

The Ethics of Warfare
Undergraduate Seminar
Lauren Sukin
lsukin@stanford.edu



Course Description:

In the 1990s, many political writers and commentators hailed the end of the Cold War as the inauguration of a new era of international peace and stability. Yet war—in new and troubling ways—is as much a central part of our political experience as ever. If the public is going to have an informed and reflective voice in making political decisions about war, we must find ways of evaluating, judging, and intelligently arguing about it.

Does the decision to go to war conform to our deepest principles and commitments? What are those principles, anyway? When, if ever, is it morally “right” for a country to go to war? And what about *how* war is fought? Do moral obligations apply to the means of warfare, as well as the ends? What are the consequences of war on militaries, civilians, and states—and how can we morally grapple with those consequences?

This class introduces students to what is known as “just war theory,” a framework for evaluating morality of warfare, as well as Pacifist and Realist critics of this tradition. We will apply these theories to a wide variety of concrete examples, both historical and contemporary. Readings for this course integrate many disciplines including film, fiction, political science, journalism, and philosophy.

Course Goals:

This course teaches students to:

- Understand various systems of ethics;
- Critically read and analyze primary, secondary, and creative sources;
- Analyze and understand political science and political theory scholarship;
- Apply these skills to historical cases of conflict and current events.

Requirements:

You do not need any background knowledge about the subjects we will cover, but you **are** expected to complete all readings and assignments. Students are also expected to **read the news** every day of the course, keeping up to date with current events, especially as they relate to international security. Doing so will make our class discussions much more interesting and fruitful! We will often communicate through **e-mail**, which means you are expected to check your email **daily**.

Availability:

Office hours are **Tuesdays, 11:30-1:30** in **Encina Central Room 434**. Sign up for office hours here: <https://www.wejoinin.com/lukin@stanford.edu>. Sign-ups help reduce wait times and allow the instructor to prepare for each meeting. If you cannot make any of these times, please email me and we can schedule an alternative time.

I encourage you to utilize office hours for longer conversations, but you should also feel free to email me (particularly with any brief questions.) I will get back to you within 24 hours during the week and within 48 hours on weekends and holidays. Give yourself enough time to receive a reply. Please write emails in a professional manner.

Accommodations:

Please contact me if you have approved accommodations. Please include a copy of your accommodations letter. I will help facilitate these accommodations. Requested accommodations that are not approved by the Office of Accessible Education or a dean are unlikely to be granted. No extensions will be granted on assignments without clear, extenuating circumstances.

Assignments:

Creative Supplement Assignment (10%)

Many days of this course are accompanied by fiction, nonfiction, or film assignments. These works are designed to enhance your understanding of course topics, but they will not often be the subjects of discussion in class.

Students will choose **one** of these creative works and write a 3-page paper analyzing the work, focusing especially on 1) its contributions to the student's understanding of conflict, and 2) issues, omissions, or challenges that the work faces. This paper can be turned in at any point in the course. Further guidelines for this assignment are available on Canvas.

Midterm Debate Assignment (20%)

Students will debate cases of military intervention in assigned teams of two. Students will be assigned a historical or contemporary case as well as a 'side' in the debate (either pro-intervention or anti-intervention). Students are expected to prepare for this debate by researching the history of their case and reviewing class materials. Students are encouraged to draft outlines of their speeches for the debate, and students will be required to submit their notes for the debate to the instructor. Detailed instructions and tips for the debate are available on Canvas.

Final Research Assignment (50%):

Students will write a research paper on the ethics of a historical or contemporary conflict. This assignment will be due during finals week.

Papers should be 8-10 pages long (double spaced, 12 pt. font, 1-inch margins, Times New Roman). Students should discuss the cases that they are interested in with the instructor *before* selecting their topic. A 2-page outline will be due midway through the course, and the final paper

will be due during finals week. Papers should utilize class material as well as topic research. Make sure that you use primary as well as secondary sources in your paper. Detailed instructions and tips for the paper outline as well as the final paper are available on Canvas.

Students may design an alternate assignment in consultation with the instructor. Options for alternate assignments include creating a documentary, conducting interviews or data collection and summarizing findings in a report, analyzing a work of fiction/film using the ethical frameworks we discuss in the course, etc. These assignments must meet the same standards of rigor as the research paper. Examples of past alternate assignments are available on Canvas.

