

*Morality during War?*  
Professor Kristen Monroe  
Tom Lourie [tlourie@UCI.Edu](mailto:tlourie@UCI.Edu) TA  
Spring term, UCI 2021

## MORALITY DURING WAR?

138 DW UG course

Email: [KRMonroe@UCIEdu](mailto:KRMonroe@UCIEdu)

Class: Tuesday 2-3:20.

Class Zoom Link: <https://uci.zoom.us/j/98628827162>

Kristen Renwick Monroe

Zoom

Office hours: immediately after class

TA: Tom Lourie

[tlourie@uci.edu](mailto:tlourie@uci.edu)

Office hours: Friday 1:00 – 2:00. Zoom Link: <https://uci.zoom.us/j/92568277032>

### Course Description

In an age of global unrest, with the threat of terrorist attacks and incidents of ethnic violence and genocide a constant backdrop for much of humanity, it is important to consider the human response to such political unrest and psychological suffering. How do individual human beings deal with the trauma of such political disturbances? What moral dilemmas confront them and what ethical resources do they bring to bear on the moral choices in such situations? Does it even make sense to speak of a moral life when, as the saying goes, “all’s fair in love and war”? These questions, at the intersection of ethics, political psychology and international relations, form the foundation of our discussions. We focus not on battles, causes or the geo-politics of wars, ethnic violence or genocides but rather on the human reaction to war and the consequences of war for the people who live through them.

We begin with a series of questions. Can people keep their humanity during war? Indeed, what does the term humanity signify during political upheavals when simply surviving requires acts of faith, courage and desperation? Some find it meaningless to speak in terms of morality/ethics when dealing with wars and genocides, such as the Holocaust. Is this true? In the face of wartime brutality must we abrogate our morality? What does it mean to compose a moral life during war?

How can we best gain insight into these questions and the way in which people construct diverse narrative to help them negotiate the moral quicksand during war? Readings focus on how the stories people tell about their lives during war help us both understand how people think about such topics and reveal how the construction of particular narratives shapes and leads us to different moral outcomes, from acts of moral courage to quiet resistance or complicity and bystander behavior. In particular, we inquire about the wide range of wartime responses in which ordinary people try to compose a meaningful moral life in the midst of wartime atrocity, cruelty and savagery, to keep or later to reclaim their own humanity and encourage it in others.

### Course Organization

We will meet via zoom twice once a week to discuss the personal and literary narratives, biographies, documentaries, and films capturing the experiences of those who have lived through some of the major wars of the 20th century: World Wars I and II, Vietnam, and incidents of ethnic cleansing in Rwanda-Burundi and the Balkans. The last two weeks of the term students will conduct an interview with

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someone who lived through a war to ask about their own acts of moral courage.

**Office hours** for Professor Monroe will be on zoom immediately after class on Tuesdays and Thursdays and by appointment if these times are not convenient. You also should feel free to phone me at home via my cell 949 701-1194 any afternoon or evening. (Mornings I am tied up in meetings and doing research.) Tom Lourie can be reached at [tlourie@uci.edu](mailto:tlourie@uci.edu). His office hours are Friday 1:00 – 2:00. Zoom Link: <https://uci.zoom.us/j/92568277032>

**Grading Requirements:** *Writing assignments and Final Papers*

*It is difficult to provide precise measures for grading but final grades will be based on some combination of the following:*

- *The writing assignments. (You must do 5 of the 8 possible topics.) Each paper should be submitted by Tuesday of the week they are due. The graded papers will be returned directly to you via email and the discussion of writing issues will be discussed in class on Thursdays. In the past, I find most students do not know how to write well so, since my job is to help you improve, please do not feel concerned if your work is criticized.*
- *Final project. Completion of interview, transcription and analysis of interview with someone who lived through a war and/or genocide; presentation of that analysis in class. Final presentation of transcript plus your analysis of this and what the interview taught you will be presented Week 10.*
- *Class participation, including any pop-quizzes. You are responsible for attending class and for completing ALL reading assignment by the time they are discussed in class.*

**Required Books** (ordered and in Bookstore. Also placed on library reserve.)

The following books contain most of the assigned readings and are available for purchase in the University Bookstore:

