

IDS 2935: War and the Human Condition

Quest 1: The Examined Life

I. General Information

Class Meetings

- Spring 2024
- 100% In-Person, no GTAs, 35 residential students
- T Period 4 (10:40-11:30AM), R Periods 4–5 (10:40AM-12:35PM)
- Location: MCCA 2196

Instructor

- Prof. Nathan Pinkoski
- nathanpinkoski@ufl.edu
- Office Hours: Wednesdays, 2-430 pm, or by appointment.
- Location: Computer Science and Engineering Building (CSE/E) 508.

Course Description

How does war shape the human condition? In the present era, Western countries are generally sheltered from war. But this is an anomaly. Most human societies have had to reckon with war and grapple with its effects. Moreover, they have tended to regard this reckoning as important for developing their own way of life. Without that reckoning, their societies might atrophy, ossify, and slide into decadence. The resurgence of concerns about the potential for open warfare between China, Russia, and the United States demonstrates the need to consider war's effects and the persistent questions its possibility poses for human societies. This discussion-driven course explores war's effects on the human condition through a variety of disciplines and approaches. To study these effects we draw from philosophy, literature, ancient and modern history, and illustrate these effects through a number of literary sources, including drama, novels, memoirs, and film.

We begin by examining the debate as to whether war is always immoral or whether we can and should set out to abolish it, as discussed, among others, by Elizabeth Anscombe, Immanuel Kant, and Carl Schmitt. With this theoretical edifice, we turn to the historical role the soldier has played in a variety of societies, and examine the phenomenology of warfare in works of literature. We pursue several key questions: which virtues and character-traits does it provide that are not available in peace? Does war provide special capacities for leadership? Are the habits and skills gained in wartime transferable to peacetime? How do modern technological developments change the character of soldiers and combatants? Among other authors, we will read Homer, Plutarch, Jean Lartéguy, and Winston Churchill, to reflect on the nature of statesmanship, reckon with the significance of war crimes, and ponder the consequences of victory, defeat, and captivity for the soldier's character and for the societies to which he belongs. To conclude the course, we examine the fraught questions of civil-military relations and discuss war, spirituality, and transcendence through critically-acclaimed films.

Quest and General Education Credit

- Quest 1
- Humanities
- Writing Requirement (WR) 2,000 words.

This course accomplishes the Quest and General Education objectives of the subject areas listed above. A minimum grade of C is required for Quest and General Education credit. Courses intended to satisfy Quest and General Education requirements cannot be taken S-U.

The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use a writing as a tool to facilitate learning. Course grades have two components. To receive the writing requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course.

Required Readings and Works

1. All readings will be made available in Canvas or provided in class; bibliographic information is included in the weekly schedule.
2. This course helps to satisfy the Writing Requirement; students are recommended to obtain a copy of *The New Oxford Style Manual*, (Oxford University Press, 2016). ISBN: 978-0198767251.
3. Materials and Supplies Fees: n/a

II. Graded Work

Description of Graded Work

Active Participation and Discussion Questions: 25%

- a. Class participation involves both active class discussion (10%) and written discussion questions (15%) that engage directly with the reading for that week.
- b. 10% of your grade is based on class participation. An exemplary participant shows evidence of having completed the assigned reading before each class, consistently offers thoughtful points and questions for discussion, and listens respectfully to other students and the instructor. See participation rubric below. (R) Students reluctant to speak in class should contact the instructor directly about this.
- c. 15% of your grade is determined by completion of weekly discussion questions of 150-200 words each. Questions should be posted to our Canvas discussion board at least one hour before our first class each week, and should demonstrate both close engagement with the assigned text and thoughtful reflection on the text's significance. Students should be prepared to discuss their submissions in class.
- d. Class participation involves regular and timely attendance. Students are allowed two free unexcused absences during the semester; any further unexcused absences will result in a 5 point deduction from your *overall course grade*. Please see the Attendance Policy (Section VI) for further details on excused absences.

