

University of Waterloo
Conrad Grebel University College

Religious Studies 353 / Peace and Conflict Studies 330 WAR AND PEACE IN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

Fall 2020

Instructor: Dr. Jeremy Bergen

- Email: jbergen@uwaterloo.ca
- Optional weekly virtual tutorial: Thursday 1:00-1:45 p.m. via Zoom
- Drop-in virtual office hours: Thursdays 1:45-2:15 via Zoom, and by appointment

Course format

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the University of Waterloo has mandated that nearly all classes this term be taught remotely/online and that instructors work from home. For this course, this will mean extensive use of [LEARN](#) (posting of course materials, narrated powerpoints, readings, links to videos, and discussion boards). There will be an optional weekly tutorial discussion held by live videoconference.

Because of the pandemic and related shut-downs, this term may be an especially difficult one for some due to health, family, financial, and other challenges. We will all need to be generous and flexible with one another, and I commit to this myself. Please find the help and support you need, and let me know if there are ways I can assist. You do not need to disclose anything to me, but do let me know if there are adaptations to this course that would be helpful.

Land acknowledgement

We acknowledge that we are living and working on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (also known as Neutral), Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes six miles on each side of the Grand River.

Course Description

The Christian tradition has sustained a long and complicated debate about war and peace. Is it permitted for a Christian to serve in the army? Does the command to love one's neighbour sometimes require the violent defense of the neighbour? Is it possible to interpret Jesus' instruction to love one's enemy in such a way that nevertheless permits killing of an enemy? Does God command war? Does Christianity provide guidance for the conduct of war? In what ways are the life and teachings of Jesus authoritative for contemporary Christian ethics?

In this course, we will survey the theological accounts of war and peace that Christians have given from the early church to the present. We will pay particular attention to the most prominent Christian approaches: pacifism, and just war, as well as Christian realism. We will examine how proponents of each approach drawn on biblical texts, theological concepts, ecclesiological assumptions, interpretations of history and context, and ethical theory.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will...

- understand and analyze the theological arguments that Christians, especially Christian theologians, have employed in favour of pacifism, just war, and Christian realism
- evaluate the theological arguments that Christians, especially Christian theologians, have employed in favour of pacifism, just war, and Christian realism
- appreciate the diversity of Christian theological approaches to war and peace
- engage in respectful and critical dialogue with other students
- develop theoretical/ethical frameworks from which to think about contemporary issues of violence, war, and peace

Required texts

- Dale W. Brown, *Biblical Pacifism*, 2d edition (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Press, 2003). The second edition is substantially different than the first edition.
- Daniel M. Bell, Jr., *Just War as Christian Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2009). These two books are available through the UW Bookstore and may also be available from online booksellers.
- All other required readings will be available through LEARN.

Other academic plans

In addition to Religious Studies and Peace and Conflict Studies plans, this course may fulfill a requirement of a [Mennonite Studies plan](#).

Course requirements

The course will proceed in a weekly module format. I will provide a weekly outline of tasks that will typically include input from me (short video lectures, narrated powerpoints, etc.), external links, required readings, and expectations for class response and engagement. The material for the week will be posted at the latest by 4 p.m. on Friday of the previous week.

1. Required reading and participation in weekly discussion posts (15%)

Students are expected to complete all required reading, and, for all weeks (except week 1, 9 and 12) to make one initial discussion post (around 200 words) in response to a prompt (there may be more than one option) by Tuesday at 4 p.m., and then to post at least one further response to the posts by other students or the instructor by Friday at 4 p.m. More posts than this are welcome, though am more interested in the quality of responses than in the quantity. For week 1, students are expected to respond once to a prompt to introduce themselves.

In addition, there will always be a separate discussion topic “I don’t understand” where you can ask questions about concepts, arguments, readings, as well as a topic for “logistics” of the course, such as assignments. You are not required to post on these discussion topics, and nor do posts there count towards the minimum requirements for discussion.

