ETHICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (Spring, 2000)

COURSE SCHEDULE

Jan. 12/13: Introduction to the course and methodology. Distribution of student questionnaire

January 17: Holiday: Martin Luther King Day

PART 1: THE DECISION TO DROP THE ATOMIC BOMB

Jan. 18/19: Discussion for students whose name begins A - K: John Hersey's Hiroshima

20/24: Discussion for students whose name begins L - Z: John Hersey's Hiroshima,

A. Contemporaneous Critiques of the Decision

Jan. 25 - Readings: Bird and Lifschultz (eds.) Hiroshima's Shadow, "Introduction" and Part 171, "The First Critics". Discussion will focus on the manner in which citizens instinctively make moral judgments on unexpected, or otherwise remarkable, events in international politics. This familiarity with the actual historical responses to the atomic bombings will serve to challenge the common academic assumption that ethical judgments are inappropriate in the discussion of international affairs. Four characteristic modes, or avenues, of critique are recognizable in these selected critiques. As the study proceeds, an effort will be made to weigh the merits of each of these modes of critique.

B. The Decision and the Decision-Makers

Feb. 3 - 9 Readings: Bird and Lifschultz, Parts 11 and VI. Examination of many contemporary documents, until recently classified in the interest of national security, reveals that criticism of the decision made by Truman to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki was not confined to members of the public but was shared even by some officials charged with responsibility for conduct of the war. Even. those who favored exactly the timing and manner of Truman's decision were conscious of the moral frontier they were crossing in attacking cities, in violation of the millennial prohibition against such attacks in war. This solemn prohibition, originating during the small-scale wars around the end of the first millennium, has since then, and especially in the closing years of the nineteenth century and the early days of the twentieth, become a widely recognized principle of both political ethics and of international law, enshrined in both military codes and in the just war theory. By the middle of the Second World War, however, it had gradually fallen into desuetude through reciprocal violation.

C. The American Struggle to Remember: A Mushroom Cloud over the Air and Space Museum, 1995

Feb. 10 - Readings: "The Last Act" : The Smithsonian Institution Air and Space Museum 50th Anniversary Observance of the end of the war in the Pacific. (Selections from the fifth version of the Museum exhibit, later suppressed)
Bird and Lifschultz, Part IV: "Censoring History at the Smithsonian"

D. Historians at War Over the Road to Peace

Feb. 15-17  **Readings:** Bird and Lifschultz, Parts I and V (selections). Reading this collection of essays by the leading historians of Truman's decision, one can detect a virtual professional consensus that Truman was mistaken and morally obtuse in choosing to use these weapons against cities. Several salient aspects of the international context in which Truman made his decision seem, however, to have been overlooked inexplicably in these historical analyses: most notably, (1) the dynamics of decision-making in Japan under the Meiji Constitution (1889 - 1945) and (2) the Soviet Union's post-war conduct in Europe, along with their plans for an invasion of Japan.

During this section of the course, several films and documentaries will be seen in class:

Peter Jennings, ABC White Paper: "The Decision to Drop the Bomb" and "Island to Island" (from the series the World at War), as well as "The Meiji Revolution: Asia's Response to the West"

Feb. 21: Holiday: Presidents Day

**PART II: THE HOLOCAUST:***

Feb. 22 - March 2  **THE SCANDAL OF COLLABORATION**

and  **THE WITNESS OF DISSENT**

At the midpoint in what was expected to be the Century of Progress occurred the worst assault on mankind by his fellow men, the Holocaust. That somber depravity has now taken its place as the measure of moral and political evil, as subsequent reflection on political outrages, such as those in Yugoslavia, and earlier in Cambodia, has revealed. As a point of orientation, then, in the study of ethics in relation to politics, reflection on the holocaust is inescapable. Our approach to that study will follow the perverse career of one Nazi official, Adolf Eichmann.

That study is pursued through two different media, the volume written by Hannah Arendt as a reporter for The New Yorker at Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem, and in the recently released
PBS film, based on tapes made at the trial itself. The contrasting portrayals of the trial and the prisoner are remarkably different in their impact.

**Readings:**  

Film:  
"The Trial of Adolf Eichmann" (PBS)

Visit:  
The Holocaust Memorial Museum (It is necessary to acquire tickets well in advance.)

