

**NATIONAL ENDOWMENT
FOR THE HUMANITIES**

SAMPLE APPLICATION NARRATIVE



Enduring Questions
Institution: Kean University



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES

DIVISION OF EDUCATION
PROGRAMS

1100 PENNSYLVANIA AVE., NW
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506
ROOM 302

ENDURINGQUESTIONS@NEH.GOV
202.606.8380
WWW.NEH.GOV

National Endowment for the Humanities Division of Education Programs

Narrative Section of a Successful Application

This sample of the narrative portion from a grant is provided as an example of a funded proposal. It will give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. It is not intended to serve as a model. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with staff members in the NEH Division of Education Programs well before a grant deadline. This sample proposal does not include a budget, letters of commitment, or résumés.

Project Title: NEH Enduring Questions Course on “Is There Such a Thing as a Just War?”

Institution: Kean University

Project Director: Christopher M. Bellitto

Grant Program: Enduring Questions

NEH Enduring Questions Course Grant: Narrative
Christopher M. Bellitto, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of History, Kean University Union NJ

Is there such a thing as a just war?

Intellectual Rationale and Teaching Value: This course will tackle a very uncomfortable question: “Is there such a thing as a just war?” Whether we are protecting ourselves, our families, our property, our countries or our ideas, taking up armed defense—be it a fist, a baseball bat, a gun, or a missile—raises ethical dilemmas. How far can I go to defend myself? Is it permissible to launch a first strike to knock out a threat? What if I hurt innocent people? If I protect a few of my own but kill many enemies, even civilians, is that acceptable since my first priority is my own safety? What do we do when our quest for peace and prosperity conflicts with another group’s quest for those same goals? Is my nation’s common good more important than my opponent’s? What about our shared human bond? What are the human, economic, and moral costs of a war even when it is generally agreed to be “just”?

The course’s goal is to ask students to examine this question from a variety of perspectives, which frequently will conflict with one another. I propose to pursue this goal by, first, having students read the classical literature in just war theories from a wide variety of fields and trace their development through a diverse range of time periods and cultures; intellectual pluralism and multi-disciplinary approaches are absolute necessities to the course. Second, we will look at historical events to see how people in the past approached the application of these theories to the circumstances and conflicts of their own days. Third, we will examine current-day challenges and applications of the question. Fourth, students will make their own application of just war theory and practice through a project in which they can either pick and judge an historical event or speculate about a current event or even an imagined scenario for the future.

Once students begin pulling on the string of questions, the knots become more complicated and more difficult to unravel. Students must face answers that might not agree with their own, but they will be engaged by classic readings and insightful case studies to walk in another person's shoes. There are very few—if any—answers that are clearly right or wrong. For instance, one intriguing aspect that cuts across time is perspective: is one country's freedom fighter another country's terrorist? Is there a difference between *just war* and *holy war*—and who decides? What about guerilla warfare against an oppressor—fine for the American revolutionaries, some students might say, but what about the Viet Cong? Can I use torture against one group to protect the civil liberties, human rights, or national security of another group? Can a war be legitimate and legal but still lamentable, wrong, or immoral—the proverbial necessary evil? Where does pacifism come into play? What about UN peacekeeping efforts: can I use military force for humanitarian reasons, as in Rwanda, Darfur, or Bosnia? Is an American life worth more than a Japanese life, as it seems to have been for Truman's Hiroshima decision; or a Soviet life in the Cold War; or a Muslim life in the war on terrorism?

My goal is not to be presentist or directive; students will negotiate competing perspectives to gain broader historical, cross-cultural, and interdisciplinary contexts for today's challenges. I hope that they (and I) will leave the classroom seeing these issues through eyes that are not their own. Undergraduates from any major or level can draw on their own disciplines and personal backgrounds while encountering many others: history, politics, philosophy, military affairs, economics, sociology, psychology, diplomacy, law, and religion. The question forces us to take a global perspective, which can only help our students in the future.