1. Englund, Peter. *The Beauty and the Sorrow: An Intimate History of the First World War*. Vintage of Random House Books. ISBN 978-0-307 73928 5. Drawing on letters, journals and diaries written by participants – some soldiers, some civilians – the author, a professional journalist/historian and secretary for the Nobel Peace Prize Committee – provides a first-hand, shifting look at the war that birthed so many other wars of the 20th century, from WWII to – it could be argued -- the current on-going conflict in the Middle East.
2. Galloway, Steven. *The Cellist of Sarajevo*. Riverhead ISBN-1- 1594489866 or ISBN 978 1594489860. A novel based on a real incident, in which a cellist wishes to celebrate the people killed in the shelling of the market in Belgrade and does so by playing each day in the market, one day for every person killed. Both sides focus on him. Ironically the real cellist supposedly disliked the book and now lives outside Serbia.
3. Monroe, Kristen Renwick. 2004. *The Hand of Compassion: Portraits of Moral Choice during the Holocaust*. Princeton U Press. Interviews with people who risked their lives to rescue Jews during the Holocaust, and what drove their decisions to help, thus risking their own lives and those of their families.
4. Monroe, Kristen Renwick, Chloe Lampros-Monroe and Jonah Robnett Pellecchia. 2015. *A Darkling Plain: Stories of Conflict and Humanity during War*. Cambridge University Press. Book began as a

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class project, based on interviews similar to the ones you will be asked to do this course. Two co-authors were freshmen in college when book came out and was nominated for a Pulitzer.

5. Steinbeck, John. *The Moon Is Down*. Bantam 16th Edition but any edition will do. ASIN: B0019AGBP8. Also first printed as an Edition de Minuit book inside occupied Europe, Steinbeck's simply yet moving book portrays the human aspect of ordinary men who nonetheless find the extraordinary courage to give their lives rather than collaborate. A stunning statement of the limitations of authoritarian rule and the value of democracy.

6. Vercors (pseudonym). *The Silence of the Sea (Le Silence de la Mer)*. Edited by James W. Brown and Lawrence D. Stokes. NY and Oxford. Berg. Distributed by St. Martin's Press. Book was the first publication of an underground press in Paris during the Nazi occupation. Later books include Steinbeck's *The Moon is Down*, the fictionalized story of the occupation of a country (resembling Norway) and who and why people resist. Both the existence of the press and the first book it published poses the question of how to resist during an occupation.

#### **Recommended Books and Films/documentaries.**

Books are not required reading.

Bielenberg, Christabel. *When I was a German, 1934-1945: An Englishwoman in Nazi Germany*. (Also *Christabel*.) This fascinating glimpse of Nazi Germany is provided by an Englishwoman who was fluent in German and at home in German society, yet not entirely of it. Christabel Bielenberg moved from passive to active resistance as Hitler seized power and the Nazi dictatorship clamped down.

Lawrence Langer. *Holocaust Testimonies*. Yale U Press. Makes the argument that we cannot speak of morality during an event such as the Holocaust.

Carol Rittner and Sondra Myers. *The Courage to Care*. Paperback: 180 pages. NYU Press (February 1, 1989) ISBN-10: 0814774067 ISBN-13: 978-0814774069. Stories collected as part of her film. Rittner was a nun who was disturbed by how little her church had done to help Jews during the Holocaust and her interviews are designed to figure out what made some people decide to help.

William Helmreich. *Against All Odds: Holocaust Survivors and the Successful Lives They Made in America*.

Nguyen, Viet Thanh. *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War*. 2016. Harvard U Press, ISBN: 978-0674660342. Viet Thanh Nguyen: *I wrote this book for people who are haunted by war, or who want to understand why we keep going to war even if we know its terrible costs. I was raised by and among Vietnamese people who war had shaped indelibly, and for whom loss, melancholy, and sorrow were enduring emotions. In order to make sense of what had happened to them, and to the Americans they now lived among, I delved into memories and stories of the Vietnam War. Those memories and stories contained the universal patterns that allowed me to think through what it means to remember and*

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*forget, to forgive and reconcile, to be human and inhuman. I came to believe that embracing our humanity is not enough to prevent war and achieve peace. We can only achieve those goals if we also confront our inhumanity and understand that it is latent in all of us.*

**Films.** We will view these together in class. These will be viewed on five Tuesdays with an extended class time, and a one hour class on Thursday, to make up for that. If you cannot stay on Tuesdays, please let me know and I will make alternative arrangements for you to view the film. There are only four classes when we will run over the allocated class time. These class dates are listed below. All the films are available easily on the web. We will try to view them together in class via zoom using the shared screen function. Weeks with films are noted by an \*.