I will not grade individual posts but rather the cumulative contribution by each student. By the half-way point in the term, I will give each student feedback about their discussion contributions. If you make timely, informed, and critical discussion contributions to a range of readings, it is possible to get 15/15.

The weekly tutorial meeting is designed to aid in your learning and to facilitate connections among students. You are encouraged to participate every week but it is not a requirement and you will not be graded on your participation. These meetings will be recorded and made available to all students in the course. For all videoconference meetings, students may choose to enable or disable their webcams.

2. Three critical reflection papers (50%)

About 6 pages each, double-spaced. Consider 4.5 pages a very bare minimum, and 8 pages a maximum. Your best paper will count for 20%, the other two for 15% each.

First paper: Reflect on Reinhold Niebuhr's "Why the Christian Church is Not Pacifist." First, summarize the author's main thesis and supporting argumentation (around 2 pages). You don't need to cover everything, but you do need to demonstrate that you have understood the author on his own terms. Then, identify two or three issues raised by the author, analyze and reflect on them. What is at stake in the author's position? What are the implications? What assumptions are operative? What does the author fail to take into consideration? I encourage you to develop your own position on these issues, but you must go beyond simply reporting what you agree or disagree with. Give reasons. You will be marked in terms of your understanding of the reading, a clear statement of the issues, depth of analysis, and quality of writing.

Due Friday October 9, 4:00 p.m.

Second paper: Reflect on the arguments presented for Christian pacifism in the book *Biblical Pacifism*. Summarize the approach or arguments that you think are the most persuasive presentation of this position (around 2 pages), and explain their strengths. Then reflect on the gaps or weaknesses of that particular approach.

Due Friday October 30, 4:00 p.m.

Third paper: Reflect on and respond to the visits of the two guest speakers (week 9), especially regarding the relationship of theory and practice. How do the comments by the speakers add to or change your perspective on the various theoretical approaches examined in the course, especially those of pacifism and just war? Was anything said that you found especially enlightening, surprising, or puzzling? Respond to the ways each speaker integrates his own faith commitments and beliefs about violence, war, and peace, with his institutional role. And/or, imagine how Brown and/or Bell would respond to the experiences of each speaker. Be sure that you engage with the "big picture" of their respective approaches to war and peace; avoid basing your reflection on a single comment by one speaker.

Due Friday November 20, 4:00 p.m.

Note: the speakers will participate in a "live" videoconference call at a time to be determined. Students are strongly encouraged to join, and ask questions directly and/or to submit questions to me in advance. These meetings will be recorded and posted to LEARN.

3. A take-home final assignment or "exam" (35%)

Distributed at 4:00 p.m. on Friday December 4 and due at 4:00 p.m. Monday December 14. Part of this assignment will require students to apply one of the theological/ethical frameworks discussed in the course (pacifism or just war in particular, Christian realism or just peacemaking may also be possible) to a case study (such as a particular armed conflict), or contemporary issue (such as nuclear weapons, torture, or the international "Responsibility to Protect"). This will require some additional research, which should be done in advance. Students will be required to submit a summary of their issue or case study, as well as an outline of their answer,

by Friday November 27 at 4:00 p.m. (worth 2% of the total 35%), and will be expected to incorporate the feedback they receive. More details on this part of the final assignment will be provided in a separate document.

Further notes about all assignments:

- If you have questions or concerns about any of the assignments, please contact me before the due dates. *There are no “make-up assignments” in this course.*
- All written assignments will be submitted online, through the “Dropbox” in LEARN.
- Assignment should be in PDF or MS Word formats, and *not* a link to a Google Doc. Assignments will be returned in the same format as they were received, with comments added.
- The recommended citation style is Chicago Style (Turabian), footnote/bibliography format. Link to [Chicago Style quick guide](#). Acceptable styles: MLA (author-page); APA (author-date, though you must also give page numbers for direct quotations and paraphrases). Regardless of the style you use, you must be consistent in your usage.
- Add page numbers.
- Proofread your papers.
- Late submission of a critical reflection paper will be penalized 3% per calendar day if other arrangements have not been made. Late submission of the final assignment/ “exam” will be penalized 15% per calendar day if other arrangements have not been made.

