake. The sheer pervasiveness and devastation of armed conflict in our time prompts fundamental questions about the nature and purpose of war. Why do countries go to war? Is there such a thing as a good war? Can war be prevented, and if so, how? We will explore these and related questions through classical as well as modern texts in political theory, history, official government documents, and literature. Readings will include Thucydides, Grotius, Kant, Arendt, Heller, Ehrenreich, and Morgenthau.

Over the course of the semester, you will write 3 essays in which you explore a specific question about war and peace through an analysis of one or more texts on the syllabus. Essays will be graded for the content as well as form of their analysis. Papers must be submitted in hard copy. (i.e. I will not accept email submissions.) Please use 12-pt font, double-space, paginate, and staple your papers. And remember, choose topics and texts that interest and intrigue you. The best way to do well in this class is to really engage with the readings and our discussions. Be ready to challenge yourself and to have fun doing it.

Books: The following books can be purchased at NYU bookstore (18 Washington Pl.). In addition, there is a course packet, which can also be purchased at NYU bookstore.

Barbara Ehrenreich, *Blood Rites*
Yusef Komunyaaka, *Dien Cai Dau*
Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*
Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*
Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*
Hacker, *A Pocket Manual Of Style*

Assignments and Grading

Essay 1: 4-6 pages (25%)
Essay 2: 4-6 pages (30%)
Essay 3: 5-7 pages (35%)
Participation and Attendance: (10%)

Attendance Policy: You are allowed 3 unexcused absences, no questions asked. Except for extenuating circumstances, additional absences will be penalized.

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Late Papers: Unless you have made other arrangements with me, late papers will be penalized by 1/3 letter grade for every day they are late.

On Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the representation of someone else's work as your own, in large part or in small part. Someone else means anyone else. Plagiarism is also failure to give credit where credit is due. Do not plagiarize. Consequences for plagiarizing are severe.

Introduction:

9/8 **Posing Questions/Interpreting Arguments and War and Peace**

I. What is War?

9/10 Clausewitz, *On War* (Preface, introduction, chapter 1)

9/15 Yusef Komunyakaa, *Dien Cai Dau*

II. Why do nations go to war?

9/17 Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Part 1, Ch. 13; Part 2, chs. 17-18, 21)

9/22 Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (Part 2, ch. 3; Part 4, chs. 11-13; Part 7, ch. 20) **(also on Reserve at Bobst Library)**

9/24 *Blood Rites* (chs. 1, 2, 14)

9/29 Lenin, "Imperialism and the Highest Stage of Capitalism"

10/1 Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War* (Intro, Part 1)

10/6 Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War* (Part 1)
J.P. Euben, "Thucydides in the Desert"
[Assign Essay 1]

10/8 Moore, *Fahrenheit 9/11* (screening)

10/13 Moore, *Fahrenheit 9/11* (discussion)

III. Is there such a thing as a good war?

10/15 **Essay 1 Due**

Just War Theory: Grotius, *On the Rights of War and Peace* (Book 1, ch. 2)

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- 10/20 Grotius, *On the Rights of War and Peace* (Book 2, Chs. 2, 25)
- 10/22 *Catch 22* (screening)
- 10/27 *Catch 22* (discussion) [Assign Essay 2]
- 10/29 Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (ch. 1; ch. 14, epilogue)
- 11/3 Gourevitch, “After the Genocide”; “The Genocide Fax” (*The New Yorker*) **(Note: This reading is not in the coursepack. I will provide a copy for you.)**
- 11/5 Gourevitch, “The Life After” (*The New Yorker*) **(Note: This reading is not in the coursepack. I will provide a copy for you.)**
- 11/10 **Essay 2 Due**
Hoffman, “The Civilian Target in Sierra Leone and Liberia”

III. Can War Be Prevented/Ended?

- 11/12 Kant, “Perpetual Peace”
- 11/17 Hannah Arendt, “Preface,” “The Decline of the Nation State and the End of the Rights of Man” (*Origins of Totalitarianism*) **(Note: This reading is not in the coursepack, but instead on Reserve at Bobst Library)**
- 11/24 *Dr. Strangelove*
- 12/1 *Dr. Strangelove*
[Assign essay 3]
- 12/3 Martin Luther King, “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence”
George Ball, Dissent Memos
Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern*

IV. The Official Logic of US War and Peace, 2002-2005

- 12/8 Summary of the National Security Strategy 2002;
State Department, *The Future of Iraq Project*, Economy and Infrastructure Working Group, Summary
- 12/15 **Essay 3 Due**
Naomi Klein, “Baghdad Year Zero: Pillaging Iraq in Search of a Neocon Utopia” (*Harpers*)