1. **April 13.** *The Courage to Care*, Academy-award nominated documentary featuring interviews of rescuers of Jews and survivors of the Holocaust Short film. No extended class. 30 minutes.
2. **April 20.** On World War II. *Into the Arms of Strangers*. Academy-award-winning documentary on the kindertransports in the Third Reich. Raises the uncomfortable question as to why similar proposals for Syrian refugees have been voted down today. 2 hours.
3. **May 4.** On Vietnam. *The Last Days of Vietnam*. Rare footage, assembled by Rory Kennedy, youngest child of Robert and Ethel Kennedy, about how a few American soldiers realized the war was lost and tried to save as many Vietnamese who had worked with the Americans as possible. 98 minute documentary. Also nominated for an Academy award.
4. **May 11.** On War crimes in Yugoslavia. *Hunt for Justice: The Louise Arbour Story*. How international humanitarian law is often made, and the fight against bureaucracy. Shows how one person can make a difference. 96 minutes.
5. **May 18.** *Hotel Rwanda*. On the ethnic cleansing in Rwanda-Burundi.. True story of a hotelier who saved people during the Rwanda-Burundian genocide. 2 hours, 2 minutes.

**Course Requirements and Grading.** The grade for the course will be based on writing assignments, including the final written paper, and class participation.

**Written assignments.** There are 8 possible writing assignments in addition to the final paper; each student must complete 5 plus the final written assignment, which all students must complete. These written assignments must be turned in by 2 pm on the Tuesday the week they are due. Please email them to Tom Lourie at [tlourie@uci.edu](mailto:tlourie@uci.edu). We will discuss the essays in class on Thursday of the week essays are due. Tom will have graded the papers and returned them to you at that point. Please join in the discussion, as class participation will influence your grade. Each of these writing assignments must be 3-5 pages, typed, double-spaced, 12-point font, and handed in at the beginning of the class on the due date. After being graded, papers will be discussed for grammatical/stylistic issues as well as substantive content. Papers handed in late will be automatically downgraded one point each class (A- to B+, B+ to B and so on) unless they are accompanied by a doctor's excuse. (I apologize for being so stringent but we'll discuss the importance of rules being applied equally to everyone later in the term.) A final paper will consist of an oral history you complete with someone you admire who has lived through a war. We will ask you to transcribe the interview and then analyze it for what it taught you about ethics. These final papers should be handed in the last day of class. Do not be discouraged if your papers are all marked up. I did not know how to write well until I wrote my first book over and over again. But writing is a critical skill and you

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must learn good expression and correct grammatical presentation. Do use a spell checker but also check spellings yourselves.

***Class participation and reading assignments.*** I have had several T's and students tell me they seldom do the readings for a class. Please do not follow that policy in this class. Students will be required to complete all reading and writing assignments by the date on which they are assigned. Since the course will be run as a seminar, students will be graded on their participation in class. **STUDENTS WHO DO NOT ATTEND CLASS REGULARLY WILL NOT RECEIVE A PASSING GRADE. EXCEPT FOR THE FINAL PROJECT, ALL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT SHOULD BE 3-5 PAGES, DOUBLE-SPACED, Times New Roman 12 point.**

## SCHEDULE OF LECTURES AND READINGS

### Part 1. INTRODUCTION: WORLD WAR I

**Week 1.** March 30<sup>th</sup>- April 1st Introduction and overview of course.

**Topic.** There is no moral life during war. Counter arguments: *The Last Days of Vietnam* (film) Reading discussed but not required. Lawrence Langer. *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory*. Yale U Press, 1991. Argues that when events such as the Holocaust occur we cannot apply the traditional rules/arguments/logics of morality.

**Writing assignment #1:** Do you think we can discuss morality during war? Don't most people just do everything they can to survive, and isn't that natural? Is it fair to condemn – or even to judge favorably – people for what they do during war? What would you do in a situation such as the one portrayed in *The Last Days of Vietnam*? You will write initial thoughts in class and hand in at the end of the hour, then rewrite, if you wish to use this as one of your formal assignments. **Please remember that unless otherwise specified, all writing assignments should be 3-5 pages, Times New Roman 12-point.**

**Week 2.** April 6-8th. The First World War (Called, at the time, the War to end all wars). 100+ years after it began, why did it happen and what did it look like through the eyes of participants? Discuss its significance for us today. Can we attribute the war on terror to the Versailles Treaty ending the WWI? Problems in the Middle East, Africa and much of Asia as many of these issues arose from the partition of countries losing land in WWI?

Optional Film: YouTube: *World War I: The American Legacy*. Narrated by David Carradine.

**Required Reading: Englund's *The Sorrow and the Beauty*. Skim.**

Class Assignment. Pick two people in the book and follow them as the war progresses. Week 2 you will be required to make a presentation about these two people. (Simply tell what happened to the person whose life you follow. The focus will be on WWI but also do a bit of digging to discover what happened to them later.) Please hand in a two-page assignment, documenting what happened to your person plus

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one page on what you learned about war from reading about this person. What would you have done in that person's situation? These will be discussed in class Week 2.

