

Reading Guide #6: War

These reading guides are provided to assist you in your reading. I encourage you to read the material through, first, then go back to answer the questions. You are not expected to hand in written answers. You are expected to have responses ready for class discussion. Page numbers refer to Arthur, *Morality and Moral Controversies*, 6th ed.

R.G. Frey and Christopher W. Morris, 'Terrorism', pp 106-111

1. When is violence acceptable? When does it become problematic?
- 2. How do Frey and Morris define 'terrorism'? (Describe the three characteristics.)**
3. How is force commonly used as a political instrument? What does this say about terrorism?
- 4. When might a consequentialist condone terrorist acts?**
5. How does universalism undermine consequentialist support of terrorism?
6. How do considerations of effectiveness and efficiency undermine consequentialist support of terrorism?
- 7. Why is justice a commonly stated goal of terrorists? How does a proportionality rule mitigate this justification?**
- 8. "Thus, while a consequentialist moral theory can produce a justification of terrorist acts, it typically will do so here, as in other areas, only under conditions that terrorists in the flesh will find it difficult to satisfy." (108) Explain.**
- 9. Why would a terrorist seeking Kantian justification attack the innocence claim of the victims?**
- 10. How does the assumption of infeasible human rights limit any Kantian defense of terrorism?**
- 11. What are two senses of 'innocent'? In which sense are non-combatants *not* innocent? Explain.**
12. How was U.S. use and threat of use of nuclear weapons analogous to terrorism?
13. What is the contractarian notion of justice? How might a contractarian view terrorism?

1. What is 'moral nihilism in respect to war'?
2. What is the descriptive interpretation of moral nihilism with respect to war? Why is evaluation of this claim best left to historians?
- 3. What is the prescriptive interpretation of moral nihilism with respect to war?**
- 4. What is the analytic interpretation of moral nihilism with respect to war?**
5. How can the assertion that one's own country is involved in an immoral war be personally threatening? Why might this lead to the analytic interpretation of moral nihilism in respect to war?
6. How might the weakness of international law lead one to the analytic interpretation of moral nihilism with respect to war?
- 7. Is it a necessary feature of war that everything is permissible? Explain. Why might one believe this?**
- 8. Is morality ruled out of war on practical grounds? Explain.**
9. Describe the national-interest argument for the prescriptive interpretation of moral nihilism in respect to war. How does this lead to valuing lives of the citizens of one country over another?
10. Do the special obligations of a president justify the national-interest argument? Explain.
- 11. Does the national-interest argument justify the prescriptive interpretation of moral nihilism with respect to war?**
- 12. How can we use the rules of war to assess the morality of war?**
- 13. How might the cause of a war be justified in terms of forward-looking criteria?**
- 14. How might the cause of a war be justified in terms of backwards-looking criteria? (Describe two different backwards-looking justifications.)**
15. How might the proposition that the initiation of war is never justifiable be incompatible with the proposition that a warlike response to aggressive war is justifiable?
- 16. How is the argument that the initiation of war is never justifiable implausible?**
17. What is the doctrine of self-defense, in criminal law? What are its limits?
18. What problems arise for applying the doctrine of self-defense to a justification of war?
- 19. What limitations would be necessary on an application of the doctrine of self-defense to the justification of war?**
- 20. Describe a context in which appeal to self-defense as a justification for war would be appropriate.**
- 21. What is the argument against war from the death of innocent persons? How would this argument make all modern warfare immoral?**
22. What four questions arise from the argument from the death of innocent persons?
- 23. Why can't we equate innocence in war with being a non-combatant?**
24. What different kinds of causal connections to war might be relevant to delineating innocence?
25. How might we use culpability as a way of determining innocence in war?
- 26. Why do we not need an "airtight definition" of innocence in war?**
- 27. How does Wasserstrom moderate the claim that any war in which innocents are killed is immoral?**
28. How might one argue that engaging in a war in which innocents will die is no different from building a highway on which innocents will die? How does Wasserstrom respond to such an argument?
- 29. "Given the number of criteria that are relevant to the moral assessment of any war and given the great number of persons involved in and the extended duration of most wars, it would be false to the complexity of the issues to suppose that so immediately simple a solution were possible." (120) Explain.**
30. Practically, what does Wasserstrom conclude about wars, today?