Description

When states or other human groupings abandon less primitive means of resolving their conflicts, they resort to war. Although many wars have been terribly bloody and destructive, history provides relatively few examples of wars of total annihilation. Rather, for reasons involving both self-interest and ethical conviction, political leaders and warriors have often observed limits in their resort to war and the conduct of battle. This course examines the historical, moral, and legal foundations of these limits, and their enduring relevance despite ongoing changes in world politics and the transformation of modern warfare.

Although we consider alternative perspectives, the course focuses primarily on the just war tradition, major elements of which are reflected in international law governing the legitimate resort to force and proper conduct during wartime. Topics include aggression and self-defense, genocide, humanitarian intervention, nuclear deterrence, noncombatant immunity, terrorism and counterterrorism, treatment of prisoners, torture, and prosecution of war crimes. Discussion of these topics is informed by contemporary just war thinking as well as the political and moral philosophies of Augustine, Aquinas, Kant, Grotius, and Pufendorf.

Evaluation

Course grades are based on a midterm and final exam.

Readings