Weekly schedule and readings

The course will proceed in a weekly module format. I will provide a weekly outline of tasks that will typically include input from me (short video lectures, podcasts, narrated powerpoints, etc), external links, required readings, and expectations for class response and engagement. Students are expected to complete all reading and watch all lectures and videos unless I have clearly indicated that a source is recommended (i.e. not required.)

The material for the week will be posted at the latest by 4 p.m. on Friday of the previous week. Students are expected to make one substantial discussion post in response to a prompt by Tuesday at 4 p.m., and then to post at least one further response to the posts by other students or the instructor by Friday at 4 p.m. (more posts are welcome). All of the substantial reading requirements are outlined below. However, I reserve the right to add very short additional readings. Other requirements, such as particular videos or lectures to watch, are not outlined here, but will be indicated for each week in LEARN.

While students may choose to read ahead, the course will work best for all involved if the entire class progresses through the material at the same week-by-week pace.

There will be a weekly tutorial (Thursdays 1:00-1:45 p.m.). The experience of this meeting will depend on what students want out of it. It is optional but should enhance your learning as well as be a forum for making connections with other students. I welcome all students to attend it every week. There will not be a lecture but I’d be happy to answer questions about readings and themes for the week, and will also prompt a discussion among the students.

Week 1 – Introductions

Introducing ourselves, Christianity, ethical theories, the concept of violence
Required reading:

- Stanley Hauerwas and John Berkman, “Violence,” in *Dictionary of Ethics, Theology and Society* (London: Routledge, 1996), 866-870.

Tutorial meeting: Thursday, Sept 10, 1:00 p.m.

Week 2. Pacifism in the early church

Required reading:

- Brown, 31-36 (this excerpt will be posted in case students haven’t yet purchased book)
- Tertullian, “Christians and Government” and “Christians and Military Service,” in *War and Christian Ethics*, ed. Arthur F. Holmes (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1975), 39-47.
- Ron Sider, “The Early Church on War and Killing: Distinguishing Speculation from Historical Fact,” *Books & Culture* 22, no. 1 (2016).

Tutorial meeting: Thursday, Sept 17, 1:00 p.m.

Week 3. War and peace in the History of Christianity

Constantine, early Just War, monasticism, crusades, Martin Luther

Required reading:

- Bell, 23-38
- Pope Urban II’s speech at Clermont (1095), which launched the First Crusade
- Martin Luther, “The Soldier and His Conscience,” [excerpt] in *War and Christian Ethics*, ed. Arthur F. Holmes (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1975), 140-147.

Tutorial meeting: Thursday, Sept 24, 1:00 p.m.

Week 4. Christian Realism (Reinhold Niebuhr)

Required reading:

- Larry Rasmussen, “A Few Facets of Niebuhr’s Thought,” in *Reinhold Niebuhr: Theologian of Public Life*, ed. Larry Rasmussen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 16-22.
- Reinhold Niebuhr, “Why the Christian Church is Not Pacifist” in *The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr*, ed. Robert McAfee Brown (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 1986), 102-119.
- Robin W. Lovin, “Christian Realism and the Successful Modern State,” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 20 (2007): 55–67.

Tutorial meeting: Thursday, Oct 1, 1:00 p.m.

Week 5. Christian Pacifism (part 1)

Required reading:

- Brown, 5-31, 36-66, 97-115

Recommended reading (this will be required later in the course)

- Brown, 67-77

Tutorial meeting: Thursday, Oct 8, 1:00 p.m.

First critical reflection paper due Friday, October 9, 4:00 p.m.

