When, if ever, is it permissible to kill some to save others? According to an influential strand of moral philosophy, the same moral principles govern the use of defensive harm both in individual self-defense and war. This course will examine this claim and explore the permissibility of defensive harm (lethal and non-lethal) in both private and political contexts. An overarching theoretical question will be this: Is defensive harm best justified by principles of comparative, distributive justice (i.e. it is less bad that a threatener suffers defensive harm than her victim), principles of retributive justice (i.e. it is only permissible to kill or harm a threatener insofar as she deserves to be killed or harmed) or some combination of both?

In the first part of the course, we investigate the role that moral responsibility, desert and causal responsibility has for the permissible resort to defensive force in individual cases. This part of the course will focus on what an agent has to intend or do in order to become a permissible target of defensive harm and will focus specifically on the following questions:

- Is it permissible to kill a morally innocent threatener (child soldiers, psychotic or innocently mistaken threateners) in individual self- or other-defense?
- Is it ever permissible to harm a non-threatening person in order to prevent oneself or someone else from being harmed by a separate threat (e.g. human shields or innocent obstacles)?

In the latter part of the course, we will focus on the ethics of killing in war. In this part, we bring insights from the first part of the course and ask whether principles governing defensive harm in interpersonal context can justify the use of large scale violence in war. If it cannot, should we embrace pacifism or should we look for a different moral framework governing collective use of force? More specifically, this part of the course will focus on the following questions:

- What constitutes a just cause for war?
- By what criteria do we identify morally legitimate targets in war? How do we distinguish between combatants and non-combatant and why is it morally relevant?
- Do combatants have a moral right to kill enemy combatants, and if so, do combatants on both sides have this right?
- How do we define terrorism, and can it ever be morally permissible? Why is intentionally attacking a civilian morally worse than harming the same civilian collateral?
- What does it mean to say that defensive harm in war must be proportionate to be morally permissible? Should all human suffering count for the same, morally speaking, or should the suffering of civilians count for more in the proportionality calculation?
Tentative course overview – (subject to change)

1\textsuperscript{st} week  Moral responsibility in distributive and retributive justice


2\textsuperscript{nd} week: Rights and responsibility based accounts of self defense


3\textsuperscript{rd} week.  Culpability based accounts of self defense


4\textsuperscript{th} week: Innocent threats


5\textsuperscript{th} week : Killing innocent bystanders


6\textsuperscript{th} week: Killing culpable bystanders


7\textsuperscript{th} week : Just causes for war. Revolution, Humanitarian Intervention and Self Defense

8th week. Proportionality in war


9th week. Open.

9th week: Killing in war.


TBD

10th week killing civilians


12th week. Proportionality in humanitarian interventions

McMahan, Jeff 2010. The Just Distribution of Harm between Combatants and Noncombatants. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*

13th Terrorism


14th week Drones and autonomous weapon systems.

Reading list (incomplete)


Frowe, Helen. 2014. Non-Combatant Liability in War In How We Fight: Ethics in War, eds. H. Frowe and G. Lang, 172-189: OUP.