→Institutional context: Kean University is embarking on a major emphasis on human rights education through its emerging Human Rights Institute and long-standing Holocaust Resource

Center, both with an emphasis on community outreach and education free-of-charge. Kean is an excellent setting for a global perspective: ours is a particularly diverse campus, sitting as it does in urban northern New Jersey, just across the river from New York City, one of the most ethnically varied areas in the country. Over one-third of our undergraduates are immigrants—first-generation Americans—and they come from 81 countries. They enrich our classrooms with their experiences and perspectives; they will make this course fascinating for themselves and me.

Envisioned Course Design: Pursuing this proposed enduring question will take me and my students (course enrollment: 20) on an intense journey through more than three thousand years of intellectual history and frequently-disturbing case studies. Employing student-centered learning tools, we will read classic texts in just war theory and apply them to historical situations; this 15-week course will meet once a week for 2 hours and 45 minutes. The goal of reading is to explore multiple, conflicting interpretations; comparative analysis of primary source documents is the course's bedrock. But—and this will be harder—students will apply just war theory to situations closer to our own history and headlines. If possible, we will attend a relevant panel discussion at the UN or Council on Foreign Relations and/or a museum exhibit or theatrical performance.

→Part I: Guided readings and Socratic dialogue: By way of setting up an assessment for the course's ending, I will (as I do in every class I teach) lead an opening-session exercise that asks students to list words that come to mind when they think about the topic at hand—in this case, just war. We discuss these preconceptions to begin the course and then revisit them on the last class by reconsidering course materials and revisiting the first day's notes. It is a very effective way not only to review the course, but to get students to understand the intellectual distance they've traveled during the semester.

- Much of just war theory is pulled from discussions great thinkers had on other subjects, so anthologies work best for this inquiry, especially when coupled with case studies. When read together, these selections make up the essential body of just war theory and practice, so in a sense students will read about the topic in an entire text and multiple contexts. The best volumes are Gregory Reichberg, et al, eds., *The Ethics of War: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Blackwell, 2006), and Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, 3rd ed. (Basic Books, 2000).
- At the same time, I want students to read certain texts in their entirety to see how basic questions evolve over time: Homer's *Iliad* (decision-making and competing ideas of security), Euripides' *Trojan Women* (human cost of war), Grotius' *On the Law of War and Peace* and von Clausewitz's *On War* (modern decision-making, diplomacy, and impact of long-range weapons), and the *Geneva Conventions* (just war in the context of modern nation-states in addition to combatant and non-combatant rights and protections).

To promote student success and understanding of unfamiliar sources, I find it helpful to give students questions on the material to guide their reading, which pays off in livelier and more specific discussions. As examples, we would socratically pursue the course question starting with the earliest Hebrew scriptures and the admonition, "Thou shalt not kill," then proceed through the first five chapters of the *Bhagavad Gita*, beginning with Arjuna's question, "Why should I fight?" and leading through his exploration of the advisability, permissibility, and possible sinfulness of battle. Homer's *Iliad*, Herodotus' *Histories*, and Thucydides' *Peloponnesian Wars* demonstrate the roles of honor and national pride. Plato wondered about the common good, justice, and fairness; Aristotle concluded, "We make war that we may live in peace." Cicero added civic duty, civil authority, and the law of nations (*ius gentium*) to just war ideas. The

theologian Augustine of Hippo thought people could defend ideas and not just property, causing him to gather 1,500 years of development into the first code of just war theory, which entailed questions of intent, restraint, and leadership. Such questions were applied during the medieval crusades by Christians who then encountered the Islamic notion of *jihad*. Hugo Grotius, the seventeenth-century Dutch legal theorist, synthesized international law and the notion of justified conflict during the Wars of Religion as dueling Catholics and Protestants invoked the same Christian God. Benjamin Franklin put it this way: “There never was a good war or a bad peace.” In the early nineteenth century, Prussia’s von Clausewitz said war was the continuation of diplomacy by other means. World War I was supposed to be the war to end all wars; students will be directed to ponder whether its failure to do so means it wasn’t a just war.