Reflections, Readings, News, and Participation (20%):

Students must read the news throughout the duration of the course. At the beginning of some classes, a student will be randomly selected to present to the class an article that they read the previous day. Students will describe the contents of the article as well as analyze the quality of the source. The purpose of this assignment is to get students into the habit of reading the news every day.

Most classes have assigned readings, and some have small, additional homework assignments, such as 1-page reflections on class activities or required posts on Canvas. You are expected to complete all readings and assignments **within the week that they are assigned and before the following week's class**. Advice for reading and analyzing academic work in political science can be found in the "Reading in Political Science" guide on Canvas. Keep up to date with Canvas announcements throughout the course.

Attendance and Participation:

Do I have to come to class?

Attendance and participation make up 20% of your grade. Attendance and participation are expected, unless you have an excused absence. If you will be unable to attend, be sure to notify your instructor in advance. Students with excused absences may make up participation points by submitting a 2-page response memo on the course material for the missed class.

How is my participation evaluated?

To receive full credit for attendance, you must attend class each week, arrive on time, and participate in activities and discussions. Participation grades will be based on the quality, not on the quantity, of participation. Students who make an effort to prepare ahead of time, make thoughtful contributions, ask questions that further the conversation, and listen and respond to their classmates will do well.

There are two exceptions to this policy:

- This is a class about conflict. War is gruesome, tragic, and often an uncomfortable subject for discussion. I expect students to do their best to engage even with material that may be unsettling. However, if you have any specific, strong triggers, please notify the instructor via email—that will allow you to exit the room if these topics arise.
- Some students are naturally talkative. Other students struggle to find their voice. Both types of students are welcome in this course. If you are of the latter type, I highly

encourage being prepared for class by identifying elements of the course material that you find interesting, curious, problematic, etc. and preparing some discussion points. However, if, for any reason, you are not comfortable talking in class, you may choose to refrain from participation and instead send in a 2-page response paper with your thoughts on that day's class. Doing this will allow the instructor to understand what you know, what you are interested in, and what can be clarified or improved upon.

Will you cold-call students?

There may be situations in which I cold-call students. The purpose of cold calling is not to embarrass you! It is to encourage everyone to actively participate and to create an environment where everyone feels comfortable engaging. You should not be afraid of being wrong. Being wrong is an important part of academic inquiry.

What should I do to prepare for class?

You will need to have read the material ahead of time. I recommend that, as you go through the readings, you take notes. Whenever possible, we will try to tie the theoretical principles under study to current events and ongoing international political debates. Stay tied into the most recent developments in international politics so you can contribute substantively to discussions.

Can I use a computer during class?

Yes. However, the purpose of class is to engage with the material and with each other. Computers, phones, and tablets can distract from that goal. If you seem distracted by any technology, it is more likely that I will cold-call you! I will also ask you to put away anything that appears to be distracting.

On Politics & Controversy:

This is a politics class and some political issues will be inherently controversial. Our goal is to approach politics objectively, utilizing and analyzing the available resources. This is an environment for learning and debate, and I want all students to be able to express their thoughts as well as interact with and learn from their peers. Please be aware of and respectful of the fact that your peers may have different views from you. That being said, it is important to take care of yourself. While there will not be formal trigger warnings for readings or discussions, if any conversation becomes too difficult for you, you can take steps (like leaving the room) to alleviate that pressure without being penalized.

Re-Grade Policy:

Should you wish to have an assignment re-graded, you must submit a 1-page memo explaining why you are requesting a re-grade. Point to specific elements that you believe were graded incorrectly. Please note that re-grades can make your grade higher or lower. The new grade that you are assigned is permanent and cannot be changed.

Academic Integrity:

We take the honor code very seriously at Stanford and expect you to abide by it at all times. This means that you agree not to receive or give unpermitted aid on assignments or exams. You also agree not to plagiarize, either from outside sources or other students. The penalty for honor code violations is harsh and can include suspension.

The Honor Code is the University's statement on academic integrity written by students in 1921. It articulates University expectations of students and faculty in establishing and maintaining the highest standards in academic work.

In recent years, most student disciplinary cases have involved Honor Code violations; of these, the most frequent arise when a student submits another's work as their own or gives or receives unpermitted aid. The standard penalty for a first offense includes a one-quarter suspension from the University and 40 hours of community service. In addition, most faculty members issue a "No Pass" or "No Credit" for the course in which the violation occurred. The standard penalty for multiple violations (e.g. cheating more than once in the same course) is a three-quarter suspension and 40 or more hours of community service.

