The Ethics of War

Ariel Colonomos

Sciences Po
Collège universitaire
Wednesday 10.15 am – 12.15 pm
Hall 404 – 56, rue des Sts Pères

THE ETHICS OF WAR

Ariel Colonomos (CNRS-CERI)
http://www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/en/users/arielcolonomos
ariel.colonomos@sciencespo.fr

This course will discuss one very traditional and classical issue for international relations - the ethics of war - in a field where there have recently been numerous and substantial developments.

It will exemplify the role of norms in warfare and discuss the major dilemmas that face those armies committed to following the basic codes of war. Its focus is mainly interdisciplinary as it brings together moral and political philosophy, international law and international relations. It will draw examples from history, explain certain phenomena – such as why states go or do not go to war and how they fight – from a political science perspective and ultimately will discuss legally and morally the coherence of certain rationales that aim at justifying the use of force.

The purpose of this course is to bring to light among the major issues Western democracies are confronted to in international politics and one of the major political, moral and legal questions
sovereigns, military forces, lawyers and ethicists have to face: authorize the use of force and therefore authorize killing. This course aims at giving the students the tools they need to build their own normative argument. Participation will therefore be encouraged and I will leave a Q & A time period at the end of each session.

Readings are found on Google Sciences Po’s website unless they are already accessible electronically through the library website: https://drive.google.com/a/sciencespo.fr/folderview?id=0B6oDO3aBsLt0eNHdjYm5FNGhFSkU&usp=sharing.¹

Videos – documentaries, fictions – will be shown as illustrations during some of the classes.

Required reading

Michael Walzer, Just and Unjust Wars – A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations, New York, Basic Books, (numerous re-editions)

Course requirements

- A final written exam for the course at the end of the semester (session 12): 50% of the grade
- A grade for the “conférence de méthode” (small group seminar you will attend in parallel to the course): 50% of the grade

Maître de conférence for this course (seminar instructors):
Sharon Weill (Sciences Po, IHEDI Geneva)

Session 1 Why war?
Wednesday September 3rd

Humanity and war
Why do armies fight?
What kind of wars?
What is total war?
The different modes of explanation (anthropology, sociology, economics)
The security dilemma

¹ You must be registered as a Sciences Po user to access this site.
Is there a way out?
Realism vs. idealism


**Session 2: Why ethics?**
**Wednesday September 10th**

Wanton destruction?
Can warriors show restraint? Do they? To what extent?
Natural ethics?
A process of civilization
Democracies and war
Can war be “humanized”?
The rules of war and their purposes
The fog of war in ‘asymmetrical warfare’
The ‘fog of norms’

Session 3: The cultural and religious roots of war ethics  
Wednesday September 17th

Nature / culture  
The cultural and religious foundations of the justification of the use of force  
Judaism  
Islam  
“Stoic Warriors?”  
Islam  
Liberal societies and risk aversion  
Why is the role of Christianity foundational in the ethics of war?


Session 4: The just war tradition: jus ad bellum  
Wednesday September 24th

Jus ad bellum  
What is self-defense?

St Thomas Aquinas: [http://www.newadvent.org/summa/3040.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/summa/3040.htm)  
Session 5: The just war tradition: jus in bello
Wednesday October 1st

Jus in bello
International Humanitarian Law – the Geneva Conventions
Inhumane killing: chemical weapons, landmines, cluster bombs and the like
The Doctrine of Double Effect
Measuring “unnecessary suffering”
Firing procedures

http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/double-effect/
Gentili, De Iure Belli Libri Tres, 1612. See “Book II, Chapter VI Of Poisoning” and “Book II, Chapter VII Of Arms and Counterfeit Arms”
International Committee of the Red Cross: http://www.icrc.org/

Viewing: video document ICRC

Session 6: The ethics of humanitarian intervention and beyond
Wednesday October 8th

Who is saving whom?
Morality and legality
“Caring” for the other?

Tom Farer, “Humanitarian Intervention before and after 9/11: Legality and Legitimacy”, in J.L. Holzgrefe and Robert Keohane (eds.), Humanitarian Intervention: Ethical, Legal and Political Dilemmas,
Session 7: Justifying preventive war?
Wednesday October 15th

The Just War Tradition and preventive wars
What is “just fear”?
Preemption and prevention


Viewing: *Minority Report* (Spielberg)

BREAK

Session 8: Targeted killings and drone warfare
Wednesday October 29th

 Israeli policy and US strikes
Targeted killings / political assassinations
A license to kill?
Preventive or punitive?
Illegal, immoral?


**Viewing:** Munich (Spielberg)

---

**Session 9: Prisoners of War**
**Wednesday November 5th**

Establishing a fair treatment of P.O.W.
Reciprocity
Torture
On prisoners, hostages and slaves
Trusting your enemy?
The exchange of prisoners

http://www.genevaconventions.org
http://www.icrc.org/eng/war-and-law/protected-persons/prisoners-war/


**Viewing:** Homeland (HBO, Season 1) – The Black Mirror (BBC, Episode 1, The National Anthem)

---

**Session 10: The ethics of intelligence**
**Wednesday November 12th**

On ruse and treachery
The ethics of spying
Informants for what?
The costs of intelligence
The epistemic foundations of the justification of the use of force

**Session 11: Reparations**
**Wednesday November 19th**

Post-bellum
Vae victis?
Versailles
Jus post-bellum
Putting a tag on human lives
Assessing suffering: the role of lawyers and historians
Reparations for historical injustices


**Session 12:**
**Wednesday November 26th**

**FINAL Exam**
Indicative Bibliography