**Writing assignment #2.** Choose two people from *The Sorrow and the Beauty* and follow them during WWII, reporting on them to the class (see above).

Student presentations.

Lecture: Historical Background. WWI, Versailles and WWII.

**\*Week 3.** April 13-15th.

World War II, the Holocaust: Moral Choice and Moral Courage in the Cauldron.

Film clips of interviews with rescuers. *The Courage to Care*, Academy-award nominated documentary featuring interviews of rescuers of Jews and survivors of the Holocaust.

Reading: Kristen R. Monroe. 2004. *The Hand of Compassion*. Princeton U Press. 2004.

**Writing Assignment #3:** Pick one person from *The Hand of Compassion* and one from the movie. Describe what they did, what it cost them, what drove their moral choice. What would you have done in their place? What makes bystanders different from rescuers and perpetrators? Due in class.

Recommended Book: *The Courage to Care*. Rittner and Myers.

**\*Week 4.** April 20<sup>th</sup>-22nd.

**Film. Into the Arms of Strangers**, Mark Jonathan Harris, Director. 2001. . 122 minutes.

Academy award winning documentary on the kinder (children) transports, which took Jewish children from the Third Reich to safety in England. Tuesday's class may extend beyond the 90 minutes ordinarily allotted to it, in order to view the movie together. We will have a one-hour class on Thursday. If you cannot view the entire movie with us on Tuesday, please let me know so I can arrange for you to view it at another time. 122 minutes. Mark Jonathan Harris, 2001.

**Assignment #4.** Pick one of the children featured in the documentary. Find out what happened to them later. What happened to the organizer of the kinder transport? Have we had proposals for similar transports for the Syrian children in the contemporary war in Syria, now in its 10<sup>th</sup> year? What thoughts does this prompt in you, as you think about the moral life?

**Week 5.** April 27<sup>th</sup> -29th

Quiet, personal resistance.

Reading: *The Silence of the Sea (Le Silence de la Mer)*. Anonymous. Edited by James w. Brown and Lawrence D. Stokes. NY and Oxford. Berg. Distributed by St. Martin's Press.

John Steinbeck, *The Moon is Down*. Edition Minuit or later edition.

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Both books were published originally and anonymously in occupied France as part of the debate over how and what writers and artists should do to resist the occupation and the Nazis.

**Writing Assignment #5.** Both of these books illustrate how stories and narrative can become political tools. Discuss this topic in the contemporary political climate. What kind of alternative narratives do we find today, and where? Due in class.

**\*Week 6. May 4<sup>th</sup> -6th**

**Vietnam. Film. *The Last Days in Vietnam.*** Rory Kennedy, Director.. 2014. 98 minutes.

Recommended Reading: Nguyen, Viet Thanh. *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War.* 2016. Harvard U Press, ISBN: 978-0674660342. Tuesday's class will extend beyond the 90 minutes ordinarily allotted to it, in order to view the movie together. We will have a one-hour class on Thursday. If you cannot view the entire movie with us on Tuesday, please let me know so I can arrange for you to view it at another time.

**Writing Assignment #6.** Find someone you know who has fled or fought in a war such as Vietnam. How does this person's experience contrast with that of Viet Thanh Nguyen or the soldiers (Vietnamese or American) depicted in the film or in the recommended reading?

**\*GENOCIDE AND ETHNIC CLEANSING.**

**\*Week 7. May 11-13th**

Ethnic cleansing. Personal and international response to it. What is ethnic cleansing? How extensive is it? How can we recover from it? Can one recover from it? Class discussion focuses on the historical Background on ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Rwanda-Burundi.

Lecture. Includes personal photos of Bosnia today and discussion of the ethnic cleansing's aftermath.

Required Book: *The Cellist of Sarajevo.* Steven Galloway. Riverhead ISBN-1- 1594489866 or ISBN 978 1594489860. Discussed in class Thursday May 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Film** viewed May 11<sup>th</sup>. *Hunt for Justice: The Louise Arbour Story.* Charles Binamé, Director. 2005. 90 minutes.

Film about a controversial prosecutor/judge in the trials of war criminals in the former Yugoslavia. Documents the personal costs of pursuing war criminals. Reveals what international organizations can, cannot and often will not do in such crises. Tuesday's class will extend beyond the 90 minutes ordinarily allotted to it, in order to view the movie together. We will have a one-hour class on Thursday. If you cannot view the entire movie with us on Tuesday, please let me know so I can arrange for you to view it at another time.

