

**CH 743: CHRISTIANITY AND WAR**  
**Spring 2015**  
**Tuesdays 2-4:50**  
**Professor Diane Lobody**

**This course is an exploration of Christian responses and contributions to war. Through a semester-long exploration of World War II, we will examine a variety of Christian beliefs and actions in relation to war. The course will be taught using a seminar format, and its success relies on each student's preparation and participation.**

**COURSE READINGS**

**Required Texts:**

Michael Bess. *Choices Under Fire: Moral Dimensions of World War II*. New York: Vintage Books, 2008. We will be reading this text all the way through the course. Bess continually raises ethical questions about the decisions and actions of groups and individuals in different situations throughout the war. As you read each chapter, consider the different perspectives Bess describes, raise your own questions, and make your own cases for and against his conclusions.

John Bodnar. *The 'Good War' in American Memory*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011. We will read this at the end of the semester, as a way of thinking coherently about the ways that war is remembered.

Katharine von Kellenbach. *The Mark of Cain: Guilt and Denial in the Post-War Lives of Nazi Perpetrators*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. This book, which we will read near the beginning of the course, is a terrific example of sustained theological reflection on a specific war situation and its consequences. Think of this book as a model for the kind of work we want to do in this course.

**Supplemental Texts:**

Langdon Gilkey. *Shantung Compound: The Story of Men and Women Under Pressure*. New York: HarperOne, 1975. A first-person account of the imprisonment of western civilians in a Japanese internship, written by a theologian and ethicist.

Rachel Waltner Goossen. *Women Against the Good War: Conscientious Objection and Gender on the Home Front, 1941-1947*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997. A study of pacifist women and male conscientious objectors in the U.S.

Susannah Heschel. *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologies and the Bible in Nazi Germany*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010. An examination of the theological and biblical arguments employed by Christians in support of the Reich.

Christina Jarvis. *The Male Body at War: American Masculinity During World War II*. DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010. An exploration of images of manhood and the experiences of men in the U.S. military.

Donna Knaff. *Beyond Rosie the Riveter: Women of World War II in Popular Graphic Art*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2013. An analysis of popular visual imagery in the U.S. and its use in conveying messages about women.

Kevin Kruse and Stephen Tuck. *Fog of War: The Second World War and the Civil Rights Movement*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. A collection of essays focusing on the experiences of African Americans during the war and connections to twentieth-century movements for racial justice and equality.

Caroline Moorhead. *Village of Secrets: Defying the Nazis in Vichy France*. New York: Harper, 2014. An investigation of a community in France and its actions in rescuing Jewish refugees fleeing from persecution and death.

Michael Snape. *God and the British Soldier: Religion and the British Army in the First and Second World Wars*. London: Routledge, 2005. One of the few close scholarly studies of religion and the experience of soldiers during the war.

### **Recommended Text:**

Gerhard Weinberg. *The Second World War: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. If you know little about World War II, or you want to brush up on the basics, this is a very accessible starting point.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Your active and lively participation is absolutely essential to this course. The issues we will discuss are vital to our world--- and they are likely to be personally challenging in different ways to each of us. Please come to every class session fully prepared to discuss the general reading assignment in an informed and productive way. Listen attentively to others and engage respectfully and openly in class discussions and activities. We are all likely to disagree with each other at times during the course. Let us seek to treat each other graciously and compassionately.

Class participation is not graded, but does factor in to final course evaluations.

## **Text-Based Papers and Class Discussions:**

Each of the supplemental texts introduces us to a very specific aspect of World War II, inviting us to ponder some of the complex issues that confronted people during this global conflict. I would love for you to read as many of these texts as you can!

For graded assignments, you are to select three of the supplemental texts to serve as your major sources of written reflection. Here is what you need to do:

- Read the text with care.
- Look for issues that might have had distinctively religious implications for Christians living in the historical context described and analyzed in the book. Keep a running list of the theological, ethical, pastoral, and/ or spiritual questions that might have been raised (or should have been raised!) for Christians in these circumstances.
- When you have finished the book, pare down your list to the most significant theological, ethical, pastoral, and/ or spiritual questions.
- Write a 5-page paper (1250-1500 words) in which you explore one of those questions, with specific reference to the historical situation described in the text.
- Append to your paper the list of the other significant questions you have identified.
- Post the paper to Dropbox by the start of the class session when we are scheduled to discuss this text.
- Come to class prepared to help lead the discussion of this text and the questions and issues it raises.

Each paper, along with your contributions to the class discussion on that day, will contribute 15% to your final grade.

## **Historical Research and Reflection on an Event or Situation:**

Early in the semester, each student will select one area of the world affected by the war. In consultation with the instructor, you will then identify and research one particular event or situation that illuminates the choices and actions of an individual Christian or a group of Christians in a specific war context. This research will serve as the basis for two interrelated assignments:

**Class presentation:** You are to share your research findings with the class in a 45-50-minute presentation. In this presentation, you are to familiarize the class with the event or situation, introduce us to the person or community involved, and describe in detail the significant choices confronting this individual or group. What was happening? What challenges did this pose to Christians? What did your specific person or group do? What were the consequences? What issues and questions do their actions and choices raise for us today? How are we to think as Christians today about this single slice of World War II?

The class presentation will contribute 20% to your final grade.