**March 3 - 13 : Spring Vacation**

WRITING WEEK I  
March 13 (9:30 a.m.) - March 20 (9:30 a.m.) An essential element in the course of study is to set aside an extended period of time to organize, compare, apply and savor the reflections which have occurred in the course, in the light of recent political developments and of certain cognate readings which will be provided to you at the time. During this period, several days should be devoted almost exclusively to reflecting on these readings and to preparing several (four-page, double spaced) essays as directed.

Arguments made in the essays should be amply documented by reference to the readings, films and lectures or discussions of the course. Such references may be made by employing either footnotes or endnotes, but not parentheses inserted within the text. (If you employ footnotes, the essays may be extended to compensate for the space devoted to notes.) Students now increasingly find that such notes are useful to refine and support their arguments and to demonstrate the comprehensiveness of their knowledge while observing the strict limits on the length of the essays.

These essays will be evaluated for comprehension of the materials studied (including the films assigned), analysis of the argumentation to which the student has been exposed through class discussions and readings and, not least, for the clarity, force and elegance of prose style. (Due consideration is given to the special situation of those students whose first language is not English.)

There is no class during Writing Week. While the instructor is evaluating the essays (March 20 - 24), students will meet at the ordinary class time to view documentaries as background for the next section of the course, on Vietnam ("Vietnam: A Television History").

The essays will be returned in individual conferences with the instructor at his office (March 27, 28, 29). This interview is a requirement for successful completion of the course.

**PART III: THE AMERICAN WAR IN VIETNAM**
"Vietnam is the shrapnel we (Americans) bear in our hearts. Our condition is inoperable.

March 30 - April 19

Class analysis will focus on the early years of the war, under Kennedy and Johnson. Specifically, the starting point will be a close documentary analysis of Kennedy's decision to orchestrate a coup against the government of his ally, Ngo Dinh Diem, President of South Vietnam. The instructor's study, The Year of the Hare: America in Vietnam, Janua 25, 1963 FebruM 15, 1964, will be supplemented by excerpts from the comprehensive study by George Herring, America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975. Both will be studied in conjunction with the (PBS - TV) documentaries cited above.

The period between April 20 and 24 is set aside for the observance of passover and Easter. These observances should not preclude, however, advance reading for the next section of the course, on the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the throes of war.

PART IV: AFTER THE COLD WAR

April 25 - May 3

Along with the Persian Gulf war, the most challenging development in international politics since the fall of the Berlin Wall has been the wave of wars in Yugoslavia. In retrospect, analysts should probably have foreseen the dramatic breakup of the Versailles Treaty-state of Yugoslavia, after a period of continuous outside pressure following World War II, finally unraveling amid bloodshed following the death of Tito. Events in the former Yugoslavia unrolled without any expectation by governments, international organizations or even analysts. A gripping account of the dynamics of that tragic but almost inevitable course of events is found in the volume by two journalists, Laura Silber and Allan Little, Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation, with an accompanying film series portraying all the principal actors and many of the critical decisions.

While the Silber and Little series extends only to the Dayton Peace Accords, that apparent peace turned out to be only a pause, followed by the aftershocks of the two wars in Kosovo, one waged by Milosevic against the Albanians separatists in Kosovo and the other the military response launched by NATO against the forces of Milosevic, which constituted the only war ever fought by NATO in its fifty-year history.

The justice of each of these wars will be examined separately, according to the criteria of the just war theory, which is the intellectual effort to adjudicate the rival claims made by the right to life and those made by the right of independence. When independence (sovereignty) is threatened by invasion, as occurred when Iraq invaded Kuwait, statesmen and citizens must
face the harsh choice between peace and justice, which cannot always be protected at the same time.

WRITING WEEK II: May 8 - 16. This second period of reflection and composition of essays, which will reflect questions from the entire course, may provide an opportunity to make a personal synthesis of the materials of the course.

Office: ICC 514

Office Hours: Monday through Thursday, 4:00 - 5:00 Fridays by appointment (x75916)
wintersf@gunet.georgetown.edu
Website: http://www.georgetown.edu/faculty/wintersf/ethics