Midterm Exam, Week 8: 25%

- a. The midterm exam will be an in-class, 50-minute exam composed of three textual identification and analysis questions.

Experiential Learning Presentation and Paper, due Week 12: 10% (WR)

- a. Students will select a novel or film that reflects, clarifies, or challenges the ideas we study in class. Students will prepare an analytical essay of 1000-1200 words in which they apply the ideas we've studied in class to their chosen work, and will share with the class what this novel or film can teach us. See "Experiential Learning Component," in syllabus below for more details.

Analytical and Self-Reflection Paper, due Week 14: 15% (WR, R)

- a. Students will write an analytical essay of 1800-2000 words, drawing from the ideas we study in class and their own self-reflection, to reflect on whether the abolition of universal conscription has been a mistake. See "Analytical and Self-Reflection Component," in syllabus below for more details.

Final Exam, Week 15: 25%

- a. The final exam will be an in-class, 50-minute exam composed of two short essays.

Grading Scale

For information on how UF assigns grade points, visit: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>.

A	94 – 100%		C	74 – 76%
A-	90 – 93%		C-	70 – 73%

B+	87 – 89%		D+	67 – 69%
B	84 – 86%		D	64 – 66%
B-	80 – 83%		D-	60 – 63%
C+	77 – 79%		E	<60

Grading Rubrics

Participation Rubric

	Excellent (90-100%)	Good (80-89%)	Average (70-79%)	Insufficient (60-69%)	Unsatisfactory (below 60%)
Knowledgeable: Shows evidence of having done the assigned work.					
Thoughtful: Evaluates carefully issues raised in assigned work.					
Considerate: Takes the perspective of others into account and listens attentively.					

Writing Rubric

	SATISFACTORY (Y)	UNSATISFACTORY (N)
CONTENT	Papers exhibit at least some evidence of ideas that respond to the topic with complexity, critically evaluating and synthesizing sources, and provide at least an adequate discussion with basic understanding of sources.	Papers either include a central idea(s) that is unclear or off- topic or provide only minimal or inadequate discussion of ideas. Papers may also lack sufficient or appropriate sources.
ORGANIZATION AND COHERENCE	Documents and paragraphs exhibit at least some identifiable structure for topics, including a clear thesis statement but may require readers to work to follow progression of ideas.	Documents and paragraphs lack clearly identifiable organization, may lack any coherent sense of logic in associating and organizing ideas, and may also lack transitions and coherence to guide the reader.
ARGUMENT AND SUPPORT	Documents use persuasive and confident presentation of ideas, strongly supported with evidence. At the weak end of the Satisfactory range, documents may provide only generalized discussion of ideas or may provide adequate discussion but rely on weak support for arguments.	Documents make only weak generalizations, providing little or no support, as in summaries or narratives that fail to provide critical analysis.
STYLE	Documents use a writing style with word choice appropriate to the context, genre, and discipline. Sentences should display complexity and logical sentence structure. At a minimum, documents will display a less precise use of vocabulary and an uneven use of sentence structure or a writing style that occasionally veers away from word choice or tone appropriate to the context, genre, and discipline.	Documents rely on word usage that is inappropriate for the context, genre, or discipline. Sentences may be overly long or short with awkward construction. Documents may also use words incorrectly.
MECHANICS	Papers will feature correct or error-free presentation of ideas. At the weak end of the Satisfactory range, papers may contain some spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors that remain unobtrusive so they do not muddy the paper's argument or points.	Papers contain so many mechanical or grammatical errors that they impede the reader's understanding or severely undermine the writer's credibility.

1. The student must earn a grade of C or better in the course.
- AND
2. The student must earn an S (satisfactory) evaluation on the writing requirements of the course.

