

Christian Perspectives on War and Peace

IAF 384/POL 392

TR 12:30- 1:45 pm, Knight Hall 207

Dr. David P. Gushee

Distinguished University Professor of Christian Ethics

Office: Godsey Science Center 212; phone: 478-301-2724

Availability: Tuesday 2-4, Wednesdays 12-4

Course Description

This class examines four major historic Christian approaches to peace and war: pacifism, just war theory, crusade/holy war, and just peacemaking, considering both theories and major historical examples.

Course Objectives

To enhance factual understanding of the Christian tradition on war and peace as it has developed over two millennia.

To understand the factors internal and external to the tradition that have contributed to the diversity of Christian perspectives on war and peace.

To be able to articulate reasons for and reasons against each Christian perspective on war and peace, reasons that would be respected from within the terms of the tradition itself.

To gain a basic understanding of the historical impact of Christian perspectives on war and peace in various contexts in which these have been actualized.

To set theories about war against the backdrop of the actual conduct of modern war, thinking about they might falter or succeed in real-life conditions.

To conclude the class with the ability to articulate one's own perspective on the ethics of war and peace, at least at an introductory level.

About Your Professor

My doctorate is in Christian ethics from Union Theological Seminary in New York, with a dissertation focusing on the Holocaust, published as *The Righteous Gentiles of the Holocaust* in 1994. I came of age during the second stage of the Cold War, with the threat of nuclear warfare hanging over the heads of all humanity. I served with a peacemaking organization while in seminary, where my major professor was Glen Stassen, the founder of just peacemaking theory. I edited a 2013 book on the practice of peacemaking, called *Evangelical Peacemakers*.

Textbooks and Assigned Reading

Required Reading, in order:

Lisa Sowle Cahill. *Blessed are the Peacemakers: Pacifism, Just War, and Peacebuilding*. Fortress, 2019. 9781506431659. 380 pp.

John Howard Yoder. *Nevertheless: Varieties of Religious Pacifism*. Herald Press, 1992. 9780836135862. 192 pp.

Nigel Biggar. *In Defence of War*. Oxford, 2013. 9780199672615. 361 pp.

James Turner Johnson. *The Holy War Idea in Western and Islamic Traditions*. Penn State, 1997. 9780271016337. 185 pp.

Glen H. Stassen. *Just Peacemaking: The New Paradigm for the Ethics of Peace and War*. New Edition. Pilgrim Press, 2008. 9780829817935. 234 pp.

Chris Hedges. *War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*. Public Affairs, 2002. 9781586480493. 211 pp.

Method of Instruction

This course will be taught in classic seminar style, in which students and professor gather around meaningful books for shared discussion that we facilitate together as an earnest learning community. The reading is heavy but will be divided up into reasonable size units; students will present on these units in rotation, leading into class discussion of each reading.

Course Requirements and Methods of Evaluation

Your grade for the term will be determined as follows:

Reading Notes.....	(25 x 20)....	500 points (62.5%)
Seminar Papers.....	(2 x 100).....	200 points (25%)
Final Essay Exam.....		100 points (12.5%)

The official Mercer University grading scale will be used in the course:

Grading Scale

90-100%	A 720-800
87-89%	B+ 696-719
80-86%	B 640-695

77-79%	C+ 616-639
70-76%	C 560-615
60-69%	D 480-559
<60%	F 000-479

Here is a description of each course requirement:

Reading Notes. Students are to prepare informal reading notes for all daily reading assignments. These are content summaries that conclude with critical reflection, unresolved questions, and personal implications/applications. Aim for 750 words per selection. The reading notes are worth 20 points each. There are 28 days of class readings: 26 days in which you could write reading notes, two days in which you will do the formal seminar papers (see next item). You are required to do 25 of these 26 reading notes assignments. You will come to class each day having completed these reading notes, uploaded them to Canvas, and ready to contribute some thoughts from your notes to the class discussion.

Seminar Papers. One student per day will offer a formal, carefully written, tightly focused analysis of the assigned reading for the day. These 7-8-page (1750-2000 word) papers should include summary of content, description of key discoveries, critical analysis and engagement, and at least two discussion questions which will become the launch point for class discussion. The student will read the seminar paper aloud, up to a 20-minute time limit during the assigned class session. These are papers, not media presentations; they need to be fully ready when class starts; they will be submitted for grading via Canvas. Each student will present two of these seminar papers during the course. No reading notes are due when you present a seminar paper.

NOTE: Please write exact word count at the end of every paper.

Final Essay Exam. The final exam in this course will be in person and will consist of one or more essay questions. You will be free to consult any notes you have taken during the course.

