

# THE STUDY OF WAR, PEACE AND RELIGION IN THE HISTORY CLASSROOM

Lessons Developed by Participants  
in the Seminar Series

“War and Peace in  
Judaism, Christianity and Islam”

at

SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

2008 -2009

Funded by the  
National Endowment for the Humanities



*From the Classroom to the World*  
*Educating for Citizenship in a Global Neighborhood*

# WAR, PEACE AND RELIGION IN THE HISTORY CLASSROOM

## Preface

Religion – the cause of war, or a voice for peace? School textbooks and state curriculum standards often leave the impression that religion and war go hand-in-hand. But historically, the influence of religious thought on both war and peace is more complex than our textbooks – and news media – would have us believe.

In 2008-2009, the National Endowment for the Humanities funded a seminar series, “War and Peace in Judaism, Christianity and Islam: The Influence of Texts and Commentaries Throughout History” co-sponsored by ISTEP, the Department of Religious Studies and the Center for Islamic and Arabic Studies at San Diego State University. Throughout the year, middle and high school teachers met with SDSU faculty on a regular basis to discuss readings drawn from each of the religious traditions, and explore approaches for translating those discussions into the classroom. The lessons in this unit represent the combined outcome of those efforts.

We would like to acknowledge all of the participants for their collaborative efforts in developing classroom materials. Special recognition is due to Danielle Perkio, Mesa Verde Middle School, for her input on critical examination of textbook language; Dana Mejias and Stacy Tinsley, Correia Middle School, for their contributions to the lessons on Just War, technology applications, and language usage in contemporary media; and Susan Mitchell, Jefferson Middle School, for her approach to using Just War as a theme throughout the year.

Finally, we wish to thank our lead faculty from the SDSU Department of Religious Studies: Rebecca Moore, Department Chair, covering Christianity; Khaleel Mohammed, covering Islamic Studies; and Rabbi Scott Meltzer, covering Judaic Studies. ISTEP Director, Elsie Begler, facilitated discussions of classroom adaptations and development of new curriculum, and was responsible for final editing and compilation of the materials.

ISTEP  
2009

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

### **I. Setting the Context - The Academic Study of Sacred Texts and Commentaries**

Lesson 1: Religious vs. Devotional Study of Religious Texts

Lesson 2: The Bible as a Primary Source Document for Learning about the Ancient Hebrews

### **II. Defining War, Exploring the Meaning of Peace**

Lesson 3: The Meaning(s) of War and Peace

Part I: Words and Meanings (an “Into” Activity)

Part II: Defining War

Part III: Exploring the Meaning of Peace

Lesson 4: The Lexicon of War and Peace in Textbooks

Part I: The Lexicon of War

Part II: The Causes of War

Part III: Peace

### **III. Just War**

Lesson 5: Introducing the Principles of Just War

Part I: Surveying Student Attitudes Towards War

Part II: Just War Theory

Part III: Augustine de Hippo and Thomas Aquinas on Just War

Lesson 6: Just War Theory in the History Classroom I: What Leaders Have Said

Lesson 7: Just War Theory in the History Classroom II: You Decide...

### **IV. Language and Faith**

Lesson 8: Language and Faith

Part I: The Political Lexicon of Our Times

Part II: Revolutionaries or Terrorists?