

University of Waterloo  
Conrad Grebel University College

Religious Studies 353 / Peace and Conflict Studies 330  
**WAR AND PEACE IN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY**  
Winter 2023

Class time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00 – 2:20 p.m.

Location: CGR 1301

Office hours: Thursdays 2:30-3:30 p.m., and by appointment

**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. Through a careful study to two primary books, we will examine how each draw on biblical texts, theological concepts, ecclesiological assumptions, interpretations of history and context, and ethical theory.

**Course Objectives**

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

This course will include discussion of difficult subjects, including war, violence, colonialism, trauma, torture, sexual violence, and others. It will engage with a range of religious beliefs, including some beliefs that may be abhorrent to some or many in the class, and some beliefs that

may be held by some or many in the class. I will work to create a supportive and respectful environment for these discussions, an expectation that extends to everyone in the class, mindful that some topics may be triggering for some. If you have concerns about any class content, please communicate these with me. I will seek to accommodate as best I can.

### **Required texts**

- Ronald J. Sider, *If Jesus is Lord: Loving our Enemies in an Age of Violence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019).
- Daniel M. Bell, Jr., *Just War as Christian Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2009).

These books have been ordered by the WStore and are also available from online booksellers. There is only one edition for each of them, so any used copies that you find are fine to use. All other required readings will be posted on LEARN.

### **Course requirements**

**1. Attendance and informed participation** (5%). In this course, learning happens at the intersection of individual reading, listening, thinking, and writing, and interaction with the instructor, fellow students, and guest speakers. It is important to be present. I will be taking attendance. If you miss more than two classes, contact the instructor about doing brief responses to the readings for those days in order to address the missed engagement with the material in class. They may be several small writing exercises throughout the course (either in-class, or in advance of class)—the completion of which will contribute significantly to learning. Be sure to bring a copy (paper or electronic) of the required readings for each particular class.

Please consider others: Do not come and go during class unless absolutely necessary. Use devices for taking notes but not for activities unrelated to the course.

**2. Short reading quizzes** (5 x 2 = 10%). There will be a total of 7 “surprise” quizzes throughout the term, and the best 5 quizzes will count towards your mark. These quizzes will primarily test whether you have completed the reading with adequate understanding.

**3. Two reflection papers** (2 x 15 = 30%) of 5-6 pages each, double-spaced (consider 4.5 pages a very bare minimum, and 8 pages a maximum).

*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. Consult the critical book review guidelines for information on citation. *Due January 31.*

*Second paper:* Reflect on and respond to the visits of the two guest speakers (expected March 21 and 23), 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 Sider and Bell? Was anything said that you found especially enlightening, surprising, or puzzling? Respond to the ways each speaker integrates their own faith commitments and beliefs about violence, war, and peace, with his institutional role.

And/or, imagine how Sider 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 March 28.*

### **3. Critical book review essay (30%).**

This assignment is explained in detail in an appendix to the syllabus. The assignment is primarily a written exercise, but also includes a brief presentation to the class. *Due March 7.*

### **4. Final summative assignment (25%).**

This assignment will draw on the required readings, lectures, and class discussions from the whole course. No additional research is expected. Questions will be distributed on April 6, the last day of class. *Due Friday, April 14.*

### **Further information about 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 assignments must be submitted to the appropriate Dropbox in LEARN, double-spaced, standard margins and 12-point font. Submit as a Word document or as a PDF (*not* a link to a Google doc).
- It is expected that students read all feedback on returned papers. You may find that comments are more accessible in MS Word (which is available to every Waterloo student).
- The length guidelines assume a standard 12-point font, double spacing, and standard margins.
- No separate title page is needed. Just be sure that a title and your own name is at the top of the first page. (If a title page is included, do not include it towards page count.)
- Cite your source(s): Preferred style: Chicago Manual of Style, notes and bibliography. Quick guide: [www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html). Acceptable styles: MLA (author-page); APA (author-date, though you must also give page numbers for direct quotations and paraphrases).
- Use inclusive language (e.g. humankind rather than mankind) when referring to people. Avoid use of language that perpetuates stereotypes.
- Assignments are due by 11:59 p.m. on the date specified.
- Late assignments will be penalized 3% per calendar day (including weekends), and can be accepted no later than the last day of class (in the case of reflection papers and book review) or the last day of the exam period (in the case of the final summative assignment). If you request an extension on an assignment, you must do so by email at least 24 hours before it is due. You will be expected to propose a new deadline.

