This course offers a comprehensive overview of the role of ethics in international politics. In the most general sense, there are three main substantive elements of the course: just war theory, global distributive justice, and human rights. Other significant topics analyzed in this course include sovereignty, pacifism, and globalization.

In international politics, ethical obligations seem to be most controversial, and meet with apparently non-negotiable assertions of economic, political, or military necessity. This clash between ethics and politics, and what can or should be done about it, is the heart of the course. There is much debate about the role of ethics in international politics, among both citizens and academics. The current period is one in which international political norms are in relative flux, compared with the recent past. To that extent, the debates discussed in this course are of unusual immediacy. This course will not seek a particular resolution of these debates, but it will arm students with the knowledge necessary to better understand what is at stake in them, and to resolve them on their own insofar as such resolution is possible.

Those texts for this course which are on order at the bookstore are listed below. Other readings for this course will either be posted on the course website, or found through GMU Library E-Resources. Texts on order at the GMU Bookstore in Arlington:

Andrew Clapham, *Very Short Introduction to Human Rights*
Immanuel Kant, *Political Writings* (Cambridge University Press, Hans Reiss, ed.)
John Rawls, *Law of Peoples*
Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*

Course Requirements:

1) Regular attendance and well-informed participation in class discussion. We only meet once per week, so each student should be ready to contribute to discussion in each class meeting.
2) A paper of 1000 words (+/- 10%) due at 7:20 PM on Wednesday 6 February in hard copy.
3) During the term, a 1000 word critical essay (+/- 10%) focused on a particular week’s reading, turned in at 7:20 PM, in conjunction with an in-class presentation of about 10 minutes.
4) A book review of 2000 words (+/- 10%), due Wednesday 24 April at 7:20 PM in hard copy. A list of books from which you may choose, and more details, will be coming early in the term.
5) Midterm exam. The midterm exam is scheduled for Wednesday 6 March at 8:45 PM.
6) Final exam. The final exam is scheduled for Wednesday, May 8, at 7:30 PM.

Grading Breakdown:
Week 3 Paper: 10 %
Discussion Participation: 10%
Critical Essay and In-Class Presentation: 15 %
Book Review: 20%
Midterm Exam: 15% March 6
Final Exam: 30%
Course Schedule:

23 January: Weber, Pacifism, and the State
Max Weber’s definition of the state is frequently cited as the definition of the state. Weber made significant claims about the interaction of politics and ethics in the same lecture. How did Weber characterize the interaction between politics and ethics? How do Weber’s views contrast with those whose pacifism leads them to question conventional notions of political necessity?

Reading Assignment
- Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation”
- Leo Tolstoy, “Letter to a Hindu”
- Gandhi, “The Doctrine of the Sword”
- Michael Walzer, Just and Unjust Wars, Afterward, 329-335
- Mark Amstutz, International Ethics, ch. 1, 3

30 January: Kant on Ethics and Politics
Kant is the most influential moral philosopher of modernity and the political theorist who most successfully described the possibility of interstate peace through institutional shaping of state action. How will peace happen, according to Kant? How did he understand peace as both a moral and a natural imperative? What institutional framework is suggested by his thought?

Reading Assignment
- Kant, very brief selections from Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals
- Kant, Idea of a Universal History and Perpetual Peace, from Political Writings, 41-53; 93-130
- Kant, selections from Theory and Practice, Metaphysics of Morals and Contest of the Faculties, from Political Writings, 61-63, 73-92, 171-175; 182-183

6 February: Introduction to Just War Theory
Who decided that going to war could be just? Can wars be started unjustly? How do we morally differentiate war from other modes of killing? How did the history of this just war theory shape its content? How might the criteria of just war theory serve to inform policymakers about the question of going to war?

Reading Assignment
- Walzer, Just and Unjust Wars, pages 3-73
- Amstutz, International Ethics, ch. 4-5
- Aquinas, Summa Theologica, II-II, Q. 40, Art.1; Q. 64, Art. 7

13 February: Just War Theory: Soldiers and Civilians
Jus in Bello is that part of just war theory which concerns the conduct of war. This week we will focus on that, with special attention to the distinction between soldiers and civilians. What are the elements of just war theory relevant to the conduct of war? How seriously do these elements limit the conduct of war? How seriously should they limit the conduct of war?

Reading Assignment
- Walzer, Just and Unjust Wars, pages 74-196
- Amstutz, International Ethics, ch. 7

20 February: Walzer, Just War and Irregular Warfare
Just war theory has long confronted new developments in war. Some stem from the development of new technology, which give rise to new moral considerations. Some emerge out of the apparent necessities of asymmetric warfare, such as terrorism and irregular modes of combat. Do these innovations make just war theory impossible, or all the more necessary?
Reading Assignment
- Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, 197-327
- Amstutz, *International Ethics*, ch. 8

27 February: Human Rights and International Politics
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, promulgated in 1948, asserts rights that are to be respected for all humans. However, enforcing human rights is the job of states, not international organizations. How do the ethical demands of human rights interact with the apparent imperatives of international politics? Whose job should fostering human rights be, anyway?