III. Annotated Weekly Schedule

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Is War Ever Justified? • Summary: Lecture and discussion will introduce and motivate the central question of the course, and raise related questions/issues for continued consideration. The central question of our course is how war shapes the human condition. But we could argue that war only shapes the human condition in evil ways: therefore, war and intentional killing is always evil. In this week we look at some secular and religious cases for pacifism and important criticisms. • Required Reading (46 pages): Daniel Dombrowski, "Christian Pacifism," in <i>The Routledge Handbook of Pacifism and Non-Violence</i>, ed. by Andrew Fiala (Routledge 2020), 43-53; G.E.M. Anscombe, "War and Murder," in <i>Ethics, Religion, and Politics</i>; 51-61; C.S. Lewis, "Why I'm not a Pacifist" in <i>The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses</i> 64-90.
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: The Possibility of Abolishing War • Summary: Other thinkers have allowed that war might be justifiable in some circumstances, but that because on most occasions it is so destructive, it is better to rearrange our ethics, politics, and institutions in order to abolish it. We begin by looking at one of the most philosophically rigorous aspirations for how to abolish war, found in Immanuel Kant. • Required Reading (48 pages): Kant, "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent," and "To Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch," in <i>Perpetual Peace and Other Essays (Hackett Edition)</i> 29-40; 107-144.
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: The Permanency of War • Summary: We consider the challenge to Kant's thesis by reading Carl Schmitt's famous text, which argues that not only is war a permanent potential threat for human societies to reckon with, but that the pursuit of the project to abolish war produces even more intense forms of war than those known in the past. • Required Reading (75 pages): Carl Schmitt, <i>The Concept of the Political</i>, Expanded Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 19-96.
Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: What is a Soldier? Between Warrior, Citizen, and Professional • Summary: We now turn to examine those entrusted by their community with the task of killing: the soldier. We examine several different portrayals of his role and function in society, from antiquity to modernity, and what kind of ethic these different kinds of soldier require from society and from the soldier himself. • Required Reading (50 pages): Homer, <i>The Iliad</i> (Penguin Classics, 2003), 319-329, 380-94; Fustel de Coulanges, <i>The Ancient City</i>, 167-182; Samuel Huntington, <i>The Soldier and the State</i> (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 7-18.
Week 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: War's Brutality • Summary: This week we look at war's effects on human beings through a selection from Remarque's famous 1929 novel, which portrays war's destruction of the human spirit and its ultimate futility. • Required Reading (60 pages): Erich Maria Remarque, <i>All Quiet on the Western Front</i> (Ballantine Books, 1987), 1-60.

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
Week 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: War's Nobility • Summary: We continue to look at war's effects on human beings through a selection from the memoirs of the philosopher Ernst Jünger. Unlike Remarque's novel, Jünger's memoirs show how the experience of war discloses higher human possibilities than those available in ordinary life. • Required Reading (54 pages): Ernst Jünger, <i>The Storm of Steel</i> (1929 translation, by Basil Creighton), 1-53, 153-211.
Week 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: War and Statesmanship • Summary: This week, we examine war from the perspective of the rulers or generals who decide to go to war and who wage it. What are the traits of a successful leader? Are the skills used in wartime the same as those used in peacetime? • Required Reading (18 pages): Plutarch, <i>Life of Alexander</i> (excerpt of 10 pages); Suetonius, <i>The Lives of the Caesars, The Deified Julius</i> (excerpt of 2 pages); James Bond Stockdale, "The Principles of Leadership", <i>The American Educator</i> 5:4 (1981), 12-16; <i>Patton</i> (1970; 172 minutes)
Week 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Midterm Review • Summary: This week, class sessions will be devoted to midterm review. The midterm exam will be composed of textual identification and analysis questions: students will be given blind passages from the texts we have studied and be asked to identify the authors, the argumentative contexts, the significance of each passage, and provide a brief analysis of the passages' content. This is a closed-book exam. Class time this week will focus on concept review and consolidating our reading so far, to help students prepare for the exam. • Required Reading: no new reading • Assignment: In-class midterm exam • Assignment: Experiential learning topic choice due
Week 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: The Soldier in Victory • Summary: In this section of the course, we turn to the phenomenology of warfare in different settings. Looking especially at literary portrayals and memoirs, we study how certain settings disclose certain human archetypes and reinforce certain virtues and vices in human beings. • Required Reading: Watch <i>Henry V</i> (1989; 137 minutes).
Week 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: The Soldier in Defeat • Summary: This week, we turn to two French sources, one in novel and one in film, in order to understand the noble and ignoble responses soldiers offer in the face of defeat. • Required Reading (60 pages): Jean Lartéguy, <i>The Centurions</i> (Penguin Classics 2015): p. 3-63; watch <i>Dien Bien Phu</i> (1992; 146 minutes).