### **Outline of classes and required readings**

1. January 10 – Introduction
2. January 12 – Early Church, Constantine
  - Sider, 197-202
3. January 17 – Middle Ages, Crusades
  - Bell, 23-32

4. January 19 – Reformation
    - 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.
  5. January 24 – Enlightenment optimism; Reinhold Niebuhr
    - Reinhold Niebuhr, “Why the Christian Church is Not Pacifist” in *The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr*, ed. Robert McAfee Brown (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 102-119.
  6. January 26 – Christian realism
    - A. J. Nolte, “A Christian Realist View: Necessary War and ‘Dirty Hands,’” in *War, Peace, and Violence: Four Christian Views*, ed. Paul Copan (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2022), 117-145.
  7. January 31 – Christian pacifism
    - Sider, Introduction, chapters 1-2

*First reflection paper due*
  8. February 2 – Jesus’ teachings
    - Sider, chapters 3-4
  9. February 7 – Objections
    - Sider, chapters 6, 11
  10. February 9 – Cross, church, history
    - Sider, chapter 7-8
  11. February 14 – Violence in the Old Testament
    - Sider, chapter 10
  12. February 16 – Sexual violence
    - Hilary Jerome Scarsella and Stephanie Krehbiel, “Sexual Violence: Christian Theological Legacies and Responsibilities,” *Religion Compass* 13, no. 9 (2019): 1-13.
- [Reading week]
13. February 28 – Just war tradition
    - Bell, Introduction, chapter 1 (32-38), chapter 2 (58-69)
  14. March 2 – Just war as Christian discipleship
    - Bell, chapter 3
  15. March 7 – Presentations
 

*Critical book review due*
  16. March 9 – Legitimate authority, just cause
    - Bell, chapters 4-5

Additional presentations, if necessary

17. March 14 – Right intent, last resort, reasonable chance of success
- Bell, chapter 6-7
18. March 16 – Conduct of war
- Bell, chapter 8, Conclusion
19. March 21 – Guest 1  
Rev. Maj. (ret) Harold Ristau, retired Chaplain, Canadian Forces
20. March 23 – Guest 2  
Hannah Redekop, Communications Coordinator, Community Peacemaker Teams
21. March 28 – Just revolution
- Anna Floerke Scheid, “Waging a Just Revolution: Just War Criteria in the Context of Oppression,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 32, no. 2 (2012): 153-172.
22. March 30 – Peacebuilding
- Lisa Sowle Cahill, “Peacebuilding: A Practical Strategy of Hope,” *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* 11, no. 1 (2014): 47-66.
- Second reflection paper due*
23. April 4 – Communities of reconciliation
- Leah E. Robinson, “‘Righteousness and Peace Will Kiss Each Other’: Christian Communities of Reconciliation and the Pursuit of Peace,” in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Peace*, ed. Jolyon Mitchell, et al. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2022), 319-329.
24. April 6 – Nuclear weapons
- Tyler Wigg-Stevenson, “Will History End in Nuclear War?” *Plough*, May 20, 2022.
- Final summative assignment questions distributed*  
*Final summative assignment due April 14*

## UWaterloo 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. See the [Office of Academic Integrity webpage](#) for more information.

### Discipline

A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity to avoid committing an academic offence and to take responsibility for his/her 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 their 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 he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to [Policy 72 - Student Appeals](#).

### Note for Students with Disabilities

[AccessAbility Services](#), located in Needles Hall, Room 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 AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term.

### Accommodations for illness or extenuating circumstances

Beginning in Winter 2023, a new set of guidelines and procedures are in place for situations which cause students to be unable to attend classes and/or meet academic obligations. Please consult the [Accommodations for illness or Extenuating Circumstances website](#).

## Other information

### 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.

### 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](#).