

The Conference Presentation

Every student will prepare and lead a presentation and discussion (~20 min total) of their paper topic (International Students will meet in smaller groups and record their presentations; Send me the video by June 30th at the latest).

STEP ONE: GIVE US READINGS: Post a short reading or youtube video clip under the Student Bibliographies page 24 hours before your conference

STEP TWO: CREATE A “HANDOUT”: In-class presentations will also include a Presentation Handout or Powerpoint presentation (Powerpoint encouraged) in which you curate relevant information for your audience. You have ***full autonomy*** in constructing your presentation and handout, with the following proviso: All presentations must include *in some form and at some point in the presentation* the following components:

(i) Context: A concise summary of the issue you will treat, referencing exhibit sources where relevant.

(ii) Disruption Questions: An explanation of the potential philosophical significance of the issue at hand, referencing argument sources where relevant, and a series of **2-3 DISCUSSION CHALLENGES, modelled on those completed in class**, that frame the philosophically grounded issues you will be treating in your paper. You may choose when to introduce the discussion questions.

(iii) Resolution: You must be prepared to audition potential strategies for resolving your disruption question. Here you may audition more than one potential claim if you are deciding between different argumentative claims or strategies.

Accomplishing each of these components should take approx. 20 minutes total. **SUGGESTIONS:**

- **Engage your audience!** I encourage everyone to think of ways to engage your audience, whether through an initial brainstorm exercise, a discussion activity, video clip, or other methods.
- **Audio/Video Logistics:** You will be sharing your screen throughout the duration of your presentation, so you may take advantage of any digital media content you would like to share.

STEP THREE: PREPARE FOR FEEDBACK:

Presentation and Cross-Examination: Once your presentation is complete, your classmates and I will respond to the questions and argumentative strategies you pose, offering constructive suggestions and devil’s advocate positions. You will be expected to be “on” for the duration of your presentation, engaging and responding to the questions and responses that your peers offer.

Drone Strikes and the Doctrine of Double-Effect (Paper Handout Model)

Consider the following two cases carefully:

A) Suppose that a judge is faced with violent rioters demanding that a culprit be found guilty and executed for a certain crime, and threatening otherwise to take their own bloody revenge on a particular section of the community. The real culprit being unknown, the judge sees himself as able to prevent the bloodshed only by framing some innocent person and having him executed. The next day, he tries, convicts, and hangs a local shop owner. As a result, the rioters are appeased and peace is restored.

B) Drone strike technicians have located a confirmed terrorist hiding in an apartment complex. In order to ensure death, the Hellfire missiles used by the drones have a blast radius of 15-20 meters. Being aware that there is a high probability of collateral damage within that range, the CIA orders the drone strike anyways, hoping to prevent the terrorist in question from causing even more death. The terrorist is killed, along with a mother and her three daughters living in the adjacent apartment.

(i) In your view, is there a distinction between the two cases with respect to the intention to cause the death of innocent lives? Explain.

(ii) Is there a corresponding difference in the *moral* status of each action? Or are they both morally equivalent in your view? Explain.

Drone Strikes and the Doctrine of Double-Effect

How to Create a Distilled ‘Microcosm’ of Your Paper

The Issue: (CONTEXT): The U.S. government should provide an official accounting on who is being killed by drone strikes, said a new report released today by Columbia Law School’s Human Rights Clinic. “Counting Drone Strike Deaths” is a systematic review of drone strike casualty estimates provided by media and aggregated by three major casualty tracking organizations: The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, Long War Journal, and New America Foundation. These organizations have filled the gaps left by the U.S. government, which refuses to officially provide information on casualties; however, their estimates are incomplete and, in the case of the latter two organizations, significantly undercounted the extent of reported civilian deaths in Pakistan during 2011. “Drone strike casualty estimates are substituting for hard facts and information about the drone program,” said Naureen Shah, Acting Director of the Human Rights Clinic at Columbia Law School. “These are good faith efforts to count civilian deaths, but it’s the U.S. government that owes the public an accounting of who is being killed, especially as it continues expanding secret drone operations in new places around the world.” The report warns that low civilian casualty estimates may provide false assurance to the public and policymakers that drone strikes do not harm civilians. According to the report, despite their strong efforts, two of the tracking organizations, the Long War Journal and New America Foundation, significantly and consistently underestimated the potential number of civilians killed in Pakistan during the year 2011.

So What? (DISRUPTION): The issue of drone strike casualties is part and parcel of a broader philosophical question: Provided that one does not directly intend to bring about such harms, is it sometimes morally permissible to bring about bad outcomes that would otherwise be morally wrong to directly intend to bring about? One attempt to provide a positive answer to this question can be found in the so-called Doctrine of Double Effect, which Philippa Foot (1967) describes as follows:

The doctrine of the double effect is based on a distinction between what a man foresees as a result of his voluntary action and what, in the strict sense, he intends. He intends in the strictest sense both those things that he aims at as ends and those that he aims at as means to his ends. [...] By contrast a man is said not strictly, or directly, to intend the foreseen consequences of his voluntary actions where these are neither the end at which he is aiming nor the means to this end.

“Double effect” thus refers to the two effects of an action: “the one aimed at, and the one foreseen but in no way desired.” Those who defend the use of drone strikes would likely appeal to the doctrine of double effect on the grounds that the killing of innocent civilians is neither (i) the intended aim of the action nor (ii) the intended means used to achieve that end. What can the Doctrine of the Double Effect tell us about the ethics of drone strikes?

- 1. In your view, if I know innocent people could be killed by a drone strike, does the fact that I do not ultimately aim at their death change the moral status of my decision to launch a strike?**
- 2. Do you agree that civilian deaths caused by drone strikes are not intended as the part of the means to killing the target in question?**

Consider This! (RESPONSE): With respect to the first point, the ultimate end aimed at by a drone strike is not the death of innocents, but the death of a dangerous malefactor: this end would be satisfied with or without collateral damage. With respect to the second point, the death of innocent civilians is not a necessary step in the causal chain used to kill the terrorist. By contrast, in the case of the Judge, the death of an innocent man is part of the plan to avoid violent riots: it is precisely by killing the innocent man that the mob will be assuaged. In the case of drone strikes, however, the death of innocent civilians is incidental to the performing the means to killing the target in question. Thus, collateral damage caused by targeted drone strikes is not tantamount to the murder of innocent civilians, one might argue, because although such collateral damage is foreseen, the death of innocent civilians is not the direct intention of the action.