Participation/Attendance. In all Mercer classes, the expectation is that students will attend each day unless an emergency or university obligation prevents your attendance, with either you or a university official informing the professor if such occasions arise. Excellence in participation looks like active but non-dominating conversational involvement, note taking, no checking of phones, clear evidence of close reading and attention to the comments of other students, and advancing the conversation constructively. Excellence in attendance looks like missing no more than one class, unexcused. Unexcused absences will be penalized beyond that point, according to the following system:

2 absences: -20 points out of total course points	3 absences: -30 points
4 absences: -40 points	5 absences: -50 points
6 absences: -60 points	7 absences: -70 points
8 absences: Automatic Fail	

CLAS Policies

Academic Honesty

Mercer recognizes honesty and integrity as being necessary to the academic function of the University. Upon enrolling at Mercer each student automatically subscribes to the Honor Code. A violation of the [Mercer Honor Code](#) involves cheating, plagiarism, self-plagiarism, academic negligence, or dishonesty. All suspected violations of the University Honor Code will be forwarded to the Honor Council.

Documented Disabilities

Students in need of accommodation due to a disability should contact the Access and Accommodation Office to complete the verification process to become approved for services. In order to receive accommodations, each term, students will request accommodation and faculty notification forms through the Access Office online system Accommodate. Students are strongly encouraged to schedule a meeting with each professor in a timely manner to discuss arrangements. Accommodations are not retroactive in nature. Note - Disability accommodations or status are not reflected on academic transcripts. Students with a history of a disability, perceived as having a disability, or with a current disability who do not wish to use academic accommodations are also strongly encouraged to complete the verification process with the Access Office.

Students must request accommodations in a timely manner to receive accommodations in a timely manner.

The Access Coordinator for Macon Campus is Katie Johnson, Director and ADA/504 Coordinator. Phone: (478) 301-2778; email: johnson_kc@mercer.edu Website: <https://access.mercer.edu>

Mental Health and Wellness

Mercer University faculty and staff recognize that mental health concerns can impact academic performance and interfere with daily life activities. Please notify your faculty member or academic advisor for academic assistance, as needed. The office of Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) can also provide support if you are feeling stressed, overwhelmed, anxious, depressed, lost, or are struggling with personal issues. Please call (478) 301-2862 or visit the CAPS website for more information. These services are free and confidential, and support non-traditional, graduate, and undergraduate students. The CAPS office on the Macon campus is located in Linden House (attached to the MEP Residence Hall).

Cellphones

Out of courtesy for all those participating in the learning experience, all cell phones must be muted before entering any classroom, lab, or formal academic or performance event.

Covid-19. The Fall 2021 Mercer University COVID policy will be discussed on the first day of class.

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Course Schedule, Fall 2021

Note: Assigned readings may be reconsidered according to pacing considerations. Any changes will be announced orally and in writing.

8/24 Course Organization and Requirements
Selection of Seminar Papers/Class Logistics
Introductory Comments

INTRODUCING THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION ON WAR AND PEACE

8/26 Cahill, Preface-ch. 1; Stassen, Introduction

UNIT ONE: THE PACIFIST TRADITION

8/31 Cahill, ch. 2. Paper:

9/2 Cahill, ch. 3. Paper:

9/7 Cahill, ch. 8. Paper:

9/9 Yoder, Preface-ch. 6. Paper:

9/14 Yoder, ch. 7-13. Paper:

9/16 Yoder, ch. 14-20. Paper:

UNIT TWO: THE JUST WAR TRADITION

9/21 Cahill, ch. 4. Paper:

9/23 Cahill, ch. 5. Paper:

9/28 Cahill, ch. 6. Paper:

9/30 Biggar, ch. 1. Paper:

10/5 Biggar, ch. 2. Paper:

10/7 Fall Break

- 10/12 Biggar, ch. 3-4. Paper:
10/14 Biggar, ch. 5. Paper:
10/19 Biggar, ch. 6. Paper:
10/21 Biggar, ch. 7-Conclusion. Paper:

UNIT THREE: THE CRUSADE/HOLY WAR TRADITION

- 10/26 Cahill, ch. 7. Paper:
10/28 Johnson, Preface-ch. 2. Paper:
11/2 Johnson, ch. 3-4. Paper:
11/4 Johnson, ch. 5-6. Paper:

UNIT FOUR: THE JUST PEACEMAKING TRADITION

- 11/9 Cahill, ch. 9. Paper:
11/11 Cahill, ch. 10. Paper:
11/11 Stassen, chs. 1-4. Paper:
11/16 Stassen, chs. 5-6. Paper:
11/18 Stassen, chs. 7-10. Paper:
11/23 Class Cancelled

UNIT FIVE: ENCOUNTERING MODERN WARFARE

- 11/30 Hedges, Intro-ch.1.Paper:
12/2 Hedges, ch. 2-3. Paper:
12/7 Hedges, ch. 4-5. Paper:
12/9 Hedges, ch. 6-7. Paper:

Final Essay Exam