## Just War Theory: Lesson Plan

**Topic**

Just War Theory provides a framework for states in conflict. It explains that every effort to prevent wars must be made while acknowledging that there are circumstances where violence is permissible because it is a lesser evil than alternatives. For a battle to be considered morally permissible, it must be ethical before, during, and after the conflict.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible subjects/classes</th>
<th>Time needed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy, International Relations, Government/Politics, World History</td>
<td>40-45 minutes</td>
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**Video link:**


**Objective:** *What will students know/be able to do at the end of class?*

Students will be able to...
- Articulate the evolution of Just War Theory.
- List the qualifications for a war to be justified according to this theory.
- Explain the ethical frameworks Just War Theory uses.

**Key Concepts & Vocabulary**

Sovereignty, Ethical/moral, Civilians

**Materials Needed**

Worksheet, Internet access

**Before you watch**

**Poll the class:** Ask the class questions about real world scenarios that have started wars, such as is it okay to go to war over a political ideology? Can the killing of a country’s leader be a reason to go to war? Is it okay to bomb others to
prevent the killing of innocent people? Are material resources like land, oil, or minerals a proper reason to go to war? Keep a tally of the classes responses to different questions. If you have time, ask them to consider why students responded how they did.

### While you watch

1. Name the three components of Just War Theory.
2. Name one thing states should not do during war.
3. What are two kinds of ethical thought that influenced Just War Theory?

### After you watch/discussion questions

1. Think about a past war or conflict, and apply Just War Theory. Was the war just? What before, during, or after the conflict would have made it moreso?
2. Are there cases where jus ad/in/post bellum should not be considered, or where a war was just even if a violation in Just War Theory occurred? Which category is most important? Why?
3. When you think about violence, are you a consequentialist (concerned with the outcomes), intrinsicist (concerned with the good or bad in actions), or pacifist (believing all war is immoral)? Which do you tend to agree with, and why?

### Activity Ideas

- Invite students to explore online websites about the Nuremberg trials, like [https://nuremberg.law.harvard.edu](https://nuremberg.law.harvard.edu). Have them work in small groups to discuss and write a paragraph about if the trials are an example of jus post bellum.
- Have students break up into groups and complete the Worksheet.

### Sources/places to learn more