**\*Week 8. May 18<sup>th</sup> -20th**

Genocide and ethnic cleansing in Rwanda-Burundi

Film: *Hotel Rwanda.* Terry George Director. 2004. 2 hours and two minutes.

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Paul Rusesabagina (Don Cheadle), a Hutu, manages the Hôtel des Mille Collines and lives happily with his Tutsi wife (Sophie Okonedo) and their three children. When Hutu military forces initiate a campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Tutsi minority, Paul shelters refugees in the hotel he manages. As the U.N. pulls out, Paul must struggle alone to protect the Tutsi refugees in the face of the escalating violence later known as the Rwandan genocide.

Recommended Book: Romeo Dallaire. *Shake hands with the devil: The failure of humanity in Rwanda*. Autobiographical account by UN commander at the time, who later tried to commit suicide and eventually moved to Rwanda to help people there. 584 pages ISBN-10: 0786715 103 ASIN: B000BZ99WY

**Writing Assignment #7.** What happened to Paul Rusesabagina after the genocide? To Romeo Dallaire? Discuss their actions and their later lives in light of the words of a Holocaust rescuer (Marion Pritchard): “We all have memories of times when we should have done something, and we didn’t. And it gets in the way during the rest of your life.” Have you experienced such an event? Discuss.

### **Week 9. May 25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>**

Surviving wars and genocides with humanity intact. How do people compose a meaningful life after such trauma?

Reading: *A Darkling Plain: Studies of Conflict and Humanity during War*. Kristen Monroe, Chloe Lampros-Monroe, and Jonah Robnett Pellechia. Cambridge U Press. 2015

**Writing Assignment #8.** Contrast two people featured in this book. After a brief description of what happened to them, note what strikes you most about them. What factors helped them most survive with their humanity intact, or did they manage to maintain their humanity? Do you see critical similarities between the two individuals, or are the contrasts most striking? Due in class on Thursday.

### **Week 10. June 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> PART 4. SPECIAL PROJECT: SURVIVING WAR AND GENOCIDE**

**FINAL PROJECT ASSIGNMENT (20 PAGES):** Three parts: Part 1. Review literature on the psychological and ethical response to war, focusing on what factors have been found to help wartime survivors keep their humanity. Part 2. Interview someone affected by war, genocide or terrorism. For examples, see any of the interviews in *A Darkling Plain: Stories of Conflict and Humanity during War*, such as chapters on Japanese interned during World War II, US soldier from a recent American war, a political refugee from a war – civil or otherwise, etc. Do a 1-2 hour taped and/or filmed interview with them, asking about their experiences and what moral lessons- if any- they drew from their experience. Using your cell phone to conduct the interview is fine. If you need someone to interview, please see the professor. We have people from the VA Hospital in Long Beach, a young woman who was a Major who did two tours of duty in Iraq, and others willing to be interviewed. Students who submit a film clip of highlights from the interview will receive extra credit in their final grade for this project. Part 3. What does the interview tell you about the scholarly literature? Discuss.



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**REGARDLESS OF THE FORMAT UTILIZED, PLEASE INCLUDE:**

- (A) The signed consent form – which will be distributed to you during class – saying they understand and give approval to you to conduct the interview, analyze it and show it to others. If they give their consent, their interview also will be placed in an archive at the UCI Ethics Center so that others may view their interview. These interviews are for pedagogical purposes, not for research, so no IRB approval is required. No one interviewed is under any obligation to have their interview placed in the Archive or viewed by anyone but you, if that is their choice.
- (B) A transcript of the interview, which must be at least 10 pages in length, double spaced 12-point type Times New Roman, and
- (C) A 5+page analysis of your own on what the interview taught you about how people deal with the trauma of war or genocide. (Again, 12 point, Times New Roman, double spaced)

**PROJECTS WILL BE PRESENTED IN CLASS THE LAST TWO WEEKS OF THE TERM.  
FINAL PAPERS DUE THE LAST DAY OF CLASS.**

Please ask your interviewee if they are willing to have their interview approved for public viewing, in which case it will be shown/discussed in class and stored in the Ethics Center Archives, where it will be made available to any scholar wishing to use it for scholarly analysis. If the person you interview wants their interview to be private – that is, shared only with you and the professor/TA grading your paper – that is fine. Just please note that on the consent form and on your final paper. If not otherwise noted on the signed consent form, we will assume they give their consent to have their interview discussed by you in class and analyzed by you, for pedagogical purposes, in your final paper. Please email the final paper, including the transcribed and/or filmed interview to Professor Monroe at [KRMonroe@uci.edu](mailto:KRMonroe@uci.edu). **HAVE FUN!**