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in any form. Please refer to and uphold the Stanford Honor Code, noting especially the rules on plagiarism. You can find the Code here: <https://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/communitystandards/policy/honor-code>.

Additional Resources:

Hume Writing Center

You are encouraged to make use of the writing tutoring offered through the Hume Center, especially as you begin work on your term papers. <https://undergrad.stanford.edu/tutoring-support/hume-center/see-tutor>.

Library Research Support

These resources can help with research and papers: <https://library.stanford.edu/students>.

Diversity/First-Gen Resources

Stanford has many resources available for its students; you can find more information about resources for diverse and first-generation students here: <https://undergrad.stanford.edu/advising/student-guides/diversity-and-first-gen-office>.

Tutoring and Academic Support

If you are falling behind in class, reach out to me! We can work through any issues you are having with the material. Moreover, there are a number of additional tutoring and support resources that you might find helpful: <https://undergrad.stanford.edu/tutoring-support/tutoring>.

Mental Health Resources

Counseling & Psychological Services at Vaden is available to assist with a wide range of mental health concerns. <https://vaden.stanford.edu/caps>.

Class Schedule:

Week 1

Introduction: Can War Be Just?

- Class: Introductions to Political Science, Ethics, and Laws of War
 - Introductions, Syllabus Review, and Introductory Survey
 - Discussion: What is Political Science?
 - Lecture: Introduction to Ethics
 - Read & Discuss: [United Nations Charter](#), Articles 1-5.
- Assignments:
 - [What Is Politics?](#)
 - Review the “Reading in Political Science” guide on Canvas.
 - Carl von Clausewitz, Book 1, Chapter 1, in *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret, Princeton: Princeton University Press, (1976): 75-89.
 - Thucydides, “The Melian Dialogue,” in *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Chapter 17.
 - Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, Chapters 1, 2, and 6.

Week 2

The Right to Self Defense: When Do We Fight?

- Class:
 - Handouts: Reading in Political Science
 - Lecture: History of Political Thought on Conflict
 - Discuss: [If Crisis or War Comes](#), Swedish Government Pamphlet, 2018 Version.
- Assignments:
 - John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001), Chapters 1 and 2.
 - Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, Chapters 1-5
 - Robert Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (1978), 167-206. (*Note: Only read through pg. 206, not through the end of the article.*)
 - Think about your research paper topic.

Week 3

Realism

- Class:
 - Lecture: Realism
 - Activity: Security Dilemma & Building from Anarchy
- Assignments:
 - Daniel Drezner, Ronald Krebs, and Randall Schweller, “The End of Grand Strategy: America Must Think Small,” *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2020.
 - Robert D. Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games,” *International Organization*, 42, no. 3 (1988): 427-460.
 - Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change,” *International Organization* (1998): 887-917.

- Tannenwald, Nina. "The nuclear taboo: The United States and the normative basis of nuclear non-use." *International organization* 53, no. 3 (1999): 433-468.
- Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Chapters 1-4 (Optional).
- Confirm your topic over email or in office hours with the instructor.

Week 4

Liberalism & Constructivism

- Class:
 - Lecture: Liberalism and Features of International Institutions
 - Game: Overfishing and the Global Commons
 - Lecture: Constructivism
 - Discuss: Nationalism and Identity
- Assignments:
 - *Military Ethics: What Everyone Needs to Know*, Ch. 1, 2, & 4.
 - Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter 13.
 - Watch "Men Against Fire," *Black Mirror*.
 - Contribute to the Canvas Discussion Board by posting 1-2 paragraphs about what you think is the most significant political conflict that's occurred in your lifetime. Did the conflict affect you? If so, how? If not, why not? How does the conflict relate to the themes we've discussed in class? What lessons do you think policymakers should take away from the conflict?
 - Begin outlining your research paper.

Week 5

Strategies of Conflict

- Class:
 - Lecture: Military Strategy, Tactics, and Operations
 - Activity: Virtual Staff Ride
- Assignments:
 - Fearon, James D. "Rationalist explanations for war." *International organization* 49, no. 3 (1995): 379-414.
 - Erica D. Borghard and Shawn W. Lonergan, "[Why Are There No Cyber Arms Control Agreements?](#)" Council on Foreign Relations Blog Post, January 16, 2018.
 - Sukin, Lauren, Kathryn Hedgecock, and Leah Matchett. "The Distinctiveness of Cybersecurity and Public Support for Cyber Retaliation."
 - Play one of the suggested military strategy boardgames with a friend or classmate and write a one-page reflection on how the game reflects or distorts real-world principles of military strategy. Copies of the games will be available to borrow in class; please return the game during next week's session.
 - Continue to outline your research paper topic. Arrange to meet with the instructor to discuss your outline next week.

