

Ethics and World Politics Seminar Series

16th January 2017
1.30PM-6.00PM

School of Politics and International Relations,
Queen Mary University of London
Ground Floor, France House
Westfield Way E1 4NP

We are pleased to announce our second Ethics and World Politics seminar, which will be an ongoing forum for scholars to present, discuss and develop the latest work on the normative dimensions of world politics.

This session will feature:

Prof Kimberly Hutchings (QMUL)
“Decolonising Just War Theory”

Dr David Karp (Sussex)
“What is the Responsibility to Respect Human Rights? A New Way Forward for the Respect-Protect-Fulfil Framework”

Ms Ida Danewid (LSE)
“A Drowned Memory Space: the Politics of Mourning the Migrant Dead in Europe”

The seminar will kick off at 1.30PM and finish at 6.00PM, with a lunch provided at 1.00pm and refreshments during the session. There will also be a drinks reception after.

The event is organised in conjunction with the Theory Lab at QMUL and it is free thanks to the generous support of BISA, Millennium: Journal of International Studies and the School of Politics and International Relations at QMUL.

We would, however, ask that you contact us to register for the event, so we can plan for lunch and the drinks reception accordingly. You can register through Eventbrite here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/ethics-and-world-politics-seminar-series-tickets-30256012548>

BISA members who are postgraduate students or not in full-time employment are eligible to apply for a bursary to help cover travel costs. Please contact the organisers for details.

We look forward to seeing you in London. Please get in touch if you have any questions.

Email: ethicsbisa@gmail.com

Twitter: @ethicsBISA

Website: <https://ethicsbisa.wordpress.com>

SESSION ONE - 1.45pm-3.00pm

Ida Danewid (London School of Economics)

“A Drowned Memory Space: the Politics of Mourning the Migrant Dead in Europe”

In contemporary political theory there has been a recent surge of interest in themes of loss, grief, and mourning. Thinkers such as Judith Butler, David Eng, and Stephen White have argued that grief has the capacity to access, or stage, a commonality that eludes politics and on which a new cosmopolitan ethics can be built. In this paper, I argue that these ethical perspectives contribute to an ideological formation that disconnects connected histories and undoes shared, unified pasts. I develop this claim through a close reading of the European refugee “crisis”, focusing on how the migrant dead are mourned as universal humans—and not as victims of a shared, global present built on colonialism, racism, and white supremacy. In particular, I argue that Europe’s selective, humanitarian grief obfuscates that the loss of life in the Mediterranean is not an unfortunate “accident” but, rather, the product of EU border policies coupled with colonial and neo-colonial interventions in the Global South. Ultimately, this has enabled the EU to constitute itself as “caring”, “good”, and “ethical”—in the very moment that it buries its own border fatalities.

Discussant: Robbie Shilliam (Queen Mary University of London)

SESSION TWO - 3.15pm-4.30pm

David Karp (Sussex)

“What is the Responsibility to Respect Human Rights? A New Way Forward for the Respect-Protect-Fulfil Framework”

This paper offers a re-definition of ‘respect’ for human rights within the respect-protect-fulfil framework, and illustrates how this re-definition can better address key human rights issues of our day. The respect-protect-fulfil conceptual framework of responsibility for human rights came about in the 1980s in the context of United Nations work on the right to food. It was intended as a solution to the ‘problem’ of the de-prioritisation by the West, in a Cold War context, of socio-economic rights in relation to civil and political rights. The framework is now interpreted as implying that ‘respect’ for human rights, defined in terms of negative duties to do no harm, is the most fundamental component of human rights responsibility. This doubles down on (rather than gets rid of) the West’s Cold-War-era linkage of human rights discourse to libertarian variants of neoliberalism. This paper responds to this problem in three steps. Firstly, it argues that ‘respect’, ‘protect’, and ‘fulfil’ can be best understood as three separate and equally important spheres of human rights decision-making, rather than as a spectrum that runs from negative to positive duties. Secondly, drawing from the work of Charles Taylor and Axel Honneth, the paper argues that the best interpretation of the ‘respect’ element needs to involve more than ‘do no harm’: instead, it needs to involve a thicker, more positive account of recognising the humanity of others, and aligning one’s behaviour in accordance with that recognition. Thirdly, the paper reflects on the implications for state and non-state actors, dealing particularly with the objection that corporate/ collective agents do not have the required capacities to ‘respect’ human rights, understood in this richer sense.

Discussant: Mervyn Frost (Kings College London)

SESSION THREE - 4.45pm-6.00pm

Kimberly Hutchings (Queen Mary University of London)

“Decolonising the Ethics of War”

Contemporary ethics of war literatures are dominated by perspectives derived from consequentialist, deontological and contractarian traditions of moral and political theory. These modes of theorising are distinguished by their explicit embrace of a rationalist method characterised by abstraction, individualism, logical argumentation and the use of thought experiments. In recent years, these approaches have been 'applied' to forms of armed conflict characteristic of the current time such as military humanitarian intervention, non-state transnational political violence or the increased use of remote weaponry in counter-insurgency operations. Proponents of these ways of doing the ethics of war would repudiate any suggestion of coloniality in their methods and claims. At the same time, decolonial and feminist critics have been vocal in condemning post 9/11 forms of liberal warfare and the ways in which it is justified, actually or hypothetically and have identified liberal ethical arguments with the repetition of old forms of imperialism. This chapter focuses specifically on the question of whether rationalist approaches to the ethics of war reproduce a colonial imaginary. It will argue that they do indeed do so in a variety of ways. These include how they understand and where they locate moral intelligence and moral agency, how they grasp the phenomena of war and fighting, the audiences to whom their arguments are directed and the worlds invoked by the thought experiments, analogies and examples on which they draw.

Discussant: Christopher Finlay (Birmingham)