

WAR AND PEACE IN BIBLICAL TRADITION

Course Syllabus (Updated 9/9/05)

Fall, 2005

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The most persistent sound which reverberates through human history is the beating of war drums. (adapted from Arthur Koestler, *Prologue to Janus: A Summing Up*, 1978).

Future years will never know the seething hell and the black infernal background, the countless minor scenes and interiors of the secession war; and it is best they should not. The real war will never get in the books. (Walt Whitman, *Specimen Days*, 1892)

War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things. The decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth war is much worse. People who have nothing for which they are willing to fight, nothing which is more important than their own personal safety, are miserable creatures and have no chance of being free unless made or kept so by the exertions of better persons than themselves.

(adapted from John Stuart Mill, "The Contest in America," *Fraser's Magazine*, February, 1862; later published in *Dissertations and Discussions*, 1868, vol.1)

The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth. Through violence you murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. (Martin Luther King, *Strength to Love*, 1962)

Goals: To familiarize students with the biblical traditions of war and peace-making and their interpretation by both Jews and Christians; to teach students how to recognize and understand the simultaneous existence of both violence and peace in the biblical sources; to integrate the study of war and peace in the Bible with the study of war and peace in the modern world; and to help students address current issues of violence by interpreting scripture in a responsible and constructive fashion.

Purpose: To give students the knowledge and theological thinking skills that will allow them to begin making this world a more humane and peaceful place.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

- 1) Have read critically the biblical texts on war and violence.
- 2) Begin to understand the ancient context of biblical texts and their interpretation by later readers.
- 3) Have examined the continuities and discontinuities between ancient and modern concepts of war and peace.
- 4) Have begun to interpret responsibly biblical texts in a modern context.
- 5) Begin to think theologically about biblical texts, biblical interpretations, historical accounts, theological texts, novels, and films.

Required Books

Gwynne Dyer, *War: The Lethal Custom*

Arthur F. Holmes, *War And Christian Ethics: Classic And Contemporary Readings on the Morality of War*. (2nd ed. scheduled for release in September; 1st ed. available on library reserve)

Wolfgang Huber, *Violence: The Unrelenting Assault on Human Dignity*

Primo Levi, *If Not Now, When?*

Susan Niditch, *War in the Hebrew Bible: A Study in the Ethics of Violence*

Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*

NRSV Study Bible (HarperCollins, Oxford, New Interpreters, etc.)

Other Texts

Willard Swartley, "War and Peace in the New Testament"

Recommended Books

Joseph J. Fahey and Richard Armstrong, *A Peace Reader*

Jewish Study Bible (Adele Berlin, ed.)

Three Additional Classic War Novels (if students have time)

Stephen Crane, *Red Badge of Courage*

Joseph Heller, *Catch 22*

James Jones, *The Thin Red Line*

Required Films for Viewing

The Alexander Nevsky (Sergei Eisenstein, Dmitri Vasilev, 1938)

The Battle of Algiers (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1965)

Black Hawk Down (Ridley Scott, 2001)

Gettysburg (Ronald F. Maxwell, 1993) (pending)

Hotel Rwanda (Terry George, 2004)

One Day in September (Kevin Macdonald, 2000)

Platoon (Oliver Stone, 1986)

Saving Private Ryan (Steven Spielberg, 1998) (first 30 minutes)

The Thin Red Line (Terrence Mallek, 1998)

Requirements:

1) **Attendance and informed class participation** are required. **Class participation (including attendance) are worth 20 percent of the grade.** Thoughtful questions and discussion are encouraged.

At the beginning of each class, everyone will sign an attendance sheet. Unexcused absences will result in automatic lowering of the student's grade at the discretion of the instructor. Excused absences (which do not include circumstances over which one has personal control) are allowed, but three or more absences may lead to lowering of the grade at the discretion of the instructor. **Please do not telephone the instructor about an impending class absence or a prior class absence, but send an email describing the situation.**

Students should have read all assigned texts, and viewed all films, before the beginning of the class period, in which we are discussing particular texts or movies. When discussion of texts or film extends over two class periods, students must complete the reading or viewing assignment before the beginning of the first class period. Students may wait to read G. Dyer (*War*) until the last date given under a specified heading. Books are all available at the LTS Bookstore, while both books and films are available on the Bosworth Memorial Library reserve shelf. When viewing films in another language, make sure that you have the English subtitles turned to the "on" position.

