

GORDON COLLEGE
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

**BAL: War and Peace: Philosophical and Theological Perspectives
Fall 2015**

Instructor: James L. Taylor

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Course Description

This course will provide a broad theoretical understanding of war and peace through three main components: 1) a critical engagement with the theories of Just War and pacifism, 2) an examination of the changing conceptions of war and peace throughout the Western philosophical tradition, and 3) an investigation of a theologically informed response to the recent war in the Balkans. Through this three-stage approach, students will wrestle with and attempt to formulate a distinctively Christian response to war, peace and the possibility of reconciliation.

Texts

Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*

Richard Kearney, *Strangers, Gods and Monsters*

Selections from

- Plato, *Republic*
- *The War of the Lamb*, by John Howard Yoder
- *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, by Reinhold Niebuhr
- *The Second Treatise of Government*, by John Locke
- *Totality and Infinity*, Emmanuel Levinas
- "Peace and Proximity", Emmanuel Levinas
- *Genealogy of Morals*, Friedrich Nietzsche
- *History of Sexuality, Vol. I*, Michel Foucault,
- *Violence and the Sacred*, Rene Girard
- *Hosting the Stranger: Between Religions*, Kearney and Taylor

Grading Overview

Journals	15 points	93-100	A	80-82	B-	65-69	D
Class Participation	20 points	90-92	A-	77-79	C+	<65	F
Presentation	25 points	87-89	B+	73-76	C		
Paper	40 points	83-86	B	70-72	C-		

Grading Scale

Students begin with zero points and accumulate points throughout the course.

Participation

Each class period will include a substantial dialogue about the current reading assignment. Although you will not be forced to speak in class, because our classroom dialogue will be our primary manner of investigating the material, you are strongly encouraged to participate where possible. The success of this class depends upon its members' interest in and willingness to engage the subject matter under investigation. Thus, classes will often begin with students' questions. If students do not have relevant questions to ask, questions that will initiate our discussion, a quiz on the relevant reading passage may be administered. Each quiz administered will count for one point of the participation grade. There will also be various in-class writing assignments and group presentations that will count toward your participation grade.

Journals

A brief reflection on the next day's reading assignments will be due every evening (Sun through Wed) on Blackboard by 12pm. These reflections will be composed as follows:

1. When you have completed the reading assignment, write a one-paragraph reflection on **one or two** philosophically significant aspects of the reading assignment in which you demonstrate a personal understanding of the author's argument and provide a brief critical evaluation.
2. At the bottom of the same page, ask **one** philosophically relevant question that you believe would contribute to class discussion.

Each satisfactory journal will count 1 point toward the total. (All "good-faith" efforts will receive the same 1 point grade, while anything less than a full effort will be given whatever grade the instructor deems appropriate.)

Presentations

Each student will present and lead discussion on one figure or topic covered in the class. These presentations/discussions should take up roughly 45 minutes of our three-hour class period. Each student must choose a figure or topic and discuss it with me by the end of the first week. Presentations will begin on Wednesday, Oct 28, the third day of our class. On Monday, I will ask for volunteers to present on Wednesday and Thursday of that first week.

Papers

There will be one 8-10 page paper worth 40 points. This paper should be grammatically correct, well-argued, and demonstrative of the student's own understanding of the subject matter. Students will seek to develop a thoughtful Christian response to the complexities of war or violence by drawing from 1) historical philosophical sources, 2) recent theories of just war and pacifism and 3) Volf's *Exclusion and Embrace*, and/or 4) Kearney's *Strangers, Gods and Monsters*.

*See forthcoming handout for further instruction and deadline.

Schedule

Week I: Framing the Problem: Peace or Violence from Antiquity to Modernity

Monday, Oct 26 (March 2 – 6)

Homer, *Iliad*

Weil (distributed)

Tuesday, Oct 27 (March 9 – 13)

Plato, online, pp. 3-44

Wednesday, Oct 28 (March 16 – 20)

Nietzsche (online)

Volf, Chapter 5, pp. 193-205

Thursday, Oct 29 (March 23 – 27)

Nietzsche (online)

Volf, Chapter 5, pp. 205-220

Week II: Modern Reversals: Concealed Violence and Eschatological Peace

Monday, Nov 2: (March 30 – April 3)

Foucault, pp. 1-35 Hannah

Volf, Chapter 5, pp. 220-231

Tuesday, Nov 3: (April 6 – 10)
Foucault, pp. 133-159 Kate
Volf, Chapter 6, 233-250

Wednesday, Nov 4: (April 13 – 17)
Levinas, TBD Will?
Volf, Chapter 6, pp. 250-264

Thursday, Nov 5: (April 20 – 24)
Levinas (TBD) Kristin
Volf, Chapter 6, pp. 264-273

Week III: Postmodern Interventions: Society, the Scapegoat, and the Stranger

Monday, Nov 9: (April 27 – May 29)
Girard (TBD) Esther
Kearney, Intro and Chapter 1

Tuesday, Nov 10: (May 4 – 8)
Girard (TBD) Will?
Kearney, Chapter 3

Wednesday, Nov 11: (May 11 – 15)
Ricoeur (TBD)
Kearney, Chapter 4

Thursday, Nov 12
Ricoeur (TBD) Zach
Kearney, TBA

Week IV: Theologies of Peace, Violence and Eschatological Justice

Monday, Nov 16
Niebuhr, TBD Austin
Just War Tradition TBD

Tuesday, Nov 17
Yoder, TBD Kati

Wednesday, Nov 18
Volf, Chapter VII

Thursday, Nov 19
TBD

Week V: Writing the Paper

Monday, Nov 23
Conferences

Tuesday, Nov 24
Conferences

Thanksgiving Break

Papers Due on Nov. 29

*Schedule may be modified at any time to improve quality of learning.

URLs for above readings:

Plato: http://www.inp.uw.edu.pl/mdsie/Political_Thought/Plato-Republic.pdf

Nietzsche: http://www.inp.uw.edu.pl/mdsie/Political_Thought/GeneologyofMorals.pdf

Foucault: <https://suplaney.files.wordpress.com/2010/09/foucault-the-history-of-sexuality-volume-1.pdf>

Texts to be distributed:

Girard

Levinas

Ricoeur

Niebuhr

Yoder