Reading Assignment
- Amstutz, *International Ethics*, 6

6 March: The Limits of Human Rights (Midterm exam: 8:45 PM, during the second half of class)
A significant threat to the norm of human rights is disagreement about their content. Even if we agree about the need for human rights, how do we know whether a given rights claim should be considered a human right? Should we consider open-ended debate about the status of particular rights as human rights to be beneficial to the persuasiveness of human rights as a norm?

Reading Assignment
- Clapham, *Very Short Introduction to Human Rights*, ch. 6-9

20 March: Rawls on International Politics
John Rawls was responsible for the revival of social contractarian thought, and his ideas were taken to be relevant to international politics as well. How does his domestic political thought interact with his theory of international politics? What kinds of duties do nations have to other nations? How different is the world we live in from the theory he offers in *Law of Peoples*?

Reading Assignment
- John Rawls, very brief selections from *Theory of Justice*
- Amstutz, *International Ethics*, ch. 2

27 March: Responses to Rawls
*Law of Peoples* urged people to take more seriously the question of the duty to assist other nations. However, many scholars found fault with significant elements of Rawls’s argument, on varying grounds. What were the main defects in the argument in *Law of Peoples*, and how can the argument be improved? Is there an element of Rawls’s argument neglected by these authors?

Reading Assignment
3 April: Poverty and the Global South
One of the ways in which peoples can be most profoundly burdened is through severe poverty. What are the major causes of severe poverty? Are there ways that systemic poverty can be addressed through individual action? Are there institutional solutions that can be coordinated by state actors?

Reading Assignment
- Amstutz, International Ethics, ch. 11

10 April: Can Poverty Be Eradicated?
Several scholars look at the problem of severe poverty and conclude that the problem is not well addressed by current policy, if indeed it can be well addressed at all. However, the critics themselves disagree about what the problem actually is. Is it really plausible to think that poverty simply can’t be solved, at least in part?

Reading Assignment
- William Easterly, “Can the West Save Africa?” Journal of Economic Literature 47:2 (Jun., 2009), 373-447

17 April: Ethics and International Political Economy
As the economy has changed, our ethical understanding of international political economy may well change significantly. What are the significant economic shifts of the last generation, and what will be the significant economic shifts of the next generation? How can we cope with these in a way that satisfies optimization and efficiency criteria as well as ethical requirements?

Reading Assignment
- Amstutz, International Ethics, 10

24 April: Responsibility to Protect: Sovereignty, Intervention, and Human Rights
Responsibility to Protect offers reconsideration of international norms in light of changes in international politics. How do the authors of Responsibility to Protect define sovereignty? What are the implications of this definition for human rights? If adopted in full by the international community, how would the Responsibility to Protect help foster the protection of human rights?
Reading Assignment
- Amstutz, *International Ethics*, 9

1 May: Conclusion
In studying international relations, it is conventional to take the state to be the standard unit of analysis. Conventional assumptions about morality take the individual to be the morally relevant unit. When we study ethics in an international context, what is the moral status of the state? What is the political status of the individual?

Reading Assignment
- Amstutz, *International Ethics*, ch. 12 and conclusion

**Student Learning Objectives:** In the broadest sense, students will learn about the relationship between ethics and politics. This will involve more specific understanding of the main elements of just war theory, global distributive justice, human rights, and sovereignty. Students will learn to apply these theories, using them to analyze policy decisions, violations of human rights and related ethical norms, and other political phenomena. Students will be able to communicate what they have learned, both verbally and in writing.

**A Note on the Papers:** For the papers in this course, you should cite all of your sources, whether paraphrasing or directly quoting an author’s argument. Any standard citation system will do. Contact me as soon as possible if you have any questions about how to cite sources. The paper due on 6 February (requirement 2, above) will focus on Weber or Kant. You will receive a topic a week before the paper is due. The book review (requirement 4, above) will evaluate the most important arguments offered by the author of the book you select, and explain its theoretical relevance to a historical or current event. Extensions will be considered on a case-by-case basis for these two papers. Extension requests must be submitted in writing before the day the paper is due. Extensions of longer than a week will not normally be granted.

The purpose of the 1000 word critical essay (requirement 3, above) is to evaluate the arguments offered in the texts you analyze, focusing the most attention on the most important problem or question that you see as you read. Critical essays focused on mere summary of the arguments found in the reading are much less successful than critical essays focused on evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments found in the reading. No extensions will be granted for this assignment. We will assign particular weeks to students during the second meeting, so consult the syllabus to decide which weeks you would prefer for the purpose of completing this assignment.

**Disability resources:** If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact Disability Services at 993-2474, http://ds.gmu.edu. All academic accommodations must be arranged through Disability Services.

**Electronic Devices:** Laptop computers may be used for taking notes or for consulting assigned texts in electronic format. Please do not use cellular phones or similar devices in the classroom.
Academic Ethics: Mason is an Honor Code university; please see the Office for Academic Integrity for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else’s work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

Email: Students must use their MasonLive email account to receive important University information, including communications related to this class. I may not respond to messages sent from or send messages to a non-Mason email address.

Important deadlines for this semester: Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes.
Last Day to Add: January 29, 2019
Last Day to Drop: February 12, 2019
After the last day to drop a class, withdrawing from this class requires the approval of the Dean and is only allowed for non-academic reasons.