WAR, TERRORISM, AND TORTURE
PHILOSOPHY 6000
SPRING 2009

Course Description: There has been a long, intellectual tradition in thinking about the moral justification of war, ranging at least from Thomas Aquinas’s writings in the 13th century to Michael Walzer’s contemporary classic, Just and Unjust Wars. The contemporary advent of terrorism arguably challenges central tenets of the just war tradition, replacing the doctrine of preemption with that of prevention, blurring the distinction between civilians and combatants, accelerating both the speed and potential damage of attacks, and so on. How, if at all, should these features of terrorism lead to a revision of just war principles?

In the war on terror, much controversy has emerged over the use of torture. The Third Geneva Convention protects prisoners of war against torture, but there are at least two ways around this convention: either by denying that it applies or else conceiving of torture in such a way that hostile measures nevertheless fall short of it. Should it apply? And what is torture? Independently of the historical and legal status of torture, we can ask whether it could be morally justified. In particular, imagine that the torture of a terrorist will reveal actionable intelligence that is necessary for the protection of innocents. If so, is torture permissible? Regardless, are such scenarios anything other than philosophical fiction?

Professor: Dr. Fritz Allhoff
3006 Moore Hall; Tuesday 2:00-4:00 and by appointment
fritz.allhoff@wmich.edu, 387-4503 (w)

Seminar: Tuesday 4:00-6:30, Moore 3014


All other readings are available online at http://www.wmich.edu/library/reserves/. The first time that you visit that site, you must create an account and add this course to that account. The password is graduateseminar.

Grading: Attendance/participation 20%
Presentations 20%
Annotated research bibliography (April 7) 10%
Research paper (6000-9000 words; April 24) 50%
Attendance/Participation: You are required to attend each seminar and to participate. If you miss a seminar, you may turn in a 1500-word reaction to the assigned readings (half exegetical, half critical) at the beginning of the following seminar to avoid a zero for the previous week. You may do this, at most, two times.

Presentations: This will very much be a student-led seminar with some number of students being responsible for presentations each week. I expect very good preparation for these presentations, which we will talk more about. In particular, presentations should not simply trace through the text with a bunch of quotations (though these should be there as appropriate), but should rather seek to explicate the project in some integrative manner and to provide substantive questions for discussion. PowerPoint is strongly encouraged.

Annotated research bibliography: Before writing your research paper, you will compile a research bibliography which will support the research for that project. There should be at least twenty sources in this bibliography, at least half of which should be from after 2000. For each source, you should provide full bibliographic information as well as a 100-word précis. Comments will be offered on the bibliography as will be useful for developing the research paper. This is due on April 7.

Research paper: Students will incorporate the annotated research bibliography into a research paper, which will be in the 6000-9000 word range. My preference would be for something approximately in the middle of this range as I suspect shorter papers will lack some of the depth of longer ones and that longer ones will lack some of the focus of more intermediate ones. Nevertheless, you have some flexibility on this length. Papers are due on April 24 if you want a grade by the end of the semester; otherwise, we will work out other arrangements. It is quite possible that, for some/many of these papers, I will encourage (optional) rewrites in order to achieve a higher grade, conference potential, or publication potential; we will coordinate further deadlines together.

Statement on Academic Honesty: You are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the policies and procedures in the Graduate Catalog (pp. 25-27) that pertain to Academic Honesty. These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submission, plagiarism, complicity and computer misuse. If there is reason to believe you have been involved in academic dishonesty, you will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. You will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s). If you believe you are not responsible, you will have the opportunity for a hearing. You should consult with me if you are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment or test.
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Reading List

Required


Optional


