

## Dana Trusso

### Abstract

The Ethics of War Project is designed for HUP 104 Ethics and Moral Issues, a course populated by non-majors fulfilling the Individual and Society Pathway graduation requirement; many majors in Philosophy also enroll in the class. The NEH “Meanings of War” inspired the project, especially the issue of the most ethical practices during war using the bombing of Hiroshima as a case study. Three distinct argumentative essays and one midterm debate are usually assigned in the course, but the project adds debates, a staged approach, peer review, and critical response essay.

The Ethics of War Project spans four weeks and is worth 25% of the course grade. The first two weeks are dedicated to close readings of philosophical essays that serve as a platform to debate issues of just war, ethical conduct in war, torture, and terrorism (2%). The third week students complete the first draft of the research paper, and then students exchange papers with a partner and assess their peer’s paper based on the peer review rubric (3%). The fourth week students revise papers based on the peer review and submit to Blackboard (15%). Lastly, students write a one-page critical response paper carefully examining the argument in their partner’s revised paper (5%).

HUP 104 is a baseline course for the Inquiry and Problem Solving Core Competency that is paired with Oral Ability in the Philosophy Program’s curriculum map. By adding a short video presentation, the Ethics of War Project could easily be amended to fulfill the Oral Ability and the video deposited for assessment. I allow students to choose from any completed assignment from the course—of which the Ethics of War Project is one—to create a five-minute video that applies the problem-solving method to one moral issue. The video serves as the final exam and is posted on Blackboard Discussion where students post short critical responses (10%). Additionally, the four-week timeframe of the project can be paired down by eliminating one or more readings and the subsequent debates.

## Required Reading, Film Clips, and In-Class Debates (2%)

### FILM CLIPS: *White Light/Black Rain* (2007)

- John Rawls “50 Years After Hiroshima”
  - Debate 1: Is war morally justified? (Case: Bombing of Hiroshima) (.5%)
- Thomas Nagel “War and Massacre”
  - Debate 2: Does the end of war justify the means? Is it morally justified to target civilians and noncombatants in war? Which approach--utilitarianism or absolutism--best resolves the question of moral conduct in war? (Case: Bombing of Hiroshima) (.5%)

### FILM CLIPS: *Battle of Algiers* (1966)

- Alan Dershowitz “Should the Ticking Time Bomb Terrorist Be Tortured?”
  - Debate 3: Is torture morally justified? (Case: Torture of Algerians by French) (.5%)
- Michael Walzer “Terrorism: A Critique of Excuses”
  - Debate 4: Is terrorism morally justified? (Case: Bombing of civilian targets by Algerians) (.5%)

## Argumentative Essay (15%)

Choose one of the above debate topics to further research in a five-page argumentative essay. A current example from a reliable news source will serve as a relevant case study, and the application of two ethical theories will aid the examination of the case. Write a well-researched and carefully reasoned argument that takes a side on the issue. Submit to Blackboard and bring a hard copy to class. *See Current News Analysis handout for detailed instructions.* Revised paper will also be posted on Blackboard.

## Peer Review (3%)

Review a peer’s paper according to the rubric, writing on the paper itself when appropriate. Return the rubric and marked paper to author for revision.

## Critical Response (5%)

Write a one-page response that provides constructive criticism of the argument in the revised paper. Submit on Blackboard and bring a hard copy to class. Start with summarizing the argument of the paper. Next, explain why this is a moral issue worthy of consideration. Then, analyze specific parts of the argument that need improvement. Consider responses the author would make and explain why those reasons are mistaken or unsatisfactory. Lastly, summarize your criticism. Argue why your response is a helpful way to improve the author’s argument, and ultimately in understanding how to resolve the issue. *See Critical Response Guide for more details.*