→Part II: Historical case studies and current applications: Students will lead discussions, offer presentations on their project research, and engage in role-playing and in-class debates. In order to experience the reality of intellectual pluralism head-on for themselves, students will be assigned a particular side of a debate for class, but another side for a writing assignment. For instance, some students will be assigned to investigate and then role-play a crusades debate between Saladin and Richard-the-Lionhearted. I will put them in the room where decisions were made concerning John Brown’s raid on Harpers Ferry, the plot to kill Hitler (in tandem with viewing and critiquing the recent movie *Valkyrie*), war crimes trials from Nuremberg to The Hague (including the death penalty debate concerning Adolf Eichmann), Israel’s raid on the Entebbe airport, UN intervention in Bosnia, and torture techniques at Guantanamo Bay.

→Part III: Writing and website assignments: Building on Part II exercises, there will a series of short assessment essays based on classroom reading, discussion, and role-playing, and then one longer research paper. The research project will be to select, research, and discuss a case study

related to their own interests. Students will also help create a website and teaching unit on the topic, producing a digital humanities component of the course for public consumption. By way of assessment, students will participate in the “preconceptions revisited” exercise noted above; respond to a survey that I will administer about the course; and review my syllabus with suggestions on how they might teach the course now that they have taken it.

Plan of work: My plan is to embark on a reading program (see Bibliography), using requested budget funds to build our library’s holdings. Research and syllabus preparation will occur Summer-Fall 2010, with advice from two consultants and an initial course website designer (digital humanities component) paid by budget funds. I will teach the course for the first time Spring 2011, then take student assessment and my own reevaluation into account Summer-Fall 2011, filling in holes and reworking unsuccessful activities/materials in preparation for teaching with a renewed syllabus in Spring 2012, the same semester in which a community outreach workshop will occur, featuring two speakers and student presentations funded by the budget.

Faculty preparation: I have been teaching ancient and medieval history from a multidisciplinary perspective (focusing especially on history, philosophy, theology, and politics) for more than a decade, with experience taking specific themes (including just war) through the modern period. I have had much success with student-centered learning by promoting close reading of primary sources with guiding questions, in-class debates, student presentations, and Socratic dialogue—my preferred way of teaching my students and learning from them. My research and writing explore how religion and history interact, including such topics as war and peace, justice, and assessing historical actions that later generations have labeled as errors. I am recently-tenured and embarking on the next phase of my career path, one that I hope will include a hefty dose of curriculum-building, particularly in interdisciplinary subjects such this enduring question.

NEH Enduring Questions Course Grant: Preliminary Course Reading List
 Christopher M. Bellitto, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of History, Kean University Union NJ

Is there such a thing as a just war?

Augustine. *City of God*, "Book 19." Trans. Marcus Dods. Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 2009.

Bhagavad Gita. Trans. Stephen Mitchell. NY: Three Rivers Press, 2000.

Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, "Book IX: On the Right of the Government to Wage War." 2d. ed. Trans. Henry Beveridge. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1990.

Eidelberg, Shlomo, trans. *The Jews and the Crusaders*. Hoboken NJ: KTAV, 1996.

Euripides. *Trojan Women*. Trans. Paul Roche. NY: Signet, 1998.

Gabrieli, Francesco, trans. *Arab Historians of the Crusades*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.

Geneva Conventions. www.icrc.org/Web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/genevaconventions

Grotius, Hugo. *On the Law of War and Peace*. Trans. Francis Kelsey. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925.

Holmes, Arthur F., ed. *War and Christian Ethics: Classical and Contemporary Readings on the Morality of War*. Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 2005.

Homer. *The Iliad*. Trans. E.V. Rieu, rev. Peter Jones, D.C.H. Rieu. NY: Penguin, 2003.

Reichberg, Gregory, et al, eds. *The Ethics of War: Classic and Contemporary Readings*. Malden MA: Blackwell, 2006.

Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica, II-II*, "Questions 40, 42, 64." Trans. Blackfriars. *Summa Theologica*. Vol. 35. New York: McGraw Hill, 1972.

von Clausewitz, Carl. *On War*. Trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.

Walzer, Michael. *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*. 3rd ed. New York: Basic Books, 2000.