Class time will consist primarily of sustained conversations, with some brief lectures. This will include a **Socratic form of dialogue**, in which the instructor directly engages individual students, and groups of students, with questions to which the students must respond. This kind of give-and-take demands that students complete the required assignments. More important, it requires students to think under pressure and to communicate in a clear and persuasive manner.

2) Students will complete an **Annotated Bibliography** on at least one component of the student's term paper, in which students develop bibliographic resources (in the Bosworth Memorial Library and on the World Wide Web) and offer very brief summaries and analysis of the various texts under consideration. **This is worth 15 percent of the grade and is due by October 20.**

3) Students will write a **Take-Home Exam: Due November 3 and worth 15 percent of the grade.**

4) Students will complete a **Term Paper: Due December 16 and worth 50 percent of the grade.** Students will pick a topic that treats two biblical texts, one film, one war chronicle (*All Quiet on the Western Front*, *If Not Now, When?*, or a story of the student's choice) and some aspect of war in the modern world. Student will incorporate an annotated bibliography into the term paper. Students must consult with the instructor before finally deciding on a topic. The paper should have an approximate length of fifteen to twenty pages.

5) Students should start reading Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, and Primo Levi, *If Not Now, When?*, at the beginning of the semester so that they are ready to discuss them in the latter portion of the term. Students may also find it useful to begin viewing films earlier in the term rather than later.

6) Students should bring the appropriate materials to class.

*For papers and exams, please adhere to the rules of honesty and integrity as outlined in the Student Handbook policies on cheating and plagiarism. Serious breaches of ethics (also including forging of signatures on attendance sheets) may result in class failure and/or suspension or expulsion from the seminary. Needless to say, LTS expects students, as potential pastors and religious leaders, to adhere the highest ethical and moral standards.

In classroom discussion, participants should show respect to one another by listening and paying attention before speaking. **Informed participation means that students have read the materials, thought about them before coming to class, and brought them to class.

***Grades follow the standard numerical breakdowns (93-100 = A; 90-92 = A-; 87-89 = B+; 83-86 = B; 80-82 = B-; 77-79 = C+; 73-76 = C; 70-72 = C-; 67-69 = D+; 63-66 = D; 60-62 = D-; 57-59 = F). “A” means work of the highest quality and is a very difficult grade to achieve. “B” means good work. “C” means satisfactory work. “D” means passable work, but of low quality. “F” indicates that the student did not meet the requirements of the course by not attending a sufficient number of classes, by not submitting passable work, and/or by failing to submit all work. Grades are based on work at a graduate level.

The ability to write with clarity, correct grammar and syntax, correct spelling and punctuation, good communication skills, some style, and in an organized fashion, is essential. In written assignments, students must also demonstrate the capacity to think on their own and generate their own coherent and convincing arguments. Where appropriate, students must further display research skills such as the following: intelligent use of secondary literature, thoughtful sifting of data, and deft handling of footnotes. There are no excuses for bad writing. Grades in part will reflect student writing skills. If students are uncertain about their writing, I strongly encourage them to see Anne Gregory for assistance. Those who see her regularly will receive a small grade benefit for their effort. Finally, I recommend that everyone read Deborah Core, *The Seminary Student Writes*. It will not only help you in this course, but in others at LTS as well.

August 30: Introduction

September 1: Noah and the Flood

Genesis 6-9

Niditch, "Introduction"

September 6: Genesis 22 (Binding of Isaac)

Niditch, Chapter 1

L. Kant, "Restorative Texts on an Agonizing Text: Abraham's Binding Of Isaac and the Horror on Mt. Moriah (Genesis 22) (2 parts)