[reading week]

Week 6. Christian Pacifism (part 2)

Required reading:

- Brown, 79-95; 117-168

Tutorial meeting: Thursday, Oct 22, 1:00 p.m.

Week 7. Just War (part 1)

Required reading:

- Bell, 13-21, 39-125

Tutorial meeting: Thursday, Oct 29, 1:00 p.m.

Second reflection paper due Friday October 30, 4:00 p.m.

Week 8. Just War (part 2)

Required reading:

- Bell, 127-246

Tutorial meeting: Thursday, Nov 5, 1:00 p.m.

Week 9. Guest speakers

There will be two 60 minute synchronous meetings this week (dates to be confirmed), one with each of the following two guests.

- Rev. Bob Holmes, Coordinator for Pastoral Support, [Christian Peacemaker Teams](#)
- Rev. Dr. Maj. (ret) Harold Ristau, retired Chaplain, Canadian Forces

Each will reflect on their experience as a Christian leader supporting an organization with a different philosophy of war and peace. Students are welcome to ask questions of the guests. These live meetings will be recorded and made available for those who are not able to attend. There will be no separate tutorial meeting. No discussion posts required this week. Some recommended background reading may be identified.

Week 10. Just Peacemaking

Required reading:

- Brown, 67-77
- Glen Stassen and David Gushee, "Just Peacemaking Theory," in *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 169-174.
- Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Just Peacemaking: Theory, Practice, and Prospects," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 23 (2003): 195-212.
- [short text on one of the peacemaking practices]

Tutorial meeting: Thursday, Nov 19, 1:00 p.m.

Third reflection paper due Friday November 20, 4:00 p.m.

Week 11. Policing

Required reading:

- Gerald Schlabach, "Warfare vs. Policing: In Search of Moral Clarity," in *Just Policing, Not War: An Alternative Response to World Violence*, ed. Gerald Schlabach (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 69-84.
- Andy Alexis-Baker, "The Gospel or a Glock? Mennonites and the Police," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 25, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 23-49.
- Steven Brnjas, "What about Peter? A Response to 'The Gospel or a Glock?'" *The Conrad Grebel Review* 26, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 9-13.

Tutorial meeting: Thursday, Nov 26, 1:00 p.m.

Summary of case study or issue, for final assignment, due Friday, Nov 27, 4:00 p.m.

12. Wrapping up

Short reading(s) to be determined

Tutorial meeting: Thursday, Dec 3, 1:00 p.m.

Final assignment/ "exam" distributed Friday, Dec 4, 4:00 p.m. and due Monday December 14, 4:00 p.m.

University of Waterloo Policies

Academic Integrity

In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. Check the [Office of Academic Integrity webpage](#) for more information.

Discipline

A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their actions. Check [the Office of Academic Integrity](#) for more information. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to [Policy 71 - Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties check [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

Grievance

A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read [Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances](#), Section 4. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department's administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

Appeals

A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes they have a ground for an appeal should refer to [Policy 72 - Student Appeals](#).

Note for Students with Disabilities

The [AccessAbility Services](#) office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (NH 1401), collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS office at the beginning of each academic term.

Counselling Services

[Counselling Services](#) provides free confidential counselling, in both individual and group sessions, with qualified professionals to help registered students, faculty and staff with personal concerns, educational career decisions, and strategies to studies and exams.

The Writing and Communication Centre

Writing and Communication Centre staff offer one-on-one support in planning assignments and presentations, using and documenting research, organizing and structuring papers, and revising for clarity and coherence. Make an appointment or drop in at the Library for quick questions or feedback. To book a 50-minute appointment and to see drop-in hours, visit the [Writing and Communication Centre website](#).

Cross-listed Course

Please note that a cross-listed course will count in all respective averages no matter under which rubric it has been taken. For example, a PHIL/PSCI cross-list will count in a Philosophy major average, even if the course was taken under the Political Science rubric.