NEH Enduring Questions Course Grant: Bibliography

Christopher M. Bellitto, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of History, Kean University Union NJ

Is there such a thing as a just war?

Primary Sources:

Augustine. *City of God*, "Book 19." Trans. Marcus Dods. Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 2009.

Bhagavad Gita. Trans. Stephen Mitchell. NY: Three Rivers Press, 2000.

Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, "Book IX: On the Right of the Government to Wage War." 2d. ed. Trans. Henry Beveridge. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1990.

Eidelberg, Shlomo, trans. *The Jews and the Crusaders*. Hoboken NJ: KTAV, 1996.

Euripides. *Trojan Women*. Trans. Paul Roche. NY: Signet, 1998.

Gabrieli, Francesco, trans. *Arab Historians of the Crusades*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.

Geneva Conventions. www.icrc.org/Web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/genevaconventions

Grotius, Hugo. *On the Law of War and Peace*. Trans. Francis Kelsey. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925.

Holmes, Arthur F., ed. *War and Christian Ethics: Classical and Contemporary Readings on the Morality of War*. Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 2005.

Homer. *The Iliad*. Trans. E.V. Rieu, rev. Peter Jones, D.C.H. Rieu. NY: Penguin, 2003.

Reichberg, Gregory, et al, eds. *The Ethics of War: Classic and Contemporary Readings*. Malden MA: Blackwell, 2006.

Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica, II-II*, "Questions 40, 42, 64." Trans. Blackfriars. *Summa Theologica*. Vol. 35. New York: McGraw Hill, 1972.

von Clausewitz, Carl. *On War*. Trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.

Secondary Sources

Allman, Mark J. *Who Would Jesus Kill? War, Peace, and the Christian Tradition*. Winona MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2008.

Armstrong, Karen. *Holy War: The Crusades and their Impact in Today's World*. 2nd ed. New York: Anchor, 2001.

BBC. *The Ethics of War*: www.bbc.co.uk/religion/ethics/war

Bess, Michael. *Choices Under Fire: Moral Dimensions of World War II*. New York: Knopf, 2006.

Brundage, James A. "The Hierarchy of Violence in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Canonists." *The International History Review* 17 (1995): 670-81.

Burns, J. Patout, ed. *War and Its Discontents: Pacifism and Quietism in the Abrahamic Traditions*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1996.

Chevedden, Paul E. "The Islamic View and the Christian View of the Crusades: A New Synthesis." *History* 93 (2008): 181-200.

- Cortright, David. *Gandhi and Beyond: Nonviolence for an Age of Terrorism*. London: Paradigm, 2006.
- Elshtain, Jean Bethke. *Just War Against Terror*. New York: Basic Books 2003.
- Firestone, Reuven. *Jihad: The Origins of Holy War in Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Hillenbrand, Carole. *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000.
- Hinsman, Lawrence M., ed. *Ethics Update*: <http://ethics.sandiego.edu>
- Kelsay, John. *Arguing About the Just War in Islam*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.
- Kelsay, John and James Turner Johnson, eds. *Just War and Jihad: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives on War and Peace in Western and Islamic Traditions*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1991.
- Marrin, Albert, ed. *War and the Christian Conscience: From Augustine to Martin Luther King Jr.* Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1971.
- Miles, Jack and Sohail Hashmi, eds. *Islamic Political Ethics: Civil Society, Pluralism, and Conflict*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.
- Murphy, Thomas Patrick, ed. *The Holy War*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976.
- Orend, Brian. *The Morality of War*. Peterborough Ontario: Broadview Press, 2006.
- Palmer-Fernandez, Gabriel, ed. *Encyclopedia of Religion and War*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Partner, Peter. *God of Battles. Holy Wars of Christianity and Islam*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.
- Rigstad, Mark, ed. www.justwartheory.com
- Russell, Bertrand. "The Future of Pacifism." *The American Scholar* 13 (1943): 7-13.
- Russell, Frederick H. *The Just War in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.
- Walzer, Michael. *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*. 3rd ed. New York: Basic Books, 2000.
- Wells, Donald A., ed. *An Encyclopedia of War and Ethics*. Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1996