September 8, 13 15: The Ban (*Herem*) in the First Testament

Niditch, Chapters 2-3

Dyer, Chapters 1-2

Read the following passages: Leviticus 27:21-28; Numbers 18:8-20; Numbers 21:2-3; Numbers 21:21-26; Numbers 31 (Midian); Deuteronomy 2:26-35 (Sihon); Deuteronomy 3:1-7 (Og); Deuteronomy 7:2-6; Deuteronomy 7:17-26 (the nations); Deuteronomy 13:12-18 (idolaters), Deuteronomy 20 (holy war); Joshua 6:17-21 (Jericho); Joshua 7 (Achan); Joshua 8 (Ai); Joshua 10 (Amorites); Judges 19-21 (Benjamin); 1 Samuel 14:24-45 (the forbidden honeycomb); 1 Samuel. 15 (Amalekites); 1 Kings 20 (Aram); Jeremiah 5-7, 51; Mesha Inscription (Niditch 31);

September 20, 22: The Code of the Warrior in the First Testament

Niditch, Chapter 4

Dyer, Chapter 3

Read the following passages: Genesis 14 (Abraham's rescue of Lot); Judges 8:18-21 (Gideon); 1 Samuel 17 (David vs. Goliath); 1 Samuel 30 (David and Ziklag); 2 Samuel 2:12-32 (Saul vs. David); 1 Kings 12:21-24 (Judah vs. Israel)

September 27, 29: Trickery in War in the First Testament

Niditch, Chapter 5

Dyer, Chapter 5

Black Hawk Down

Read the following passages: Genesis 34 (rape of Dinah); Judges 3:15-30 (Ehud and Eglon); Judges 4-5 (Deborah, Barak, Jael, and Sisera) Judges 14-15 (Samson)

October 4: Meet with Dr. Tim Browning in the library regarding the annotated bibliography

October 6, 11: The Ugliness of War in the First Testament

Niditch Chapter 6

Film: *Platoon*

Dyer, Chapter 6

Read the following passages: Judges 9 (Abimelech); Judges 11 (Jephthah and his daughter); Judges 18 (Dan and the peaceful people of Laish); 1 Samuel 27:8-12 (David's raids); 1 Kings 11:15-16 (David and Edom); Psalm 137; Lamentations

October 11, 13: Critiques of War and Traditions of Peace in the First Testament:

Niditch, Chapter 7

Dyer, Chapter 7

Read the following passages: Genesis 9:5; Genesis 49:5-7 (Jacob criticizes Simeon and Levi); Exodus 22:21-24 (proper treatment of resident aliens); Leviticus 19; Deuteronomy 19:15-20 (two witnesses); Judges 9 (Abimelech); Isaiah 2:4 and Micah 4:3 (the messianic age); Hosea 1:4 (Jehu); 2 Kings 6:20-23 (prisoners of war); Hillel, "Do No Harm"

October 25, 27; November 1, 3: War in the New Testament

Swartley, "War and Peace in the New Testament"

Dyer, Chapters 8-9

Readings from Holmes, TBA

Film: *Gettysburg* (pending)

Read the following passages: Matthew 5:38-42/Luke 6:27-36; Matthew 10:34-35/Luke 14:26; Mark 9:42; Mark 11:15-17/Matthew 21:12-13, 18-22/Luke 19:45-8; Mark 12:1-9; Ephesians 6:10-20; 2 Timothy 2:3-4; Revelation. We will also discuss Jesus' relationship to the Zealots and other Jewish political revolutionaries.

November 8: Crusades

Readings TBA

Readings from Holmes TBA

Dyer, Chapter 10

November 10: Opposition to War:

Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*

November 15: Madness of War

Films: *The Thin Red Line*; first 30 minutes of *Saving Private Ryan*

Readings from Holmes, TBA

Jewish Texts TBA

November 17: Patriotism: Film: *Alexander Nevsky*

Readings from Holmes, TBA

Jewish Texts TBA

Dyer, Chapter 11

November 29, December 1: Just War Theories

Readings from Holmes, TBA

Hotel Rwanda

December 1, 6: Just War

Exodus 15, "Song at the Sea"

Primo Levi, *If Not Now, When?*

December 6, 8 Terrorism

Films: *The Battle of Algiers*, *One Day in September*

Holmes, Readings TBA

December 8, 13: The Middle East

Readings TBA

December 13, 15: Violence

Wolfgang Huber, *Violence*

Readings from *Peace Reader*, TBA