Week 6

Can War Be Avoided?

- Class:

- Exercise: Bargaining Games
- Lecture: Why Does War Happen?
- Debate: Is War with China Inevitable?
- Assignments:
 - *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families*, Chapters 9-13.
 - Steinfels, Peter, [“How Do You Tell A Victorious War from a Just One?”](#) *New York Times*, March 17, 1991.
 - Morgenthau, “To Intervene or Not to Intervene.”
 - Watch [The Fog of War](#).
 - Meet with the instructor on your outline.

Week 7

Humanitarian Intervention

- Class:
 - Lecture: Humanitarian Intervention
 - Read & Discuss: [R2P Report](#), VII-XIII & 31-37
 - Group Debate: Victorious vs. Just Wars
- Assignments:
 - *A Problem from Hell*, Parts I & II.
 - *Military Ethics*, Chapters 7-9
 - Sukin, Lauren and Allen Weiner. “Self-Defense and Justifications for the Use of Force.”
 - Watch [Restrepo](#).
 - Continue working on your outline.

Week 8

Consequences of Intervention

- Class:
 - Lecture: Refugees & The Aftermath of War
 - Activity: UNHCR Refugee Simulation
- Assignments:
 - *A Problem from Hell*, Part III.
 - Luban, David. “Just War and Human Rights,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs*. (1980): 161-180.
 - Matziaraki, Daphne. “4.1 Miles,” *New York Times*, 09/28/2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/28/opinion/4-1-miles.html>
 - Sonia Shah, “Climate Change Will Drive People Across Borders,” *Foreign Affairs*, July 29, 2020.
 - Sukin, Lauren. “The United States Treats Migrants Worse Than Prisoners of War.” *Foreign Policy*. July 26, 2019.
 - Begin writing your final paper.

Week 9

Terrorism

- Class:
 - Discuss: Final Essay
 - Lecture: Terrorism Part I—Defining Terrorism
 - Including “Defining Terrorism” Activity
 - Lecture: Terrorism, Part II—Combatting Terrorism
 - Including Terrorism Simulation
 - Guest Speaker: Internal Politics of Terrorist Organizations
- Assignments:
 - [Geneva Conventions](#) I, II, and IV.
 - Sukin, Lauren and Kaitlyn Robinson. “Pandemic Politics: Why the US police should read ‘just war’ theory.” *International Affairs* and Future Strategy Forum. August 20, 2020.
 - You will be assigned a section of “explanations of terrorism” articles for next week. Take notes on these articles and be prepared to present and analyze the main points of the article in class. Compare and contrast the articles in your assigned section.
 - Ideological/Cultural Explanations of Terrorism
 - Oberschall, Anthony. “Explaining Terrorism: The Contribution of Collective Action Theory.” *Sociological Theory* 22, no. 1 (2004): 26-37.
 - Piazza, James. “Is Islamist Terrorism More Dangerous? An empirical study of group ideology, organization, and goal structure.” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 21, no. 1 (2009): 62-88.
 - Psychological/Social Explanations of Terrorism
 - Abrahms, Max. “What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy.” *International Security*, 32, no. 4 (2008): 78-105.
 - Berman, Eli, and David D. Laitin. "Religion, terrorism and public goods: Testing the club model." *Journal of Public Economics* 92.10 (2008): 1942-1967.
 - Liberal Institutional Explanations of Terrorism
 - Abadie, Alberto. “Poverty, Political Freedom, and the Roots of Terrorism.” *American Economic Review* 96, no. 2 (2006): 50-56.
 - De Mesquita, Bueno. “The Quality of Terror.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 49, no. 5 (2005): 515-530.
 - Rational Explanations of Terrorism
 - Robert Pape, “The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism,” *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 3 (2003): 343-361.
 - Andrew H. Kydd and Barbara F. Walter, “The Strategies of Terrorism,” *International Security* 31, no. 1 (2006), pp. 49-80.
 - Economic Explanations of Terrorism
 - Mousseau, Michael. “Market Civilization and Its Clash with Terror,” *International Security* 27, no. 3 (2003): 5-29.

- Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy M. Weinstein, “Who Fights? The Determinants of Participation in Civil War,” *American Journal of Political Science* 52, no. 2 (2008): 436-455.
- Continue working on the final paper.

Week 10

Counterterrorism and Laws of Armed Conflict

- Class:
 - Present: Explanations of Terrorism Readings
 - Lecture: Laws of Armed Conflict
 - Watch: “[This is Your Brain on Terrorism](#),” *VOX*. March 20, 2017.
 - Read & Discuss: The “Torture Memos”
 - Assign: Review guidelines for intervention debates, give out case assignments.
- Assignments:
 - *Choices Under Fire*. Part I, p. 42-58.
 - *Guantanamo Diary*. Chapter 5-7.
 - Nincic, Miroslav, and Donna J. Nincic. "Race, Gender, and War." *Journal of Peace Research* 39, no. 5 (2002): 547-568.
 - Watch [Eye in the Sky](#) (Amazon Prime) or [Drone](#) (YouTube). Contribute 1-2 paragraphs to the Canvas Discussion Board for the film that you choose.
 - Prepare for intervention debates next week.
 - Continue working on the final paper.

Week 11

Intervention Debates

- Class:
 - Exercise: Intervention debates!
 - Debates will take place in two groups; each team will present in front of half of the class. Students who are not debating will listen to the speeches and will act as “judges.” Debates will be recorded.
 - Activity: Public Speaking
 - Students will listen to and make improvements to their speeches. They will then perform their speeches again in front of their teammates.
- Assignments:
 - Hersey, John. “[Hiroshima](#),” *The New Yorker*, August 31, 1945.
 - The Jewel Voice Broadcast. “[The Debate Over Japan’s Decision To Surrender](#).” Atomic Heritage Foundation. June 1, 2016.
 - Dower, John. *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*. New York: Pantheon Books, (1986): 3-33.
 - Sagan, Scott Douglas, and Kenneth Neal Waltz. *The spread of nuclear weapons: an enduring debate: with new chapters on Iran, Iraq, and North Korea, and on the prospects for global nuclear disarmament*. WW Norton & Company, 2013. Chapters 1-4. (Note: Take notes on these chapters! We will debate Sagan and Waltz’s positions in class next week.)
 - Continue working on the final paper.

Week 12

Hiroshima & Nagasaki

- Class:
 - Lecture: Part I—Introduction to Nuclear Weapons
 - Lecture: Part II—Nonproliferation
 - Including Proliferation Debates
 - Lecture: Part III—Nuclear Strategy
 - Activity: Comparing Nuclear Posture Reviews
- Assignments:
 - *Choices Under Fire* (Part II)
 - Monteiro, Nuno P., and Alexandre Debs. "The strategic logic of nuclear proliferation." *International Security* 39, no. 2 (2014): 7-51.
 - Sonali Singh and Christopher Way, "The Correlates of Nuclear Proliferation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48, No. 6 (2004): 859-885.
 - "Credible Nuclear Security Commitments Can Backfire: Explaining Domestic Support for Nuclear Weapons Acquisition in South Korea." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 64 No. 6, (2020): 1011–1042.
 - Malfrid Braut-Hegghammer, "Revisiting Osirak: Preventive Attacks and Nuclear Proliferation Risks," *International Security* 36, No. 1 (2011): 101-132.
 - Watch [Dr. Strangelove](#) (Optional)
 - Continue working on the final paper.

Week 13

Today's Nuclear World

- Class:
 - Lecture: Part I – The Use of Nuclear Weapons
 - Including Nuclear Use Survey
 - Lecture: Part II—Proliferation Theories and New Nuclear Nations
 - Discussion: Part III—Potential for Proliferation
- Assignments:
 - Watch [Command and Control](#) (Optional)
 - Thomas, Louisa. "Give Pacifism a Chance." *The New York Times*. August 27, 2011. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/28/opinion/sunday/what-is-pacifism-good-for.html>)
 - Jeff McMahan, "Rethinking the 'Just War,' [Parts 1](#) & [2](#)," *The New York Times*, November 11 & 12, 2012.
 - Carol Cohn, "Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals," *Signs* 12, No. 4 (1987): 687-718.
 - Final papers and creative supplement assignments are due next week!

Week 14

Finals Week

- No class! Submit final papers and creative supplement assignments by Friday at 5pm.