**RELI 0396 War, Peace, and Christian America**

**Middlebury College, Spring 2016**

**Tues./Thurs. 3-4:15pm / Munroe Hall 405**

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**Office: Munroe Hall 406 Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 4:30-5:30pm and by appt.**

**Course Description:**  
Many Christians have argued that war is morally justifiable in certain circumstances, while others have maintained that killing of any kind, even in the name of the state, is wrong.  In this seminar we will examine the theological roots of pacifist, just-war, and crusader perspectives, and then consider how Christian interpretations of political violence have been used to support or dissent from American armed conflicts, from the Revolutionary War to the War in Iraq.  Throughout the course, we will ask how American views on war have been shaped by the persistent interpretation of the U.S. as a “Christian nation.”

**Resources:**

Mark J. Allman, *Who Would Jesus Kill?* (Anselm)

Tobias Winright and Laurie Johnston, eds. *Can War be Just in the 21st Century?* (Orbis)

Kenneth Himes, *Drones and the Ethics of Targeted Killing* (Rowman & Littlefield)

**Grading Opportunities:**

Class Participation 30%

Class Leadership 30%

Final Paper 40%

**Class Participation**: This is a seminar, which means several things to me: (1) that the heart of the course is the conversation we have around the table; (2) that we all will learn from contributing to conversations consistently and listening to the contributions of the other participants; (3) that the responsibility for leadership of that conversation is shared by all participants (including, but not exclusively, me); and (4) none of us will be able to carry our weight in the discussions if we haven’t put care and effort into preparing for class. Consequently, I will expect all of us to come to class well prepared to discuss the meaning and implications of the assignments for each session.

**Attendance:**  Obviously, because this seminar involves substantial discussion, you can’t contribute to or benefit from the learning in this class if you’re not here. For that reason, more than two unapproved absences will result in a letter drop in your final grade. At the same time, illness (and contagion!) is a legitimate reason for missing class, so if you’re feeling unwell, don’t hesitate to email me to tell me you won’t be in class.

**Honor Code Commitment:** As members of the Middlebury community, we are bound to one another by a covenant of character captured (at least in part) in the Honor Code. When you matriculated to Middlebury, you ceremoniously signaled your commitment to abide by certain standards in your academic work and in your treatment of other people. I pledge to engage you with respect, honesty, civility, and integrity throughout the course, and I expect that you will treat me, your colleagues, and your responsibilities to the class with similar character. All assignments submitted to me should include a pledge to the Honor Code, but whether you remember to pledge an assignment or not, please remember that your actions in this class are accountable to the virtues the Honor Code commends.

Schedule of Meetings

(Readings are to be read for the class session under which they are listed)

**I. The Morality of War in Christian Tradition**

Tuesday, February 16 First Things

Thursday, February 18 Christian Ethics and Collective Violence

Mark J. Allman, *Who Would Jesus Kill?* Chapter 1

From the Bible: Deuteronomy 20, I Samuel 15, Isaiah 11, Matthew 5-7, Romans 12-13

Tuesday, February 23 Christian Pacifism

Mark J. Allman, *Who Would Jesus Kill?* Chapter 2

John Howard Yoder, “The Way of Peace in a World at War”

Thursday, February 25 The Crusading Motif

Mark J. Allman, *Who Would Jesus Kill?* Chapter 3

Jonathan Riley Smith, “Crusading as an Act of Love”

Tuesday, March 1 Justified War: The Tradition

Mark J. Allman, *Who Would Jesus Kill?* Chapter 4

Thursday, March 3 Justified War: Recent Application

James Turner Johnson, *The War to Oust Saddam Hussein* (selections)

**II. War and Religion in American History**

(Student-Led Sessions)

Tuesday, March 8 The Founding of a “Christian Nation” (Revolutionary War)

Thursday, March 10 Both Pray to the Same God (The Civil War)

Tuesday, March 15 Christian America and Global Crusade (World War I)

Thursday, March 17 World War II and the Chastened Crusade

Tuesday, March 22 Vietnam and the Moral Ambiguity of War

Thursday, March 24 The Gulf Wars and 9/11

**Spring Break!**

**III. War and Christian Ethics in Modern America**

Tuesday, April 5 Contesting America’s “Most Divinely Favored Nation” Status

Reinhold Niebuhr, “On Pacifism, Democracy, and Utopia”

Stanley Hauerwas, “Whose ‘Just’ War? Which Peace?”

Thursday, April 7 Pacifism and Just War: Outmoded Ideas?

Allman, chapter 5

Reinhold Niebuhr, "Why the Christian Church Is Not Pacifist"

Tuesday, April 12 Humanitarian Intervention

H. Richard Niebuhr, “The Grace of Doing Nothing”

Reinhold Niebuhr, “Must We Do Nothing?”

Winright and Johnston, *Can War Be Just in the 21st Century?* Chapters 4, 5, 10

Thursday, April 14 Humanitarian Intervention (II)

Paul Ramsey, “The Ethics of Intervention”

Tuesday, April 19 Terrorism and Torture

J. Daryl Charles, “Just War Theory and the Problem of Terrorism”

Walzer, “Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands”

Jean Bethke Elshtain, “Reflections on the Problem of ‘Dirty Hands’”

Winright and Johnston, *Can War Be Just in the 21st Century?* Chapter 6

Thursday, April 21 Wars of Insurgency

Paul Ramsey, “How Shall Counter-Insurgency War Be Conducted Justly?”

Winright and Johnston, *Can War Be Just in the 21st Century?* Chapter 11

Tuesday, April 26 Weapons of Mass Destruction

Paul Ramsey, "The Just War and Nuclear Deterrence"

Nigel Biggar, “Christianity and Weapons of Mass Destruction”

Winright and Johnston, *Can War Be Just in the 21st Century?* Chapter 8

Thursday, April 28 WMD and the Pacifist Impulse

U.S. Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace* (selections)

Stanley Hauerwas, *Against the Nations* (selections)

Tuesday, May 3 A More Precise War?

Michael Himes, *Drones and the Ethics of Targeted Killing*

Thursday, May 5 War and Technology

(Finish Himes)

Winright and Johnston, *Can War Be Just in the 21st Century?* chapters 2, 3

Tuesday, May 10 Just Peacemaking: A New Paradigm?

Glen H. Stassen et al, *Just Peacemaking*, chapter 1

Thursday, May 12 Expanding the Scope of “Justice”

Winright and Johnston, *Can War Be Just in the 21st Century?* Chapters 7, 9

Other reading TBD