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
Week 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: The Soldier in Captivity • Summary: Captivity has been a relatively common experience for soldiers, and sometimes they must wait for years to be released—if they do not opt for the risks of escape. But for some soldiers, the challenges of captivity reveal new insights into themselves, their enemies, and which philosophical commitments endure. • Required Reading (60 pages): Jean Lartéguy, <i>The Centurions</i> (Penguin Classics 2015): p. 64-103; James Bond Stockdale, <i>Courage under Fire: Testing Epictetus’s Doctrines in a Laboratory of Human Behavior</i> (Stanford: Hoover Institution, 1993), 1-21. [Optional]: Watch <i>La Grande Illusion</i> (1937; 114 minutes).
Week 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: War and the Technological Society • Summary: Discussion this week will focus on questions about how modern technological development has changed the face of war, to the point whereby the classical virtues and experiences of heroism one used to be able to acquire from it—and awareness of fixed human differences—are lost. Moreover, fighting wars far from the front line may save human lives, but dull our sense of responsibility for our actions. We probe the consequences of this for soldiers, officers, and politicians through readings and one contemporary film. • Required Reading (23 pages): Winston Churchill, “Mass Effects in Modern Life,” in <i>Thoughts and Adventures</i>, 269-80; Jim Webb, “Woman Can’t Fight,” <i>Washingtonian</i>, November 1979 (12 pages); watch <i>Eye in the Sky</i> (2015; 102 minutes) • Assignment: Experiential learning papers due.
Week 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: War Crimes • Summary: In this week, we shall consider the facts of war crimes with a view to understanding what they disclose about human nature. Is evil ingrained in our own nature? Or do perpetrators of war crimes have to find ways to circumvent the human conscience? Can we speak of a natural moral law? Are war crimes more or less likely to occur based on the ethical system we adopt? Are we losing the capacity to even recognise them? • Required Reading: (56 pages): Interview of Otto Ohlendorf, Nuremberg Trial Proceedings, 26th Day, Thursday 3 January 1946. [online text] https://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/01-03-46.asp; G.E.M. Anscombe, “Mr Truman’s Degree,” in <i>Ethics, Religion, and Politics</i>, 62-72.
Week 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Military and Civil Authority • Summary: One of the critical issues a modern democratic state has to get right is the relationship between civil and military authority. We explore this question in the American tradition through selections from the Federalist Papers and from Samuel Huntington’s classic treatment of the question. We also look at an example of how this relationship breaks down and what its consequences are. • Required Reading (39 pages): Alexander Hamilton, <i>Federalist 24-25</i>, ed. by J.R. Pole (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2005) 128-137; Samuel Huntington, <i>The Soldier and the State</i> (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 80-97; <i>The Nixon Tapes: 1971-72</i>, ed. by Douglas Brinkley and Luke Nichter (Boston: Mariner Books, 2015), 331-344.

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
Week 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: War and Spirituality • Summary: In the last week of class, we will conclude our discussion by tying together the theoretical strands we have pursued over the course of the semester through a comparative study of two films. Students will be invited to reflect on and articulate, their own views and lingering questions about war and the human condition, with a particular emphasis on discovering how human beings in wartime wrestle with their higher loyalties, beliefs, and faith. • Required Reading: Watch <i>The Thin Red Line</i> (1998; 171 minutes); [Optional] <i>Hacksaw Ridge</i> (2016; 139 minutes) • Assignment: Self-reflection papers due; In-class final exam

IV. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the [Quest](#) and [General Education](#) learning outcomes as follows:

Content: *Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the discipline(s).*

- Identify, describe, and explain the methodologies used across humanities disciplines to examine essential ideas war. **Assignments:** midterm exam, final exam, discussion questions.
- Identify, describe, and explain key ideas and questions about the nature of heroism, character, statesmanship, technology, and spirituality in wartime settings. **Assignments:** midterm exam, final exam, discussion questions.

