

NEWS BREAK

Article: **How college students who study war view Trump's Iran taunts**

Section: **MAIN, A8**

Sunday's News Break selects an article from **Sunday, April 12, 2026**, of The Seattle Times print replica for an in-depth reading of the news. Read the selected article and answer the attached study questions.

Feel free to adapt this lesson for your students. For instance, some educators may assign this as a homework task, while others might facilitate the reading and discussion of questions within small groups or larger class discussions.

****Please take a moment to review all NIE content before classroom use to ensure it is suitable for your students.****

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1

- Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.2

- Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

Learning Objectives:

After reading the article, students will analyze how moral theories about war apply to real-world political actions and decisions, especially in modern contexts shaped by media, technology, and leadership.

Pre-Reading Discussion:



- What do you think the article will be about, using this picture?
- Are there any clues? What can you infer?

Vocabulary Building:

Read this sentence, what do you think the highlighted words mean using *context clues*? A **context clue** is a word or words that are hints and refers to the sources of information outside of words that readers may use to predict the meaning of the word.

Against this backdrop, the Catholic University students looked to answer: In a war such as the United States' in Iran, what does **morality** look like?

Morality Guess:

Morality Definition:

Comprehension Questions:

1. For Politics 226: Introduction to Peace Studies, this was a week when treaties, rules and theories slammed into the reality of a U.S. president who said what three things?

2. Even for Trump, his Tuesday post casually threatening to level Iran, in a way that seemed to suggest the use of nuclear weapons, lit up classes around the country where young Americans are studying _____ and _____.

3. Students said the riotous nature of social media, digitally gamified war, Trump's penchant for shock and the oft-changing U.S. goals in Iran can sometimes leave them _____.

4. "He generalizes and says 'We're going to destroy civilization' — that's _____." It's very dehumanizing."

5. Classes at colleges and universities around the country last week tackled how Trump's approach fit into the major schools of thought around war, which include pacifism, just war theory and realism, which sees war as what?

6. Just war's roots are thousands of years old and include _____ and _____ traditions.

7. Trump's attack on Iran, bellicose threats and what Connors said was a "disregard for rules of engagement" can make the philosophical frameworks she's studying feel almost _____.

8. "We are engaging with philosophical discussions that are on the edge of the conversation, and what's happening is something that was meant to be sort of _____," said the philosophy

and theatrical performance double major, who will graduate this spring and plans to go to law school.

9. You can't threaten to commit a war crime as a _____, even if you didn't mean it." Threatening indiscriminate attacks on Iranian civilization is immoral, he said.
10. Love discussed Trump's post in the context of what the class had studied about the Rwandan genocide in the 1990s. There, political leaders from one side used what?

11. "To get people to violate these deeply held moral norms that are deeply internalized, you have to take these actions," she said. "This is a real challenge, the way new technologies and AI can generate the language of _____ and _____."
12. Outside of class, some students said their generation is hungry for both moral structure and activism, but at the same time _____.

Class Discussion Questions:

- What surprised (or stood out to) you in the article?
- At first, I thought _____, but now I think _____?

"A whole civilization will die tonight, never to be brought back again," Trump posted on Truth Social at 8:06 a.m. "I don't want that to happen, but it probably will."

- What is your honest opinion about President Trump's post above? How should Americans view this? How do you think the world sees this?

Deeper-Dive "Connect & Explain" comprehension questions for small groups, entire classes or journal entries and/ or essay prompts for extended enrichment:

- How does Just War Theory attempt to make something as destructive as war "moral"? Do you think that's truly possible? Why or why not?
- The article suggests students feel both concerned and numb about global conflict. Why do you think young people can feel both emotions at the same time? What are the risks of this "numbness"?
- How do public statements by leaders like Donald Trump influence people's understanding of war and morality? Should words alone be judged morally, or only actions?
- One student called the rhetoric in the article "dehumanizing." What does it mean to dehumanize someone, and why is it dangerous in times of conflict?

- Compare modern political communication (social media posts, instant reactions) with historical examples like the Rwandan genocide. How can language contribute to violence?
- Is it ever acceptable to harm civilians to achieve a military goal? How does this challenge moral theories?
- Do you think morality in war should be absolute (never change) or flexible depending on the situation? Explain your reasoning.
- If leaders ignore international laws or moral guidelines, what responsibility do citizens have to respond?
- How would you define your own moral code when it comes to conflict or violence? What influences your beliefs (family, culture, religion, media, etc.)?
- The article shows students actively discussing and questioning global issues. Do you think young people today have a responsibility to be informed about world events? Why or why not?
- How does constant exposure to global crises (war, climate change, etc.) shape your worldview? Does it motivate you, overwhelm you, or both?

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