**Final Paper:** You are to write a final paper in which you use engage in serious and sustained theological reflection on the choices made by Christians in this specific historical context. Your theological reflection must emerge from rigorous examination of the historical information uncovered in your research. Do not simply use the historical situation as a springboard for your own untethered ruminations. Look hard at the actual situation in this war and wrestle with the decisions made by the person or community. Be sure to refer explicitly and frequently to the historical sources in your theological reflections. Your paper should be 12-15 pages long (3000-4500 words), and must include a bibliography of all the sources you have consulted. The paper must be uploaded to Dropbox by 5 P.M. on the final day of the semester (Friday, May 15) unless you are a graduating senior, in which case it is due by noon on Wednesday, May 13.

The final paper will contribute 35% to your final grade.

### **General Policies**

Please see Student Handbook for sections providing policy details on the following:

**ADA**—MTSO seeks to remove barriers to inclusion in its learning communities. Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs at the beginning of the semester. Please contact the Director of Student Services to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Any accommodation must be agreed upon prior to the due date of the affected course requirement.

**Class attendance**—Regular attendance is expected in all classes. During unavoidable absences, students are responsible for missed work. An excessive number of absences may result in grade reduction or course failure, despite successful completion of all assigned work. In most cases, a student will not be allowed credit for a course if he or she is absent for 25% of the class sessions. As it relates to blended courses, students may not be allowed credit if they are absent for 25% of class meetings or if 25% of online course work is not completed. Use of Skype or similar technology is not a substitute for attendance in class.

**Electronic Devices**—Turn mobile devices off or “vibrate only” during class. Browsing the Internet or engaging in email or social network conversations during class is discouraged. Instructors have the right to impose grading penalties for disruptions due to electronic devices.

**Human Subjects Research**—Research by MTSO faculty, students, or affiliated personnel that collects non-public information from and/or about living individuals or contemporary organizations/groups for purposes of publication or public presentation (including class assignments) must be approved by the Human Subjects Research Committee. MTSO faculty, students, or affiliated personnel should err on the side of caution and apply for committee approval of any activity that may fit this description.

**Inclusive Language**—In accordance with MTSO’s policy on inclusive language, all students are expected to use gender inclusive or gender neutral language in their writing and in the classroom discussions when referring to human beings.

**Incompletes**—To receive a course grade of Incomplete, students must submit the petition form from the Registrar with all signatures to the Dean’s Office before the last day of regularly scheduled classes. See Student Handbook for intensive term deadlines. Any petition submitted without a due date for outstanding work will be denied. If work is not complete by the due date the Registrar will record the grade of F for the course.

**Pass/Fail**—The decision to exercise this option must be made before the end of the second week of the course by completing the appropriate form available through the Registrar. To receive a grade of "pass" the student must do at least the equivalent of C minus work in the course.

**Plagiarism**—Plagiarism is a serious matter of academic, professional, and personal integrity. All students at the masters level are expected to understand the requirement to provide attribution when the work of others is used. Students are also expected to be familiar with and understand the school’s policy on Academic Misconduct found in the Student Handbook. If students have questions about attribution, citation, and how to avoid plagiarism they should consult the course instructor, the school’s writing instructor, or library staff. When in doubt it is better to provide attribution even if one is uncertain about the proper citation form. Plagiarism is a form of academic misconduct that results in disciplinary actions per the Student Handbook that may range from failing an assignment or course to expulsion.

### **Class Schedule**

- 2/3 Introduction to the class and to one another
- 2/10 Christians Before the War  
Reading assignment: Bess, *Choices Under Fire*, 1-75 (introduction and chapters 1-3)
- 2/17 Christians Reflecting on War  
Reading assignment: von Kellenbach, *The Mark of Cain*
- 2/24 Christians Contributing to War  
Reading assignment: Bess, *Choices Under Fire*, 77-87 (chapter 4)  
Text discussion: Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*
- 3/3 Christians Enduring War  
Reading assignment: Bess, 88-110  
Text discussion: Gilkey, *Shantung Compound*

- 3/10 Christians Subverting War  
Reading assignment: Bess, *Choices Under Fire*, 111-135 (chapter 5)  
Text discussion: Moorhead, *Village of Secrets*
- 3/17 Christians Fighting in War  
Reading assignment: Bess, *Choices Under Fire*, 136-165 (chapter 7)  
Text discussion: Snape, *God and the British Soldier*
- 3/24 Midterm break--- no class
- 3/31 Holy Week--- no class
- 4/7 Christians Opposing War  
Text discussion: Goossen, *Women Against the Good War*
- 4/14 Christians Compromising in War  
Reading assignment: Bess, *Choices Under Fire*, 166-178 (chapter 8)  
Text discussion: Kruse and Tuck, *Fog of War*.
- 4/21 Christians Sacrificing in War  
Reading assignment: Bess, *Choices Under Fire*, 179-197 (chapter 9)  
Text discussion: Jarvis, *The Male Body at War*
- 4/28 Christians Changing in War  
Reading assignment: Bess, *Choices Under Fire*, 198-253 (chapter 10)  
Text discussion: Knaff, *Beyond Rosie the Riveter*
- 5/5 Christians Remembering War  
Reading assignment: Bodnar, *The 'Good War' in American Memory*
- 5/12 Christians After the War  
Reading assignment: Bess, *Choices Under Fire*, 255-346 (chapters 11-13)
- 5/13 Graduating seniors: Final papers are due by noon today
- 5/15 Last day of the semester: Final papers are due by 5 P.M. today