Critical Thinking: *Students carefully and logically analyze information from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems within the discipline(s).*

- Analyze how the philosophical, theological, political, and artistic works we study in class present competing (or cohesive) pictures of war's effects on the human person and human communities. (H) **Assignments:** midterm exam, final exam, discussion questions.
- Apply philosophical and literary analysis of war's effects on human life to contemporary social, political, and cultural debates (Q1) **Assignments:** final exam, discussion questions, self-reflection paper, experiential learning paper.

Communication: *Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline(s).*

- Develop and present clear and effective written and oral work that demonstrates critical engagement with course texts, visual and auditory media, and experiential learning activities. (H & Q1) **Assignments:** experiential learning paper, discussion questions, midterm exam, final exam, self-reflection paper.
- Communicate well-supported ideas and arguments effectively within class discussion and debates, with clear oral presentation and written work articulating students' personal experiences and reflections on war and how it transforms the human being in negative and positive ways (Q1) **Assignments:** experiential learning paper, in-class presentation, discussion questions.

Connection: *Students connect course content with meaningful critical reflection on their intellectual, personal, and professional development at UF and beyond.*

- Connect course content with students' intellectual, personal, and professional lives at UF and beyond. (Q1) **Assignments:** self-reflection paper, discussion questions, in-class presentation.
- Reflect on students' own and others' experience with military life, war, and combat in class discussion and written work. (Q1) **Assignments:** experiential learning paper, in-class presentation, discussion questions.

V. Quest Learning Experiences

1. Details of Experiential Learning Component

After carefully reflecting on a presentation by an ROTC officer (TBC sometime in weeks 4-7), choose a novel, film, or work of art discussed or alluded to in class and put it in conversation with the ROTC officer's presentation. You should submit an essay of between 1000-1200 words, describing your chosen work, why you chose it, how it reflects or refracts the presentation of the ROTC officer, and how it has affected your own thinking about war and the human condition. No later than the end of Friday of Week 8, you should write to the instructor with the work you wish to write on and a 2-3 sentence description of the work's relevance to our course. This emailed proposal is worth 10% of the total grade for this assignment.

2. Details of Analytical and Self-Reflection Component

The texts we read invite us to consider how war shapes human character, and examines whether some human virtues are only gained through the direct experience of war and risking one's life. We see, therefore, deep challenges to contemporary accounts of the human being as an actor motivated by self-preservation and economic rationalism. In an essay of 1800-2000 words, please answer the question: "In the past few decades, most Western countries have abolished universal conscription. Very few citizens now have the experience of soldiering, let alone warfare and combat. Has the abolition of universal conscription been a mistake?" Your answer should draw on specific examples in our texts, and on your self-reflection. You may use anecdotes to describe how you came to the view you hold. Your answer might address the relationship between virtue and warfare, the effects of military life and war on the human person and on society, or consider how technological developments of the past century have changed how we fight wars. Essays are due in Week 14.

VI. Required Policies

Attendance Policy

Class attendance and participation are expected, and are an important part of your final grade. Two free unexcused absences per semester are allowed; any further unexcused absences will result in a 5 point reduction in your overall final grade. Excused absences are permitted consistent with university policies in the undergraduate catalog (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>). Students requesting an excused absence should email the instructor as soon as possible and may be asked to provide supporting documentation of the reason for their absence.

Make-up dates for in-class exams and presentations will only be allowed in the event of a documented emergency. Students should contact the instructor as early as possible to make arrangements.

Students Requiring Accommodation

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

UF Evaluations Process

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Counseling and Wellness Center

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

The Writing Studio

The writing studio is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the writing studio online at

<http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> or in 2215 Turlington Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.

In-Class Recordings

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.